PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

**SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 627**

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND  
SIXTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF  
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SESSION 2017 - 2019**

COMPRISING PERIOD

10 July 2017—20 July 2017

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HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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ii

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT—cont.

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HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT—cont.

iii

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iv

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT—cont.

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*10 July 2017*

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND  
[WHICH OPENED 13 JUNE 2017]

SIXTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SIXTH SERIES**

**VOLUME 627**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 2017-2019

House of Commons

*Monday 10 July 2017*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock***PRAYERS**

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

*The Secretary of State was asked—***Reserve Centres**

1. **Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/  
Co-op): What discussions he has had with local authorities  
and the devolved Administrations on reserve centre  
closures; and if he will make a statement. [900293]

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mark  
Lancaster):** At the first Defence questions of the new  
Parliament, may I remind the House of my interest,  
namely that I am in my 29th year of service in the Army  
Reserve?

The Ministry of Defence regularly holds discussions  
with local authorities and the devolved Administrations  
on reserves. That includes engaging with all stakeholders  
on sites that are earmarked for closure or for the  
establishment of new reserve units. The release of sites  
no longer required by the Ministry of Defence will free  
up land for new housing and raise money to reinvest in  
our armed forces.

**Jim McMahon:** Like the Minister, my father was a  
Territorial Army reservist, so I know the importance of  
the reserve. Would it not make more sense, rather than  
jumping to a closure and then contacting the devolved  
Administrations, to have a pre-consultation to make  
sure that where facilities are being reviewed across the  
board—ambulance stations, fire stations and so on—we  
have a single estates strategy for public sector assets?

**Mark Lancaster:** Of course, we do engage with local  
authorities to the best of our ability, but no final  
decisions have been made in the Army Reserve Refine  
programme. It would therefore be premature to engage  
with local authorities to say which, if any, Army Reserve  
centres are closing. However, that piece of work on the  
reserves brings good news as well, so I am delighted to  
take this opportunity to announce the creation of two  
new infantry battalions as a result of it: 4th Battalion  
the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, whose headquarters  
will be at Redhill, and 8 Rifles Battalion, whose  
headquarters will be at Bishop Auckland.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell** (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): May I  
offer my hon. Friend very warm congratulations on his  
promotion to Minister for the armed forces? As a  
distinguished and senior officer in the reserve, is he not  
perfectly placed to make decisions on reserve centre  
closures?

**Mark Lancaster:** I am very grateful to my right hon.  
Friend for his warm words. As his former Parliamentary  
Private Secretary at the Department for International  
Development, I know only too well of his contribution  
to the comprehensive approach during his tenure there.  
It is rare as a Minister to be appointed to a Department  
one actually knows something about. On that basis, I  
am delighted to be here. It is great to be in this position  
and I hope to use any experience I have.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP):  
May I, too, congratulate the Minister on seemingly  
knowing what he is talking about?

3

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

4

In recent days I became aware, via the office of the  
deputy lord lieutenant of the county of Dunbartonshire  
that he had informed the provost of West Dunbartonshire,  
as the local government's civic leader, that armed forces  
veterans' day would not take place due to there being no  
capacity in the armed forces to deliver it. As the Member  
of Parliament for West Dunbartonshire, it gives me  
grave cause for concern that veterans in local families in  
West Dunbartonshire, including those in my own family  
who have served, will not be given the appropriate  
thanks by their local community. Will the Minister, on  
behalf of the Ministry of Defence, advise me and other  
Members of the House whose local communities may  
have been unable to hold veterans' day that this will not  
happen again?

**Mark Lancaster:** Armed Forces Day has become  
quite a success, so I am disappointed to hear what the  
hon. Gentleman says. I visited Bangor in Northern  
Ireland and my colleagues have visited other places in  
the United Kingdom. The Armed Forces Day centring  
on Liverpool this year was a particular success. However,  
I am concerned by what he says and would like to think  
that all our units, whether Army Reserve units, Regular  
units or cadet forces, will do whatever they can to  
support Armed Forces Day. I will certainly look into  
what he has said.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): Does the Minister  
agree that a crucial criterion when considering dismissing  
or abandoning reserve centres is to ensure that our  
reserve centres are as close as possible to the reserve  
soldiers who will man them, so that they do not have to  
travel far?

**Mark Lancaster:** Of course, our reserves have become  
very much a success over recent years. Over the last  
year, some 5,000 extra reserves were recruited—an increase  
of some 5% on the Army Reserve of 2016. One of the  
great challenges we face is to ensure that the footprint is  
equal across the country. That is why the Army Reserve  
Refine piece of work that is going on is so important.  
One of the principal aims is to ensure that the footprint  
is even across the country.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Abertillery in my  
constituency is home to the 211 Battery, which has the  
reserve's only unmanned air systems operators. I understand  
that the Department is scrapping the Black Hornet  
unmanned aerial vehicle, but is still using the Desert  
Hawk model. Will that have an impact on the successful  
and popular Blaenau Gwent-based unit?

**Mark Lancaster:** As I said earlier, I think that the  
reserves Refine piece is overwhelmingly a success story.  
I am sorry that I am not currently in a position to give  
the House the final details, but I will go out of my way  
to ensure that all Members are informed in advance of  
any changes in their local units.

**James Gray** (North Wiltshire) (Con): My hon. and  
gallant Friend has referred to a footprint for the reserve  
forces. That is terribly important, because, as was pointed  
out by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham  
(Bob Stewart), they have to live near their bases. Reserve  
centres are also very useful as the outward face of the  
British Army throughout the nation where there is not  
otherwise any military presence. They are often co-located

with, for instance, cadet battalions, and they have a  
huge usefulness quite apart from their military usefulness.  
Does it not concern my hon. Friend that what he  
described as a footprint may become a toehold?

**Mark Lancaster:** I am quite confident that at the end  
of the reserves Refine process, the footprint will still be  
substantial across the United Kingdom. We are not  
considering major closures across the UK, and I would  
hate to imply that that is the correct impression. Indeed,  
today I announced the creation of two new reserve  
units. I think that, as we continue to increase the size of  
our reserves, the story is a positive one.

**NATO: Estonia and Poland**

2. **Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con):  
What contribution the Government are making to NATO's  
reassurance measures in Estonia and Poland. [900294]

6. **Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con):  
What contribution the Government are making to NATO's  
reassurance measures in Estonia and Poland. [900298]

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**The United Kingdom is supporting NATO's enhanced  
Forward Presence, which is designed to defend our  
allies and deter our adversaries. About 800 UK personnel  
based on armoured infantry form the core of our  
battlegroup in Estonia. In Poland, a British reconnaissance  
squadron is part of the US-led battlegroup. Both  
deployments are defensive but combat-capable.

**Tom Tugendhat:** I am sure that my right hon. Friend  
welcomed, as I did, the congressional vote that renewed  
the United States' commitment to article 5. Will my  
right hon. Friend say a little about Britain's commitment  
to it, particularly in relation to units such as the Estonian  
armed forces, alongside whom I—and many other  
Members—had the privilege to serve in, for instance,  
Afghanistan?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** It is good that both Congress  
and, now, the President have committed themselves to  
article 5, the most important principle of NATO. In  
Washington on Friday, Secretary Mattis and I agreed to  
continue our work together to modernise NATO and  
give it more focus on counter-terrorism and hybrid  
warfare. As my hon. Friend has said, one of the reasons  
that our contribution to the enhanced Forward Presence  
is based in Estonia is indeed our good experience of  
working with Estonian forces in Helmand, Afghanistan.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** Joint military exercises in the  
Suwalki gap are obviously very welcome, as are rotational  
deployments of troops in Poland, but when will the  
United Kingdom use its senior position in NATO to  
press that organisation for a permanent NATO base in  
eastern Poland?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Our defence relationship with  
Poland is close. Since the beginning of 2016 I have met  
Minister Macierewicz at least five times, and we aim to  
sign a defence treaty with Poland later this year. NATO, of  
course, already has a small permanent base in Poland, the  
Multinational Corps Northeast headquarters in Szczecin,  
to which the United Kingdom contributes personnel.

5

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

6

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I very much support  
what the Defence Secretary has said about the contribution  
that we are making in respect of NATO in Estonia and  
Poland, but having spoken to a couple of constituents  
at the weekend, I believe that the Government, and all  
of us, have a job of work to do to explain to the British  
public the importance of NATO and the continuing  
need for us to be vigilant in eastern Europe.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I absolutely agree. We need to  
keep restating the case for NATO, and it is sometimes  
sad to see the case for it being questioned. We must  
restate its importance. It was good to hear the President  
reinforce that in his speech in Warsaw on Friday, but I  
think that all of us in the House have a responsibility to  
explain why our troops are being deployed to Poland  
and Estonia, why our Typhoons are based in Romania  
this summer, and why we are committing Royal Navy  
ships to the standing maritime groups this year.

**Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South)  
(Lab): One of the biggest threats facing all NATO  
member states is the growing sophistication and volume  
of cyber-attacks. What collective action are the Secretary  
of State and his colleagues taking to counter that threat?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** As I said, Secretary Mattis and I  
have agreed that NATO needs to prioritise its work on  
cyber and other forms of hybrid warfare, which is just  
as important as its conventional deployments. We are  
now doing that; that work was agreed in principle at the  
Warsaw summit a year ago, and we continue to urge  
other members to do that, too. In addition, we have  
offered to put Britain's offensive cyber capabilities at  
the service of NATO, if required.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): These  
deployments are certainly defensive, as the Secretary of  
State stated, but they will be represented as offensive by  
the Russians. What measures are the Government taking  
to keep open a line of communication with the Russians,  
to make it absolutely clear to them that this would not  
be happening but for their own conduct in Ukraine and  
elsewhere?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** NATO is, as my right hon. Friend  
knows, a defensive alliance and these deployments are  
defensive in nature. It is important in respect of Russia  
that we explain these deployments and the purpose of  
them, and we are transparent about the number of  
personnel and the units involved. To that end, we already  
have machinery in place whereby our vice-chief of the  
defence staff has regular discussions with his opposite  
number to explain the deployments and ensure that  
there is no misunderstanding about them.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
As this is the first Defence questions of the new Parliament,  
may I begin by putting on record the Scottish National  
party's welcome for the announcement on Type 26s,  
and also welcome the fact that Scotland is, of course,  
the only part of the UK that can build these complex  
ships?

On the issue of cyber, what is the Secretary of State's  
assessment of what the President of America tweeted at  
the weekend on the idea of an impenetrable cyber  
security unit? What would that mean for a country such  
as Estonia, for NATO, and for the United Kingdom?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I will take for what it is the hon.  
Gentleman's welcome for Type 26, on which there is a  
later question on the Order Paper. Of course, if the SNP  
had had its way on the nuclear deterrent we would not  
be needing the Type 26 frigates at all, because they are  
designed to protect a deterrent that the SNP voted  
against.

We have cyber expertise in this country, as do Estonia  
and other countries inside the alliance; we now need to  
bring that expertise together to counter the cyber-attacks  
made by our adversaries.

**Former Military Personnel: Depression and Suicide**

3. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): What steps he  
is taking to reduce rates of depression and suicide  
among former British military personnel. [900295]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Mr Tobias Ellwood):** We ask much of our brave service  
personnel and recognise that service life can cause stress,  
so we are absolutely committed to providing the necessary  
mental health and welfare support both during the time  
of service and on retirement.

**Andrew Rosindell:** I thank the Minister for his reply,  
but can he tell us more about the Veterans' Gateway  
and how it will work alongside the young royals' charity,  
the Heads Together campaign, to support veterans with  
mental health problems?

**Mr Ellwood:** There are 2.5 million veterans in this  
country and the majority make the transition to civilian  
life without a problem, but some do not, and that is no  
fault of their own. There are over 500 main charities  
providing support, including the one my hon. Friend  
mentions. The Veterans' Gateway is that initial portal to  
avoid the confusion of where to turn to. So I welcome  
this initiative, and would love to take credit for it myself,  
but I cannot as it was down to my predecessor, my hon.  
Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North (Mark  
Lancaster), who is now the armed forces Minister.

**Mr Speaker:** Very good intra-office arrangements;  
splendid.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): We all owe a  
great debt of gratitude to those armed forces charities  
that work so hard supporting former military personnel  
facing depression and other conditions, but why will the  
Government not commit to the Royal British Legion's  
“Count Them In” campaign so that the charities, the  
statutory services and everyone else can know where  
former military personnel live?

**Mr Ellwood:** This is down to a data issue. We are  
putting together a veterans register, but there is a Data  
Protection Act issue. We work with Cobseo—the  
confederation of service charities—and we will be  
establishing a veterans' board as well, to make sure that  
we are meeting the needs of our veterans.

**Johnny Mercer** (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): LIBOR  
funding has been a real lifeline for many charities across  
the UK, including in Plymouth, where we recently  
secured £80,000 for a veterans care navigation service.  
Beyond 2018 that LIBOR funding dries up, however;

7

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

8

what thought has the Minister given to getting veterans  
care on to a sustainable model, so that we can do our  
duty by those who serve?

**Mr Ellwood:** I pay tribute to the work that my hon.  
Friend has done in this area. He is right to say that the  
LIBOR funding has been so useful in providing sources  
of revenue for a number of key projects, and we need to  
ensure that that continues. I would like to highlight one  
of those projects, Combat Stress, whose 24/7 phone line  
has been paid for by LIBOR funds, providing an important  
service.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): Following the question  
from my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South  
(Susan Elan Jones) about voluntary groups, I would like  
to mention two wonderful groups in my constituency—the  
Veterans Association UK and Veterans in Communities—  
that do wonderful work with ex-service personnel. What  
guarantee can the Government give that they will support  
such organisations in the future?

**Mr Ellwood:** These organisations play an important  
part in looking after not only the transition but the  
veterans themselves, who have given so much during  
their service life. This is part of our covenant commitment,  
as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, and I am grateful  
that he has mentioned those charities. The veterans  
board will also help with that. All our commitments to  
do with the covenant are important, but the Veterans'  
Gateway programme will ensure that such small charities  
get the publicity they deserve.

**Leo Docherty** (Aldershot) (Con): The role of all three  
services of the British armed forces in the liberation of  
Mosul in Iraq in recent days must be commended. Will  
the Secretary of State tell me what plans we have for  
further involvement in Iraq and whether he agrees that  
the British Army has a crucial role in mentoring and  
training the Iraqi forces, who are a hugely important  
ally?

**Mr Ellwood:** I am a Minister in the Ministry of  
Defence rather than the Secretary of State, but I am  
glad that my hon. Friend has such confidence in me. I  
welcome him to his place. It was a pleasure to join him  
on the 35th anniversary of the Falklands conflict. He is  
right to ask what should happen next. As we have seen  
so many times in various conflicts, there has not been  
that important transition from war-fighting to peacekeeping,  
but I know that the Secretary of State is involved in this  
matter.

**Common Defence and Security Policy**

4. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What discussions  
he has had with his European counterparts on the effect  
of the UK leaving the EU on the UK's participation in  
the Common Defence and Security Policy. [900296]

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**While still an EU member, we will maintain our  
contributions to CSDP missions and operations. The  
Prime Minister has made it clear that after Brexit we  
want a deep and special partnership with the European  
Union that encompasses economic and security  
co-operation. Europe remains our continent, and we

will continue to play our part in its security, through  
NATO, through our bilateral relationships and through  
collaboration on defence and research programmes.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I thank the Secretary of State for  
that response. Last week, giving evidence in the Lords,  
Baroness Ashton, Lord Robertson and Lord Hague all  
expressed concern about the impact of Brexit on our  
influence in the world. Does the Secretary of State  
agree with Lord Hague that we should be seeking  
permanent membership of the EU's Political and Security  
Committee to ensure that we can lead a united response  
on issues such as sanctions on Iran and that we have a  
united voice on the Falklands?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** After Brexit, we will still have the  
largest defence budget and the largest navy in Europe.  
We have a range of assets and capabilities on which  
other countries in Europe will want to continue to work  
with us. So far as foreign policy is concerned, we have  
not yet got to the point in the negotiations of sorting  
out exactly what the relationship will be, but let me  
assure the hon. Lady that I expect to continue our  
co-operation with my fellow Defence Ministers.

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): Does  
my right hon. Friend agree that it would be far better  
for our European friends to focus on their NATO  
membership and their commitment to defence spending  
of 2% of their GDP, rather than trying to create some  
sort of bogus EU defence force?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We all agreed—it was not just  
Britain—at the time of the Warsaw summit that the  
European Union and NATO needed to work together  
to avoid unnecessary duplication. We agreed to co-operate  
in areas where both could add value but to avoid the  
need to set up fancy new headquarters and duplicate  
what was already being done in NATO.

**Fabian Hamilton** (Leeds North East) (Lab): The  
European Defence Agency supports the improvement  
of defence capabilities and provides a forum for European  
co-operation on research and development. Will the  
Secretary of State be recommending that we remain a  
member of the EDA? If not, will he explain what our  
relationship with it will be, post-Brexit?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The European Defence Agency is  
an important forum, but it is not the only forum in  
which collaboration takes place. Some of that collaboration  
is outside the treaty, including some of the work that we  
have done together on Typhoon and on other major  
equipment projects. Obviously we expect to have some  
kind of relationship with the European Defence Agency  
after Brexit, and that will be discussed in the negotiating  
process that awaits us.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): I am pleased to hear  
my right hon. Friend state that NATO is the cornerstone  
of our defence alliance. Will he assure me that the  
pan-European co-operation of defence contractors, such  
as Thales in my constituency, will continue?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. Several important companies,  
such as Thales, Leonardo, Airbus and so on, are based  
both in Europe and in the United Kingdom, and it is  
important to ensure that their investment and employment  
here is fully taken into account after Brexit.

9

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

10

Service Accommodation

5. **Fiona Onasanya** (Peterborough) (Lab): What  
discussions he had with contractors on their delivery of  
service accommodation; and if he will make a statement.  
[900297]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Mr Tobias Ellwood):** The national housing prime contractor  
is CarillionAmey and, with support from the MOD,  
performance levels for service accommodation have  
been met and sustained. Both organisations meet monthly  
to review performance, and the Department will penalise  
poor performance where necessary.

**Fiona Onasanya:** I thank the Secretary of State for his  
response. What estimate has he made of the impact of  
renegotiating the lease in 2021? Will the costs fall on  
service families?

**Mr Ellwood:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for  
calling me the Secretary of State; I hope that if enough  
people say that, it will actually—*[Interruption.]* I should  
not say that. I will say, however, that the hon. Lady  
raises the important issue of ensuring that service family  
accommodation is up to par. That forms part of our  
armed forces people proposals, which I will be speaking  
more about in the House. I hope that we will have the  
opportunity to review the contract in 2021, but I hope  
the hon. Lady understands that negotiations will take  
place and that we will we keep the House updated.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con):  
Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there  
are no plans to eradicate single-living accommodation  
for service personnel?

**Mr Ellwood:** As far as I understand it, there are no  
plans to remove single-living accommodation, which  
forms part of the complex offering of service family  
accommodation. As we have heard, we need to rationalise  
the defence estate across the country, and we are returning  
officers and personnel from the Rhine, which will require  
building projects, including single-living accommodation.

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab):  
As we have heard, the Armed Forces Pay Review Body's  
46th report found that there was an

“overwhelming view that the maintenance service provided by  
CarillionAmey was continuing to fall well short of the needs of  
Service personnel and their families.”

Service families are tired of Government platitudes, so  
how bad do things have to get before the Government  
get a grip on the issue?

**Mr Ellwood:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his  
place and to the Dispatch Box. He is right to raise that  
issue. I have just inherited this brief, and there has been  
concern about standards, in which the Secretary of  
State has taken a personal interest. We are ensuring that  
performance levels are up to par, and there will be an  
opportunity to renegotiate the contract in 2021.

**Armed Forces Pay**

1. **Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): What recent  
   discussions he has had with the Armed Forces Pay  
   Review Body on levels of pay for the armed forces.  
   [900299]

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**Ministers are in regular contact with the Armed Forces  
Pay Review Body as part of the annual pay round  
process. I gave oral evidence to the review body last  
November prior to its 2017 report, and I expect to meet  
it again prior to its 2018 report.

**Mike Amesbury:** Given that every Minister, including  
the Defence Secretary, voted against lifting the pay cap,  
does that not prove that their praise is more hollow  
words than good deeds?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We all want to see people in  
public service, including in the armed forces, properly  
remunerated for what they do, but any pay settlement  
must obviously take account of taxpayers' interests and  
be fair to our need to get our deficit under control. We  
are advised by an independent pay review body that,  
unlike some other pay review bodies, it is specifically  
required to look at comparability with the civilian sector  
and to take account of any evidence regarding recruitment  
and retention.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): At times  
when general employment levels rise and unemployment  
levels fall, and with the continued strength of our  
economy, it gets more and more difficult to recruit and  
retain armed forces personnel. Will those be key factors  
in the consideration of this issue?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** My hon. Friend is right. We are  
competing for the best of every generation against other  
sectors of the economy, which of course are growing.  
The Armed Forces Pay Review Body, in recommending  
a 1% pay rise in its last report, said:

“We believe tliat...an increase of one per cent in base pay... will  
broadly maintain pay comparability with the civilian sector.”

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): Further to that last question, figures released  
to me last week by the Secretary of State's Department  
in a written answer show that recruitment to our infantry  
fell by 18% in the last year alone. Does he not accept  
that not giving a fair pay rise is having a direct impact  
on recruitment?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** That is not the view of the Armed  
Forces Pay Review Body. As I have just indicated to the  
House, the pay review body believes that its settlement,  
recommended last year, does maintain pay comparability  
with the civilian sector. Some 8,000 people joined the  
armed forces in the last 12 months, but when the pay  
review body comes to make its recommendation for  
next year, it will of course look specifically at the  
evidence on recruitment and retention—and it does  
that in a way that some other review bodies are not able  
to do.

**Nia Griffith** (Llanelli) (Lab): After losing her majority  
at the general election, the Prime Minister has now  
signalled that she is prepared to work across the House  
with other parties on areas of agreement. In that spirit,  
I make a constructive offer. The Government have just  
introduced the Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Bill in  
the other place. If the Government agree to amend the  
Bill to include a real-terms pay rise for our armed forces

11

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

12

personnel, they can count on Labour's support, so will  
they agree to work with us to give our armed forces the  
pay award they deserve?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We all want to see our armed  
forces properly remunerated for the service they give us,  
but it is also incumbent on the hon. Lady to make it  
very clear how any increase she favours would be properly  
paid for. That is something she has not done and her  
party has not done—it certainly did not do it at the last  
election. The pay review body system is beyond party  
politics in this House. It is an independent pay review  
body that looks at comparability with the civilian sector,  
looks at the issue of retention and recruitment and  
makes its recommendation, which last year we accepted  
in full.

**Nia Griffith:** On the contrary, our manifesto was fully  
funded, and the Government know that. They know  
how to raise taxes if they need them. The fact is that the  
Armed Forces Pay Review Body is severely constrained  
by the overall 1% cap on public sector pay that the  
Government have imposed. If the Government will not  
legislate for a pay rise, will the Secretary of State at least  
allow the pay review body to carry out a mid-year  
review and report on what our armed forces should be  
receiving if the cap were not in place?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am staggered that the hon. Lady  
thinks her manifesto was fully costed or, indeed, fully  
funded. There were billions in that manifesto that were  
due to be borrowed and paid for by future generations.  
We have implemented the pay review body's  
recommendation in full for this financial year and, for  
next year, evidence is already being acquired by the pay  
review body. I will give my evidence to the pay review  
body later in the year, and we will see what it recommends.

**Royal Navy: Personnel**

1. **Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con):  
   What assessment he has made of whether the Royal  
   Navy has sufficient personnel to operate (a) all vessels  
   and (b) the Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.  
   [900300]

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mark  
Lancaster):** The Royal Navy is growing, with 400 more  
personnel, more ships and new submarines. The Royal  
Navy remains on track to achieve its manning levels for  
2020 and will have sufficient manpower to continue to  
meet all its operational requirements. That includes  
ensuring that the Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers  
can always operate safely and effectively.

**Mr Baron:** Given concerns that we are hollowing out  
our armed forces' manpower in favour of big-ticket  
items, what is the Minister, and indeed the Government,  
doing to ensure that we not only have the manpower to  
operate those big-ticket items but the ships to protect  
them when at sea? Global uncertainties abound, and  
over 90% of our trade is maritime borne.

**Mark Lancaster:** My hon. Friend highlights the  
challenges we face in recruiting in our growing economy,  
and I am pleased that the Navy's efforts to address  
shortages of engineers are beginning to show dividends,

through the personnel recovery programme. He will  
also be aware of our investment in offshore patrol  
vessels, five of which are currently under construction,  
and in the new Type 26s—we will cut steel later this  
month.

**Ruth Smeeth** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): In March  
2017, total Royal Navy numbers were 710 below their  
liability, and it is reported that currently only six of our  
service escort platforms are at sea or fully operational.  
Given that last year we had a net manpower loss of 750,  
how can we be assured that we have the right retention  
policies to operate all of our platforms, when they are  
so desperately needed?

**Mark Lancaster:** The Royal Navy is growing; I am  
pleased that for the first time in a generation the  
establishment of the Royal Navy will grow, by 400, as I  
said. I have mentioned the personnel recovery programme,  
an excellent programme that has sought to address the  
shortages of engineers through apprenticeships and  
through affiliation with university technical colleges. It  
is a long-term programme, but it is working.

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): The truth is that the  
Royal Navy has experienced catastrophic cuts in personnel  
over the past seven years and now the chickens are  
coming home to roost; the Navy is even asking 55 to  
60-year-olds to rejoin on short-term contracts. Will the  
Government now recognise the error of their ways and  
recruit, on good wages, the personnel we need? The  
Prime Minister has asked for ideas from the Opposition,  
so will the Minister pass my suggestion on to the Prime  
Minister?

**Mark Lancaster:** With the greatest respect to the hon.  
Gentleman, this seems to be a common theme when we  
come to the Dispatch Box: he is always terribly negative.  
I am determined to try to support our serving personnel  
and, as I have tried to explain, an awful lot of effort is  
going in at the moment. This really is the year of the  
Navy, with more than £3 billion invested in the Royal  
Navy. We are seeing two new carriers; the fourth Astute  
class was launched recently; and we are seeing the  
contract launch for three Type 26s. The future is bright  
for the Royal Navy and I wish he would stop talking it  
down.

**Mr Speaker:** There is no doubting the comprehensiveness  
of the replies, but if we could make slightly more timely  
progress, that would be appreciated by Back Benchers.

Armed Forces Covenant

1. **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): What steps he is taking  
   to strengthen the armed forces covenant. [900301]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Mr Tobias Ellwood):** The Government are committed  
to ensuring that service personnel, veterans and their  
families are not disadvantaged, and that special provision  
is made for those who have sacrificed the most. We will  
continue to use the £10 million annual covenant fund to  
build partnerships that support our military and wider  
society, including the recently launched veterans gateway,  
which was mentioned earlier.

13

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

14

**Lucy Allan:** Some councils are much more proactive  
than others in supporting the armed forces covenant  
and in marking Armed Forces Day. Telford's Labour-run  
council has more work to do in ensuring that warm  
words on a website translate into action. What does he  
suggest can be done to encourage increased participation  
in future?

**Mr Ellwood:** I am really upset to hear that Telford did  
not join the hundreds of local authorities across the  
country on 24 June to pay tribute to our armed forces. I  
was in Plymouth; as we have heard, the Minister of  
State, Ministry of Defence, my hon. Friend the hon.  
Member for Milton Keynes North (Mark Lancaster)  
was in Northern Ireland; the Under-Secretary of State  
for Defence, my hon. Friend the Member for West  
Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) was in Woolwich;  
and the Secretary of State was with the Prime Minister  
in Liverpool. I am not sure whether the Leader of the  
Opposition was on that day. We are putting a package  
of measures together to be given to all hon. Members,  
so that they can talk to their local authorities and so  
that next year Telford's council will join others around  
the country in paying tribute to our armed forces.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): The armed forces  
covenant is a covenant between those who serve on the  
frontline and the Government. Those serving on the  
frontline have over the past six years experienced a  
real-terms pay cut of about 10%, so does the Minister  
not agree that that bond of trust is wearing a little thin?

**Mr Ellwood:** The Secretary of State has already answered  
the question on the pay itself, but the hon. Lady is  
absolutely right in what she implies: we have to make  
sure that we look after our service personnel. We put  
them in danger and in harm's way, and we must look  
after them. Armed Forces Day is one opportunity for  
the nation to show its appreciation.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The armed forces  
covenant covers equal access to healthcare. While on  
the armed forces parliamentary scheme, I met many  
veterans and serving personnel who have issues relating  
to stigma and mental health. What more is being done  
about that?

**Mr Ellwood:** I am pleased to be launching the new  
mental health strategy at the end of the month. We are  
bringing together the “Five Eyes”—New Zealand,  
Australia, the United States, Canada and the United  
Kingdom—to share best practice on how best to look  
after our armed forces when they move, retire and  
become veterans.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): I am  
a proud patron of the veterans charity Forward Assist.  
Back in March, it was promised just under £200,000  
from the tampon tax fund to help its work with female  
veterans, but the money has yet to materialise. Will the  
Minister say why there has been a delay and when the  
money will be released?

**Mr Ellwood:** I hope the hon. Lady will understand  
that I am not armed with that information, but I would  
be more than delighted to meet her to discuss the  
matter. I pay tribute to her for the work she does to  
support that important charity.

Armed Forces: Life Satisfaction

1. **Jenny Chapman** (Darlington) (Lab): What steps  
   his Department is taking to improve service life satisfaction  
   rates in the Armed Forces. [900302]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Mr Tobias Ellwood):** The experience and morale of  
service personnel are central to defence. Both the  
Department and the new single services place the  
management of this as a high priority. As such, we have  
put in place a large number of programmes, namely the  
flexible engagement system—a Bill on which will come  
to the House shortly—the future accommodation model,  
the new joiners offer and the armed forces family strategy.

**Jenny Chapman:** Currently, forces families are given  
special assistance by local authorities when they leave  
the Army. Is the Minister aware that, upon divorce or  
separation, an Army spouse is instantly no longer classed  
as part of an Army family and receives no such support?  
Will he look into this and consider amending the advice  
given to local authorities?

**Mr Ellwood:** I am certainly happy to look into that,  
and I am grateful that the hon. Lady has taken the  
matter up. It is important that we get the package of  
measures right so that we can support our armed forces  
personnel and their families as they transition through  
their career.

**Will Quince** (Colchester) (Con): A key part of improving  
service life satisfaction is ensuring that soldiers can get  
their children into a good school that understands  
military life. Will the Minister join me in congratulating  
Montgomery Infant School and Nursery and Montgomery  
Junior School, which are celebrating having served the  
military community in Colchester for 50 years?

**Mr Ellwood:** I welcome my hon. Friend to his place.  
Those are two schools out of almost 500 around the  
country that are located near garrisons and that provide  
support for the children of armed forces personnel. It is  
important that that continues. The service pupil premium  
is important for making sure that we look after those  
pupils, particularly as they end up moving around because  
of their parents' careers.

**John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Would  
service life satisfaction rates be improved by job security?  
On that basis, will the Minister assure the House that  
the Army will be no smaller at the end of this Parliament  
than it is now?

**Mr Ellwood:** That is absolutely the intention. The  
hon. Gentleman is right to look at the life satisfaction  
survey, which is one reason behind some of the initiatives  
that I have mentioned, including the various reviews  
that are taking place.

Defence Spending

11. **Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): What plans the Government have to increase the  
defence budget in this Parliament. [900303]

15

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

16

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**Our defence budget for 2017-18 is £36 billion, and we  
are committed to increasing it by at least half a per cent  
above inflation every year of this Parliament. In addition,  
we are committed to continuing to meet the NATO  
guideline to spend at least 2% of our GDP on defence  
until 2022. Those two commitments will ensure that our  
armed forces can help to keep Britain safe.

**Michael Tomlinson:** The United Kingdom leads the  
way, with the biggest defence budget in Europe, but  
what more can be done to encourage other nations to  
play their part and increase their spending to protect  
our collective security?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Since the Wales summit in 2014,  
defence spending by our allies in Europe has been  
increasing. Three more countries now meet that 2% target  
and more than 20 are committed to meeting it by a  
particular date. We continue to press those allies that  
have not yet met or planned to meet the target to do so.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Secretary of State will know that his Department recently  
stated that the trained strength of our armed forces is  
down below 140,000. If we are to keep people in our  
armed services satisfied, can we go back to what they  
were proud of—the tradition of taking in a lot of  
trainees and being one of the best trainers in the world?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We are one of the best trainers in  
the world, and our armed forces training is highly  
respected the world over. Other countries are constantly  
telling me that they want more places at Cranwell,  
Sandhurst and Dartmouth; they also want our armed  
forces to go out and train, as we are doing in Ukraine  
and Nigeria; and we have the largest apprenticeship  
programme in the country.

Dreadnought Submarines

12. **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con):  
What progress is being made on implementing the  
Dreadnought submarine programme. [900304]

16. **Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con):  
What progress there has been on the programme to  
build four Dreadnought submarines. [900308]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Harriett Baldwin):** Thanks to the vote a year ago, the  
Dreadnought programme to replace the four Vanguard-  
classnuclear-armedsubmarinesisonschedule.Construction  
on Dreadnought, the first of her class, commenced as  
planned in October 2016 at the BAE Systems yard in  
Barrow-in-Furness.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** Will the handover from Vanguard  
to Dreadnought be seamless?

**Harriett Baldwin:** Certainly if I and the 80% of people  
who took part in the vote a year ago have anything to  
do with it, it will be. I gently draw the House's attention  
to the fact that both the shadow Defence Secretary and  
the Leader of the Opposition voted in the opposite  
Lobby on that day.

**Mr Speaker:** Perhaps the right hon. Member for New  
Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) would be good  
enough to circulate to all parliamentary colleagues his  
textbook on succinct questions from which they would  
greatly benefit.

**Mrs Latham:** The Dreadnought submarine programme  
is important to my constituents, many of whom work at  
the Rolls-Royce Raynesway facility which is building  
the pressurised water reactors that will go into those  
submarines. Rolls-Royce has been investing very heavily  
in the new facility to meet the demands of this programme.  
When will the Government make a decision?

**Harriett Baldwin:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right  
to highlight the fact that companies not just in Barrow-  
in-Furness but up and down this country are involved  
in carrying out highly skilled work in this incredibly  
elaborate programme. I had the pleasure of visiting  
Raynesway and her nearby constituency and I know  
how many people in Derby and in Derbyshire depend  
on that programme. I can assure her that we are making  
substantial investment in the site.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
We were looking forward to discussing this very issue  
with the Minister during the general election campaign.  
I do not know what happened to her; perhaps she can  
come up to see us next time. Will she put the Government's  
full support behind our campaign now to raise education  
standards in the Furness area where, for generations,  
school leavers have had below average English and  
maths results, which is simply not good enough if we  
are to remain on track for the Dreadnought programme?

**Harriett Baldwin:** The hon. Gentleman is very kind to  
invite me for another visit to his constituency. I shall  
look forward to it. He rightly raises the important issue  
of the skills that we need as a country for these highly  
skilled and important jobs. I know that the Under-Secretary  
of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member  
for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), will be very happy  
to meet him to discuss what we are doing as we ensure  
that we put in place that pipeline of skills.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): I welcome the investment in the Dreadnought-class  
submarines, which will bring investment to Devonport  
dockyard in my constituency. Does the Minister agree  
that we also need to deal with the legacy of current and  
previous submarines and accelerate the slow pace of the  
submarine dismantling programme?

**Harriett Baldwin:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman,  
who is the son of a submariner, on his arrival in this  
place. It is wonderful to have someone taking such a  
close interest in the matter. He will be aware that it is the  
subject of ongoing commercial negotiations. We will  
keep the House informed.

Defence Spending

13. **Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): What  
estimate he has made of the level of defence spending  
required over the course of this Parliament. [900305]

17

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

18

18. **Jo Churchill** (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): What  
estimate he has made of the level of defence spending  
required over the course of this Parliament. [900311]

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**The Government have committed to meeting the NATO  
guideline to spend at least 2% of our GDP on defence  
until the end of this Parliament, and to increase spending  
by at least half a per cent ahead of inflation every year  
of this Parliament.

**Paul Scully:** Is it not the case that we only need a  
growing defence budget if we are committed to leading  
in NATO, investing in our armed forces and giving  
them the equipment they need and maintaining our  
nuclear deterrent? Is it also not the case that this party is  
the only one that is committed to all three?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** My hon. Friend is spot on. We  
are leading by example in NATO. We are the second  
biggest defence spender in the alliance—one of only six  
members spending 2%—and we are committed to investing  
£178 billion in equipment between 2016 and 2026. Our  
growing defence budget means more ships, more planes,  
more armoured vehicles and more cutting-edge equipment  
for our forces.

**Jo Churchill:** Will the Secretary of State join me in  
welcoming the Apache helicopter package worth £48 million  
to secure high-skilled jobs at Wattisham airfield in my  
constituency, and does he agree that that will help our  
armed forces to keep us safe, and that it is all due to a  
growing defence budget?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes, I was very pleased to announce  
this £48 million contract earlier this year, which will  
support jobs in my hon. Friend's area and provide  
world-class Apache training for our personnel. The  
Apache is a vital part of the British Army's fighting  
force and this investment is only possible thanks to a  
rising defence budget.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): The UK was a central  
part of the European forces in Bosnia, Althea, and in  
the Mediterranean, Atalanta. Does this mean that the  
Government will be committing to remain part of such  
European forces in the future, after we have left the  
European Union?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** That will become clearer after we  
leave, but we play an important part in Sophia, Althea  
and Atalanta not just because of our membership of  
the European Union but because it is in our national  
interest to help to deal with migration, to curb piracy  
off the horn of Africa and to help to stabilise the  
western Balkans.

**Mr Speaker:** On this question, I call John Howell.

15. [900307] **John Howell** (Henley) (Con): The millions  
spent on technical innovation on bases around the  
UK is crucial, particularly on my own base of RAF  
Benson, where CAE is a big contributor. Does the  
Secretary of State agree with that and what will he do  
to continue it?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes, I do agree with that. That is  
why we have set aside a specific innovation fund to  
encourage more innovation in defence and to get more  
of our small and medium-sized businesses, of which I  
know there are a large number in and around my hon.  
Friend's constituency, to help us find these cutting-edge  
solutions.

**Defence Suppliers: Innovation**

14. **Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): What steps he  
is taking to encourage innovation by defence suppliers.  
[900306]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Harriett Baldwin):** With an equipment plan worth  
£178 billion and a rising defence budget, there are great  
opportunities for innovative suppliers. The £800 million  
innovation fund will provide the Ministry of Defence  
with the freedom to pursue innovative solutions in an  
open, competitive process.

**Nigel Mills:** Will the Minister ensure that there is  
greater risk appetite in which projects are selected for  
funding to ensure that our armed forces have the best  
technology available to them?

**Harriett Baldwin:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right  
to highlight this issue. It is one of the things that we  
weight when we consider awards through the innovation  
fund to ensure that the projects with the highest risks  
but the biggest potential pay-off are the ones that are  
invested in.

**Topical Questions**

T1. [900318] **Derek Thomas** (St Ives) (Con): If he will  
make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**It is an honour to be reappointed as Defence Secretary.  
Our party has a proud record of supporting our armed  
forces and providing the budget to ensure that they have  
the capabilities they need. Since the election, our new  
carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, has sailed, Daesh has  
been defeated in Mosul with further RAF strikes in  
Syria and Iraq, and we have signed up Sweden and  
Finland to join our joint expeditionary force, demonstrating  
that Britain continues to step up in the world.

**Derek Thomas:** On that note, as the MP with RNAS  
Culdrose in my constituency, may I ask the Secretary of  
State for an update on airpower capability and training  
for the new Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The Queen Elizabeth is designed  
to operate the F-35B Lightning II aircraft. One hundred  
and twenty British pilots and aircrew are training on the  
first 10 of these aircraft in the United States ahead of  
their arrival in the UK next year. The carrier will also  
operate Royal Navy Merlin helicopters, specifically those  
based in my hon. Friend's constituency at Royal Naval  
Air Station Culdrose.

**Nia Griffith** (Llanelli) (Lab): We welcome the fact  
that Iraqi forces, backed by the coalition air strikes,  
have managed to retake Mosul, with only a small section

19

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

20

of the city still under Daesh control. This has been a  
challenging and complex operation, and we pay tribute  
to the personnel who have played a part in it, including  
our forces working on Operation Shader. We know that  
the battle against Daesh and its evil ideology is far from  
over, so will the Secretary of State update the House on  
what further support our armed forces will be providing  
as Iraq's ground troops advance westwards towards Tal  
Afar?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** It is good to be able to agree with  
the hon. Lady about something today, and I join her in  
paying tribute to our services—the RAF, which has  
carried out more than 1,400 strikes in just under three  
years; the Army, which has helped to train more than  
50,000 Iraqi and peshmerga troops;, and the Royal  
Navy, which has helped to guard the American and  
French carriers when they have been striking from the  
Gulf. The military campaign is not over with the fall of  
Mosul. There remain other towns—Tal Afar, Hawija, in  
Nineveh province—and there are remnants of Daesh  
coalescing around the Middle Euphrates river valley, so  
there is still more work to be done, but there are  
4 million fewer people living under Daesh rule since this  
House gave us permission to engage in this campaign.

T2. [900319] **James Heappey** (Wells) (Con): Further to  
the Secretary of State's update on progress against  
Daesh, I know that he will be as concerned as I am that  
as we defeat Daesh militarily on the ground, its threat  
seems to be changing as it attacks in other ways in  
other places. Will he update the House on what his  
Department is doing to counter those emerging new  
threats?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** My hon. Friend is right that the  
military campaign up the Tigris and along the Euphrates  
is just part of the strategy. We need to continue disrupting  
Daesh's online propaganda. We need to target its senior  
leadership and undermine its finances. The military  
campaign has to be combined, and seen as part of a  
broader coalition campaign to undermine this evil  
organisation and make sure that it never comes back.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
Both the Defence and Foreign Secretaries seem to have  
suggested that UK forces may target others in Syria  
beyond the mandate that was given in this House in  
December 2015—namely, the Assad regime. Will the  
Secretary of State confirm that if he is to deviate from  
that mandate, it will only happen after a full debate and  
vote in this House?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I can confirm that our target in  
Syria is Daesh. Our strikes are in and around Raqqa  
and other Daesh areas, including Deir ez-Zor, that  
Daesh continues to hold. It is not our aim to collaborate  
with either the regime or indeed its principal sponsor,  
Russia.

T7. [900324] **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): The  
Royal Navy has rescued hundreds of migrants in the  
Mediterranean and taken them to Italy, but has the time  
now come to consider taking them to North Africa in  
order to remove the incentive for people to risk their lives  
and to prevent money being made by people traffickers?

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mark  
Lancaster):** As part of Operation Sophia, the Royal  
Navy and UK assets have saved more than 12,500 lives,  
destroyed more than 170 smuggling boats and apprehended  
23 suspected smugglers. We are the only country in  
Europe that has provided at least one ship at all times. It  
is UK Government policy to tackle migration at its  
source, and we are pursuing a comprehensive response  
including training coastguards, providing sustainable  
alternatives to unmanaged migration and disrupting  
criminal gangs.

T3. [900320] **Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge)  
(Lab): Given the delays in procuring the full order for  
Type 26 and Type 31 frigates, and given that HMS  
Ocean is to be paid off because of acute staffing shortages,  
just how does the Minister envisage that the Royal Navy  
will be capable of discharging its duties of protecting  
the UK at home and abroad?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Harriett Baldwin):** I would have hoped for a few more  
words of welcome for the announcement of the Type 26  
frigates, which will be ready for the out-of-service dates  
and replacement dates of the existing Type 23s. As the  
hon. Lady knows, HMS Ocean was always due to come  
out of service next year, and other amphibious capability  
will obviously be available.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): I know from my  
constituency casework that access to appropriate housing  
is often a big challenge for those leaving the armed  
forces. What steps are being taken to ensure that armed  
forces veterans are prioritised on waiting lists, and that  
the appropriate help and support is properly being  
provided?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Mr Tobias Ellwood):** We have touched on the importance  
of the veterans gateway programme, which we hope will  
provide a connection between the charities and those  
seeking that help. I also reiterate the importance of  
local authorities, and encourage all hon. Members to  
ask their local authorities what more they can do to  
provide the support our veterans need.

T4. [900321] **Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): I

declare an interest as a former serviceman who served  
in Afghanistan.

The Secretary of State will have seen the recent  
coverage in *The Sunday Times* relating to alleged incidents  
that took place in Afghanistan and the subsequent  
Royal Military Police inquiry. Will he tell the House  
who took the decision to shut down Operation Northmoor?  
Why was that decision taken, when was it taken and was  
the Prime Minister kept informed?

**Mr Speaker:** Well, it will have to be a brief answer or  
it may need to be in writing. There are a lot of other  
questions to cover.

**Mark Lancaster:** In answering, I have to declare the  
same interest, having served in Afghanistan.

Our armed forces are rightly held to the highest  
standards, and credible, serious allegations of criminal  
behaviour must be investigated. Op Northmoor has

21

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

22

discontinued more than 90% of the 675 allegations  
received because there was no evidence of criminal or  
disciplinary offence. To date, no case has been referred  
to the Service Prosecuting Authority, but investigations  
continue.

**Mr Speaker:** Single sentence questions are really what  
is required.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): Earlier, the hon. Member  
for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) referred to evidence  
that Lord Hague gave to the House of Lords EU  
External Affairs Sub-Committee about the European  
defence arrangements after Brexit. He said that the best  
proposal was a paper written by the former Chair of the  
Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. Has my right  
hon. Friend seen that paper or would he like to?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I have not actually seen that  
paper yet, but I am very happy to procure a copy and  
read it. I made the position clear about common foreign  
and defence policy. We participate in those missions  
and operations at the moment, and we continue to press  
for a partnership with the European Union that  
encompasses economic and security co-operation.

T5. [900322] **Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab):

Recently, I attended the Grimsby veterans breakfast,  
and I was told about the problems that former  
servicemen and women have in accessing local mental  
health services. What representations did the Defence  
Secretary make to the Health Secretary regarding the  
dropping of the promised new mental health Bill from  
the Queen's Speech?

**Mr Ellwood:** This goes into the new strategy that is  
being launched in a couple of weeks' time, and I would  
be delighted to learn more about what the hon. Lady  
learned at her meetings, but I can say that regular  
meetings take place between the Secretary of State and  
the Health Secretary.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): One of the major  
concerns of servicemen in Carterton, which surrounds  
Brize Norton in my constituency, is the quality of  
service housing. What steps is the Minister taking to  
provide high-quality housing for our service personnel?

**Mr Ellwood:** This relates to one of the key initiatives  
we are putting forward—the future accommodation  
model—and I would be delighted to write to my hon.  
Friend with more details.

T6. [900323] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire  
North) (SNP): At least 603 civilians have been killed by  
coalition air strikes in Iraq and Syria since the  
beginning of Operation Inherent Resolve, according to  
the coalition itself, but the UK has claimed responsibility  
for none of these incidents. Will the Secretary of State  
commit to greater scrutiny and transparency for civilian  
casualties caused by UK airstrikes in Iraq and Syria?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Let me emphasise to the hon.  
Gentleman that we carry out an assessment after each  
of the RAF strikes. We investigate any allegation that  
civilians may have been caught up in these strikes. So

far, we have not seen any evidence that civilians have  
been killed by an RAF strike, but, obviously, every  
single allegation is carefully investigated.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I hope the point about a sentence has  
been captured by colleagues—preferably a short one  
without all sorts of subordinate clauses.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Will the Defence  
Secretary join me in welcoming the new Combined  
Cadet Force at the Newark Academy and the Magnus  
school in Newark, and agree to continue the roll-out of  
cadet forces in this Parliament, particularly in schools  
that have suffered from poor educational performance  
in the past?

**Mr Ellwood:** Yes and yes.

**Mr Speaker:** Splendid.

T8. [900325] **Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab):  
Given that the Royal British Legion set out in the  
armed forces covenant annual report of last year its  
concerns about the mental health needs of veterans not  
being met as they should be, does the Secretary of State  
agree that we need a comprehensive approach to  
veterans' mental health, not just in the weeks after they  
leave the service but throughout their lives?

**Mr Ellwood:** We are providing a comprehensive approach.  
There is work that takes place, first, with those who are  
serving, to provide that umbrella of support, and then  
as they make their transition and, indeed, become veterans.  
We will be launching the new strategy in two weeks, and  
I look forward to making announcements to the House.

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): Will  
my hon. Friend confirm that the RAF will retain its  
existing surveillance capability—Sentinel—which proved  
so effective in Mali, and that the existing fleet will be  
maintained and continued?

**Harriett Baldwin:** I can confirm that. I had the pleasure  
of going to north Wales recently to extend the Sentinel  
contract to 2021.

T9. [900326] **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)  
(SNP): Will the Minister reverse the decision to shut  
down Operation Northmoor, given the recent report in  
*The Sunday Times* on possible criminal behaviour by  
an SAS unit in Afghanistan?

**Mark Lancaster:** It would be absolutely wrong for  
there to be ministerial interference in that operation. I  
am quite confident that Op Northmoor is appropriately  
resourced, both through personnel and finances, and I  
can only refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave  
a few moments ago.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Will the  
Government consider reinstating ring-fenced funding  
for the BBC Monitoring Service, given that its absence  
is leading to the closure of Caversham Park and a  
considerable reduction in the service's defensive potential?

23

Oral Answers

10 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

24

**Mark Lancaster:** I am more than happy to look at the  
matter for my right hon. Friend.

T10. [900327] **Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and  
Arran) (SNP): Given that the UK claims to support  
multilateral nuclear disarmament, will the Secretary of  
State tell the House why the UK boycotted the UN's  
nuclear ban treaty negotiations and how the UK  
Government will respond to the nuclear ban treaty?  
Can he understand the disappointment of so many  
of my constituents at the UK's boycott of these  
negotiations?

**Mr Speaker:** I think the hon. Lady is in pursuit of an  
essay, but, sadly, time allows only for a short answer.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Let me be very clear: we do not  
support this treaty. We do not think it should apply to  
the United Kingdom, and if it is voted on we will not  
accept it.

**Stephen Kinnock** (Aberavon) (Lab): What conversations  
has the Minister had with British steel producers to  
maximise the use of British steel in the new Type 26  
frigates, and what percentage of the steel that will be  
used to build those frigates will be British steel?

**Harriett Baldwin:** Again, I am glad that the hon.  
Gentleman welcomes the news on the Type 26 frigates.  
He will be aware that we publish on gov.uk the full  
pipeline in terms of our steel requirements. We do  
encourage our prime contractors to see where they can  
use British steel, and I am sure that in due course he will  
be pleased to see progress.

25

10 JULY 2017

G20

26

G20

3.35 pm

**ThePrimeMinister(MrsTheresaMay):**Withpermission,  
Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the  
G20 in Hamburg.

At this summit we showed how a global Britain can  
play a key role in shaping international responses to  
some of the biggest challenges of our time. On terrorism,  
trade, climate change, international development, migration,  
modern slavery and women's economic empowerment,  
we made leading contributions on issues that critically  
affect our national interest but which can be addressed  
only by working together with our international partners.

First, on terrorism, as we have seen with the horrific  
attacks in Manchester and London, the nature of the  
threat we face is evolving, and our response must evolve  
to meet it. The UK is leading the way. At the G7, and  
subsequently through a detailed action plan with President  
Macron, I called for industry to take responsibility  
more to rapidly detect and report extremist content  
online—and industry has now announced the launch of  
a global forum to do just that. At this summit we set the  
agenda again, calling on our G20 partners to squeeze  
the lifeblood out of terrorist networks by making the  
global financial system an entirely hostile environment  
for terrorists—and we secured agreements on all our  
proposals.

We agreed to work together to ensure there are no  
safe spaces for terrorist financing by increasing capacity-  
building and raising standards worldwide, especially in  
terrorist finance hotspots. We agreed to bring industry  
and law enforcement together to develop new tools and  
technologies better to identify suspicious small flows of  
money being used to support low cost terrorist attacks,  
such as those we have seen in the UK. Just as Interior  
Ministers are following up on the online agenda we set  
at the G7, so Finance Ministers will follow through on  
these G20 commitments to cut off the funding that  
fuels the terrorist threat we face.

I also called for the G20 to come together better to  
manage the risk posed by foreign fighters as they disperse  
from the battlefield in Syria and Iraq, and we agreed we  
would work to improve international information-sharing  
on the movement of individuals known to have travelled  
to and from Daesh territory. By working together in  
these ways we can defeat this terrorist threat and ensure  
that our way of life will always prevail.

Turning to the global economy, we are seeing encouraging  
signs of recovery with the IMF forecasting that global  
GDP will rise by 3.5%. But many, both here in the UK  
and across the G20, are simply not sharing in the  
benefits of that growth. So we need to build a global  
economy that works for everyone by ensuring that trade  
is not just free but, crucially, fair for all. That means fair  
for all people here in the UK, which is why we are  
forging a modern industrial strategy that will help to  
bring the benefits of trade to every part of our country.  
It means fair terms of trade for the poorest countries,  
which is why we will protect their trade preferences as  
we leave the EU, and in time explore options to improve  
their trade access; and it means strengthening the  
international rules that make trade fair between countries.  
So at this summit I argued that we must reform the  
international trading system, especially the World Trade

Organisation given its central role, so that it keeps pace  
with developments in key sectors like digital and services,  
and so it is better able to resolve disputes.

Some countries are not playing by the rules. They are  
not behaving responsibly and are creating risks to the  
global trading system. Nowhere is this clearer than in  
relation to the dumping of steel on global markets. The  
urgent need to act to remove excess capacity was recognised  
last year at the G20, but not enough has been done  
since. If we are to avoid unilateral action by nations  
seeking to protect themselves from unfairly priced steel,  
we need immediate collective action, so we agreed that  
the global forum established last year needs to be more  
effective and the pace of its work must quicken. In  
order to ensure its work gets the necessary attention  
and there is senior accountability, I have pressed for  
relevant Ministers from around the world to meet in  
this forum. The UK will play a leading role in championing  
all those reforms so that all citizens can share in the  
benefits of global growth.

As we leave the European Union, we will negotiate a  
new, comprehensive, bold and ambitious free trade  
agreement with the EU, but we will also seize the  
exciting opportunities to strike deals with old friends  
and new partners. At this summit, I held a number of  
meetings with other world leaders, all of whom made  
clear their strong desire to forge ambitious new bilateral  
trading relationships with the UK after Brexit. This  
included America, Japan, China and India. This morning,  
I welcomed Australian Prime Minister Turnbull to Downing  
Street, where he also reiterated his desire for a bold new  
trading relationship. All those discussions are a clear  
and powerful vote of confidence in British goods, British  
services, the British economy and the British people,  
and I look forward to building on them in the months  
ahead.

On climate change, the UK reaffirmed our commitment  
to the Paris agreement, which is vital if we are to take  
responsibility for the world we pass on to our children  
and grandchildren. There is not a choice between  
decarbonisation and economic growth, as the UK's  
own experience shows. We have reduced our emissions  
by around 40% over the last 16 years but grown our  
GDP by almost two thirds. So I, and my counterparts at  
the G20, are dismayed at America's withdrawal from  
this agreement. I spoke personally to President Trump  
to encourage him to rejoin the Paris agreement, and I  
continue to hope that that is exactly what he will do.

On international development, we reaffirmed our  
commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income on  
development assistance, and we set out plans for a new  
long-term approach to reduce Africa's reliance on aid.  
That includes focusing on supporting African aspirations  
for trade and growth, creating millions of new jobs and  
harnessing the power of capital markets to generate  
trillions of new investment. We welcomed Germany's  
new compact with Africa, which reflects those principles.

On migration, I expressed the UK's continued support  
for the scale of the challenge facing Italy, and agreed with  
Prime Minister Gentiloni that a UK expert delegation  
from the Home Office and the Department for International  
Development will travel out to Italy to see how we can  
help further. That is yet further evidence that, while we are  
leaving the European Union, as a global Britain we will  
continue to work closely with all our European partners.

27

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

28

*[The Prime Minister]*

The G20 also agreed to use the upcoming negotiations  
on the UN global compacts to seek the comprehensive  
approach that the UK has been arguing for. That includes  
ensuring that refugees claim asylum in the first safe  
country they reach; improving the way we distinguish  
between refugees and economic migrants; and developing  
a better overall approach to managing economic migration.  
It also includes providing humanitarian and development  
assistance to refugees in their home region. At this  
summit, the UK committed £55 million to support the  
Government of Tanzania in managing their refugee and  
migrant populations and to support the further integration  
of new naturalised Burundian refugees.

Turning to modern slavery, it is hard to comprehend  
that in today's world innocent and vulnerable men,  
women and children are being enslaved, forced into  
hard labour, raped, beaten and passed from abuser to  
abuser for profit. We cannot and will not ignore this  
dark and barbaric trade in human beings that is simply  
horrifying in its inhumanity. That is why I put this issue  
on the G20 agenda at my first summit a year ago, and at  
this summit I pushed for a global and co-ordinated  
approach to the complex business supply chains that  
can feed the demand for forced labour and child labour.

Our ground-breaking UK Modern Slavery Act 2015  
requires companies to examine all aspects of their  
businesses, including their supply chains, and to publish  
their results. I called on my G20 partners to follow  
Britain's lead. I welcomed Germany's proposed vision  
zero fund, to which the UK is contributing, as an  
important part of helping to ensure the health and  
safety of workers in these global supply chains.

Finally, we agreed to create better job opportunities  
for women, to remove the legal barriers and end the  
discrimination and gender-based violence that restrict  
opportunities both at home and abroad. As part of this,  
the UK is contributing to the women entrepreneurs  
finance initiative, launched by the World Bank, which  
will provide more than $1 billion to support women in  
developing countries to start and grow businesses. This  
is not just morally right; it is economically essential.  
The UK will continue to play a leading role in driving  
forward women's economic empowerment across the  
world.

Of course, we did not agree on everything at the  
summit, in particular on climate change. But when we  
have such disagreements, it is all the more important  
that we come together in forums such as the G20 to try  
to resolve them. As a global Britain, we will continue to  
work at bridging differences between nations and forging  
global responses to issues that are fundamental to our  
prosperity and security, and to that of our allies around  
the world. That is what we did at the summit, and that is  
what the Government will continue to do. I commend  
this statement to the House.

3.45 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): I thank the  
Prime Minister for the advance copy of this statement. I  
am really surprised that she had much to contribute at  
the G20, given that there was barely a mention of  
international policy in her party's election manifesto—or,  
indeed, of any policy, so much so that the Government  
are apparently now asking other parties for their policy

ideas. If the Prime Minister would like it, I am very  
happy to furnish her with a copy of our election manifesto,  
or better still an early election in order that the people  
of this country can decide.

Let us face it: the Government have run out of steam,  
at a pivotal moment for our country and the world.  
Amid the uncertainty of Brexit, conflict in the Gulf  
states, nuclear sabre-rattling over North Korea, refugees  
continuing to flee war and destruction, ongoing pandemics  
and cross-border terrorism, poverty, inequality and the  
impact of climate change are the core global challenges  
of our time. Just when we need strong government, we  
have weakness from this Government.

The US President attempts to pull the plug on the  
Paris climate change deal, and that gets only a belated  
informal mention in a brief meeting with him; there was  
no opportunity to sign a joint letter from European  
leaders at the time he made the announcement. The  
UK's trade deficit is growing, at a time when we are  
negotiating our exit from the European Union. The  
UK-backed Saudi war in Yemen continues to kill, displace  
and injure thousands, and there have been 300,000 cases  
of cholera—this is a man-made catastrophe. Worse, the  
Government continue to sell arms to Saudi Arabia, one  
of the most repressive and brutal regimes, which finances  
terrorism and is breaching humanitarian law. The Court  
may have ruled that the Government acted legally, but  
they are certainly not acting ethically.

We welcome the ceasefire agreed between the US and  
Russia in south-west Syria. It is good news. Did the  
Prime Minister play any role in those negotiations? Will  
she commit to working with them to expand the ceasefire  
to the rest of that poor, benighted country?

The US President's attempt to pull out of the Paris  
climate change deal is both reckless and very dangerous.  
The commitments made in Paris are a vital move to  
stop the world reaching the point of no return on  
climate change. Other G20 leaders have been unequivocal  
with the US President, but not our Prime Minister;  
apparently, she did not raise the issue in her bilateral  
meeting but later raised it informally. I do not quite  
know what that means, but perhaps the Prime Minister  
can tell us exactly what the nature of that meeting was.  
What a complete neglect of her duty both to our people  
and—equally importantly—to our planet.

We need a leader who is prepared to speak out and  
talk up values of international co-operation, human  
rights, social justice and respect for international law.  
The Prime Minister now needs to listen. Will she condemn  
attempts to undermine global co-operation on climate  
change? Will she take meaningful action against our  
country's role in global tax avoidance, which starves  
many developing countries of funding for sustainable  
growth and which is sucking investment out of our  
public services?

Will the Prime Minister offer European Union nationals  
in Britain the same rights as they have now? What  
proposals does she have, and what discussions has she  
had, on Britain's membership of Euratom? Will she halt  
the immoral arms sales to Saudi Arabia, as Germany  
has done, and back Germany's call to end the bombing  
in Yemen?

We have heard the Prime Minister talk about “safe  
spaces” for terrorist finance, so why have her Government  
sat on the report on foreign funding of extremism and

29

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

30

radicalisation in the UK? When will that report be  
released? What new regulations is the UK bringing  
forward for UK companies and banks as part of her  
new global accord on terrorist financing?

Keeping Britain global is one of our country's most  
urgent tasks, but the truth is this country needs a new  
approach to foreign policy and global co-operation.  
The Conservative Government, in hock to vested interests,  
simply cannot deliver. Responding to the grotesque  
levels of inequality within countries and between them  
is important to the security and sustainability of our  
world. In a joint report published in April, the World  
Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation  
recognised what they referred to as the

“long-lasting displacements as well as large earnings losses”  
of workers, and that the negative experience of globalisation  
has informed the public's rejection of the established  
political order. The Prime Minister talks of the dumping  
of steel on global markets, but why did her Government  
fail to take the action that other European nations took  
at the most acute time when our steel industry was  
suffering?

This Government are the architect of failed austerity  
policies, and now threaten to use Brexit to turn Britain  
into a low wage, deregulated tax haven on the shores of  
Europe—a narrow and hopeless vision of the potential  
of this country that would serve only an elite few, and  
one that would ruin industry, destroy innovation and  
hit people's living standards.

Finally, the US President said a US-UK trade deal  
will happen quickly. Can the Prime Minister give any  
detail or timetable or any of the terms of this  
agreement—on environmental protections, workers' rights,  
consumer rights, product safety or any of the issues that  
so concern so many people? The Prime Minister has  
lost her mandate at home, and now she is losing Britain  
her influence abroad.

**The Prime Minister:** On the issue of terrorist financing,  
I say to the right hon. Gentleman that it is in fact the  
United Kingdom that has not only been developing  
approaches within the UK, working with our financial  
sector, but is taking this internationally and, as I have  
said, has raised this at the G20 and has agreement from  
countries sitting around the G20 table that we are going  
to take this forward together. I think what was important  
was that we had a separate communique on counter-  
terrorism, which specifically identifies issues such as  
working with the financial sector to identify suspicious  
small flows of funding. This is what the UK has led on,  
it was the UK's proposal and it was in the communique  
of the G20.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about global tax  
avoidance. It is the UK that has led on the issues of  
global tax avoidance. Global tax avoidance is on the  
agenda of these international meetings only because my  
predecessor, the right hon. David Cameron, put it there.  
It is the UK that has been leading on that.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about trade deals. I  
am very happy to tell him that we are already working  
with the Americans on what a trade deal might look  
like. We already have a working group with the Australians,  
and we have a working group with India as well. We are  
out there. He says that what Britain needs is somebody

actually standing up and speaking about these things;  
what we need is somebody doing these things, and that  
is exactly what we are doing.

On the issue of climate change, this country has a  
proud record on climate change. We secured the first  
truly global, legally binding agreement on climate change  
in the Paris agreement. We are the third best country in  
the world for tackling climate change. We were at the  
leading edge in putting through our own legislation in  
relation to emissions, and this country will continue to  
lead on this issue.

The right hon. Gentleman refers to the question of  
the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia. I welcome the High  
Court judgment today—my right hon. Friend the Defence  
Secretary will make a statement on this later this  
afternoon—but I think it shows that we in this country  
do indeed operate one of the most robust export control  
regimes in the world.

The right hon. Gentleman started off by talking  
about the issue of the Government's agenda. This  
Government have an ambitious agenda to change this  
country. There are many issues—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Mr Ashworth, you are a cheeky  
and rather over-excitable whippersnapper. Calm yourself  
and, as I say, take some sort of soothing medicament.  
That is a repeated refrain of mine, but with good  
reason.

**The Prime Minister:** There are many issues on which,  
I would hope, we will be able to achieve consensus  
across this House: issues such as ensuring that our  
police and security agencies have the powers they need  
to deal with the terrorist threat we face; issues such as  
responding to the Matthew Taylor report, which I  
commissioned to ensure that, in the new gig economy,  
as we see the world of work changing, workers have  
their rights protected.

We talked about women's empowerment at the  
G20 summit. One issue that I have been concerned  
about recently is the fact that many female candidates  
during the general election found themselves in receipt  
of bullying and harassment. I would have hoped that,  
as has been said by the right hon. Member for Normanton,  
Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), every leader  
of a political party in this House would stand up and  
condemn such action. It is time that the Leader of the  
Opposition did so.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I congratulate  
the Prime Minister on her many successes at a productive  
summit, particularly on the trade front. Will she confirm  
that Ministers are working not just on trade deals with  
those countries we do not have one with at the moment  
but will have when we are outside the EU, but on  
making sure that we transfer the EU ones to the UK on  
exit?

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to give that confirmation  
to my right hon. Friend. We are working on trade in  
three areas. Obviously, one area is looking ahead to the  
trade agreements we can have with those countries  
we do not currently have them with as a member of  
the European Union. The second is ensuring that,  
where there are trade agreements with the EU, we  
are able to roll those forward as we leave the EU.

31

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

32

*[The Prime Minister]*

The third area is working with countries such as India  
and Australia to discuss what changes we can make  
now, before we leave the European Union, to improve  
our trade relationship.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): The  
G20 summit was an eye-opening event: the UK is now  
floundering around on the global stage, desperately  
trying to win friends. A disastrous and unpredictable  
alliance was formed with the American President on  
trade. Goodness knows what a trade deal with America  
now would mean for our public services, for food  
quality and for workers' rights. Indeed, talk about a  
UK-US trade deal was dealt a blow by the Prime  
Minister's own Justice Secretary, who just hours after  
the summit said:

“It wouldn't be enough on its own”.

The Prime Minister must come to her senses. A  
United Kingdom outside the single market would be  
ruinous. Our EU friends and partners are moving on  
without us, this year alone finalising trade deals with  
Japan and Canada, while the UK readily turns in on  
itself. Today's Scottish Chambers of Commerce survey  
shows that 61% of Scottish businesses feel that the UK  
should remain in both the single market and the customs  
union. It is quite scandalous that the Prime Minister  
turns a blind eye to the economy in favour of her  
Eurosceptic colleagues' reckless rhetoric.

I welcome the progress made at the G20 summit. I  
especiallypaytributetotheworkoftheGermanChancellor,  
who hosted and delivered a challenging agenda on  
global issues. The communique is clear that we must  
redouble our efforts in delivering the Paris agreement,  
calling it “irreversible”. I ask the Prime Minister to set  
out the next steps in delivering the Paris agreement  
outcomes in the UK.

The communique also delivers the G20 Africa  
Partnership to boost growth and jobs across Africa,  
including an initiative on rural employment that will  
create 1.1 million new jobs by 2022. Will the Prime  
Minister explain the UK's role in delivering the initiative  
and confirm whether that role will continue after the  
UK exits the EU?

The agreement to take further action to achieve gender  
equality is undoubtedly universally welcomed in this  
House. The conclusions also push the G20 to  
“take immediate and effective measures to eliminate child labour  
by 2025, forced labour, human trafficking and all forms of modern  
slavery.”

That is a promising step indeed.

However, the Prime Minister went to Hamburg with  
an opening core message: she wanted the G20 to tackle  
terrorism. In particular, she wanted the G20 to tackle  
terrorist financing—what staggering hypocrisy! The  
Prime Minister who is sitting on a report commissioned  
by her predecessor, denying us all the truth about terrorist  
financing in the UK, had the brass neck to call on the  
G20 to do more. What an absolute outrage. Will she  
publish the Home Office extremism analysis report on  
terror funding in the UK and will she set up a  
public inquiry into questions around the funding of  
extremism?

**The Prime Minister** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sure that the hon. Member  
for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) was not  
making a personal accusation against the Prime Minister.  
*[Interruption.]* Order. I know what I am doing in these  
matters.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman was not making a  
personal accusation of hypocrisy against the Prime  
Minister. I cannot believe that he would knowingly do  
so, because it is palpably disorderly, and he ought to be  
awareof that.If heisnotawareof that,itistimethathe  
was, but I think he ought to spring to his feet and clarify  
the position.

**Ian Blackford:** Indeed, I am happy to clarify. It is the  
hypocrisy—

**Mr Speaker:** On a point of explanation:mysensewas  
that there was an element of an accusation. Withdraw.

**Ian Blackford:** I will withdraw the allegation against  
the Prime Minister. It is against the—

**Mr Speaker:** No. I do not want to hear anything  
further. The Prime Minister.

**The Prime Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The hon. Gentleman raised a number of issues. He  
asked about trade deals. As I said in my statement, we  
have indeed started discussions with a number of  
countries—yes, the United States, but also Japan, China  
and India—and I was able to speak to representatives of  
a number of other countries at the G20 about the  
possibility of future trade deals.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the compact with  
Africa. That is not a European Union initiative. It has  
been led by Chancellor Merkel under the G20, and,  
indeed, the United Kingdom is playing its role. The  
principles that underpin the compact are principles that  
we have been using in the assistance that we have  
already been giving in development aid to a variety of  
countries in Africa. We already have a compact with  
Ethiopia, which the United Kingdom has put forward  
and which will create 100,000 jobs, including jobs for  
refugees living in Ethiopia. So we have already shown a  
commitment to these issues by what we are actually out  
doing.

Thehon. Gentleman talked about terrorist financing.  
Of course we discussed ensuring that we look across the  
board at all aspects of the issue, which means that, as  
we look at the changing nature of terrorism, we look  
not just at large-scale financing but at the small sums  
that are harder to trace—harder to identify—but that  
could underpin attacks that take place. The communique  
clearly put a focus on that new initiative.

It is important to eradicate modern slavery, which the  
hon. Gentleman also talked about. That was in the  
G20 agenda because I put it there, because modern  
slavery is an issue that this Government take very  
seriously. We introduced the Modern Slavery Act 2015,  
the first piece of legislation of its kind in the world, and  
we are working with others to ensure that we eradicate  
modern slavery.

I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that his portrayal  
of the UK's position at the G20 was simply wrong, but  
then, he was not there and I was.

33

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

34

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. If I am to accommodate the  
extensive interest of colleagues in this matter, there will  
be an imperative for great brevity—to be, I hope,  
spectacularly exemplified now by Anna Soubry.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): That is very kind of  
you, Mr Speaker, but I did not actually have a question.  
*[Laughter.]*

**Mr Speaker:** The answer is that the right hon. Lady—  
*[Interruption.]* Order. I did not imagine it in my sleep.  
The right hon. Lady was standing. If she ceased to do  
so, I was not conscious of the fact; but she has leapt to  
her feet with alacrity, and the House is in a state of  
eager anticipation and bated breath.

**Anna Soubry:** I always take the opportunity to say  
something. *[Laughter.]*

I wonder whether my right hon. Friend could help us  
with the Modern Slavery Act. As she rightly said, we  
have led the world with that legislation, and many of us  
are hugely proud of the work that she did when she was  
Home Secretary. Is she finding that, throughout the  
world, there is now a desire for other countries to follow  
where she and this country have led?

**The Prime Minister:** I am very pleased to be able to  
say to my right hon. Friend that that is indeed the case.  
We are seeing a much greater awareness of the issue  
throughout the world, and a much greater willingness  
on the part of Governments to look at it. Governments  
are looking at the human trafficking aspect across  
borders, but as we know here in the UK, it is also  
important to look at what happens in-country—what  
happens to the citizens of one's own country—and that  
is exactly what we are doing.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I am certain that the right hon. Member  
for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) will be as brief as his  
surname.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Thank you very  
much, Mr Speaker.

The G20 discussed energy security. The Prime Minister  
will no doubt be aware of growing anxiety on both sides  
of the House about her proposal to withdraw the UK  
from the Euratom treaty, despite concern about the  
implications for the movement of scientists, nuclear  
materials and life-saving radiotherapies. Can she explain  
what the UK nuclear industry will gain from such a  
policy?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sure the right hon. Gentleman  
will be aware from his chairing of the Select Committee  
that membership of Euratom is inextricably linked with  
membership of the European Union. As was signalled  
in the Queen's Speech with reference to a future Bill on  
this issue, we want to ensure that we can maintain those  
relationships—that co-operation with Euratom which  
enables the exchange of scientists and material. Countries  
throughout the world that are not members of the EU

have that relationship with Euratom, but we need to put  
that Bill in place, and I look forward to the right hon.  
Gentleman's support for it.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
Does my right hon. Friend agree that free trade will be  
one of the great Brexit dividends, and that it will  
provide cheaper food, clothing and footwear, to the  
greatest benefit of the poorest in our society?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend that  
it is free trade that enables us to grow economies,  
increase prosperity and provide jobs, and there will be  
benefits from the trade agreements that we want to  
negotiate throughout the world. But we also need as a  
country to defend the concept of free trade because,  
sadly, it is under too much attack from protectionists  
around the world.

**Jo Swinson** (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): When  
journalists and activists such as Anna Politkovskaya  
and Natalia Estemirova have been murdered in Putin's  
Russia, does the Prime Minister share my anger at the  
chilling sight of Presidents Trump and Putin joking  
about the inconvenience of a free press, and will she  
commit to raising the importance of the independence  
of the media to both leaders when she next meets them?

**The Prime Minister:** We defend a free press. We think  
a free press is an essential underpinning of our democracy  
here, and we want to defend a free press around the  
world. I can assure the hon. Lady that we do regularly  
raise this issue with the Russian President and at all  
levels in Russian authorities.

**Sir Hugo Swire** (East Devon) (Con): I also pay tribute  
to my right hon. Friend for all the extraordinary work  
she has done on the issue of human trafficking and  
slavery, and commend her for raising that matter at the  
G20. However, with the world on the move, there are,  
unfortunately, opportunities for more, rather than less,  
of that. What can we do between the G20s to ensure  
that other countries take the issue as seriously as the  
UK does? We have set the bar on this and we need to  
raise others to it.

**The Prime Minister:** That is absolutely right, and we  
are taking action across a number of areas. As I said,  
the specific area we focused on at the G20 was the  
business supply chains, but one of the key ways of  
ensuring we can act against human trafficking and  
modern slavery is through the co-operation of the law  
enforcement agencies in the UK with others around the  
world. That is exactly what we are encouraging and  
what is happening—and, I am pleased to say, with some  
success.

**Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): A year ago, the  
then Financial Secretary, the right hon. Member for  
South West Hertfordshire (Mr Gauke), told the House  
that the Government supported a multilateral deal on  
public country-by-country reporting. He said that  
“if we have not made progress by this time next year on reaching a  
multilateral agreement, we will need to look carefully at the issue  
once again.”—[*Official Report*, 28 June 2016; Vol. 612, c. 160.]  
A year on, may I ask the Prime Minister to confirm  
what progress has been made, and what discussions she

35

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

36

*[Caroline Flint]*

has had with G20 members to ensure that we can tackle  
corporate tax avoidance through open, public country-  
by-country reporting?

**The Prime Minister:** We regularly raise that issue, and  
we are disappointed at the lack of progress on it. We  
will continue to press on it, but of course if we are going  
to get that multilateral agreement, others have to agree  
to the concept as well. We will continue to press on the  
issue, however. It is on the agenda because the UK has  
been putting it there, and we will continue to do so.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): On  
the new love-fest with Members on the Opposition  
Benches, given the record of the Leader of the Opposition  
on the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, does  
the Prime Minister possess a very long spoon?

**The Prime Minister:** I can say to my right hon. Friend  
that as Home Secretary I welcomed the co-operation  
which I had from the Labour Benches—not from the  
right hon. Gentleman who is currently Leader of the  
Opposition, but from others on his Benches, who have  
seen the need to ensure that our agencies have appropriate  
powers to deal with the terrorist threat that we face—and  
I look forward to Labour MPs, and indeed others on  
the Opposition Benches in this House, supporting those  
counter-terrorism measures when we bring them forward.

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op):  
The G20 communique includes important references to  
investment in global education, including the Global  
Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait.  
The UK has a proud record of leading on global health.  
Will the Prime Minister join Argentina during its  
forthcoming G20 presidency to ensure that investment  
in global education is given the priority it deserves?

**The Prime Minister:** Indeed, this is not just about  
looking ahead to the agenda for the next G20 meeting.  
It is also about what the United Kingdom has been  
doing practically, through our international development  
budget. For example, a significant number of girls, in  
particular, around the world are now being educated as  
a result of our input. We think that the global education  
agenda is very important.

**Colin Clark** (Gordon) (Con): As the Prime Minister  
said in her statement, we are leaving the European  
Union but we are not leaving Europe. May I welcome  
her announcement that we will continue to work with  
our European friends and allies to develop a better  
overall approach to managing economic migration?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. Again, this is an issue that the UK has been  
leading on, and other countries are increasingly recognising  
the importance of what we have been saying about  
differentiating between refugees and economic migrants.  
We will continue to work on this not just in the G20 but  
in the United Nations work that started last year and  
will be progressing towards the end of this year on the  
compact for migration and refugees across the world.

**Mary Creagh** (Wakefield) (Lab): We know that US  
intelligence services leaked sensitive UK intelligence in  
the hours following the attack on the Ariana Grande  
concert in Manchester. This weekend, according to a  
tweet from President Trump, he and President Putin  
were discussing forming

“an impenetrable Cyber Security unit so that election hacking...will  
be guarded and safe”.

Can the Prime Minister guarantee that UK intelligence  
assets on cyber-warfare will not be compromised, or  
shared in any way as long as there is a risk of this sort of  
bizarre and dangerous alliance with the Russians?

**The Prime Minister:** We take the issue of intelligence  
sharing very seriously. It is important that we are able to  
share intelligence with our allies in the United States  
and with other allies around the world, but what matters  
is that we are able to do that on the basis of confidence  
that that intelligence will be treated appropriately. I can  
assure the hon. Lady that we take the whole issue of  
cyber-security extremely seriously. That is why we have  
set up the new National Cyber Security Centre. We  
recognise and understand the threat that Russia poses  
in that area.

**Craig Mackinlay** (South Thanet) (Con): We heard  
positive words from the President of the United States  
at the G20 summit—and more this morning from the  
Prime Minister of Australia—on the opportunities for  
rapidandcomprehensivetradedealsbetweentheircountries  
and the UK. Does my right hon. Friend agree that new  
trade deals with old friends and new, which will be  
realisable only outside the customs union, will add to  
the prosperity of a new, global Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. We have been very clear that we want to undertake,  
sign up to and activate new trade deals with old friends  
and new allies alike. That, of course, means not being  
part of the customs union, which would prevent us  
from doing so. It is important that we are able to  
negotiate a trade agreement with the EU and trade  
agreements around the rest of the world.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): May I press the  
Prime Minister on the issue of migration and displacement,  
which affects 65 million people worldwide? She will  
know that, since 1 January, 82,800 people have risked  
their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean, and that  
2,000 have died. The G20 leaders run 84% of the  
economy of the world. Apart from the £55 million that  
is going to Tanzania, what other resources are being  
given to deal with this catastrophic problem?

**The Prime Minister:** The resources being given to this  
issuearesignificantandvaried.FromtheUnitedKingdom's  
point of view, we have been doing work through our  
development aid budget, particularly in a number of  
countries in Africa. I referred earlier to the compact  
that we have with Ethiopia, which is providing jobs in  
that country for refugees and others. We see it as  
important to ensure that there are economic opportunities  
in the countries of origin where there is migration, so  
that people do not feel the need to make that dangerous  
journey. As I announced at the last EU Council meeting,  
we are giving extra funding—I think £75 million—to  
work with Libya and Italy to ensure that there are  
humane conditions so that people can be returned to  
countries in Africa. We have also increased the ability of

37

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

38

the Libyan coastguard to ensure that it can properly  
intercept those boats that could pose a risk to people's  
lives if they were to try to make it across the Mediterranean.  
This is multi-faceted, but the United Kingdom is involved  
in every aspect of it.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The Leader of  
the Opposition has spent his entire life opposing trade  
deals with countries such as Mexico and India. The  
Prime Minister's success at the G20 meeting means that  
we can look both east and west when securing trade  
deals. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should  
recognise and be proud of the global confidence in  
British services, British goods and the British economy?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. The fact that several leaders—not only those  
whom I have mentioned, but others as well—have expressed  
their interest in trade deals with the United Kingdom is  
a vote of confidence in the British people.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I would  
be really interested to know when the Prime Minister  
expects to sign trade deals with Australia and India,  
how much she expects those deals to be worth, and how  
much extra immigration she intends to accept as part of  
those deals.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady may know that  
there is a limit to what we can put in place while we are  
still a member of the European Union, but that does  
not mean that we cannot discuss what a future trade  
agreement might be or how we can improve trade  
relations now. We can do just that in certain areas that  
are not covered by EU competences, and those are the  
discussions that we are having.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): Behind some of the  
rhetoric coming from the other side of the House, there  
actually seems to be a consensus that a UK-US free  
trade deal would be a good and necessary thing when  
we leave the European Union. Does the Prime Minister  
welcome, like me, the clear support of the American  
Administration, as expressed at the G20 meeting? The  
other important decision makers in this are those in the  
American Congress. Following her successful visit to  
Philadelphia with the Republican caucus, will she allow  
the excellent congressional relations office in our  
Washington embassy to help Members of Parliament  
make the case for a trade deal to our congressional  
colleagues?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right about the role that Congress will play, and he  
raises an interesting idea. I did have discussions with  
members of Congress when I was in Philadelphia, and  
my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International  
Trade has also been having discussions with members  
of Congress recently. We will consider my hon. Friend's  
proposal, but he is right that we will be working with  
Congress and the American Administration on this.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): The Prime Minister  
says that she wants help in building consensus for  
sensible policies. There are majorities in this House to  
stay in Euratom and in the European Medicines Agency,  
so why does she not do that?

**The Prime Minister:** As I referred to in answer to the  
right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn),  
membership of Euratom is inextricably linked with  
membership of the European Union. As we leave the  
European Union, we will be leaving Euratom, but we  
will be looking to put in place a similar relationship  
with Euratom, just as other countries around the world  
that are not members of the EU have access to the  
movement of scientists and materials and to Euratom's  
standards. We recognise the importance of this matter,  
which is why a Bill on this subject was in the Queen's  
Speech.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): As my right  
hon. Friend is now open to ideas from a man who tried  
to remove her from office, I wonder whether she will be  
prepared to take an idea from a friend who stood on a  
platform of keeping her in office and who wants her to  
stay in office—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Rhondda  
(Chris Bryant) should calm himself. I want to hear what  
the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh)  
has to say.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** How about this idea: we have  
warm words about helping Italy on migration, but as  
long as it is forced to take all the refugees, more and  
more will obviously come. Will my right hon. Friend  
work with our allies to try to establish safe havens in  
Libya, so that people can be returned safely? That is a  
Conservative idea, not a useless socialist one.

**The Prime Minister:** Not only is the concept of being  
able to return people to Libya a good one, but it is one  
that we are already working on. It is one of the issues  
that we will be discussing with the Italians and others in  
relation to the extra humanitarian aid that we are  
making available. We have also offered the Italians  
support and help with returns to Nigeria, because a  
significant number of those who reach Italy come from  
Nigeria, where the United Kingdom is already running  
arrangements to provide the sort of area in which  
people are able to stay.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): On Syria and  
the loss of civilian life, specifically as it relates to US  
operations against Daesh in Raqqa, it appears that the  
rules of engagement have changed. Has the Prime Minister,  
or any of her Ministers, raised that with the United  
States of America?

**The Prime Minister:** As the hon. Lady may recognise,  
we have regular discussions with the Americans and  
others within the coalition about the action that is  
taking place. I think that the military action to drive  
Daesh out of Mosul has been very important and that  
the military action in Raqqa will be important, but of  
course, as a United Kingdom, we always want to ensure  
that such actions deal with those they are supposed to  
deal with—the terrorists—and do not affect civilians.

**Alberto Costa** (South Leicestershire) (Con): I add my  
welcome to the Prime Minister's statement, particularly  
in respect of the additional assistance being given to  
Italy to tackle migration. My right hon. Friend may not  
be aware that I am chairman of the all-party parliamentary

39

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

40

*[Alberto Costa]*

group on Greece. As she knows, Greece also has a huge  
burden to bear with the movement of migrants. Will she  
agree to consider whether the delegation being sent to  
Italy might also be sent, in due course, to Greece?

**The Prime Minister:** As it happens, we are mirroring  
in Italy something that we have already offered to  
Greece and that has been taken up by Greece. Of  
course, there is now a different situation in Greece  
because of the European Union's deal with Turkey. We  
have seen a significant reduction in the number of  
migrants trying to reach Greece, but people who came  
through those routes are now trying to go through  
Libya into Italy. We will certainly ensure that we give as  
much support as we can to Italy in this matter.

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): In the Prime  
Minister's enthusiasm for a bilateral trade agreement  
with the United States, will she accept American insistence  
that we dilute food standards and agree to the establishment  
of investment protection mechanisms that override British  
courts?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is  
asking about arrangements in negotiations that have yet  
to take place. We have started discussions with the  
Americans, and we will of course be negotiating trade  
arrangements with them.

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): Many developing  
countries are keen to trade with G20 countries free from  
punitive tariffs and on a level playing field. Does my  
right hon. Friend agree that Britain can be a real leader  
in free trade and fair trade, once we leave the European  
Union, by setting our own tariffs on trade and striking  
our own trade deals?

**The Prime Minister:** This is very important. We will  
have the ability, once we are outside the European  
Union, to strike those trade deals with countries around  
the world. Underpinning my hon. Friend's question is  
the need for the United Kingdom to stand up and  
promote free and fair trade around the world. As I said  
in response to my hon. Friend the Member for North  
East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg), there is a temptation  
in some areas to move towards protectionism, and I  
think we should stand against that. We should show  
very clearly that it is free trade that brings prosperity  
and jobs, and that it not only helps economies such as  
ours but helps some of the world's poorest countries to  
develop.

**Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Given  
the special relationship that the Prime Minister enjoys  
with President Trump, can she explain why she failed to  
influence him and prevent him from pulling out of the  
Paris climate agreement? Will she condemn that decision  
and refrain from rolling out the red carpet for him in the  
form of a state visit?

**The Prime Minister:** We—the United Kingdom and  
I—made our view on the Paris agreement very clear to  
the United States. The United States takes its own  
decisions, and this was a commitment that President  
Trump made during his election campaign. I have said  
to him on more than one occasion that I hope we can

encourage the United States to come back into the Paris  
agreement, which I think is important. We will continue  
to work to try to get them back in.

**David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): Given that  
the vast majority of Members of Parliament, including  
the Leader of the Opposition, stood on an election  
platform explicitly backing Brexit, is it not time that  
people stopped using these negotiations for either political  
or even personal advantage and united behind the Prime  
Minister, allowing her and her Ministers to get on with  
delivering a deal that works for the whole of Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is very right:  
80% of the votes at the general election were for parties  
that said they wanted to deliver on the Brexit decision  
taken by the British people in the referendum last year.  
That is what the Government are going to get on and  
do, and I hope others across the House will support us  
in doing it.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): The Prime Minister  
said in her statement that, “women and children are  
being enslaved, forced into hard labour, raped, beaten  
and passed from abuser to abuser for profit.” Does she  
agree that that is no more true than when it comes to the  
depravity of child prostitution in India? Did she raise  
that issue with Prime Minister Modi?

**The Prime Minister:** I have raised this issue—the  
question of modern slavery—previously with Prime  
Minister Modi, as the United Kingdom wants people  
around the world to address it. We are very clear that we  
want to see this issue being dealt with. That is one of the  
reasons why we have put into legislation the requirement  
for companies here in the UK, which will be manufacturing  
and will be sourcing products from around the world,  
to look at their supply chains and report on what they  
find in them and whether or not modern slavery is  
taking place within them.

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): Does the Prime Minister  
agree that although we are leaving the European Union,  
there are still many matters on which we need to co-operate?  
I am thinking particularly of across the English channel  
in dealing with the migrant problems, of how we are  
going to manage international trade, of how we are  
going to work with Europe to tackle the evil of people  
trafficking and of co-operation to stop these multinationals  
from gaming our tax systems across the European  
continent.

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree with my hon.  
Friend that there is much on which we will continue to  
want to co-operate with countries within the European  
Union. Of course, the relationship we have with France  
and Belgium in particular in relation to our ports and  
the traffic of people across the channel is very important  
to us. We have been working increasingly with the  
French authorities and others, including the Greek  
authorities, in dealing with this issue of human trafficking  
and successfully ensuring that criminal gangs involved  
in it are not just identified, but investigated and prosecuted.

**Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab):  
Will the Prime Minister confirm whether she spoke to  
President Erdogan of Turkey at the G20 summit? If so,

41

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

42

did she ask him about the reasons why the Cyprus talks  
in Switzerland broke down again without resolution  
last week?

**The Prime Minister:** I did speak to President Erdogan  
about the Cyprus talks; I also spoke to the Secretary-  
General of the United Nations, who of course had been  
present at them, about the reason why they broke down.  
It is a matter of not only great disappointment, but  
great sadness that they did not come to fruition; they  
were the closest we have come to finding a solution for  
the unification of Cyprus. As I say, it is a matter of  
sadness that that was not able to be achieved. The  
United Nations worked to achieve it and the United  
Kingdom played a strong role in trying to achieve it, but  
sadly it did not happen.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): A quarter of G20  
members are also members of the Commonwealth. I  
welcome my right hon. Friend's talking about preliminary  
discussions with Australia and India, but will she also  
let the House know what discussions have been had  
with other Commonwealth countries, such as New Zealand?

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to let my hon. Friend  
know that we have indeed also been having discussions  
with New Zealand. This is an issue I think we can  
progress with a number of other members of the  
Commonwealth—not just New Zealand, but Canada.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):  
What concrete steps will the Government take next to  
get climate change back in the discussion with the US  
Administration?

**The Prime Minister:** We raise this issue regularly with  
the US Administration, but, crucially, there was a very  
clear message from everybody sitting around the table  
at the G20 to the US Administration about the importance  
we all placed on the climate change agreement—on the  
Paris agreement—and on the US being a member of it.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Kettering is  
located at the economic beating heart of the nation, so  
a strong economy and new international trade deals  
post-Brexit are very important for all of us who live  
there. The Prime Minister has told the House that over  
the weekend she met the leaders of America, China,  
Japan and India to talk about new trade deals. May I  
say to her that that sounds to me like a very good start  
and a very good weekend's work?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for that.  
May I also recognise the important role that Kettering  
playsintheeconomyof the country? When we see these  
new trade deals come into place, I am sure that his  
constituents and others across the country will benefit  
from them.

**Mrs Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):  
Can the Prime Minister guarantee that Brexit will not  
weaken the fight against terrorism? Will we retain full  
membership of Europol and Eurojust?

**The Prime Minister:** As the hon. Lady will know, I  
have stood at this Dispatch Box in the past and defended  
our membership of Europol and a number of other

arrangements we have in the security field, such as  
SIS II—the Schengen information system—and various  
others. As we are in formal negotiations with the EU,  
such matters will of course be matters for those negotiations,  
but I am clear that we want to continue to retain our  
co-operation on matters relating to crime and counter-  
terrorism. Some of the arrangements with other European  
countries are outside the EU. We want to maintain that  
co-operation because it is important not only for us but  
for countries in the EU.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): What conversations  
did the Prime Minister have with her fellow leaders  
about the growing crisis on the Korean peninsula, and  
what does she see as the UK's role in that crisis? Might  
partof it be further restrictions on British banks, two of  
which recently had warrants issued against them for  
inadvertently trading with North Korean businesses?

**The Prime Minister:** I had several discussions with  
other leaders about what is happening on the Korean  
peninsula and the Democratic People's Republic of  
Korea's activities—particularly with President Xi, because  
China's role is crucial. It is the country with the greatest  
leverage in relation to North Korea, and I have urged  
President Xi—as have others, I believe—to exercise that  
leverage. We want to see the denuclearisation of North  
Korea.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): The Prime Minister  
talks about boosting trade, but what discussions has she  
had with other leaders about our open skies agreement  
with the USA, which depends on our relationship with  
the European Union? There is of course considerable  
concern for the aviation industry and airports such as  
Stansted, which plan ahead by 12 to 18 months. Time is  
very short.

**The Prime Minister:** The open skies agreement was  
referenced in the bilateral I had with President Trump.

**James Heappey** (Wells) (Con): I congratulate the  
Prime Minister on her comments over the weekend and  
today condemning President Trump's decision to abandon  
the Paris agreement. I encourage her to keep the UK in  
the global vanguard on climate change by publishing a  
clean-growth plan as quickly as possible, so that those  
who are more reluctant on the matter can see the  
enormous value of a green economy.

**The Prime Minister:** The UK's record on this issue is  
good. We can already point to the actions we have taken  
here in the UK, but we will of course be looking to do  
more in future—for example, on air quality. We can  
already show the action we have taken and the benefit it  
has had. As I said in my statement, there is no contradiction  
between decarbonisation and a growing economy.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)  
(PC): Is a bad trade deal with the United States better  
than no deal?

**The Prime Minister:** We will be working to negotiate  
a good trade deal with the United States.

**KelvinHopkins**(LutonNorth)(Lab):ThePrimeMinister  
will recall that the recently deceased Transatlantic Trade  
and Investment Partnership would have included grotesque

43

G20

10 JULY 2017

G20

44

*[Kelvin Hopkins]*

provisions allowing private global corporations to prosecute  
legitimate democratic Governments. Will she reject any  
future trade deal that includes such provisions?

**The Prime Minister:** I recognise the concern raised  
when the TTIP arrangements were being discussed and  
negotiated. I assure the hon. Gentleman that as we look  
to negotiate a trade deal with the United States, we will  
want to negotiate a deal that is in the United Kingdom's  
best interests.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
For all the progress against Daesh, hundreds of thousands  
of civilians in Syria remain under siege from the evil  
al-Assad Government. Will the Prime Minister look  
again at securing multilateral agreement to get aid into  
those besieged towns and cities?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman has raised  
an important issue; we regularly discuss with our coalition  
partners and others the possibility of getting that aid in.  
As he will know, there have been some attempts to  
ensure that aid can get through to those besieged civilians,  
but they have not always—*[Interruption.]* He says,  
“Try again”; I have to say that we do regularly raise this  
issue. The best answer is to find a solution to the  
situation in Syria that leads to a stable Syria in which  
those civilians are no longer being besieged.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): In a summit of  
extraordinarily awkward moments that would rival an  
episode of “The Addams Family”, perhaps the most  
bizarre moment was when President Trump's seat was  
taken by his daughter. The Prime Minister did not seem  
to bat an eyelid, presumably because she expects somebody  
else to take her seat soon. Who does she hope that will  
be—the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary or the  
Chancellor?

**The Prime Minister:** On Ivanka Trump taking President  
Trump's seat, it followed a morning session in which we  
had launched the women entrepreneurs financing initiative,  
which was developed by Ivanka Trump and the World  
Bank, so the move was entirely reasonable.

**Stephen Kinnock** (Aberavon) (Lab): It is welcome  
that the Prime Minister raised the issue of the dumping  
of Chinese steel with President Xi, but, quite frankly,  
words are cheap; it is action that matters. Will she please  
tell the House what specific actions will be taken to  
ensure that China starts playing by the rules?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman will be  
aware of the action that we have taken here in the  
United Kingdom to support our steel industry. The last  
G20 took the decision that the Global Forum would be  
the basis on which work will be done internationally to  
look at this issue of excess capacity in steel. That has  
not worked as well as people had hoped when it was set  
up under the Chinese presidency, but it is exactly that  
that we want to see, along with a ministerial meeting to  
look at excess steel capacity later this year.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
Will the Prime Minister confirm that the NHS will be  
excluded from any trade deal with the United States?

**The Prime Minister:** I am conscious that that was an  
issue that was raised in relation to the TTIP deal. A  
concern that people had was that, somehow, that was  
about changing the NHS. We will not change the national  
health service. The TTIP deal was never going to impact  
on the NHS in the way that the Opposition suggested.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): Not all G20  
countries have made the same sort of progress that we  
have in this country in relation to racist and discriminatory  
language. Was that an issue that she discussed with the  
G20 leaders, and does she agree that, where it happens,  
organisations should take decisive and swift action?

**The Prime Minister:** I must say to the hon. Gentleman  
that it behoves us all to ensure that we use appropriate  
language at all times.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Dieter Kempf,  
president of the Federation of German Industries, stated  
that, following Brexit,

“it will be extraordinarily difficult to avert negative effects on  
British businesses in particular.”

Has the Prime Minister got any closer to carrying out  
an economic assessment of the UK leaving the single  
market?

**The Prime Minister:** What is very clear is that we  
want to negotiate a comprehensive free trade agreement  
with the European Union, which gives us access to the  
single market. Anybody who is looking at the economic  
impacts that take place as a result of leaving the single  
market should recognise that the most important single  
market to the nations within the United Kingdom is the  
United Kingdom.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Given  
the Prime Minister's personal commitment to ending  
modern slavery and her desire for other countries to  
follow the UK's lead, why does she think it takes her  
Home Office more than two years to investigate the case  
of a woman in my constituency who is a victim of rape,  
slavery and trafficking? What kind of example is she  
setting for the G20 there?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not aware of the individual  
case that the hon. Gentleman raises. He talks about an  
investigation of the case of rape. That is a matter not  
for the Home Office but for the police.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): Following the  
questions by my right hon. Friends the Members for  
Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw),  
the Prime Minister said that our membership of Euratom  
is inextricably linked with our membership of the European  
Union, and yet we have been members of Euratom for  
longer than we have been members of the European  
Union, so how can that be the case? Will the Government  
rethink our arrangements in terms of Euratom, which  
is so important both for our civil nuclear sector and for  
access to the best radiotherapy treatments?

**The Prime Minister:** The fact is that the treaty makes  
it clear that there is a link between membership of the  
European Union and membership of Euratom. Across  
this House, we are all agreed that we want to ensure that  
we can still maintain the arrangements and relationships

45

G20

10 JULY 2017

46

that currently exist under Euratom, but they will be on  
a different basis in future. There is no argument that we  
want to maintain those relationships.

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): I thank the  
Prime Minister for her statement and note her efforts to  
reform the World Trade Organisation rules in order that  
they keep up with the services and digital sectors, which  
are crucial to the British economy. Does she agree that  
any reform of the WTO rules will take longer than the  
time we have left before the UK crashes out of EU  
without a trade deal in 2019?

**The Prime Minister:** One point of my comments at  
the G20 was that we need to speed up how the WTO  
considers these issues. Looking at the trade rules around  
the digital economy is not being started from scratch;  
the WTO has been doing it for some time. We just need  
to ensure that we get on with it and get those rules set.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): I welcome  
the Prime Minister's indication that she wants to coax  
the United States back into the Paris agreement. Will  
she consider strengthening her negotiating hand by  
suggesting to President Trump that there will be no  
negotiations on a free trade deal until they come back  
into the agreement, or is securing a free trade deal with  
the United States more important than securing the  
future of the planet?

**The Prime Minister:** We want to ensure that we get a  
good trade deal with the United States, because that  
would be to the benefit of people here, providing prosperity,  
economic growth and jobs across the UK. We will  
continue to press on the climate change agreement as  
well, and, as I say, I am encouraging President Trump,  
as are others, to find a way back into the Paris agreement.  
I think that that is important for us all, but meanwhile  
we will continue to do our bit through the application  
of the Paris agreement.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I think the hon. Member for  
Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) wanted to  
make a point of order—

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP) *indicated  
dissent.*

**Mr Speaker:** No? Okay. I was going to say that if he  
wanted to do so, it would normally happen after the  
statements but, as it appertained to the previous statement,  
he could raise it now if he wished. He does not, so that  
is fine. Thank you.

Export Licensing: High Court Judgment

4.41 pm

**The Secretary of State for International Trade and  
President of the Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox):** With  
permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement  
on the High Court judgment on export licensing. We  
welcome the divisional court's judgment today dismissing  
the claim by the Campaign Against Arms Trade for a  
judicial review of decisions regarding exports to Saudi  
Arabia for possible use in the conflict in Yemen. We are  
grateful to the court for the careful and meticulous way  
in which the evidence from both sides has been considered  
in reaching this judgment.

The judgment recognises the rigorous and robust  
processes that we have in place across Government to  
ensure that UK defence exports are licensed consistently  
with the Government's consolidated EU and national  
arms export licensing criteria. These criteria give effect  
to an EU common position setting out rules for assessing  
military exports. They were introduced in October 2000  
and last updated in March 2014. The consolidated  
criteria, used to assess each export licence application,  
cover: our international obligations, including sanctions;  
human rights and international humanitarian law; armed  
conflicts; regional peace and security; national security  
and the security of our allies; terrorism; risk of diversion;  
and the technical and economic capacity of the recipient  
country.

The claim challenged decisions not to suspend extant  
licences for the sale or transfer of arms or military  
equipment and to continue to grant new licences for  
such transfers. The judgment states that these decisions  
were lawful and rational. It describes the Government's  
decision making about export licensing as  
“highly sophisticated, structured and multi-faceted”.

We note the application to appeal and will continue to  
defend the decisions challenged. We remain confident  
that the UK operates one of the most robust export  
control regimes in the world.

The central issue in relation to defence exports to  
Saudi Arabia in the context of the conflict in Yemen is  
Criterion 2c of the consolidated EU and national arms  
export licensing criteria—that is, that the Government  
will not grant a licence if there is a clear risk that the  
items might be used in the commission of a serious  
violation of international humanitarian law. We have  
sufficient information to carry out proper risk-based  
assessments against Criterion 2c. The situation has  
been kept under close review and to date we have not  
refused licences on Criterion 2c grounds because we  
have assessed—based on all the information available to  
us, including information not publicly available—that  
the clear risk threshold has not been reached. The  
judgment says that, on the evidence, we were rationally  
entitled to conclude that this threshold has indeed not  
been reached.

The exercise undertaken to inform these assessments  
has, in the words of the judgment,

“all the hallmarks of a rigorous and robust, multi-layered process  
of analysis carried out by numerous expert Government and military  
personnel, upon which the Secretary of State could properly rely”.

In addition to a considered analysis by the Ministry  
of Defence of allegations of breaches of international  
humanitarian law, there has been intensive engagement

10 JULY 2017

47 Export Licensing: High Court

Judgment

*[Dr Liam Fox]*

with the Saudis at the highest level, stressing the need to  
comply with international humanitarian law, to investigate  
all incidents of concern and ensure that lessons are  
learned. Through this engagement, and our long-standing  
relationship with the Saudis, the UK Government have  
developed a higher degree of insight into Saudi military  
processes and procedures adopted in Yemen than might  
be expected for a country that is not party to the conflict.  
We have also considered public commitments to comply  
with international humanitarian law made by the Saudis,  
and monitored and analysed developments on the ground.

Each of these strands takes into account a wide range  
of sources and analyses, including those of a sensitive  
nature to which other parties, such as non-governmental  
organisations and the UN, do not have access. Taken  
together, these strands of information and analysis,  
which are reviewed regularly by the Foreign and  
Commonwealth Office in comprehensive reports to the  
Foreign Secretary, have enabled Ministers to take informed  
decisions about the overall Criterion 2c position and  
individual export licence applications. They provide a  
sound basis on which the Foreign Secretary is able to  
advise me, as the Secretary of State for International  
Trade, on these points.

That the assessment has been that the issue of military  
exports to Saudi Arabia is “finely balanced” is seen by  
the judgment as instructive and points to the

“anxious scrutiny ...given to the matter and the essential rationality  
and rigour of the process in which the Secretary of State was  
engaged.”

As the judgment states, on the basis of this information  
and analysis, we were rationally entitled to conclude  
that Saudi Arabia has put processes in place to secure  
respect for compliance with international humanitarian  
law, and that Saudi Arabia has been, and remains,  
genuinely committed to compliance with international  
humanitarian law. The Saudis have engaged and continue  
to engage constructively with the UK on these matters.

We do not receive this court judgment as a signal to  
do anything other than to continue to take our export  
control responsibilities very seriously. Our policy is to  
assess licence applications on a case-by-case basis against  
the rigorous tests set out in the consolidated EU and  
national arms export licensing criteria. We will not  
grant a licence if to do so would be inconsistent with  
these criteria. We will continue to keep the situation in  
Yemen under close scrutiny and base our export licensing  
assessments on the most up-to-date information and  
analysis available. If we assess that the clear risk threshold  
under Criterion 2c of the consolidated EU and national  
arms export licensing criteria has been reached, we will  
not hesitate to refuse export licences and suspend licences  
already in circulation. I commend this statement to the  
House.

4.47 pm

**Barry Gardiner** (Brent North) (Lab): I thank the  
Secretary of State for his statement and early sight of it.  
I know that he and the whole House will agree that the  
war in Yemen is a humanitarian tragedy. Thousands of  
people, including women and children, have been its victims  
both directly and indirectly through the loss of life-saving  
infrastructures such as hospitals and water supplies. All  
of us should, and do, mourn that keenly.

Export Licensing: High Court 48

Judgment

The question for the High Court was whether the  
Secretary of State was entitled to conclude that there  
was no risk that British weapons might be used in the  
commission of serious violations of international  
humanitarian law. Since the bombing of Yemen began  
in March 2015, the UK has licensed more than £3.3 billion  
of arms to the Saudi regime, including: £2.2 billion of  
ML10 licences, dealing with aircraft, helicopters and  
drones; £1.1 billion of ML4 licences, dealing with grenades,  
bombs, missiles and countermeasures; and £430,000-worth  
of ML6 licences, dealing with armoured vehicles and  
tanks.

The Secretary of State knows that indiscriminate use  
of air strikes, the destruction of a country's means of  
food production and the targeting of civilians are all  
classed as war crimes under international humanitarian  
law. Does he recall that a United Nations panel of  
experts reported in January 2016 that Saudi Arabian  
forces had engaged in “widespread and systematic”  
targeting of civilians? Does he recall that, on 21 July  
last year, the Government corrected their previous  
declarations that they had no evidence of any violations,  
and that the Foreign Secretary stated in September last  
year that the Government's new position was that they  
had been unable to make an assessment and that the  
Saudi authorities were best placed to make such an  
assessment? Does he accept that the Foreign Secretary  
was wrong to franchise out our obligation in this way,  
and that we, not the Saudis, have the duty to assess  
whether there is a risk that British arms sold to the  
Saudis might be used in contravention of international  
humanitarian law?

Does the Secretary of State recall that evidence revealed  
in the High Court in February this year showed that the  
civil servant at the head of export control had provided  
advice to a previous Secretary of State recommending  
that the UK suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia

“given the gaps in knowledge about Saudi operations”?

Can he explain to the House why that recommendation  
was overruled by the then Secretary of State, the right  
hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid), who sits  
alongside him?

Does the Secretary of State agree that the Committees  
on Arms Export Controls should be set up in this  
Parliament without delay so that export licensing for  
arms sales can come under the necessary parliamentary  
scrutiny?

Does the Secretary of State agree that today's judgment  
did not seek to rule on whether the Government were  
correct in concluding that there was no clear risk of a  
serious breach of international humanitarian law, but  
rather on whether, in so concluding, they had reached a  
decision that could be considered rational, given the  
procedures they had adopted and the evidence they had  
considered? Does he further accept that if those procedures  
themselves were defective, or the evidence the Government  
considered was insufficient, misleading or even simply  
not comprehensive, it follows that the decision, however  
rational within its own parameters, could be deeply  
flawed, and this country might be at grave risk of  
violating our obligations in international humanitarian  
law?

The Government relied on material they brought  
forward only in closed hearing. That evidence could not  
be seen or heard by the claimant—the Campaign Against

10 JULY 2017

49 Export Licensing: High Court

Judgment

Arms Trade—or its lawyers, Leigh Day. As such, the  
court ruling that the Government's decision was a rational  
one, given the procedures and evidence they considered,  
was based on secret evidence, which it was impossible to  
challenge. Does the Secretary of State accept that the  
court judgment makes specific reference to the substantial  
body of evidence presented in open session, which in  
fact suggests that a clear risk does exist that British  
arms might be used in violation of international  
humanitarian law? Will he agree to make the evidence  
that was available only in closed session available to  
Members of this House on Privy Council terms or,  
indeed, to the Intelligence and Security Committee?

Does the Secretary of State agree that we would all  
wish this country not only to adopt the highest ethical  
standards and controls but to be seen to adopt them,  
and that it would be helpful if he could now give his  
assurance to the House that it is his considered view  
that not only were the Government rational in adopting  
the view they did, given the procedures they followed  
and the evidence they considered, but that there is, to  
his certain knowledge, no risk whatever that UK arms  
might be used by Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war in any  
way that might constitute a violation of our obligations  
in international humanitarian law?

**Dr Fox:** May I say, first, that I agree with the hon.  
Gentleman that Yemen is indeed a humanitarian disaster  
that is begging for a political solution, to enable us to  
carry out our diplomatic efforts and our humanitarian  
efforts? I doubt whether anyone in the House would  
disagree with that.

The hon. Gentleman was not quite accurate in terms  
of what the court case was about. There were three  
grounds of challenge in court: first, failure to ask the  
correct questions and to make sufficient inquiries; secondly,  
failure to apply the suspension mechanism; and, thirdly,  
irrationally concluding that there was no clear risk  
under Criterion 2c. All these grounds have been dismissed  
by the court.

The hon. Gentleman makes the point about targeting.  
As a former Defence Secretary, I say to him that the  
MOD has gone to the nth degree to improve the ability  
of the Saudis to target more effectively, including through  
training by UK personnel. That is one of the biggest  
advances we have helped the Saudis to make in this.

The hon. Gentleman says that the UN and the NGOs  
had set out their own reservations about what had  
happened, but as the judgment made clear, they did not  
have sight of all the information that the judges were  
able to look at. He said there were gaps in the Government's  
knowledge, but the court again made it clear that the  
Government had not only the ability to assess what the  
gaps in that knowledge might have been, but the appropriate  
means of redressing that. I remind him that the criteria  
we operate are part of the EU consolidated criteria—they  
are not UK Government unilateral criteria.

I take exception to the hon. Gentleman's final point. I  
simply do not accept that if we have closed sessions it  
somehow makes the judgment less valid. I do not accept  
that we cannot have closed sessions that protect our  
national security or the personnel involved in our national  
security. Our sources need to be protected. I listened to  
the argument he makes but I simply cannot bring  
myself to accept it.

Export Licensing: High Court 50

Judgment

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): At the end  
of his statement my right hon. Friend referred to steps  
that could be taken if it were found that Saudi Arabia  
were misusing the arms that we supply. Will he expand  
on that a bit? The issue has come up before in the  
Committees on Arms Export Controls. If we supplied a  
consignment of sophisticated weapons for use in one  
way and it was used differently, or abused in defiance of  
the laws of war, what could we do to rectify the situation?

**Dr Fox:** As my right hon. Friend knows from his  
experience, there are a number of criteria for refusals  
and revocations; if he has not seen the list, I will ensure  
that he is sent it. If we believed that we were not able to  
convince ourselves that we were operating entirely within  
the consolidated criteria, we could suspend extant licences  
and refuse new ones. As I made very clear, if we believed  
that we were not fully in line with the criteria, we would  
do so.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I thank the Secretary  
of State for advance notice of the statement. I apologise  
for my hoarse voice—I think I shouted a bit too much  
in excitement at London Pride on Saturday.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and  
other human rights campaign groups believe that UK  
and US weapons have been used against Yemeni civilians.  
As things stand, 10,000 civilians have been killed, 50,000  
wounded and 3 million displaced. Today's judgment  
raises a number of questions. We pay tribute to Campaign  
Against Arms Trade, which has taken the Government  
to court and forced them to explain themselves. We  
acknowledge CAAT's plan to appeal this decision and  
wish it well, but the UK Government should be coming  
to this house with the facts at all times, not having to be  
dragged through the courts for the public to get a full  
explanation.

Does the Secretary of State accept that it cannot be  
beneficial if the public lose confidence in the Government  
over their relationship with a supposed ally—one that is  
in flagrant breach of international humanitarian law in  
Yemen? Let us not forget that Saudi Arabia, the UK's  
largest weapons client, has bought more than £3 billion-  
worth of British arms in the past two years. UK and EU  
arms sales rules state that export licences cannot be  
granted if there is a “clear risk” that the equipment  
could be used to break international humanitarian law.

The Secretary of State says that he takes this very  
seriously. He will know that our former colleagues  
Angus Robertson and Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh were  
strong advocates for the re-establishment of the Committees  
on Arms Export Controls, which the UK Government  
promised before the election would be reconvened. When  
will that happen, and when will the first meeting take  
place? Can he give us categorical assurances that the  
election does not mean that such an important Committee  
will be kicked into the long grass?

**Dr Fox:** I thank the hon. Lady for her comments. As  
the judgment set out, the case focused on the airstrikes  
conducted by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia in support  
of the legitimate Government of Yemen against the  
Houthi rebellion. We need to put on record that that is  
the origin of the conflict. Of course the humanitarian  
issues in Yemen are deeply troubling to all of us; we  
have all seen the pictures. The United Kingdom, through  
our various agencies and Government Departments,

52

51

*Export Licensing: High Court  
Judgment*

*[Dr Fox]*

has been fulfilling as much of our diplomatic and  
humanitarian actions as we can in the circumstances.  
This will only be brought to an end by a political  
settlement, not by a military settlement.

The hon. Lady talks about the “clear risk” test. The  
judgment could not have been clearer that the Government  
met the “clear risk” test of criterion 2c in the way they  
carried this out.

On the hon. Lady's point about the Committees on  
Arms Export Controls, I have absolutely no objection  
to such a Committee being set up. In fact, I think it is  
beneficial to us to ensure at all times the highest reputation  
of our probity in these matters. I would have absolutely  
no objection whatsoever to such a Committee being in  
place.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): Does the Secretary of  
State agree that the detail of the judgment makes clear  
what a great job his civil servants, and other civil  
servants and officials in both the Ministry of Defence  
and the Foreign Office, have done and the rigorous way  
in which they have gone about their responsibilities?  
The judgment states that the process was “highly  
sophisticated, structured” and “multi-faceted”. They  
deserve congratulations today.

**Dr Fox:** I do not think that the judgment could have  
been more unequivocal.I am grateful to my hon.Friend  
for his comments. We have been utterly vigorous in the  
process. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the  
MODand the Department for InternationalTrade have  
worked extremely closely. Our officials have done a  
wonderful job. I am not sure that they necessarily  
appreciated the number of letters between us to ensure  
that the process worked as tightlyas it has,but I am sure  
that they will all feel totally vindicated by the judgment  
on the way in which they have carried out their duties  
on behalf of this country's international reputation and  
law.

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab): I welcome  
the judgment, which demonstrates the robustness of the  
Export Control Act 2002, which was introduced by a  
Labour Government. It also supports the hard-working  
defence workers in our industry. The judgment states  
that the coalition did not deliberately target civilians  
and that the Saudis have procedures to abide by the  
principles of international humanitarian law. In the  
light of that, may I urge the Secretary of State to make  
representations to the Saudis to publish the outcomes  
of their own inquiries into the alleged incidents?

**Dr Fox:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments.  
As I have said, I think we have the most robust system  
in existence on defence exports. We have been very clear  
with the Saudis that they have to carry out investigations  
into incidents and make those investigations clear to the  
United Kingdom Government, and we had to be very  
clear that, if we were to license further defence exports,  
those lessons had been learned and that mechanisms  
had been put in place to ensure that they would not  
happen again.

**MrsAnne-MarieTrevelyan**(Berwick-upon-Tweed)(Con):  
Given that the High Court has today found that the  
Government have been meticulous in their export licensing

10 JULY 2017

Export Licensing: High Court

Judgment

processes, will the Secretary of State inform the House  
how much this court case is going to cost the taxpayer  
in legal fees?

**Dr Fox:** I hesitate a little because there may well be an  
appeal and we may not yet be at the end of the legal  
process, but to date the case has cost UK taxpayers  
somewhat in excess of £600,000.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): The Secretary of State and the Government  
may have won this legal skirmish, but they certainly  
have not won the moral case and there are still many  
unanswered questions about the relationship and the  
terrible situation in Yemen. He said that he was confident,  
but the court judgment makes it clear that he was  
anxious. In fact, he wrote to the Foreign Secretary:

“I am concerned that the issue...continues to be finely balanced...  
I ask that you commission a further detailed assessment.and  
send me updated advice”,  
and

“that you seek advice from”  
senior Government lawyers “before making your  
recommendation.”

Why was the International Trade Secretary anxious?  
Was it because of the civilian deaths, the use of cluster  
bombs or the attacks on humanitarian supplies in  
operations, including water and sanitation supplies that  
could have been so critical in preventing the cholera  
epidemic?

**Dr Fox:** I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a close  
interest in the matter, but I really would not describe  
today's landmark case as a “skirmish”. I think that  
everyone in the House would be well advised to read the  
full judgment. It is my job to be anxious about these  
things. It is my job to give the nth degree of scrutiny,  
because lives are potentially lost if we make the wrong  
judgments. It is the judgment of myself, the Foreign  
Secretary and other senior Ministers that gives us such  
anxiety. Were we to be cavalier, the hon. Gentleman  
would be absolutely right to criticise us. When we take  
the nth degree of care about the judgments we make, as  
previous Governments have done, he ought to be very  
grateful that we are doing so in the country's interest.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I welcome my  
right hon. Friend's statement. The judgment comes  
from an independent judiciary and underscores the  
robustness of the assessment of export licence applications.  
He will be aware, I hope, that Saudi Arabia is going  
through self-authored and hugely welcome modernisation  
and change. Can he assure me that those changes within  
thekingdomwillbetakenintoaccountwhenconsidering  
future export licence applications to our strong and  
reliable ally in the middle east?

**Dr Fox:** We take all information into account when  
coming to a judgment. We look across the information  
from the FCO, the MOD and my Department to see  
what is happening, and we put the whole picture together  
before we come to a judgment. We can hardly be  
accused of spending too little time or looking at too  
little evidence in coming to the right conclusion.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): Of course we accept  
the judgment of the court,because we believe in the rule  
of law. However, how does this help the Yemeni people?

10 JULY 2017

53 Export Licensing: High Court

Judgment

So far, 10,000 people have died, 14 million people have  
been displaced and 200,000 people are suffering from  
cholera. The Secretary of State is a former Foreign  
Minister and a former Defence Secretary. After the  
statement, will he go back to the Foreign Office and get  
everyone back around the negotiating table—please?

**Dr Fox:** The Government, through the Foreign and  
Commonwealth Office, are leaving no stone unturned  
in their attempts to get the peace process driven forward.  
Many attempts have been made to do so, and it is in all  
our interests to stop this dreadful humanitarian disaster.  
The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The parties  
need to understand that the solution cannot be a purely  
military one; it has to be political.

**Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): I, too, welcome today's  
landmark ruling on a very difficult case. There are tens  
of thousands of defence workers, many of them in my  
constituency, whose jobs depend on the deals that are  
done. Can the Secretary of State assure me that we will  
continue to work with the Saudis to ensure accurate  
targeting and robust terms of arms sales?

**Dr Fox:** Of course we will continue to work with the  
Saudis to get an improvement in the position, to make  
sure that any decisions we take are within the criteria.  
My hon. Friend is absolutely right that a lot of jobs in  
this country depend on our defence industry. Were  
campaigns such as that of the CAAT to be successful,  
there would be a rapid proliferation of new defence  
companies trying to set up around the world, and there  
would actually be less control over proliferation, rather  
than more.

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op):  
Parliamentary scrutiny of arms exports is crucial, so I  
welcome what the Secretary of State said in response to  
challenges on the Committees on Arms Export Controls.  
It is vital that those Committees are re-established soon.  
May I ask the Government to look again at the question  
of an independent UN-led investigation into all alleged  
violations of international humanitarian law, by both  
sides, in the Yemen conflict?

**Dr Fox:** We have never had any objection to an  
independent UN inquiry into that. Part of the trouble,  
however, as set out in the judgment, was the availability  
of evidence—especially in open session—to such an  
inquiry. When Members read the full judgment, they  
will see why there is such significance to it. I am entirely  
open-minded about any future UN inquiry.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): How  
many licences have been refused?

**Dr Fox:** There are a number of different criteria, and  
they are assessed on a regular basis. There were 366 refusals  
or revocations in 2016. Eight different categories of  
refusals and revocations are set out. To be helpful, I will  
makeacopyof those categories available in the Library,  
if it does not have one already.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Will  
the Secretary of State confirm that the judgment does  
not affirm that there was no risk of IHL breaches in  
Yemen; that the judge acknowledged significant evidence

Export Licensing: High Court 54

Judgment

that suggested that there was, or is, a risk of such  
breaches; and that the UK Government remain very  
heavily dependent on the Saudis' guarantees that they  
are not targeting civilians?

**Dr Fox:** It is impossible to sell anything to anybody  
with no risk attached. That is why we have a clear risk  
test in the consolidated criteria. We are in close touch  
with the Saudis, to a degree that I have never known  
before with a country that is party to a military dispute,  
in seeing how they do their targeting and understanding  
their methods and information. We have been closely  
helping to instruct them in ways to minimise civilian  
casualties in future.

**Leo Docherty** (Aldershot) (Con): I have had the  
opportunity to travel to Saudi Arabia and visit the  
targeting centre in Riyadh, where targets in Yemen are  
allocated. Does the Secretary of State agree that as well  
as exporting hardware, we export a doctrine of responsible  
use, which, at the end of the day, saves lives?

**Dr Fox:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that we  
exportnotjustthedoctrine,buttheprofessionalexpertise  
and training that can help to give effect to that doctrine.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Medecins  
Sans Frontieres is reporting today that Yemenis are  
afraid to go to and to stay in the cholera treatment  
centre in Abs, 50 km from the frontline, since it was  
bombed by Saudi Arabia last August, killing 19 people.  
The Joint Incidents Assessment Team declared this  
atrocity an “unintentional mistake”, as it did in relation  
to the facilities at Haydan and Razeh in Saada and  
Houban in Taiz, all of which were hit by Saudi bombs.  
How many hospitals protected by international  
humanitarian law will the Secretary of State allow to be  
hit by Saudi Arabia before he stops selling it bombs?

**Dr Fox:** The hon. Lady talks as though there is only  
one party in this dispute in that part of the world.  
Unfortunately, that is not the case. As I say, we take the  
key risk criteria very seriously. I am afraid that making  
the sort of rather uninformed points she has made for  
propaganda purposes does not actually help the  
humanitarian situation.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Does my right hon.  
Friend agree that among our many security objectives  
and values, keeping faith with important allies and  
being a reliable security partner should be among the  
most important, so that our allies can see that we take  
such important decisions rigorously, with the due process  
that they deserve and under the rule of law?

**Dr Fox:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Protection  
of our allies and working with our allies is extremely  
important, but it is also important that our allies themselves  
understand that we will rigorously apply the criteria  
that we have set out and on which we are parties to an  
international agreement. Getting the balance right between  
those things is exactly what the Government have sought  
and are set to achieve.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Will the  
Secretary of State please enlighten us about why he does  
not take more notice of the Foreign and Commonwealth  
Office's reports on countries of concern for human  
rights and repression?

10 JULY 2017

55 Export Licensing: High Court

Judgment

**Dr Fox:** Perhaps we are talking about a different  
judgment, because this judgment makes it very clear  
that we did take very clear account of the advice given  
by the Foreign Office and, indeed, that we sought  
further advice from the Foreign Office when it was  
necessary to do so.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Does my right hon.  
Friend agree that closed sessions are absolutely standard  
in litigation of this nature, and that it is absolutely  
wrong to make such a point to seek to undermine a  
clear and impartial ruling of the High Court that has  
confirmed the rigorous and detailed scrutiny applied to  
sensitive arms export decisions?

**Dr Fox:** I have to say that I think there is a danger in  
making such an attack on the court system, not least  
because secret or classified evidence was open to challenge  
by the special advocates representing the claimants in  
this case.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)  
(PC): The Secretary of State will be aware of reports by  
the BBC and the Danish newspaper *Dagbladet Information*in relation to the sale of surveillance and decryption  
technology to Saudi Arabia by British companies via  
their Danish subsidiaries. This technology has been  
used to crush internal dissent, and it arguably contravenes  
Criterion 5 restrictions due to the potential impact on  
UK security. Will the British Government review the  
legislation and oversight procedures governing sales of  
surveillance and decryption technology?

**Dr Fox:** If any individual or organisation has evidence  
that they believe quite clearly illustrates wrongdoing,  
they should bring it to the attention of the Government  
in detail.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Today's  
judgment clearly shows that the UK is very robust in its  
licensing criteria, but in the light of this decision will the  
Secretary of State reassure the House that under this  
system decisions to grant such licences are undertaken  
and assessed in line with international humanitarian  
law?

**Dr Fox:** The judgment makes it very clear that that is  
the case. I think that those who criticise the UK system  
should look at how robust we are in comparison with  
other countries. It would do everybody in this country  
good to recognise how robust and clear we are in the  
decisions that we make and how transparent we are in  
our conduct.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary  
of State rightly draws attention to the robust nature of  
the wording in the document produced by the court.  
This judgment relates to a decision under the EU  
consolidated criteria. Does he agree that it will be  
extremely important that we continue to maintain controls  
of arms exports that are as least as strong in future as  
they are under the existing EU consolidated criteria?

**Dr Fox:** It is slightly worrying to me how often I agree  
with the hon. Gentleman, and I find myself doing so  
again today. It is not what the criteria are called, but  
what they contain that matters. Their content has clearly

Export Licensing: High Court 56

Judgment

stood the rigour of the Court's scrutiny today. I completely  
agree with him that it would be wayward, to say the  
least, for any Government to consider criteria any less  
rigorous than those we have today.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member for Ilford South  
(Mike Gapes) does not look worried at all; he looks in a  
state of high contentment that the Secretary of State  
agrees with him. Anybody would think, as far as the  
hon. Gentleman was concerned, that Christmas had  
come early, but I suppose it is always rather good when  
people agree with one.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): Will my right hon.  
Friend please tell the House whether, in his view, the  
High Court had before it all the information it needed  
to reach the judgment that has been handed down  
today?

**Dr Fox:** That was very much the view of the Court.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): May I ask the  
Secretary of State, as he continues to promote the sale  
of arms to Saudi Arabia, what regard his Government  
have to the fact that 157 people were executed there last  
year, including minors, and that four young men who  
were arrested as minors, Dawoud al-Marhoon, Abdullah  
al-Zaher, Ali al-Nimr and Abdulkareem al-Hawaj, remain  
at imminent risk of execution by crucifixion?

**Dr Fox:** By our engagement with Saudi Arabia, we  
are able to raise any reservations we have about international  
humanitarian law and human rights, which we do.

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): In the last  
Parliament, it took quite some time for the Committees  
on Arms Export Controls to be set up. Will my right  
hon. Friend speak to the Leader of the House to see  
whether that important Committee can be set up as  
quickly as possible?

**Dr Fox:** The usual channels will have heard my hon.  
Friend's view. As I have made clear, I have no objection  
to such a Committee being in place. It is a balanced  
judgment as to whether we have such a Committee or  
not. As I said, any Committee that looks into the  
probity of Ministers' decisions should be welcomed by  
Ministers as well as by the House as a whole.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): In 2013, the  
Government launched their action plan on business  
and human rights with great fanfare, but subsequent  
questions by me and others revealed that it appears to  
be little more than a piece of paper. It is certainly not an  
action plan. How does that supposed action plan inform  
our business relationship with Saudi Arabia, and how  
will it inform that relationship after this judgment?

**Dr Fox:** It will not be affected by the judgment  
because the judgment said that the Government had a  
rigorous, responsible and rational view of decisions on  
defence exports. I would have thought the House would  
be pleased that our systems are working so transparently  
and so well.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I visited Saudi  
Arabia as part of a cross-party delegation in April and  
have declared that in the register. It is right that our  
arms exports are subject to legal challenge, and everyone

58

57 *Export Licensing: High Court  
Judgment*

agrees about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, but I  
was surprised to learn, as were other members of the  
delegation, that 65,000 shells and rockets have been  
fired from Yemen into Saudi Arabia; that there have  
been civilian deaths and injuries in Saudi Arabia; and  
that civilians have been evacuated and displaced, and  
hospitals damaged, all in Saudi Arabia. Would my right  
hon. Friend welcome more balanced coverage of this  
distressing conflict?

**Dr Fox:** My hon. Friend makes the very important  
point that this is not a conflict that Saudi Arabia or the  
coalition sought. They have a legitimate right of self-defence  
and a legitimate right to acquire the means of conducting  
that self-defence. It is clear that this is a bloody and  
brutal conflict and, as I said earlier, it requires a proper  
political settlement. That requires us to continue with  
our humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. He is absolutely  
right that it would not do any harm to have a little more  
of an objective view, rather than the one-sided blast that  
we see rather too often in this House and elsewhere.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): Today's judgment  
was unequivocal: where the Government have failed is  
in advancing the peace process in Yemen and, of course,  
that includes Saudi Arabia. When will the Government  
make progress on a peace settlement for that country?

**Dr Fox:** The Government are doing all they can to  
take that process forward. Would that it were so simple  
that we could unilaterally create a solution in that  
war-torn part of the world. We are doing what we can  
to help our allies reach that settlement and will continue  
to do so. It is a humanitarian disaster but, sadly, it is not  
unilaterally within our power to simply bring it to an  
end.

10 JULY 2017

Points of Order

5.19 pm

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op) *rose—*

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op) *rose—*

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op)  
*rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I think I will take the points of order  
now, because there is a slew of them, but the two hon.  
Gentlemen can wait. Point of order, Tracy Brabin.

**Tracy Brabin:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.  
During the most recent session of questions to the  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial  
Strategy, I raised the case of local employers misleading  
workers about their right to holiday pay. The Under-  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial  
Strategy, the hon. Member for Stourbridge (Margot  
James), assured me that the Government  
“have increased the powers open to Her Majesty's Revenue and  
Customs to enforce those rights.”—[*Official Report*, 27 June 2017;  
Vol. 626, c. 458.]

However, I subsequently received a written answer from  
the same Minister stating:

“HM Revenue and Customs has no powers to sanction companies  
for withholding holiday pay.”

The Minister has given me two answers stating the  
complete opposite of each other, in the space of a few  
days. Clearly, one or other of those answers must be  
wrong, and, although I am relatively new to this place, I  
was given to understand that Ministers were under a  
particular obligation not to mislead the House, even if  
inadvertently. More important, this leaves us unable to  
say for certain what the Government are actually going  
to do about the problem that I raised. Can you advise  
me, Mr Speaker, on whether there is any way of bringing  
the Minister back to the House to tell us which of her  
answers is final?

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Lady, both  
for her point of order and for her characteristic courtesy  
in giving me advance notice of it. It was also exceptionally  
helpful of her to attach to her proposed point of order  
the text of those two answers. I must say to the hon.  
Lady and to the House that textual exegesis is of the  
essence in these matters.

I have pored over the two answers, and have sought to  
reflect on whether they might in some way be not  
incompatible with each other, but such a conclusion is  
beyond my limited intellectual capacities. It certainly  
appears that the two answers are irreconcilable: one  
must be correct, and therefore, by definition, the other  
must not be. Apart from anything else, it is quite difficult  
to see how one can increase powers open to Her Majesty's  
Revenue and Customs if in fact they have no such  
powers at all. So the matter does, I think, require some  
clarification.

The hon. Lady has certainly made her concern clear.  
The content of answers is not a matter for the Chair, but  
her concern has been conveyed to the Minister, in the  
sense that representatives of the Treasury Bench will  
have heard it, and her point will be recorded in the  
*Official Report*. If the Minister considers that she has

59

Points of Order

10 JULY 2017

Points of Order

60

*[Mr Speaker]*unintentionally misled the House, I am sure that she  
will take steps to put the record straight. I advise the  
hon. Lady to watch this space, and see whether such an  
attempt at corrective action is made. If it is, she will be  
happy. If it is not, my advice to her would be to return  
to the matter through further questioning, or possibly,  
if necessary, in extremis, by recourse to the Chair.

**Stephen Doughty:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.  
Given the importance of parliamentary scrutiny of  
arms export controls, which has been evidenced by the  
recent exchanges and by the judgment today, do you  
believe that there is anything to prevent the Committees  
on Arms Export Controls, or indeed any other Committees,  
from examining these important matters? Would they  
be able to review and look at classified information that  
was relevant to these matters—provided that the necessary  
security clearances were obtained—in much the same  
way as the Intelligence and Security Committee?

**Mr Speaker:** Off the top of my head, I would say to  
the hon. Gentleman that the only thing I can imagine  
preventing that would be a governmental refusal to  
divulge the information, on the grounds that it was  
classified and that the relevant Department or agency  
did not think that such sight by the Committee was  
necessary or desirable. Otherwise, there is nothing to  
prevent it, and if such a Committee were to seek it, it  
might find that its search was successful—and I am sure  
that, if it had anything to do with the prodigious efforts  
of the hon. Gentleman, it would have a very good  
chance of being successful. I hope that that will do for  
now, because it is the best answer that I can offer.

**Stephen Twigg:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.  
During the statement just now, there was strong cross-party  
support for the re-establishment of the Committees on  
Arms Export Controls. In the previous Parliament, that  
Committee ceased to meet because one of its component  
Select Committees, the Foreign Affairs Committee, voted  
to unilaterally leave it. May I ask you to use your good  
offices to ensure that what the Secretary of State, the  
shadow Secretary of State and the Scottish National  
party spokesperson said during the statement is fulfilled  
and we re-establish the Committees on Arms Export  
Controls as soon as possible?

**Mr Speaker:** I certainly think it would be very desirable  
for Parliament and for the scrutiny of the Executive  
branch by Parliament for that Committee to be  
re-established sooner rather than later. The word of  
caution or caveat that I insert, which the hon. Gentleman  
will appreciate, is that, unless I am much mistaken, that  
Committee can be established only when what might be  
called the feeder or constituent Committees have themselves  
been established. That, of course, requires not merely  
the election of the Chairs of those Committees, which is  
due to take place on Wednesday of this week, but the  
election by the respective parties, by such methods as  
they have adopted, of their member contingents on  
those Committees.

I have not been given much encouragement to think  
that those Committees will be fully constituted by the  
time of the summer recess, although I must say to the  
hon. Gentleman that it would be perfectly possible fully

to constitute all of the Select Committees by the time of  
the summer recess if there were a proper will to do so. If  
it were the case that none of the constituent political  
parties was interested in getting its act together, that  
would reflect very badly on them, to be frank, because  
the issue is not the interest of the party, but the interest  
of Parliament. If it transpired that some parties were  
ready to elect their members to those Committees and  
other parties were not, that would look very bad for the  
parties that were not ready. They have a responsibility  
in this matter.

I do not wish to say this unkindly, but, whoever is in  
government, it is absolutely natural that the zeal and  
enthusiasm to establish the Select Committees which  
scrutinise the Executive branch are never as obvious  
within the Executive branch as they are within Parliament.  
However, as Speaker, I am concerned about Parliament—  
Parliament exercising its rights, and Parliament doing  
its duty—and I would rather hope that, to put it bluntly,  
instead of faffing around, we could get on with this  
matter.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Further to  
that point of order, Mr Speaker. In defence of the  
former Foreign Affairs Committee, it must be said that  
I think that the reason for its withdrawal from the  
Committees on Arms Export Controls was the  
unauthorised leaking of a draft report; so that was a  
more complex situation than was first suggested.

However, reverting to the question of getting the  
Committees up and running, given that I understand  
that the 1922 Committee, for example, has not held its  
elections and it would normally handle the election of  
ordinary members to the Select Committees, is there  
any way that the resources of the House might be  
involved in assisting this process to get under way more  
quickly in the absence of the election of members of the  
executive of the 1922 Committee to administer this?

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.  
I take note of his first point, with which I will not  
quibble; I do not want to enter into the dispute about  
what caused the ceasing to operate of the Committees  
on Arms Export Controls, but I simply note what he  
said.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, I note  
that he said that, so far as his party is concerned, the  
officers of the 1922 Committee normally handle the  
election of members. To put it bluntly, if memory serves  
me correctly, what the officers of the 1922 Committee  
usually do in respect of their party—perhaps something  
similar operates in other parties—is simply oversee the  
count. Whether the officers of the 1922 Committee  
have or have not been elected is not a matter for the  
Chair—that is a party matter—but, frankly, overseeing  
the count does not require Einsteinian qualities; it is a  
pretty prosaic task.

I do not think it would be right to say that the  
resources of the House could be made available in what  
is essentially the oversight of a matter undertaken by  
parties. However, it would seem to be perfectly feasible,  
if my colleagues, the Deputy Speakers, were so willing,  
that they and I could volunteer our services to oversee  
the count, if the House thought that that would be  
helpful. My basic point stands: do colleagues want  
these Committees to be set up sooner rather than later?

61

Points of Order

10 JULY 2017

62

If they do not, that is a pity, but if they do, those of us  
who are of good will and can be relied upon to conduct  
the count perfectly fairly, would, I suspect, be very  
happy to offer our services. I could hardly be more  
explicit. We will leave it there for now. I am grateful to  
the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis)  
and to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby  
(Stephen Twigg).

**Mr Speaker:** I call Diana Johnson to make an application  
for leave to propose a debate on a specific and important  
matter that should have urgent consideration under the  
terms of Standing Order No. 24. The hon. Member has  
up to three minutes in which to make such an application.

Contaminated Blood

*Application for emergency debate (Standing Order  
No. 24)*

5.30 pm

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I  
seek leave to propose that the House should debate a  
specific and important matter that should have urgent  
consideration—namely, the need for the Government to  
establish an independent public inquiry into the  
contaminated blood scandal, which is the worst treatment  
disaster in the history of the NHS. In his valedictory  
speech to this House on 25 April 2017, the then right  
hon. Member for Leigh outlined a dossier of extremely  
serious allegations amounting to criminal conduct on  
the part of individuals involved in the contaminated  
blood scandal. He said that, if the Government did not  
commit to a public inquiry

“by the time the House rises for the summer recess, I will refer my  
evidence to the police”.—[*Official Report*, 25 April 2017; Vol. 624,  
c. 1081.]

The then Under-Secretary of State for Health—the  
former Member for Oxford West and Abingdon—asked  
him to submit his dossier of evidence to the Health  
Secretary, which he did. She assured the House that the  
Secretary of State would give it “the highest priority”.  
However, we have heard nothing since then, and we  
now have further unanswered questions that underline  
the need for an emergency debate.

First, the *Daily Mail* set out evidence last week that  
officials knew, as early as 1980, that 50 people with  
haemophilia a year were being infected with hepatitis C.  
Nothing was done about this for five years. Secondly, it  
has been reported in *The Sunday Times* that, on Friday  
7 July, the Westminster leaders of all six non-Government  
parties in the House of Commons—including the  
Democratic Unionist party—wrote a joint letter to the  
Prime Minister urging her to commit to a Hillsborough-style  
inquiry. Thirdly, the right hon. Andy Burnham yesterday  
reaffirmed his commitment to refer cases of alleged  
criminality to the police, and confirmed that he has an  
appointment with the police on 26 July.

We are now fast approaching the summer recess  
deadline, yet what little comment the Government have  
made has only added to the confusion and strengthened  
the case for an emergency debate. It would appear that  
the Secretary of State for Health has not considered the  
dossier, as was promised on 25 April. Last week, the  
Prime Minister and the Leader of the House of Commons  
responded to questions about the scandal: one from me,  
the other from my hon. Friend the Member for Newport  
East (Jessica Morden). Neither of them addressed our  
direct questions about the need for a public inquiry.  
Indeed, both raised further confusion by referring to  
the financial support for those affected as “compensation”,  
contradicting the position taken by previous Ministers.

These recent developments have been extremely  
significant. The letter of 7 July raises the prospect that,  
if the matter of a public inquiry were put to a vote in  
the House, it would command the support of the majority  
of Members of Parliament. For all the reasons I have  
outlined, I believe that we now need an emergency  
debate. We need the Government to do the right thing  
and secure justice for those affected in this scandal,  
including justice for the 2,400 people who have already  
died.

63

Contaminated Blood

10 JULY 2017

64

**Mr Speaker:** I have listened carefully to the application  
from the hon. Member, and I am satisfied that the  
matter raised by her is proper to be discussed under the  
terms of Standing Order No. 24. Has the hon. Member  
the leave of the House?

*Application agreed to.*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member has obtained the  
leave of the House. I can inform the House that the debate  
will be held tomorrow, Tuesday 11 July, as the first item  
of public business. The debate will last for up to three  
hours and will arise on a motion that the House has  
considered the specified matter set out in the hon.  
Member's application. She may wish to liaise either  
with my office or with the Clerks as to the precise  
wording, but it was referenced in her initial application  
to me and it conveys the gravamen of the issue in terms  
that are unmistakable. I hope that that is helpful to the  
hon. Member and to the House, which has about 24 hours'  
notice—perhaps a bit less than that—of the intended  
debate.

Telecommunications Infrastructure (Relief  
from Non-Domestic Rates) Bill

5.35 pm

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** I beg to  
move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Everyone in the House knows the importance of  
being connected, whether through traditional means or,  
increasingly, through digital connections. Whether the  
issue is the next generation of broadband technology,  
better mobile phone coverage or preparing for the next  
generation of 5G, the Bill is all about improved connectivity.  
Whether we are talking about fixed networks in the  
ground or the next generation of mobile and wireless  
connectivity, what people care about is how well connected  
they are—good download and upload speeds, reliability,  
latency, and how quickly they get reconnected when  
there is a problem. It is a problem that we can all  
identify with, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I say what  
a great pleasure it is to see you in the Chair for the first  
time from the Dispatch Box, Dame Rosie?

Our task is to prepare for a world of considerably  
greater demand for digital connectivity. Just as Moore's  
law states that the cost of computing halves each year,  
Nielsen's law has seen the doubling of data demands  
every two years. World-class connectivity is important  
for people to function in the modern world, whether at  
work or at play. It will continue to transform our public  
services and bring efficiencies there, too, and it is important  
for all sectors in our economy. The challenge is always  
to stay a step ahead of need. We need the digital  
infrastructure that can support that, providing ubiquitous  
coverage so that no one is left out, and sufficient capacity  
to ensure that data can flow at volume and with speed  
and reliability to meet the demands of modern life.

All these connections rely on Britain laying more  
fibre-optic cable. Whether fibre all the way to the  
premise—to each home and business—or the fibre that  
underpins the mobile network, all modern connectivity  
runs off fibre. Around five years ago, the nation took a  
strategic decision to roll out high-speed broadband  
based largely on a part-fibre, part-copper network.  
Superfast broadband delivered in that way is today  
available to 93% of UK homes and businesses. We rank  
first among the big European states for superfast  
connections, and we are on track to reach 95% by the  
end of this year.

In mentioning that, may I pay tribute to my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey)? He  
did so much—he never lets me forget how much—to  
deliver the first-rate, high-quality superfast broadband  
connectivitytohomesandbusinessesaroundthecountry  
that now allows us to say that 93% of people have  
access to, but do not necessarily take up, superfast  
broadband.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): I  
thank the right hon. Gentleman for being so quick to  
take an intervention. May I suggest that he is being a  
little Panglossian and positive in his approach? As  
constituency MPs, we receive quite a number of complaints,  
and yet the grin on his face suggests quite the opposite.

**Matt Hancock:** That was me talking about what we have  
done so far—just wait until I talk about what we need  
to do in the future. I strongly agree with the hon. Lady

65 *Telecommunications Infrastructure  
(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)*

that we need to do much more, which is what the bulk of  
my speech is all about. Indeed, it is what the Bill is all  
about. If she holds the view she espouses, I look forward  
to her marching through the Division Lobby later in  
support.

Precisely on the point raised by the hon. Lady, of  
course 7% of premises do not yet have access to superfast  
connections, so we are introducing the new broadband  
universal service obligation so that, by 2020, everyone  
has access to a minimum level of service. That will  
provide a vital safety net and ensure that nobody is left  
behind as the country takes these strides towards better  
connectivity.

Yet even this is not enough. Demand marches on.  
People's needs and expectations have risen further, and  
will continue to rise. Yes, we need to celebrate what we  
have done so far, but we must also deliver deeper  
connectivity,nowandinthefuture,tosupportacompetitive  
market and to ensure that we get this infrastructure in  
the ground. We must work now to deliver the next  
generation of technologies, 5G and fibre over the decades  
ahead. This Bill is part of a suite of actions we are  
taking to boost Britain's fibre. We will break down  
barriers to better broadband for business and get quicker  
connectivity for consumers.

First, in the Digital Economy Act 2017 we reformed  
the electronic communications code, which regulates  
agreements between people who provide sites and the  
digital communication operators. That new code will  
make it easier for electronic communications infrastructure  
to be deployed, maintained and upgraded. We are currently  
finalising the regulations needed to support the new  
code, which we plan to commence later this year when  
the work has been completed.

Secondly, with the separation of Openreach from  
BT we will see a more competitive market, with an  
Openreach that serves all customers well, rather than  
just focusing on BT. That decision has been largely  
welcomed by BT's competitors and is the result of  
intense negotiations between Ofcom and BT. It is the  
right outcome and will ensure that Openreach delivers  
not just for its customers but for the whole country.

Thirdly, we are supporting the fibre roll-out through  
a £400 million digital infrastructure investment fund to  
help competitors in the market to reach scale and to  
deliver. The fund will improve access to commercial  
financeforalternativedevelopersforfullfibreinfrastructure,  
helping them to accelerate roll-out plans and compete  
with the larger players.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Will  
that assist those areas, of which there seem to be a great  
number in my constituency, where one part of, say, a  
market town or a small village has had its box upgraded  
by BT but users who are a few yards further away from  
the box, requiring longer reaches of copper wire, cannot  
get a decent service?

**Matt Hancock:** It may well help, but the universal  
service obligation is the thing that will really help those  
people, because it means everybody will have a right to  
a high-speed broadband connection. Some of those  
connections will be delivered by the next-generation full  
fibre connectivity and some of them by the existing  
technology, but our whole package of measures to  
deliver better broadband and quicker connectivity will  
ensure that we reach those people who, frustratingly,

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure 66

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

can be just a few yards further away from a box—or,  
indeed, who see the fibre go down in the road in front of  
their premises—but who do not have a connection.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): I welcome the  
Bill, which is essential for moving the country forward  
and making our businesses as strong as possible, but  
even in the centre of Taunton Deane and the county  
town of Taunton there are areas where people still  
cannot get fast broadband. Will the Minister tell them  
how quickly they might be able to take advantage of  
this new service?

**Matt Hancock:** The universal service obligation is in  
law to ensure that everybody can access the service by  
2020, but that is an end date, a deadline. As I said  
earlier, we have now reached 93% of premises. Crucially,  
that is 93% of premises having access to broadband—they  
still have to take it up. In fact, everybody who takes up  
the service in a subsidised area puts more money into  
the pot so that we can give more people access to  
superfast broadband.

Just 42% of the country had superfast broadband in  
2010, when my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Wantage took up the reins of delivering it, but now  
93% have access to it. We are on track to get to 95% at  
the end of the year, and then 100% of premises will have  
access to high-speed broadband by 2020. As my hon.  
Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow)  
can see, we are rolling that out. Crucially, that is delivering  
today's technology—it delivers the needs of an average  
household today—but we also need to make sure we are  
ahead of the curve on the next generation of technology.

The idea of the digital investment fund is that it  
supports the commercial finance of alternative developers  
so we get more players into the market, rather than  
just having BT and Virgin, the two big players. The  
Government's investment will be at least matched on  
the same terms by private sector investments so we  
expect it to capitalise more private investment and bring  
more than £1 billion of investment overall into full-fibre  
broadband, getting the really high speeds that some  
people need and want now, but many, many more will  
need and want in the future as these demands increase.

**Kit Malthouse** (North West Hampshire) (Con): I  
want to refer back to the Minister's remarks on the  
universal service obligation, which of course he is right  
to hail as a revolution in provision. The USO will be  
subject to a cost cap, so I wonder whether he will tell us  
when our constituents are likely to know what that cap  
is going to be and therefore whether he will be burnishing  
his credentials as a hero of rural Britain or not.

**Matt Hancock:** I know when to take a compliment as  
a threat. The truth is that this all depends on the  
technology. It may cost an awful lot to dig a trench and  
getapieceof fibre all the way to some places a long way  
from the existing network. However, new technologies  
arecomingonstream,especiallyfixedwirelesstechnologies,  
where a signal is beamed from one place to another. As  
a last resort, there are satellite technologies, which are  
good but not as reliable, that mean everyone can get  
connected. The aim is to get decent broadband speeds  
to every premises that wants them, making sure that as  
much of that as is feasibly possible is covered by a fixed  
network, but using technologies to get to the hardest to  
reach.

10 JULY 2017

67 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): I am grateful to the Minister for confirming that  
100% of properties will have access to this by 2020, but  
will he confirm what speeds they will have access to? At  
the moment, there is a range of 2 megabits per second  
for the universal service and 24 megabits per second and  
more for the superfast service. What range of speeds is  
he talking about when he refers to 100%?

**Matt Hancock:** We have said 10 megabits per second  
as a minimum, and that is Ofcom's analysis of the needs  
of the average household today; this is about making  
sure there is a service everybody can use. As we ask  
people to pay their taxes, get their passports or do their  
ruralpayments service applications online, it is a perfectly  
reasonable request back to us in government that people  
should have a decent level of broadband. If people  
want the really tip-top level, they may have to pay more  
for it, and that is not unreasonable either. We are saying  
that there must be a decent level of high-speed broadband.  
At the moment, we have said 10 megabits per second as  
a minimum, but we have also said that that has to be  
reviewed in an upwards direction in due course.

**Richard Benyon** (Newbury) (Con): I speak as someone  
whose constituency is one big roadworks, where a company  
called Gigaclear delivers fibre to premises, which is  
welcomed by people in even quite remote communities.

Will the Minister help us with concerns we might  
have about his discussions with the Valuation Office  
Agency, which, in my experience, seems not to understand  
the way the world is? At the click of a VOA bureaucrat's  
mouse, the finances of a local unitary authority such as  
West Berkshire Council can be radically altered in terms  
of how networks are business rated.

**Matt Hancock:** I can tell my right hon. Friend two  
things. The first is that we are committed to a business  
rates review to look at these sorts of things for fibre  
currently in the ground; I am sure the Secretary of State  
for Communities and Local Government and the Under-  
SecretaryofStateforCommunitiesandLocalGovernment,  
my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr Jones), who  
are here on the Bench, will have heard what he has said.

The second thing is that at the heart of this Bill is  
making sure that new fibre that goes into the ground  
will have no such rates at all for the next five years,  
which is why we are here legislating today; we are  
making sure that companies such as the one he mentioned  
can get on and deliver this fibre, digging it in the ground  
as efficiently and cheaply as is reasonably possible, and  
we reduce the tax on that.

The fourth reason why fibre is important is for  
implementing our 5G strategy, including exploring  
commercial options to improve mobile coverage on our  
roads and rail networks, because we want mobile phone  
coverage where people live, work and travel. We are  
working with Ofcom to make sure that UK regulations  
on spectrum and infrastructure are 5G ready. We are  
working across Government with the Department for  
Transport and the Department for Communities and  
Local Government to make sure that we get right the  
rules on putting the infrastructure in place. We are also  
supporting 5G pilots, the first of which we will roll out  
next year, making Britain a global leader in 5G. All  
5G roll-out is supported by fibre—there cannot be a  
5G mast without the fibre that connects it to the network.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 68

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

Fifthly, our £200 million local full-fibre networks  
programme is about supporting local bodies to stimulate  
the market for fibre connectivity in their areas. Fibre  
cannot be delivered by some sort of entirely nationalised,  
top-down, taxpayer-funded system; it has to be done in  
collaboration with the private sector. The local full-fibre  
networks programme is being delivered in support of  
local bodies to encourage the market to provide more  
fibre connectivity. For example, public sector anchor  
tenancies will bring together public sector broadband  
demand in an area to create an anchor customer,  
thereby making sure that investors know there is enough  
revenue to reduce the risk of building a new network.  
Such networks will connect directly into public sector  
buildings such as schools and hospitals. At the same  
time, they will improve connectivity for those who work  
in our vital public services and bring fibre closer  
to more homes and businesses, allowing them to be  
connected, too. The first wave of projects will begin  
later in the year. This is a great example of the public  
andprivatesectorsworkingtogethertoimproveconnectivity  
for all.

Sixthly, our business broadband fibre connection  
vouchers are incredibly exciting for people like me who  
are frustrated at the poor quality of broadband being  
delivered to businesses. In the previous Parliament, we  
had a really effective voucher scheme for superfast  
broadband for businesses. The new vouchers will be  
trialled by the end of the year and will be for full-fibre  
connections for businesses. The scheme will be rolled  
out more widely in 2018 to help businesses to get the  
best fibre broadband, because we know that so many  
jobs and so much business growth depends on it.

The Bill takes a further step. Business rates are an  
important source of revenue for local services, but have  
long been cited as a barrier to investment by the telecoms  
sector. There has been consternation—as articulated by  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard  
Benyon)—at how the rates have been calculated. There was  
a perception of a disparity or lack of fairness between  
the rates paid by some operators, such as BT and Virgin  
Media, and smaller alternative networks such as CityFibre  
and Gigaclear. The rating methodology is of course a  
matter for the independent VOA, which has been working  
on this issue with the sector, but it is complex work and  
we do not have a moment to waste.

We recognise the urgent need to go the extra mile, so  
in last year's autumn statement my right hon. Friend  
the Chancellor announced a 100% rate relief for all new  
fibre networks for five years from April 2017, with any  
relief backdated to that date. We will fund and fuel a  
full-fibre future, and we have introduced this Bill early  
in the Parliament to bring forward the legislative changes  
required to make that happen. The Bill will introduce  
new rules into each provision for business rates to allow  
us to vary the rates bill for telecommunication infrastructure,  
which will be set so that no rates are paid on new fibre  
for five years from the April just gone.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Does  
the Minister think the five-year period for business rates  
relief will be sufficient to incentivise the market players  
to get on and roll out fibre broadband? Will he try to  
ensure that as they do that we get coverage throughout  
the country and they do not just start in the easy-to-reach  
areas first?

10 JULY 2017

69 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Matt Hancock:** First, there is no doubt that the  
five-year business rates holiday shows that we are reducing  
the cost of getting fibre into the ground. Secondly, it is  
time limited, so my message to alternative providers, as  
well as the big players, is to get on with it and make use  
of the relief while it is available. Thirdly, it gives us time  
for the business rates review and the VOA to look at the  
complexities over a reasonable period and come forward  
with a long-term, sustainable scheme. Sixthly—fourthly?  
I cannot remember which point I was up to, but I am  
sure that *Hansard* will make this bit sound really eloquent.  
I have completely lost my train of thought!

The final thing I was going to say is that the five-year  
business rates holiday will also give us the opportunity  
to decide, towards its end, whether five years has been  
long enough and whether we want to extend it. The fact  
that it is a five-year period demonstrates that providers  
should get on with it. I assure my hon. Friend the  
Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton) that  
it will be no shorter than five years, and I am grateful  
for her intervention because it allowed me to get completely  
confused with my own points.

In total, our efforts are part of measures worth  
£1.1 billion to support the market-led roll-out of fibre  
broadband and ensure that we are at the front of the  
5G queue. There is still a lot more work to be done, and  
we will consult shortly on the technical details of  
implementation. The relief will reduce the costs of  
deployment, thereby incentivising the market to deliver  
where it otherwise would not have. I hope that, in the  
spirit of cross-party collaboration, the Bill will get the  
support of Government and Opposition Members, as it  
will benefit people right across the United Kingdom.  
We want to see a country in which people are better  
connected and everyone can get online and reach their  
full potential, and to make sure that nobody is left  
behind. The Bill provides a step on that journey, and I  
commend it to the House.

5.56 pm

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): May I  
welcome you to the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker? It  
is a pleasure to see you in your rightful place. I wish to  
take this opportunity to welcome my shadow Communities  
and Local Government team: my hon. Friends the  
Members for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon)  
and for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue), and my hon.  
Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen  
Morgan), who has today agreed to act as my PPS.

The Opposition cautiously welcome the Government's  
apparent commitment to provide financial relief for all  
new investment in full-fibre internet for five years. In the  
course of my speech, I shall set out why I say “cautiously”.  
Until the intervention from the hon. Member for Aldridge-  
Brownhills (Wendy Morton), the Minister had waxed  
lyrical for twenty minutes before coming to business  
rate relief, which is the subject of this very short Bill.

The Opposition welcome the opportunity finally to  
discuss a crucial piece of infrastructure policy—a policy  
that will have a huge impact on the potential investment  
opportunities for all our communities over the coming  
decades. It is rather ironic that we are talking about  
IT connections on a day when pretty much all the  
parliamentary internet connection is down. I have it on  
good assurance that the parliamentary information and  
communications technology officers are busily trying to  
reconnect MPs to the internet and their email accounts.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 70

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

All Members will know that the policy in the Bill will  
affect every part of the country—north or south; England,  
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; urban or rural—so  
we have to get this right. I am sure Members will feel  
that acutely today as we and our staff struggle with the  
collapse of internet connection across the Westminster  
estate which I just mentioned.

We were expecting a larger, more substantial Bill, not  
least considering the scope of investment and certainty  
needed not only for full-fibre infrastructure but on  
business rates more widely. However, it appears that the  
Government have been in permanent listening mode for  
quite some time now, which would explain their decision  
to acquiesce in the concerns of independent and large  
internet providers who at the end of last year faced an  
excessive fourfold increase in their rateable values.

The UK's main providers and the Broadband  
Commission have estimated that UK 5G infrastructure  
will outstrip the economic benefits of fibre broadband,  
which most of the country currently uses, by 2026,  
when it will be outdated. By 2026, therefore, the UK  
will reach a tipping point where the direct economic  
benefits of new 5G optical fibre internet will beat the  
conventional fibre broadband. Various estimates point  
to a boost to the UK economy of between £5 billion to  
£7 billion just six years from roll-out, with 5G broadband  
delivering economic growth almost twice as quickly as  
conventional fibre broadband used today. Much as with  
our railways and road links, the quicker the connection,  
the faster businesses will grow, particularly in an age  
when online sales, social media and direct online contact  
with buyers and sellers are becoming the norm.

A study by O2 has revealed that national 5G  
infrastructure will also add an extra £3 billion a year  
through secondary supply chain impacts, boosting overall  
UK productivity by a total of £10 billion, which, as I  
have already said, makes good, sound economic sense.  
With improved connectivity comes greater economic  
growth, more jobs and improved links between business  
hubs and individuals alike. Although today's Bill will be  
welcomed by larger providers in the sector as it will  
relieve some of the burden that they face from increased  
business rates—£60 million is on offer, which is a big  
giveaway to them—I worry that it will do not as much  
as it should for the independent providers, and it will  
not come close to mitigating the fourfold increase that  
all providers have faced. Perhaps the Minister can give  
us some assurances when he winds up the debate. Providers  
are not the only ones who need assurances; consumers  
do, too, and they need to know that those costs will not  
be passed on to them.

Additionally, I am slightly disappointed that this Bill  
contains only partial measures, instead of the more  
detailed and wide-ranging set of proposals that were  
outlined in the Local Government Finance Bill, of  
which these measures were originally a part. I mention  
that Bill, which had successfully passed through Committee,  
as it included proposals on local business rate retention  
for local authorities as well as the legislation for business  
rate relief for new full-fibre broadband, which we are  
now discussing today. However, those fuller measures  
seem to have disappeared since the general election.

Since that election, I have asked the Secretary of  
State on three separate occasions about the progress  
that has been made on delivering business rate retention  
for local authorities. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of

10 JULY 2017

71 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Andrew Gwynne]*

State for Communities and Local Government, the  
hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr Jones), has something  
to say on that. He can intervene on me now or respond  
in his closing remarks. I ask him again: what is happening  
to retention and why has business rate relief for new 5G  
connectivity now been separated into this smaller, separate  
Bill?

As I have said, I have written to the Secretary of State  
about this matter and I await his response, although I  
hope that, by this stage, the Department will do less  
listening and more acting on this issue of business rate  
retention. In the spirit of the cross-party co-operation  
that the Prime Minister is now asking for, and in respect  
of the exchange of ideas and genuine dialogue between  
the Opposition and the Government, I suggest that  
perhaps we can work together on a shared future for  
local government finance. The local government sector  
deserves more than a policy and a financial black hole  
with which it is currently faced with the exclusion of the  
Local Government Finance Bill from the Queen's Speech.  
At the same time, the Government are still announcing  
their intention to remove the revenue support grant.  
Perhaps the Minister can clarify that when he closes the  
debate.

The Secretary of State and I visited the LGA conference  
last week—admittedly we received slightly different  
receptions. I am sure that he was reminded again and  
again by representatives from councils of all political  
colours of the financial certainty that local authorities  
desperately need—specifically at a time when they have  
already absorbed budgets cuts of 40%. However, like  
me, they have received no updates and no certainty.  
While we are talking about an element of the business  
rate in this Bill, perhaps we can remind the Secretary of  
State that local authorities need to have that clarity and  
certainty for future financial planning. They need some  
idea from this Government of where the wider business  
rate policy is going.

I will repeat what I said during my speech to the  
Local Government Association: “The Secretary of State  
told local government that they faced a looming crisis  
in confidence. He's wrong. It is this Government who  
are facing a looming crisis in confidence.” The lack of  
clarity on business rates and the botched business rates  
revaluations have left thousands of businesses facing  
cliff-edge increases in their rates. In addition, the  
Government's support package and promises to review  
the revaluation process go nowhere near far enough.

It is clear that business rates are this Department's  
ticking time bomb, which threatens to destroy high  
streets and town centres across the country. Labour  
advocates introducing statutory annual revaluations to  
stop businesses facing periodic and unmanageable hikes,  
and guarantees a fair and transparent appeals process.  
We will reform business rates, scrap quarterly reporting  
and end the scourge of late payments, because it is  
Labour which is the party of business. *[Interruption.]*Members can heckle, but the facts speak clearly: this  
Government have let down business and they have let  
down local government.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con):  
Will the hon. Gentleman just remind us of the Labour  
party's policy on corporation tax rates?

Telecommunications Infrastructure 72

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Andrew Gwynne:** Absolutely. Labour would have  
increased corporation tax to pay for better public services,  
but our rates would still have been among the lowest in  
the G20. It is a question of priorities. We can put money  
where people want it—in a better NHS, in better local  
government and in better education—or we can have  
poorly funded public services and tax giveaways to  
those at the very top. For all its rhetoric about ending  
austerity, it seems quite clear that the Conservative  
party has not changed one iota. There was a further  
omission to this Bill—

**Kit Malthouse**: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise  
that the reductions in corporation tax in the past few  
years have resulted in a massive increase in the cash  
collected by the Treasury?

**Andrew Gwynne:** As I said in answer to the hon.  
Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately),  
it is a question of priorities. We can give tax cuts to big  
business, or we can invest in public services. The point is  
that we made a very clear choice—*[Interruption.]* We  
have differences of opinion on this. The hon. Gentleman  
feels that having the lowest corporation tax is a good  
thing, but I think that having a corporation tax that is  
among the lowest in the world with a better funded  
public—*[Interruption.]* It is not an anti-business rant. I  
am talking about being both pro-business and pro-public  
services. That is the choice, because our public services  
are on their knees. If this is the cross-party co-operation  
that the Prime Minister wants, I am afraid it will be a  
long time coming.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Andrew Gwynne:** I will not give way, because we are  
talking about infrastructure.

**Helen Whately** *rose—*

**Andrew Gwynne:** No, I have given way once to the  
hon. Lady, I will not do so again.

There is a further omission in this Bill—the exclusion  
of any real and meaningful legislative commitments on  
growing rural broadband. I am worried that there appears  
to be absolutely no mention in the body of the Bill or  
the explanatory notes of growing and expanding the  
UK's superfast broadband in our rural areas, although  
the Minister touched on it and I think there is some  
consensus about its desirability.

Let me give a short anecdote. Last year, I was privileged  
to be in a delegation to Zambia for the Inter-Parliamentary  
Union Assembly. In the middle of Africa, in the middle  
of nowhere, on a visit to a health scheme near the  
Zambezi river, I received an almost-perfect 4G connection  
to my mobile phone. There are parts of my constituency  
where I do not get such a perfect 4G connection. We  
need to look at our internet connections, broadband  
connections and mobile telephone connections in this  
country so that we have the very best to support business,  
consumers and individuals.

As I am sure the Minister is aware, many families  
living in rural areas struggle to get anything close to fast  
broadband, let alone 5G, which is what we are discussing  
today. Many others struggle to get anything above  
2 megabits per second, making most average use of

73 *Telecommunications Infrastructure  
(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)*

day-to-day internet functions incredibly frustrating. The  
impact on rural businesses is steep, with the Select  
Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
warning before the 2015 general election that rural  
communities are being overlooked for potential investment  
by businesses looking to expand and develop because  
certain regions have very poor digital connectivity. The  
then Chair of the Committee, the former Member for  
Thirsk and Malton, said:

“There is a risk in the current approach that improving service  
for those who already have it will leave even further behind those  
who have little or none.”

Rather than taking responsibility for this ever-growing  
chasm in our technology and identifying specific areas  
that desperately need investment, the Government have  
chosen to rely solely on the market to encourage  
improvements in any given area.

**Matt Hancock:** That is not the case. The Digital  
Economy Act 2017, which was the last Bill passed in the  
previous Parliament, gives us the power to require a  
universal service obligation so as to get high-speed  
broadband to everybody.

**Andrew Gwynne:** Well—*[Interruption.]* Exactly. As  
my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and  
Royton says, the Minister should share that with his  
Back Benchers. In all parts of the House, there is  
growing dissatisfaction with some rural broadband  
connectivity, its impact not just on consumers but on  
businesses, and the slow pace of improvement. It is  
clear that the Government ought perhaps to use their  
powers to ensure that those improvements happen,  
because it is a massive frustration for those communities  
and businesses—I see him nodding his head in agreement.

**Matt Hancock:** It is a serious frustration and we will  
use the powers.

**Andrew Gwynne** *rose—*

**Helen Whately** *rose—*

**Andrew Gwynne:** Will the hon. Lady to let me answer  
the Minister's intervention before I take another?

I am grateful to hear that from the Minister, and we  
will hold the Government to account to ensure that that  
intervention takes place. As he knows, we are all here to  
ensure that improvements happen, and if he has given a  
commitment from the Dispatch Box that he will use his  
ministerial position to ensure that the market is not a  
free-for-all and that the Government will ensure those  
improvements in rural areas, for rural businesses and  
consumers, the Opposition will support him.

**Helen Whately:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for  
giving way to one of the Back Benchers he mentions.  
Yes, many of us are campaigning on behalf of our  
constituents for better broadband, but on behalf of  
many of my constituents I appreciate that 20% of  
properties have been connected to superfast broadband  
thanks to the Government's intervention. I expect up to  
100% to be connected thanks to further Government  
intervention through the universal service obligation, as  
the Minister mentioned earlier. I look forward to being  
very grateful to the Government for all the work they  
are doing for my constituents.

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure 74

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Andrew Gwynne:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for  
that intervention, because, of course, it was not just the  
Government who did that. I do not know whether she  
was a remainer or a leaver, but it would be remiss of the  
House, whatever our views on Brexit, not to acknowledge  
the involvement of the European Commission in funding  
some of the roll-out of this infrastructure and technology.  
It has come not just from the Government but from  
others, and we can see the European flag stickers on  
boxes, cabinets and infrastructure up and down the  
country.

**Kit Malthouse** *rose—*

**Andrew Gwynne:** I am afraid that I have upset the  
hon. Gentleman by mentioning the word “Europe”.

**Kit Malthouse:** The hon. Gentleman has to recognise  
that there is also a downside to EU involvement. I know  
that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage  
(Mr Vaizey) struggled for a long time with EU state aid  
rules and the roll-out of broadband and, certainly for  
small businesses, had to come up with a slightly Heath  
Robinson-esque scheme of vouchers to get around the  
rules. If anything, they hampered roll-out rather than  
assisting.

**Andrew Gwynne:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
right. I am not saying that everything was perfect with  
that scheme, or with the European Community and  
European Union. I was merely pointing out in response  
to the intervention from the hon. Member for Faversham  
and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) that it would be remiss  
of us to suggest that all the funding came from central  
Government when it came from a variety of sources,  
including the European Commission, to which all those  
stickers are a testament.

As I have said and as the Minister has acknowledged,  
our rural areas need a long-term investment strategy,  
not just short-term subsidy, helpful though that is. I  
look forward to holding the Minister to account while  
he is in this post to ensure that he makes good on his  
word. The short-term subsidy will help, but we need to  
ensure that investment continues apace beyond the five-year  
deadline of this business rate relief and we need continually  
to update our internet connections with the latest  
technology.

The Opposition's focus is to encourage investment in  
all communities by excluding new investment in plant  
and machinery from future business rates valuation,  
which will free up medium and large businesses to invest  
in any area of the country. The country needs fresh  
ideas to meet the emerging challenges of the new century,  
yet what we have seen today, in a stripped-down Bill, is  
the lack of a comprehensive and compelling legislative  
framework that supports all businesses and local authorities  
on business rates.

I desperately plead for the co-operation the Prime  
Minister has asked for. I hope that it is genuine and  
heartfelt, and that she looks for ideas from the Opposition,  
which we are more than happy to provide to the  
Government—ideas to improve our infrastructure in  
cities and in rural areas, to update our connectivity, not  
just physically but through the cloud and other technologies,  
and to use emerging technologies to benefit British  
business, which will be crucial if we are to keep a  
competitive advantage in the uncertain years ahead.

75 *Telecommunications Infrastructure  
(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)  
[Andrew Gwynne]*

As we remove ourselves from the EU and strike a new  
set of trade deals across the world, we must keep that  
competitive edge. I agree with the Minister that new and  
emerging technology and infrastructure is part of the  
mechanism to drive Britain's economy in the face of the  
new challenges that lie ahead.

We will not divide the House tonight. We will look to  
strengthen the Bill in Committee and we will continue  
to challenge the Government on their wider local  
government finance policy until we get the answers and  
certainty that local government so desperately needs.  
Technology and infrastructure are vital to building  
Britain's capacity to grow and develop in a changing  
world in which we look to new and emerging markets. It  
is incumbent on whichever party is in government in  
future to work constructively with others to ensure that  
Britain's infrastructure is kept as up-to-date and as  
state-of-the-art as possible.

In that respect, we cautiously welcome the Bill. We  
will seek to strengthen it in Committee, but let us work  
together on some measures for future local government  
finance because, as the local government Minister knows,  
local government needs that certainty.

6.21 pm

**Mr Edward Vaizey** (Wantage) (Con): I am grateful for  
the chance to speak under your chairmanship for the  
second time, Madam Deputy Speaker. I refer hon.  
Members to my entries in the Register of Members'  
Financial Interests.

It is a great pleasure to take part in this debate. I  
thought it might be narrowly-focused, but I have judged,  
from the interventions on the Minister, that this is  
clearly going to be yet another talk-fest about the  
qualityof broadbandinindividualMembers'constituencies.  
That means I will have to stay for the whole debate to  
ensure that hon. Members are not too rude about me. I  
know that they are unswerving in their support of the  
Minister, but they always liked to have a go at me when  
I did his job.

It was quite good to hear the Opposition spokesman,  
the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew  
Gwynne), as he spent very little time actually talking  
about broadband, which shows how well the job has  
been done. He finessed his speech to talk widely about  
the important issue of businessrates,butonlymentioned  
broadband briefly. I understand why and respect his  
reasons because, under the stewardship of the Minister,  
we have of course seen the most successful rural broadband  
programme ever devised anywhere in the world. There was  
meant to be a cheer there. [HON.MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”]  
I will give hon. Members their cue points as I go  
through my speech.

This incredibly successful programme has delivered  
superfast broadband to 4.5 million premises for a few  
hundred million pounds. Most of that money, if not all  
of it, will come back to the Government because the  
way in which the contracts were constructed means that  
the money starts to be paid back once take-up passes a  
certain threshold. I echo the words of my hon. Friend  
the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately).  
She talked about the 20% of premises in her constituency  
that have superfast broadband. It is very important that  
we see our cup as half full. The Opposition Chief Whip

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure 76

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

spends his time thinking his cup is half full at the  
moment—*[Interruption.]* Oh, he is the Deputy Chief  
Whip; well, for me, he is really the Chief Whip. I digress.  
We hear from people who do not have broadband and  
are waiting for superfast broadband, and it is absolutely  
understandable that they are irritated. Those voices  
obviously grow louder as superfast broadband spreads,  
and as more people have access to this fantastic technology.

I got involved in the debate about business rates for  
broadband many years ago. In fact, when I was in  
opposition, I used to tease the then telecoms Minister,  
the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms).  
I came up with an Opposition policy to reduce or  
eliminate business rates on telecoms infrastructure because  
every provider I went to told me that business rates were  
a big impediment to investment. I challenged the then  
Minister, asking him what on earth he was going to do  
about that, because the Valuation Office Agency was in  
charge of the business rates and it was the Minister's job  
to take the agency by the scruff of the neck and sort the  
situation out. Of course, when I got into office, I  
realised that there was absolutely nothing I could do  
about it. The Valuation Office Agency is independent.  
It decides the level of business rates and it certainly sees  
off any Minister who tries to alter its independence or  
affect its judgment—quite right too.

The other row we had was about the fact that BT  
apparently gets a better deal on its business rates compared  
with some of the smaller providers. My understanding  
is that that is because of a long-standing court case  
brought by BT. BT also has much more infrastructure  
in the ground, so it is able to cut a wholesale deal with  
the Valuation Office Agency, but it is much more difficult  
for small providers that are getting under way. It is one  
of those unfortunate things. The point that I am trying  
to make, in my own rambling fashion, is that the impact  
of business rates on investment in broadband infrastructure  
is real. It is one of the factors that people take into  
account when they are trying to build infrastructure.  
The Bill is a very welcome measure to address that  
problem.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not know if you have  
actually read the Bill, but it is the most boring and  
technical Bill that I have ever read. There are only six  
clauses. I saw six officials sitting in the Box and wondered  
whether each had been given a clause, because the  
chance of making it to the end of drafting even one  
clause is almost impossible. I do not know whether any  
of my hon. Friends suffer from insomnia under the  
stressof doing this job. If so, I strongly recommend that  
they take the Bill home; they will be sound asleep by  
halfway through clause 1. However, I understand the  
thrust of the Bill, which aimsto encourage newinvestment  
in broadband infrastructure by suspending the levying  
of business rates. That is the best way to do it, and the  
Governmenthavecalculatedthatsomethinglike£60million  
of savings could be made.

I echo what the Minister said at the Dispatch Box. I  
hope that all new infrastructure providers—people have  
mentioned companies such as Gigaclear and CityFibre—  
will take advantage of this. The Bill is aimed squarely at  
them to remove a financial barrier to further investment.  
The Government are trying to move to the next phase  
of broadband roll-out. The key task of the previous  
Parliament was to get workable broadband with speeds  
of about 24 megabits to as many people as possible.

10 JULY 2017

77 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

That has pretty much been completed. I understand  
that, under the universal service obligation, people in  
the last 5% of premises might get lower, but still workable,  
speeds. We are starting to build the future-proofed  
infrastructure to deliver fast and reliable broadband at  
speeds of above 30 megabits. Those are the kinds of  
broadband speeds that we will be able to dial up as  
more people make use of the technology. We all know—this  
does not need to be rehearsed—how much technology  
and data are now used, and the kind of bandwidth  
needed for the average home with two teenagers and  
parents watching 4K content, let alone for somewhere  
with business needs.

Planning is a much bigger impediment than business  
rates. A lot of people forget that. They think it is easy to  
build this infrastructure, but it is not at all. One comes  
across far too many cases of councils not being  
co-ordinated. There are cases of broadband providers  
having to go to five different council departments to get  
permission for way leaves, to dig up the highway and all  
the other permissions they need to build this infrastructure.  
We really need to get to grips with this in some shape or  
fashion.

In the spirit of co-operation that the Prime Minister  
announced this morning, let me suggest that the Labour  
Front Benchers talk to the Mayor of London. There  
must be an opportunity for him to set up a broadband  
taskforce to get all the London boroughs to co-ordinate  
their planning. I have heard of councils—it does not  
really matter what political colour they are—not granting  
way leaves to providers who wanted to provide broadband  
for social housing in London. I have heard of councils  
that did not want the green boxes on their pavements  
because they did not like the design. I have come across  
councils that refused to let broadband providers go  
ahead with future work, because they did not clear up  
after their previous work. Now, I understand councils'  
irritation, but they are still holding things back. It is an  
incredibly dull point, but there must be an opportunity  
to co-ordinate the planning functions of the London  
boroughs, as well as of councils across the country.

**Michael Tomlinson:** May I disagree vigorously with  
my right hon. Friend by saying that it is not a boring  
point? It is actually very important that these companies  
clear up after themselves, because it causes reputational  
damage when they try to deliver superfast broadband  
and leave a mess behind. That does cause concern to  
residents, and it has caused concern in my constituency.  
He may say that it is a bit of a dull point, but it is  
important for companies to get things right so that they  
can be encouraged to do more in future.

**Mr Vaizey:** I thank my hon. Friend for that point. In  
fact, although I welcome Virgin Media's investment in  
cable in Didcot, the company has irritated quite a few of  
my constituents on the Ladygrove estate, so he is right  
that companies should clear up after themselves. I suppose  
I did not make myself entirely clear; my point was that,  
while councils should hold companies to account, their  
retribution should not be, “You can't do any more  
work,” because they would be punishing constituents  
for companies' past transgression.

Clearly, the Government want to encourage full fibre—  
fibre to the premises. It is true that we are falling behind  
some other countries. Spain, for example, is well advanced,  
but that is an historical advantage, because the infrastructure

Telecommunications Infrastructure 78

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

was put in 30 years ago, with extraordinary foresight.  
One also has to remember the topography of the built  
environment, because the more apartment blocks—as  
opposed to spread-out domestic homes—there are, the  
easier it is to deliver broadband quickly.

One should also not necessarily be seduced by statistics.  
Members might see, for example, that France is ahead  
of us in terms of fibre to the premises, but that fibre is  
in the same place as fibre to the cabinet, so very few  
people take it up, and a lot of people would say that it is  
wasted investment. The incremental approach taken in  
the UK so far—of getting universal coverage for superfast  
broadband and then moving on to fibre to the premises—is  
the right approach, because it keeps pace with customer  
demand. That is what has to happen.

The good news about fibre to the premises is that the  
cost of investment is coming down rapidly. TalkTalk  
has conducted trials in York, and what has happened is  
telling. The company has got the cost of connecting  
each home down to a few hundred pounds—£200,  
£300 or £400, I think. Also, people now talk about the  
impact on the community—about whether their house  
is in the green zone, which is where the fibre to the  
premises is, and people want to be there. Interestingly,  
customers do not actually care whether they can access  
1 gigabit; what they get by having fibre to the premises  
is an absolutely 100% reliable service, whereas even  
those of us who have signed up to superfast broadband  
know that the service can drop out.

This is a very important and welcome Bill. I would  
simply ask the Minister when he sums up—I do not  
know whether it will be the Secretary of State or my  
right hon. Friend the Minister for Digital—to talk a  
little about whether the Government have considered  
how this relief impacts on mobile infrastructure. The  
roll-out of 4G in this country has been very successful,  
and we should not forget that it has all been done  
through private investment. When we rail against the  
mobile operators, we have to remember that they pay  
us—the taxpayers—by paying in to the Treasury coffers  
for spectrum, and they then build out their networks,  
effectively with their own capital. However, they come  
across the most bizarre planning issues all the time, and  
although the Minister talked about the electronic  
communications code, which will help to make mobile  
planning easier, we could perhaps hear about whether  
the Bill will apply to the fibre that goes from the masts  
back to the cabinets, or whether it could be amended so  
that mobile masts were free from whatever business  
rates these companies pay.

I would also like to hear how the Bill will encourage  
the roll-out of 5G, which will potentially transform  
everything. What we need are small cells dotted throughout  
the urban environment. The company Arqiva is already  
trialling a 5G network with its own spectrum. Again, we  
potentially need a rethink on planning to make it much  
easier for mobile companies to roll out these small cells.  
Given the dense coverage companies need, requiring  
them to get planning permission for these small cells  
will be a real hindrance to the fast roll-out of 5G.

As I made my remarks, I could tell that I had the full  
attention of the House. I noticed one or two yawns and  
a few slightly irritated looks as people thought, “When is  
this guy going to finish so that I can make my speech  
about our rotten broadband and get it in my brilliant  
local paper?” Well, the time is now, because I have finished.

80

79

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

6.35 pm

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)  
(PC): On behalf of my Plaid Cymru colleagues, may I  
congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your  
election as a Deputy Speaker? We are looking forward  
to working with you and serving under your guidance  
for the duration of this Parliament.

I will keep my contribution short, because, to all  
intents and purposes from a Welsh perspective, this is  
an enabling Bill. We broadly welcome the provisions  
outlined in it, which provide powers for Welsh Ministers  
to award business rates relief to properties used to  
facilitate the transmission of broadband and mobile  
communications. This is at least one step in the right  
direction for my constituents, who have seen little digital  
dividend from the hundreds of millions of pounds  
spent on broadband and mobile signal to date.

I do, however, have some concerns about the UK  
Government's strategy of incentivising only the most  
advanced technology. As I understand the Bill, the plan  
in England is to provide 100% business rate relief for  
technology that supports 5G and ultrafast broadband.  
As we heard in an earlier intervention, that has a budget  
of around £60 million, which equates to Barnett  
consequentials for Wales of around £3 million, and that  
will just go into the general Welsh Government pot. If I  
have one message for today's debate, it is that it is vital  
that the Labour Welsh Government ring-fence that cash  
so that that money is not spent on pet projects.

Some 40% of my constituents are unable to access  
high-speed internet, and an even greater proportion are  
unable to get a 3G or 4G mobile phone signal in their  
homes. It is clear that we have a selective connectivity  
problem in Carmarthenshire. There is no doubt that  
that is holding back Carmarthenshire and the Welsh  
economy. We have no hope of making progress in  
developing our economy unless we can get to the bottom  
of the telecommunication infrastructure problems we  
face. If we were able to do so, I am confident that we  
would have a bright economic future in Carmarthenshire  
and in Wales, due to the incredible natural assets we  
have as a county and a country.

I am fortunate enough to have been born and raised  
in one of the most beautiful parts of the world, and I  
have no hesitation in saying that. We have a range of  
incredible leisure activities. One of the things that I  
think we will see in the modern workplace is that work  
and leisure time will become compressed, with people  
looking to set up their businesses where their leisure  
activities lie. Those who like horse riding, cycling,  
mountaineering, canoeing or surfing will find all those  
incredibleleisureactivitiesinabundanceinCarmarthenshire,  
and I am confident that if we were able to deal with the  
basic telecommunication infrastructure problems we  
face, we would be able to put forward a very attractive  
economic package for investors and people looking to  
set up their businesses in our beautiful county.

While I urge the Welsh Government to use the powers  
and the Barnett consequentials awarded to them through  
the Bill to incentivise connectivity improvements in  
Wales, I call on Welsh Ministers to take an alternative  
approach to that put forward by the UK Government.  
It is vital that future investment, at a bare minimum,  
should enable rural Wales to reach a level playing field,  
before we start subsidising the most advanced technologies.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

The connectivity inequality in our nation needs to be  
eradicated, not entrenched, but I am afraid that we have  
seen the Government and providers concentrating  
investment over recent years on easy hits—on the large  
cities and the large towns in my country—while the  
more rural areas have been deliberately left behind.

The Welsh Government, via this Bill, must now use  
these powers and consequentials wisely. Rather than  
only incentivising the most advanced telecommunications  
technology, it is time that something drastic was done  
to incentivise the building of telecommunications  
infrastructure in rural areas such as the communities  
that I am very fortunate to serve in Carmarthenshire.

6.40 pm

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I suppose I  
should apologise to the Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government, my hon. Friend  
the Member for Nuneaton (Mr Jones) because the last  
time I was called to speak in a debate with no time limit,  
the subject was the local government finance settlement  
in 2016; I think that his scars have only just about  
healed. I was starting to take it a bit personally: every  
time I got called to speak, a new time limit was suddenly  
imposed, usually shorter than that which had gone  
before. My neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for  
Mid Dorset and North Poole (Michael Tomlinson), has  
suggested that one is imposed pre-emptively on my  
getting up to speak, but I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
that you will resist his cri de coeur.

I am not going to talk with the authority of my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey),  
because he speaks with great experience about these  
matters, but I want to make some points. First, I very much  
welcome this Bill, particularly the fact that it appears to  
be the result of a collaboration between three important  
Government Departments—the Department for Communities  
and Local Government, the Department for Digital,  
Culture, Media and Sport, and the Treasury. That sort of  
joined-up working of three Departments coming together  
to identify a problem and create a solution is to be  
welcomed, and it signposts a very-likely-successful  
governmental modus operandi for the five years of a  
Conservative Government that we have ahead of us.

I find myself almost reaching for the smelling salts  
and some form of remedial medication in agreeing with  
the Labour Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member  
for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne), although I  
would probably approach this in a slightly different way.  
I welcome the proposals in the Bill to help speed up and  
underscore the importance of the delivery of broadband.  
In relation to local government, particularly in small  
shire districts that are always seeking to be more efficient,  
I hope—indeed, I know—that my hon. Friend the  
DCLG Minister will be taking the reduction in the  
funding stream of non-domestic rates to a local authority  
into consideration as he evolves the new funding settlement  
for our local councils, which do so much good work to  
deliver these services. I thought that the hon. Member  
for Denton and Reddish made that point well, and I am  
sure it will have been heard on both sides of the House.  
The delivery of broadband and the delivery of those  
local council services are important, very often, to  
exactly the same constituents who need both.

I hope that this Bill and the proposed financial incentive,  
if that is the correct word, will act as a spur to existing  
providers to deliver on the notspots that are very prevalent,

10 JULY 2017

81 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

particularly, though not exclusively, in our rural areas,  
where the economic case for delivery is either non-existent  
or marginal, or where, as a result of further economic  
investigation, it has fallen outwith the confines and  
constraints of the initial contract usually agreed between  
a county council—in the case of Dorset, as with so  
many—and British Telecom.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage spoke  
with huge authority and experience, and Ido not demur  
from anything that he said. My right hon. Friend the  
Minister for Digital talked about the evolving technologies  
that mean that this will not just be about wire, copper,  
fibreandso on, as fixed wireless and satellite are playing  
a part. This has been a long-running debate. I look to  
my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness  
(Matt Warman)—he does not look to me, but I look to  
him—who has done so much to promote the delivery of  
rural broadband: so much, in fact, that he has been  
rewarded by being made a PPS in the Department, which  
means that he can no longer speak on the subject. This  
isclearlytherouteto promotion:talkwithauthorityand  
knowledge on a subject and then get zipped up and silenced  
for manyyears to come. Perhaps that iswhyIgotmoved  
from DEFRA to the Home Office—I do not know.

This subject has knocked around in public and political  
debate and in the media for a long time, so it is worth  
while, with your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
pausing for a few moments to remind ourselves of the  
most enormous strides made in broadband provision  
for all our constituents and constituencies, urban and  
rural. Yesterday afternoon, I ordered something online—I  
am going to tease the House by not saying what the  
object was—to be delivered to my house tomorrow  
morning. The sketch writers, and indeed anybody else,  
may wish to run some sort of book on what it was. All I  
will say is that it is not something I would have guessed  
one could have ordered online even three or four years  
ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert  
Courts) is looking even more perplexed than usual. I  
was struck by the huge change that this technology has  
made, and this Bill helps to underpin its delivery.

From a rural point of view—and what could be more  
rural than North Dorset?—it is worth re-amplifying the  
benefits that are derived from fast and superfast broadband  
and that will be further helped by the contents of this  
Bill. It was a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for  
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards),  
who was right to point out, as I do, the huge unlocking  
of tourism potential in the promotion of hotel rooms,  
rooms in pubs, visitor attractions and the like, and in  
interactive tourist information centres in areas where  
local authorities may have withdrawn from face-to-face,  
over-the-counter visitor services. It will be absolutely  
crucial for the farmer in my constituency who is trying  
to buy or sell stock or make their submission to the  
Rural Payments Agency to have fast, reliable broadband  
of a speed and a regularity of service that no longer  
drops off just as they reach that crucial moment of  
hitting “send” or loading up that large map.

The issue is also crucial for small and medium-sized  
businesses. I am thinking of two in my constituency,  
both of which happen to be based in a small market  
town called Sturminster Newton: one is Crowdcomms  
and the other is Harts. Crowdcomms provides online  
andinteractiveplatformsforlargeinternationalconferences.  
It has offices based in Seattle, Sydney, and Sturminster  
Newton—it is there because the town has 4G.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 82

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

Harts of Sturminster is one of thosewonderfulshops,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, that I know you will cherish  
and love as I do. It is the sort of shop that you walk into  
and do not say, “Do you sell?”, but merely ask, “Where  
can I find?”, because it sells absolutely everything, from  
powdered egg, to blackout curtains, to knicker elastic  
and sock gaiters—it is all there. You require none of  
those things, Madam Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]*My right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage says  
that he now knows what I was ordering, but he would  
be wrong on all counts.

The shop makes its largest sales from its cookware  
department online. This is in a small market town that,  
until a few years ago, had as its main centre of industry  
thelargestcalf and livestock—particularly cattle—market  
in the whole of the south-west. Broadband is transforming  
local rural economies, creating good-quality, high-tech  
jobs. It also helps—we forget this at our peril—with the  
delivery of a whole raft of other things in rural social  
life, including for small villages that are geographically  
disconnected and not particularly well served by rural  
public transport.

We now have faster broadband service provision than  
has hitherto been the case, which helps with promoting  
charitable and fundraising events. I remember the frustration  
on my wife's face as she tried to download posters for  
events she was organising for the St Gregory's parents,  
teachers and friends association, but that has been  
transformed by the faster speed. Everybody in North  
Dorset now knows—as does everybody who reads the  
*Official Report*—that St Gregory's summer sizzler event  
will take place in Marnhull this Friday. Everybody is  
invited. It is a huge fundraising event for our local  
school, the promotion of which is better enabled by  
broadband.

**Mr Vaizey:** I know more about my hon. Friend's life  
now than I did five minutes ago. The entire House still  
wants him to reveal what he ordered online last week  
that he could not have ordered four years ago. That is a  
terrible omission from the tour of his domestic online  
arrangements.

**Simon Hoare:** I am going to tantalise the House still  
further by telling my right hon. Friend that it was  
inflatable and made of rubber. Before you rule me out  
of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will explain that it  
is a small, two-man dingy for my elder daughter and me  
to do a little bit of rowing and mackerel fishing during  
our summer holidays. Right hon. and hon. Friends may  
be pleased, disappointed, depressed or made despondent  
by that explanation.

**Wendy Morton:** I am reassured.

**Simon Hoare:** My hon. Friend says that she is relieved  
thatitwassomethingso entirely innocent and innocuous.

Fast broadband, which allows us to watch telly and  
order online, will of course help address rural isolation,  
which is particularly significant in an area such as mine.  
FaceTime and other mechanisms will help keep families  
together by keeping those intergenerational conversations  
going when geography means that a weekly visit may  
not always be appropriate, feasible or affordable.

Towns such as Sturminster are not unique. Glastonbury,  
which I think is in the constituency of my hon. Friend  
the Member for Somerton and Frome (David Warburton),

10 JULY 2017

83 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Simon Hoare]*

has lost all of it banks—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry:  
Glastonbury is in the constituency of my hon. Friend  
the Member for Wells (James Heappey).

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): My hon.  
Friend mentions banks on the high street. Several branches  
in my constituency have shut and one of the arguments  
I hear is that people can use online banking, which is  
the very reason we need to ensure that we have excellent  
broadband facilities.

**Simon Hoare:** My hon. Friend makes my point far  
better than I could. She is absolutely right. The town of  
Sturminster has lost two banks in the past year and will  
lose its third bank at the end of this year. Private and  
business customers are told that internet banking is  
available. That is fine, so long as the speeds and the  
service are reliable enough to allow them to remember  
why they logged on and which financial transaction  
they wanted to undertake. That situation is not unique  
to my part of the world.

**Wendy Morton:** I did not use the word “relieved”; I  
said that I was reassured. Does my hon. Friend agree  
that rural areas such as Sturminster need a good broadband  
speed to enable people to access banking services that  
no longer exist on the high street? That will enable small  
businesses in particular, including those that are part of  
the gig economy, to operate in a business environment  
that does not leave them at a competitive disadvantage  
compared with those parts of the country that already  
have good broadband coverage.

**Simon Hoare:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
Who among us has not visited an agricultural show  
or small business that cannot afford the necessary  
infrastructure for the interconnected pieces that allow  
peopletopaybycreditcardorcontactless?However,by  
plugging a whizzy device into an iPhone—my right  
hon. Friend the Minister for Digital and my right hon.  
Friend the Member for Wantage know all about this,  
but it baffles me—my credit card can be charged for  
whatever service I have purchased, thereby helping small  
and medium-sized businesses. That also helps particularly,  
though not exclusively, those people who make and sell  
things from home and do not have commercial premises  
from which to trade.

The Bill is helpful for all those reasons. It will also help  
the next generation. Television and other advertisements  
always focus on getting faster film, the latest cartoon,  
watching sport and so on, all of which is welcome and  
laudable. There is also, however, potential for huge  
learning opportunities for our young people through  
the delivery of education in a 21st-century setting. That  
will, I hope, boost and bolster our productivity, and it  
can all be assisted by superfast and reliable broadband.

Over the past seven years, the Government have made  
the most enormous strides. We have occasionally beaten  
up our Ministers and others, saying “I've got this village  
or that hamlet that isn't covered.” As I said at the start  
of my speech, this issue is not reserved solely to the  
rural setting; it is also an issue on the edge of Tech City  
here in London and elsewhere. However, if we pause  
and look at the data, we will see that, notwithstanding

Telecommunications Infrastructure 84

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

some of the problems we have had, we are striding  
ahead of many of our European friends, who are also  
our economic and commercial competitors, in providing  
access to broadband. We should not always beat ourselves  
up. At a time when we are all being fed the negative and  
“the anti”, this is something about which the Government  
should be duly proud, as my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Wantage has said.

The Bill is a fundamental and very important next  
step. We hope and believe that it will assist better and  
faster delivery in our rural areas in North Dorset and  
across the county of Dorset. It has my full support. The  
Ministers promoting it have my admiration and  
encouragement, and I look forward to seeing it make  
speedy progress through this House.

6.57 pm

**Kit Malthouse** (North West Hampshire) (Con): It is  
a pleasure and an honour to follow my comrade and  
hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon  
Hoare).

On my first day in this House, I was told by an older  
Member that if I wanted to keep something secret I  
should make a speech about it in the House of Commons.  
And so it was that on 13 September last year I gave a  
speech on the subject of this Bill and called for 100% rate  
relief of new fibre networks. I even went so far as to  
draft an amendment to the Digital Economy Bill, not to  
give that rate relief but to require the valuation office to  
produce an annual report on the impact of the rating  
system on competition in the telecoms sector. Various  
players in the industry had presented me with the  
ridiculous conundrum that it was cheaper for them to  
rent fibre from BT than to pay the rates bill on putting  
in new fibre themselves. In their view, that entrenched  
the near monopoly of BT and gave it an enormous  
structural advantage, which was basically choking off  
competition.

I spoke on Second Reading of the Digital Economy  
Bill, drafted an amendment and had a fruitful conversation  
with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Digital, who  
is no longer in his place, who persuaded me that, given  
some of the other amendments I had tabled, I should  
leave my proposal to the Government to mull over for  
some months and that they would give it some serious  
thought. Imagine my pleasure and surprise, first when it  
appeared in last year's autumn statement, and now,  
even more so, that it has appeared in this Bill. It will  
provide an enormous boost to competition in the sector.  
There is no doubt that the asymmetric deal on business  
rates between BT and new entrants is choking off new  
investment in large parts of the country. Smaller companies  
have very little incentive to compete directly with BT;  
they have to look for areas of the country that are  
currently unserved or un-commercial in order to try to  
make their networks pay. As a result, innovation is hard  
to come by.

BT has been helpful to me and my constituents, as I  
know it has been to several other Members, and I hope  
it will take the Bill in the spirit in which it is intended.  
Those of us who believe in a market economy think that  
competition is good. We think that it will be better not  
only for the consumer, but for BT, because it will drive  
the company to greater innovation, efficiency and, we  
hope, profit.

10 JULY 2017

85 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

The Bill represents a welcome move towards seeing  
broadband and telecommunications as utilities. Over  
the past few months, steps have been taken in legislation  
towards that position. The building regulations have  
been changed to make the provision of broadband  
compulsory in new developments. Broadband will, I  
hope, be provided as a universal service over the next  
few years, and now non-domestic rates are being lifted  
on parts of the network. Broadband is increasingly  
being treated—as water, gas and electricity are—as a  
vital utility, which is what it is becoming. I am pleased  
about that development, and I hope that broadband  
will continue to be viewed increasingly as a utility.

In a constituency such as mine, broadband is incredibly  
important for a successful, vibrant countryside. If the  
countryside is to compete with its urban neighbours, it  
needs to be connected to the world. These days, that  
social and economic connection takes the form not of  
roads, dual carriageways or motorways, but of superfast  
broadband. My constituency, like that of my hon. Friend  
the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), is peppered  
with enterprises that do most of their business online.  
Hon. Members will be pleased to know that on Saturday  
I attended the Amport fete and came across a brand  
new and very pleasing business called Test Valley Gin, a  
new brand of gin that is taking the market by storm.  
Kate Griffin, the inventor of this gin, is having some  
success. The 36 bottles she produces each week are  
selling like hot cakes, many of them online on a website  
called theginstall.co.uk.

**Andrew Gwynne:** My ears pricked up when the hon.  
Gentleman mentioned gin. Perhaps, in the interests of  
cross-party co-operation, he could share some around?

**Kit Malthouse:** I have to confess that I was so taken  
with the small sample that I tried—I was driving—that  
I bought a bottle. Perhaps I will bring one in. I did  
wonder whether the House of Commons authorities  
might start serving Test Valley Gin in the bars. It is an  
excellent drink, infused with a secret recipe of local  
herbs and spices, and I can recommend it.

**Michael Tomlinson:** I had the great pleasure of being  
in my hon. Friend's constituency yesterday, although I  
beg his forgiveness for not seeking his permission. Hon.  
Members will be pleased to know that I went purely for  
a cricket match, and I did not think that I was obligated  
to seek his permission to play cricket in his wonderful  
constituency. He is making an important point. Broadband  
is increasingly important in all our constituencies, and I  
believe it is as important as road and rail. It is a part of  
our infrastructure that our constituents just cannot do  
without.

**Kit Malthouse:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
He is very welcome to visit my constituency at any time.  
In fact, I am surprised that he has only been once  
recently, and he should come more often. My door is  
always open.

Ensuring that villages are connected to the world is  
becoming vital to maintaining rural life. Rural residents  
find it increasingly ridiculous that they can see broadcast-  
quality footage of Tim Peake in the international space  
station but they cannot go online and post complimentary  
comments on my Facebook page, as my constituents  
increasingly seem to do.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 86

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Simon Hoare:** I suggest to my hon. Friend that his  
constituents might wish to do the former more often  
than the latter.

**Kit Malthouse:** I think that is rather churlish of my  
hon. Friend, given how complimentary I have been  
about him. I hope that one day I will reach the level of  
popularity and name recognition in my constituency  
that Commander Peake has reached in the world.

Small business is becoming increasingly important in  
rural areas. Some 25% of small businesses—nearly half  
a million—are located in rural areas, where they provide  
lots of employment and create wealth. The Bill points  
to a wider issue with which the House will have to  
grapple over the next few years—the hon. Member for  
Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) mentioned it—and  
that is the appropriateness of the business rate system.  
We are applying a tax first devised in 1572 to a 21st-century  
economy, much of which exists somewhere in the cloud.  
The Bill acknowledges at its core the disproportionate  
impact of business rates on competition in this sector.  
Those of us who have rural constituencies—indeed,  
anybody whose constituency contains a high street—  
understand the disproportionality of business rates for  
retail businesses, particularly now that more and more  
people buy things online, as my hon. Friend the Member  
for North Dorset said. If we are to keep our high streets  
vibrant, keep our businesses working and maintain the  
competitiveness of the rural economy against the huge  
businesses that these days operate from nowhere, I  
question whether taxing property—frankly, taxing  
investment and expansion—remains an appropriate way  
to gather the revenue that we need.

There will come a point, over the next couple of  
decades, when we have to consider shifting taxation on  
corporations away from property and profit, and towards  
turnover. If we taxed the turnover of the large multinationals  
—the Googles and the Amazons—we would collect more  
from them than we currently do, but in a fair way. Small  
shops on the high streets in North West Hampshire  
compete with corporations that transact in this country,  
dispatch goods from a second country and book the  
profits in a third country. We have to think about the  
asymmetric nature of the taxation of those organisations  
if we want to create a level playing field for competition.

I welcome the Bill. I welcome the move towards the  
designation of broadband as a utility and the recognition  
of the distortive effect of business rates on commerce. I  
hope that over the next five years or so, many companies  
will take advantage of the rate relief window. I suspect  
that at the end of that period it will be somehow extended,  
and I hope that any such extension will become permanent.  
I hope that businesses will take advantage of the window  
and come to North West Hampshire to plaster my  
entire constituency with broadband fibre, to the cabinet  
and to the premises, with my pleasure and approval.

7.7 pm

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con):  
Like several Members here, I have the pleasure of  
representing a beautiful and very rural constituency. In  
fact, 42% of my constituency is part of an area of  
outstanding natural beauty. It isa lovely constituency in  
which to walk, have picnics and spend time. It is fabulous  
for farming, but less good for connectivity.

10 JULY 2017

87 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Helen Whately]*

Over the two-and-a-bit years for which I have been  
the Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid  
Kent, I have received letters—and occasionally emails,  
if peoplehavemanagedtogetonline—fromconstituents  
in many villages including Headcorn, Kingswood,  
Doddington, Eastling, Selling and Sheldwich. Those  
are all lovely villages, but they struggle with connectivity,  
and residents have had difficulty getting fast broadband.

In several of those villages, it can be difficult even to  
get a mobile phone signal. A couple of months ago,  
during the general election campaign, I was in Headcorn,  
and I thought I might tweet a picture from Headcorn  
station. Not only did I not have 4G on my mobile  
phone, but I did not have any mobile phone signal at all.  
I could not even make an old-fashioned mobile telephone  
call or send a text message. There are parts of my  
constituency, such as that patch of Headcorn, where  
unless people happen to be with the one operator  
serving it a little, it is impossible even to make a mobile  
phone call.

My constituency wants to have better broadband and  
better mobile phone connections, and that is why I  
welcome the commitment this Government have been  
and are making to connectivity across this country. As I  
mentionedinanintervention,thankstotheGovernment's  
programme of rolling out high-speed broadband,  
8,432 properties have now got a high-speed broadband  
connection that would not have had one without the  
programme. By September 2018, I am expecting about  
2,000 more properties to be on high-speed broadband  
thanks to the programme. That amounts to 25% of the  
properties in my constituency being connected thanks  
to this Government's work and commitment to high-speed  
broadband, and it will get Faversham and Mid Kent up  
to about 90% of properties being on high-speed broadband.

We are still some way off the 100% level that I would  
like, so I very much welcome the universal service  
obligation that is coming into force. I pay tribute to the  
work of my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and  
Skegness (Matt Warman) in campaigning very hard to  
put that into law. I also welcome the commitment made  
earlier by my right hon. Friend the Minister from the  
Dispatch Box that the financial cap will be high enough  
to make sure that 100% of properties in constituencies  
such as mine receive access to broadband of at least  
10 megabits per second. That is not the high speed that  
we hope will be delivered by the Bill, but for those who  
have no or incredibly slow broadband at the moment,  
10 megabits per second will make a great difference.

All of us who represent rural constituencies know the  
difference between the haves and the have-nots on  
broadband, but having high-speed broadband is genuinely  
life changing. It enables us to do things that we now  
consider everyday functions of life, and whether it is  
sendingemails,bookingticketsorflightsonline,choosing  
hotels or B&Bs, comparing offers on travel insurance or  
car insurance, or shopping for groceries, there is so  
much that those of us with high-speed broadband take  
for granted. However, in my constituency, some people  
still do not even have such access.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con):  
Will my hon. Friend not add watching BBC Parliament  
so that all her constituents in Faversham and Mid Kent  
can see her excellent speech?

Telecommunications Infrastructure 88

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Helen Whately:** I thank my hon. Friend very much,  
although I doubt whether even one of my constituents  
is watching my speech. I will not hold my breath while  
waiting for confirmation.

We know that children, including mine, often get set  
homework tasks requiring them to look up things on  
the internet. If a child lives in a rural village or at the  
end of a track and they cannot get online, they are  
disadvantaged. There is also the very basic thing of  
staying in touch with distant relatives, who often live all  
around the world. I remember when I was a child that  
the cost of making an international call was enormous.  
During my gap year as an 18-year-old, I made two  
phone calls to my parents in nine months, because it  
cost such a huge amount to phone home, but people  
can now make video calls basically for nothing so  
families around the world can stay in touch. As older  
people go online—many people in their 70s, 80s and  
90s are very active internet users—I hope that the  
internet will be one way in which we can tackle the  
challenge of loneliness. For someone to make a FaceTime  
call to their grandma or grandpa is a great way for them  
to keep in touch, and that is often much easier if it is  
very difficult to go to see them.

There is also the question of the use of the internet  
for work, where it can make a huge difference for rural  
areas, as it does for the economy in general. It enables  
people to work from home—I have two caseworkers  
who do most of their work supporting me and my  
constituents from home, which enables them to juggle  
that work and their family commitments—and I know  
that a huge number of people in my constituency now  
runbusinessesfromhome,includingmanyquitesignificant  
rural businesses. There is a fabulous business called  
Bombus around the corner from where I live just outside  
Faversham, which makes amazing products out of maps.  
If any hon. Members want interesting products based  
on maps of their constituencies, I recommend that they  
contact Bombus to get all sorts of books, paper goods  
and lampshades. On the other side of my constituency,  
near Maidstone, a business enabling people to compare  
utility prices has about 100 employees in a really rural  
spot. There is no way in which that business could exist  
without good broadband, so it is very important for the  
rural economy.

We have got to this point very quickly. About 12 years  
ago I worked at AOL Time Warner launching digital  
products, such as the UK's first video on-demand service  
for downloading films. Back then, just over 10 years ago,  
people had to plan ahead: if they wanted to watch a  
film, they had to start downloading it and then go away,  
perhaps to cook something for supper, and come back a  
couple of hours later when enough of it had downloaded  
to enable them to watch it, if they were lucky, although  
it may well have stopped downloading halfway through.  
We probably launched the product a little ahead of  
what the technology could do. Now, however, my children  
sit down in front of the television on a Sunday morning,  
when I am trying to catch up on some sleep, turn on the  
iPlayer and watch something immediately, with none of  
that delay. That change has turned watching television  
into a completely different experience.

I welcome the Government's commitment to this  
area, but I very much ask them to press on with making  
sure that we get high-speed broadband to 100% of  
properties across constituencies such as mine. I also ask

10 JULY 2017

89 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

them to make sure that the new technologies enabled by  
the Bill such as 5G and full-fibre broadband—I will  
now turn to the Bill— benefit those not only in more  
urban areas of the country, but in rural areas. I would  
ask that as far as possible that should not be a simple  
sequential process, with the people of Headcorn being  
able, if they are lucky, to make a phone call and then  
getting 3G, 4G and eventually 5G sometime in the  
distant future. I am very keen for some leapfrogging so  
that those in more rural areas can catch up thanks to  
new forms of technology.

It is particularly important for the Bill to go ahead,  
with investment in these new technologies, in the challenging  
economic climate and the challenging economic times  
in which we live. I am very mindful of the ageing  
population in this country. We have talked a lot during  
the past couple of weeks about the cost of the public  
sector and the desire to increase the pay of people  
working in the public sector. We know that as a country  
we face a productivity challenge in that we are not  
nearly as productive as we need to be for people to have  
a good or a better standard of living, and we face global  
competition. I am pretty realistic in saying that—  
unfortunately, unlike the hon. Member for Denton and  
Reddish (Andrew Gwynne), who wishes to raise business  
rates and thinks, erroneously, that that will increase  
revenue to spend on public services—history tells us  
that, as we very well know, increasing business rates  
results in a fall in revenue.

**Andrew Gwynne** *rose—*

**Helen Whately:** As the hon. Gentleman gave way to  
me, I will give way to him.

**Andrew Gwynne:** I merely wish to correct the record:  
at no stage have either I or the Labour party said that  
we want to increase business rates. We want a small  
increase in corporation tax, which would still result in  
our having one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in  
the world.

**Helen Whately:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's  
putting the record straight, because I made an error in  
my notes. Instead of business rates, I meant to say  
corporation tax. We disagreed about this point earlier.  
My point about corporation tax stands. Unfortunately,  
raising corporation tax results in a reduction in revenue  
for the Government, as my hon. Friend the Member for  
North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse) pointed out.

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): My hon.  
Friend is making an excellent speech. Was she as shocked  
as I was to hear the shadow Secretary of State refer to a  
“small” increase in corporation tax, because the rate  
Labour would move it to would be almost a 50% increase  
on the 17% rate that we will have?

**Helen Whately:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
This point really is significant because as corporation  
tax rates come down below 20%, businesses behave  
differently. Businesses are more likely to locate in this  
country, to invest in their businesses in this country and  
to create jobs, which is what my constituents and, I am  
sure, the constituents of the hon. Member for Denton  
and Reddish want. That also generates the revenue that  
is paid in taxes to fund public services.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 90

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**JimMcMahon**(OldhamWestandRoyton)(Lab/Co-op):  
On the subject of large increases, given that the hon.  
Lady would be outraged by a 50% increase, she must be  
absolutely distraught at the business rates revaluation,  
which has seen some business rates go up by 200%.

**Helen Whately:** In some respects, the hon. Gentleman  
and I may agree, although not on the specifics of his  
point. As other hon. Members have said, the business  
rates system does need a further look. For instance, I  
am unhappy with the way business rates tend to penalise  
high street shops in some of my smaller towns. The  
largest employer in my constituency is a brewer, and  
pubs have struggled with some of the increases in  
business rates. However, I recognise the efforts that the  
Chancellor made following lobbying by me and other  
Members of Parliament to help pubs with the changes  
to business rates. There is no question but that there is  
further work to be done on business rates, and that has  
been acknowledged by the Government.

**Michael Tomlinson:** May I take my hon. Friend back  
to corporation tax? She is absolutely right that the  
reduction in the rate has seen an increase in tax take.  
Surely the important thing is to look not at the tax rate,  
but at the tax take—how much tax is actually raised.  
The final point she made about jobs is crucial. We see  
record levels of employment across all our constituencies,  
which is to be welcomed. That has happened because  
businesses want to expand and take on more people.

**Helen Whately:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
intervention. I will return to the content of the Bill in a  
moment, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am spending a  
little time on corporation tax because the hon. Member  
for Denton and Reddish spent some time talking about  
it. It is important that Government Members make it  
clear that we are absolutely committed to raising revenue  
for public services. The last thing we want to see is tax  
changes that gain the right headlines but have the  
wrong effect on the bottom line from the Government's  
point of view. We are absolutely committed to making  
sure that we can raise revenue for public services, about  
which we care very much, but we recognise that, to do  
so, we must have a tax environment that is supportive to  
businesses, because they are what provides the jobs and  
the economic growth.

On economic growth and people working harder to  
keep up their standard of living, as an economy, we  
need to be more productive and technology is the  
crucial enabler in that. That is exactly what the Bill will  
support. For instance, 5G as a technology is and will be  
a great enabler of the internet of things. Every second  
around the world, 127 devices are newly connected to  
the internet. That rate will surely increase, so the demand  
for connectivity and the ability to carry large volumes  
of data will only go up.

It is vital that we are at the forefront of that. In fact,  
5G is forecast to boost economic value by $4 trillion to  
$11 trillion globally by 2020. That is a huge increase in  
economic value, so it is vital that we as a country take  
our share of that economic growth. In practice, it will  
mean developments that allow us to have smart household  
appliances, driverless cars and, one day, driverless lorries,  
which for my constituents, who are very unhappy about  
lorries being parked up in laybys a lot, will be an  
interesting prospect.

10 JULY 2017

91 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Amanda Milling:** My hon. Friend and I both have  
residents and businesses that face the plight of HGV  
fly-parking. I know that she, too, is very passionate  
about this. Does she agree that, as technology advances,  
we should look at different ways of doing business?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
I am sure that the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid  
Kent (Helen Whately) will find an ingenious way of  
relating the intervention by the hon. Member for Cannock  
Chase (Amanda Milling) precisely to the Bill. I can see  
a way of doing it and I am sure she will succeed.

**Helen Whately:** I could see the frown on your face,  
Madam Deputy Speaker. It might seem like a stretch to  
go from talking about telecommunications to lorry  
fly-parking, but as 5G is an enabler of the internet of  
things and, potentially, of driverless cars and driverless  
lorries, it might mean that lorry drivers no longer have  
to take long breaks to sleep. The reason lorries are  
parked in the laybys of our roads is that the drivers are  
sleeping because they have to have a compulsory rest  
before they can keep driving, but we could have lorries  
without a driver, so the subjects genuinely connect.

To return to what I was planning to talk about,  
another important potential application of 5G is in  
healthcare, with wearable devices. For instance, people's  
heart rate and blood pressure could be tracked. That is  
very much part of the future of healthcare and preventive  
healthcare to help us all to look after ourselves. As  
somebody who is very committed to the NHS and to  
making sure we have a sustainable NHS and a healthier  
population, I am keen that we enable such developments  
in healthcare.

Those are just a handful of examples of what we  
hope 5G will enable. We hope to be at the forefront of  
this technology by investing in it.

**Michael Tomlinson:** My hon. Friend is being very  
generous with her time, but before she moves away  
from 5G, I invite her to reflect on this point. It is  
important not to leave behind those communities that  
are yet to clock on to 3G and 4G. I am sure that, in her  
constituency, as in mine, there are areas where people  
simply cannot access 3G or 4G. Although 5G is to be  
welcomed, will she join me in calling on the Government  
to ensure that those areas are not left behind?

**Helen Whately:** I completely agree. As in his constituency,  
there are parts of my constituency that do not have 4G,  
3G or even enough mobile signal to make a phone call.  
I am very keen for the Government to intervene to  
ensure that there is comprehensive mobile phone reception  
across rural areas. I also hope that we can have a  
catch-up for those areas, so that they can canter quickly  
through 3G and 4G and then go straight to 5G.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): While we are on the  
subject of notspots and blackout areas, does my hon.  
Friend agree that there are priority areas such as along  
railway lines? Many of my constituents commute every  
day and it is so frustrating not even being able to get a  
phone signal on the railway line. The Bill will enable  
extra infrastructure, so that we have connected commuters,  
which is key in the 21st century.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 92

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Helen Whately:** My hon. Friend has made an important  
point about the Bill's focus on the infrastructure along  
routes such as rail lines and motorways, where it will be  
of particular benefit. My constituency, like hers, contains  
commuters who would like to be able to do more work  
on the train, and the Bill will make that possible.

Full-fibre broadband should bring an end to a problem  
about which I often hear from BT engineers: the challenge  
of the “last mile”, the old copper wires that are so  
dated, some of them more than 100 years old. Although  
that technology has served us very well for many years,  
it is probably time to move on, so that people can get  
proper high-speed broadband, especially those who live  
further away from the cabinet and the traditional  
infrastructure.

It is right for the Government to support the development  
of new infrastructure by providing incentives in the  
form of appropriate conditions for substantial private  
investment in that infrastructure, which will multiply by  
many times the investment that they are making with  
the use of taxpayer funds. The combination of the  
£400 million digital infrastructure fund and the £60 million  
business rates relief for which the Bill provides should  
be wearable for the Government, while also resulting in  
much more investment in the country's digital infrastructure,  
which we badly need.

I want to ensure that we reach out to and communicate  
with younger voters. I say to them, “You may not be  
watching the Parliament channel on your internet  
connection, but take note of what is being said.” This is  
an example of the Government's looking ahead to the  
sort of economy that we need for the future: looking  
towards investing in the infrastructure that we need, so  
that we will be able to compete globally, have a modern  
economy, have innovation and have the kind of jobs  
and the kind of economy that will give younger workers  
opportunities for decades to come, and give us the  
economic growth that we need in order to fund a high  
standard of living and the public services about which  
we care so much.

7.32 pm

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): Let me  
begin by thanking my hon. Friend the Member for  
North Dorset (Simon Hoare), although he is no longer  
in the Chamber—and, indeed, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately)—  
for being so kind about the work that I have done on  
broadband. When my hon. Friend the Member for  
North Dorset said that I would not speak in the debate, I  
was going to leap to my feet like some sort of  
digital gazelle, but I thought I would keep the House  
waiting. We have heard several extensive speeches about  
the many benefits of Government investment in  
digital infrastructure, but my speech will be somewhat  
briefer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid  
Kent said that some of her constituents were not able to  
do something as old-fashioned as making a mobile  
telephone call. Mobile telephone calls are, in our modern  
world, pretty old-fashioned, but we should not forget  
that not many years ago they were simply impossible in  
this place. Since then, we have not only been through  
the period of the invention of mobile phones; we have  
been through a period during which all our constituents  
railed against the installation of mobile phone masts.

10 JULY 2017

93 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

Now we have come full circle, and they rail against the  
absence of mobile phone masts. The digital revolution  
has thoroughly revolved.

I want to make some brief points about the Bill. It  
seems obvious to me that, although adopting this approach  
to encouraging digital infrastructure investment means  
that the Government are forgoing a certain amount of  
revenue from business rates, their fostering of digital  
innovation and infrastructure investment will ensure  
that the amount they get back through the broader  
benefits of economic growth is many times greater than  
the amount that the business rates themselves cost the  
state and the taxpayer. That strikes me as a definition of  
the way in which the Government should be using  
public money, pump-priming economic growth to allow  
the development of an economy that works in the  
digital way that, as we have heard, our children will  
expect, and that all modern businesses already expect.

I commend the Government for taking that approach.  
It is also commendable that, by giving the relief a  
five-year term—which my right hon. Friend the Minister  
hinted could even be extended—they are giving firms  
an incentive to invest in installing fibre now, even if they  
do not turn it on, so to speak, for a number of years. I  
hope that we will secure the economies of scale of  
broader investment while continuing to benefit from  
business rate relief on that investment. That can only be  
a good thing, and it also addresses some of the concerns  
raised by the industry before the introduction of the  
Bill.

We should bear in mind that the growth in demand  
for fibre will only increase. When I was a journalist  
writing about the launch of the iPlayer—the BBC cunningly  
launched it in Christmas Day, because it knew that  
demand would be rather more limited—the BBC did  
not think for one moment that it would itself be  
broadcasting in 4K come 2016-17. Still less did it think  
that we would, as a matter of course, live in households  
in which half a dozen people wanted to download the  
4K streams that broadcasters now routinely provide.

It is no small irony that, by all accounts, when Bazalgette  
built the London sewers he offered quadruple the capacity  
that was required in Victorian London. Now we see that  
that quadruple capacity has been more than exhausted  
by a growing population, and we should take the same  
approach when it comes to investing in our digital  
infrastructure. To point out that a prominent Bazalgette  
is still involved in the life of our digital nation is not in  
any way to draw a comparison between sewage and the  
modern digital output with which he is concerned. The  
huge benefits provided by the man who brought us  
“Big Brother” and a host of other programmes are not  
to be described in that way in the slightest degree. All we  
can say is that this is clearly a family that has contributed  
a huge amount to the life of our nation, at every level of  
our infrastructure.

In this day and age, there is never an excuse for  
underestimating the amount of digital capacity that we  
will require. Although 4K may appear to be perfectly  
adequate for our purposes today, we will look back on it  
in a number of years and see that it is paltry in comparison  
with what we will be using on a routine basis, whether  
that involves virtual reality, driverless cars, or all the  
technologies that will eradicate the digital scourge of  
fly-parking mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member  
for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling).

Telecommunications Infrastructure 94

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

We should not only encourage the Government to  
proceed with the Bill as quickly as possible, but encourage  
any Government to ensure that this sort of rate relief  
applies to investment in digital infrastructure, whether  
mobile or fixed, thus ensuring—following the launch of  
the iPlayer not so very long ago—that the internet of  
things that is now coming upon us will be fully served.  
That will be thanks to the investment of Governments  
such as this.

7.39 pm

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): It is an  
honour to follow my hon. Friend the Member for  
Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman), who is a real  
expert in this field, as he has demonstrated tonight. I  
have to admit that I am a technology dinosaur; when it  
comes to communications, if I have a choice between  
email, text or telephone, I will choose an actual conversation  
every single time. It takes an awful lot less time to pick  
up the phone and have a conversation one to one than  
to compose lengthy emails that often can take hours to  
construct by virtue of the need to check the content and  
tone, or to correspond via text messages; at present I  
have about eight text messages building up, and I will  
no doubt forget to respond to all of them.

I welcome this Bill, which provides business rate relief  
for new fibre infrastructure. Its measures form part of a  
wider package that rightly encourages investment in our  
country's digital infrastructure and that helps ensure  
that Britain remains a digital world leader. The Bill will  
help homes and businesses across the country have  
faster, more affordable and more reliable broadband  
connectivity.

We have heard this evening from many Members who  
represent constituencies very different from mine. Many  
of their areas are very rural, and we have heard from  
them about issues of the connectivity of mobile and  
broadband in rural areas. My constituency is not like  
that: I have mainly towns and one large village—Cannock,  
Hednesford, Rugeley and Norton Canes. There is limited  
rural space in my constituency; my hon. Friend the  
Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton) is  
one of my near-neighbours, and I see her nodding, as  
she recognises what my constituency is like.

I also have a forest in my constituency. If someone is  
driving through the forest of Cannock Chase and I, as a  
passenger, am having a phone conversation, the chances  
are that the phone call will cut off; I must add that I am  
on wireless, not Bluetooth. This is an issue in the more  
rural parts of my constituency. The measures in the Bill  
that make broadband and mobile access much better  
will be welcomed by people and businesses across the  
country, including in my constituency.

**Wendy Morton:** Does my hon. Friend agree that  
although her constituency, like mine, is not predominantly  
rural, we can still find notspots—not just in forests and  
so forth, but in the more built-up areas?

**Amanda Milling:** My hon. Friend is right, and I will  
come on to some specific issues later in my speech.

My office is on Market Street in the heart of Hednesford,  
yet when I am there, more often than not I cannot make  
telephone calls because I do not have any mobile phone  
reception. When I am travelling between my office and  
my home as well, invariably the mobile phone reception  
falls.

95 *Telecommunications Infrastructure  
(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)  
[Amanda Milling]*

Why is broadband and mobile access so important?  
As Members have said, it is key to family and our daily  
lives. We can keep in contact with our friends across the  
world through Facebook and social media. We have  
talked about the closure of high street bank branches  
across the country because people are increasingly doing  
their banking online, but they need excellent online  
access to be able to do that. I am not sure that any  
Members have mentioned being able to switch energy  
suppliers. We talk about people trying to get better rates  
for their gas and electricity, and that is often best done  
by looking at online portals. If people do not have good  
internet access, the range of deals they can get is restricted.

We have talked about watching television, too. Personally,  
I just switch the TV on; that goes back to my being a bit  
of a dinosaur. Many people, however, use iPlayer and  
on-demand services. My mother, for instance, has never  
used a computer, but a few years ago we got her iPlayer  
and she is absolutely reliant on it for communicating  
with people and watching television, but she has to have  
excellent broadband access to do that.

I want to raise some specific issues in terms of broadband  
access and the roll-out of full fibre connectivity. A  
number of my constituents live on a new housing  
development called Chasewater Grange, and they complain  
of painfully slow broadband speeds. It is a new Taylor  
Wimpey development on the edge of Norton Canes.  
There are about 130 houses. Despite being billed as a  
superb collection of high-quality homes, with a mix of  
house types to suite a range of tastes, including three  
and four-bedroom homes, all with easy access to local  
amenities—which I fully support; they are fantastic,  
and it is a fantastic development—the one thing the  
local residents do not enjoy is fast and reliable broadband  
access.

On building a new housing scheme, developers install  
gas, electricity and water as a matter of course, but we  
are now in a time when broadband is the fourth utility.  
The provision of superfast broadband should be treated  
in the same way as the other utilities. The problem is not  
unique to Chasewater Grange. I have done quite a lot of  
research on this issue over previous days, and I have  
been reading endless reports of residents of new  
developments up and down the country facing similar  
issues.

My hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire  
(Kit Malthouse) is not in his place at present, but he  
made the point that this problem has been recognised,  
and last year an agreement was reached between the  
Government, Openreach and the Home Builders Federation  
to ensure that superfast and ultrafast broadband  
connectivity would be either provided free or co-funded  
by Openreach to new developments. This has been  
extended to all developments with more than 30 homes,  
and connection will be free. We rightly place emphasis  
on building new homes; we often talk about the issue in  
the Chamber. So I am pleased that there is recognition  
that broadband connectivity is as important as the  
other utilities. Homebuyers expect this.

The issue is particularly important in my constituency,  
because thousands of new homes are being built all the  
time. When I drive around the constituency, I never  
cease to be amazed by the number of new developments.  
In the Pye Green valley and in Brereton, where I live,

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure 96

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

homes are being built all the time, and we must make  
sure they have access to both the main utilities and also  
broadband.

The moves made by Openreach and the Home Builders  
Federation are good news, but they are not going to  
resolve the issues faced by the residents of Chasewater  
Grange. I was very pleased to learn last week that that  
community has made some progress in securing funding  
from both Openreach and Taylor Wimpey to complete  
the work to install the fibre-based broadband. However,  
the residents of Chasewater Grange still face a funding  
shortfall, and they are communicating at present with  
Superfast Staffordshire. I hope they succeed in securing  
some assistance to be able to bridge the gap and ensure  
that this fibre broadband is connected.

I hope that as a result the residents of Chasewater  
Grange will soon be able to enjoy the benefits of fast  
and reliable broadband, and be able to do their banking  
online, and that the teenagers will be able to do their  
homework online—I am sure that we would all agree  
that it is important that they can complete their assignments.  
I also hope that those residents who want to work from  
home will be able to do so. The issues relating to  
broadband speeds are not confined to Chasewater Grange.  
I know of homes on Sweetbriar Way, for example, that  
have been waiting years for this connectivity. I also have  
a small number of rural properties in my constituency,  
and they are still waiting, too.

I want to turn to a more positive aspect of fast  
broadband access. The redevelopment of the Rugeley  
B power station site will present opportunities to tap  
into existing superfast broadband infrastructure. The  
power station sits right alongside the west coast main  
line, which has the superfast broadband network running  
up the line. Similarly, the canal network in the area has  
that infrastructure. The power station site benefits from  
the railway line and the canals; it also has national grid  
infrastructure. I have described it before in the House as  
a connectivity crossover, and we need to make the most  
of it. It presents an ideal opportunity to attract high-tech  
businesses and advanced manufacturing that can make  
the most of the infrastructure.

The power station site is huge, and there will also be  
some homes on it. I have talked about the need to bring  
broadband infrastructure to the door in new housing  
developments. The superfast broadband line is very  
close to this development, and we need to make the  
most of it—not only for today but for future generations.  
There is a real opportunity to ensure that the regeneration  
of this power station site attracts the businesses that will  
create highly skilled, highly paid jobs for those future  
generations. As I have said before—and will probably  
say again to the Under-Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Nuneaton (Mr Jones)—we need to have ambitious,  
bold and visionary plans for Rugeley.

There is another site in my constituency that has  
excellent digital infrastructure, and again, we need to  
make the most of it. It is the Cannock campus of the  
South Staffordshire College. It was very disappointing  
to hear recently that it is to shut owing to falling  
numbers, because it had received a multi-million pound  
investment a few years ago, part of which provided it  
with excellent digital infrastructure. We need to make  
the most of this site as we look at plans for its future.  
We need to tap into that digital infrastructure.

10 JULY 2017

97 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

I am sure that many other Members want to speak in  
this important debate, but I want to come back to the  
Bill that we are discussing tonight. It is part of a wide  
range of reforms that the Government are undertaking  
to ensure that we have excellent digital infrastructure  
across our country. I welcome the Bill. I welcome the  
fact that it will enable my constituency and others to  
have faster, more reliable broadband and to enjoy all the  
benefits that the internet and emails offer us.

7.54 pm

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): As always,  
it is a pleasure to follow my constituency neighbour, my  
hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda  
Milling). It is also a pleasure to take part in the debate.  
Before I get into the detail of myspeech,Ishouldliketo  
thank the Minister for Digital, my right hon. Friend the  
Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock), who is no  
longer in his place, for giving me a comprehensive  
response to what I thought was a simple, straightforward  
intervention earlier. I asked him about the five-year  
limit and the deadline for the business rate relief, which  
was an important point. If the Bill can incentivise  
companies to really get behind investment in our digital  
infrastructure, that will be a good thing. It will have  
far-reaching benefits.

The Bill made me think of a couple of things. My  
hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase described  
herself as a “technology dinosaur”, but I would describe  
myself as a technophobe. The challenges with the internet  
connection that we have faced here in Parliament in  
recent weeks have been frustrating, to say the least. All I  
will say is that it is very handy to have a staff member  
on your team who is a good bit younger than you are. I  
have found that they know everything about the internet,  
and they have been a huge help to me.

I am also reminded of the time, probably 20 to  
25 years ago, when we first started to see the internet  
appear—Iusetheword“appear”becausethatishowit  
felt—and we had our first internet connection. It was a  
big thing to have the internet at home. I seem to recall  
that there was no such thing as wireless internet. There  
was a wire that led from downstairs to upstairs, and we  
had to plug it in and unplug it. It was impossible for  
more than one person at a time to be on a computer.  
How things have changed!

I am also reminded of the first mobile phone that we  
had. I could not fit it into my quite large handbag. It  
was almost the size of a brick, and I used to walk  
around with it. It had an aerial and a handset with a  
curly cable attached. Again, how things have progressed!  
Who would have imagined that we would be here this  
evening talking about 5G—

**Andrew Gwynne:** Perhaps my nostalgia is greater than  
the hon. Lady's, because I believe that my Nokia “brick”  
was far more reliable than my Apple iPhone has ever  
been.

**Wendy Morton:** I bow to the hon. Gentleman's judgment  
on that one. Sadly, I did not have much chance to use  
the “brick”; I seem to my recall that my husband used it  
more than I did. However, I do have my own iPhone  
these days, so things have changed. Today, we can  
stream films into our homes and download music. I  
have something that I call the boogie box. I can have it  
in the kitchen or move it around the house, and it picks

Telecommunications Infrastructure 98

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

up the music from my iPhone. It is just amazing what  
we can do and how technology has changed our lives. It  
has also changed business and so many other things.

The Bill is relatively short, but it is very important. It  
gives effect to one of the commitments on digital  
communications that were made in last year's autumn  
statement. It is also important because it aims to give  
targeted support to the roll-out of full-fibre broadband  
connections and 5G mobile communications. Often,  
when we talk about infrastructure in this place, we are  
talking about roads, railways or bridges. We are talking  
about very visible and tangible pieces of infrastructure.  
That infrastructure obviously matters to the local area,  
as well as regionally or nationally, but occasionally  
something that seems small can have a much more  
far-reaching impact.

This Bill is about a piece of infrastructure that is far  
less visible. We see the green broadband boxes as we  
drive round our constituencies, but we cannot see the  
full-fibre broadband. We will know it is there, however,  
because we will be able to access it. Although the  
technology is not visible, the Bill will enable full-fibre  
broadband to reach across England and Wales to the  
benefit of residents and businesses across the country  
and across my constituency.

Many hon. Members have given examples this evening  
of where broadband makes a difference in their  
constituencies—an individual household, a small retail  
business, a large manufacturer in a business park or  
someone working in the gig economy. Small and medium-  
sized businesses are the backbone of the local economy  
in my constituency. Whether in the shops of Aldridge  
village centre or in one of our many and varied business  
parks, businesses are creating jobs, driving the investment  
that is reducing unemployment, and developing skills  
for today and for the future. Such businesses may use  
the internet to sell their goods, to order components or  
materials, or to run their customer service. The internet  
is now an integral part of business.

**Amanda Milling:** Access to the internet is as important  
as electricity. If the lights go out and the power goes off,  
a manufacturing business will not be able to produce its  
goods. In the same way, if a business is reliant on the  
internet, it can grind to a halt without it.

**WendyMorton:**Myhon.Friendisabsolutelyright.Before  
entering this place, I worked in the optical industry, and  
our business relied on the internet day in, day out for  
processing orders and for sending stock back to Europe.  
The minute the internet went down we could do nothing  
at all, which shows how crucial connectivity is.

The Bill is vital, because under current broadband,  
superfast broadband and mobile coverage we still get  
some so-called notspots. We have rightly heard many  
contributions from hon. Members representing rural  
constituencies. My constituency does not fall into that  
category, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member  
for Cannock Chase that rural constituencies are not the  
only ones that are affected. We have notspots in my  
constituency, and I even find that I have to move  
around in my own home from time to time to get a  
mobile connection. Were it not for the wi-fi connection,  
I would struggle on many a day. I hope that the days of  
having to lean out of the kitchen window or move to a  
certain spot in the living room to get some mobile signal  
will soon be a thing of the past.

10 JULY 2017

99 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Wendy Morton]*

We have heard a lot about businesses and individuals  
tonight, but this Bill is not just about them. I am thinking  
of my constituency's many voluntary organisations and  
charities, many of which provide lifelines to local residents.  
They too rely on having a good internet connection.  
Through their webpages, they allow people to get  
information 24 hours a day. Through the internet, we are  
able to reach much further than we could in the past.

I want to follow up on something said by some other  
hon. Members about demographics and age. Access to  
the internet has the potential to cut across all parts of  
society. If an older person has good internet access,  
they can keep in touch with their family through Facebook  
or FaceTime—things that we did not have a few years  
ago. If someone has grandchildren living on the other  
side of the country, or even on the other side of town,  
and wants to connect with them on a more frequent  
basis much more cheaply than by using the telephone,  
that can be facilitated through a good internet connection.

When I go into a school, as all hon. Members do, and  
have a debate either with primary school children or,  
more often than not, older secondary school children,  
the very valid question, “What do the Government do  
for us as young people?” often comes up. Sitting here  
today has made me realise that this Bill is an example of  
something that the Government are doing that will help  
young people. The younger generation are probably  
more tech and phone-savvy than all of us here put  
together—I can certainly speak for myself on that.

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con):  
My hon. Friend will agree that the age disparity between  
young and old can be bridged through the internet and  
through proper broadband and mobile connections,  
particularly in rural constituencies and especially those  
in Scotland. Although some powers have been devolved—  
unfortunately no SNP Members are here tonight to  
speak on such an important issue—I hope that my hon.  
Friend and the Minister will recognise the important  
role that Westminster can play in all the nations of the  
UK by giving funding and offering direction for broadband  
and mobile.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. This  
Bill is for England and Wales, not for Scotland. That is  
the problem, so we need to deal with England and  
Wales and not drift too far.

**Wendy Morton:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Luke Graham)  
for making that valuable point. I am sure that I will be  
corrected if I am wrong, but although this Bill relates to  
England and Wales only, Barnett formula consequentials  
will apply, so my new hon. Friend from Scotland made  
a valid point.

The Bill is about looking to the future. It is about  
developinginfrastructure,sothatwecantakeourcountry  
forwards. As we seek to develop new relationships and  
partnerships in a post-Brexit world, the Bill will make  
connectivity around the world so much easier and better.

Turning briefly to business rates, the Bill will enable  
100% business rates relief for new full-fibre infrastructure  
for a period of five years. I hope that that will provide  
an incentive and encourage the telecommunications

Telecommunications Infrastructure 100

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

industry to get on with the job of delivering what we in  
this House want to see. Together with the universal  
service obligation, I hope that rates relief will make a  
significant difference to our constituents. I hope that we  
will make a big contribution towards closing the digital  
divide that we have heard so much about and that we  
will get higher-quality, more reliable connectivity in  
households and businesses. That is what I want in my  
constituency and what other Members want for theirs.  
In closing, I am supporting a Government who are  
investing in our country, in our infrastructure and in the  
livelihoods and futures of not just today's generation  
but tomorrow's as well, so I will support the Bill this  
evening.

8.9 pm

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con):  
It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member  
forAldridge-Brownhills(WendyMorton),whoaddressed  
the substance of this important Bill with her customary  
attention to detail and her personal reflections on the  
progress that the internet has made. The change it has  
made to all our lives has been enormously valuable.

IwilladdressthecoreoftheBillfirst,beforeexplaining  
why it is so important. It is excellent that the Bill will  
provide for 100% business rates relief for full fibre  
infrastructure for a five-year period from 1 April 2017,  
and it is important that that is backdated so that it truly  
supports telecommunications companies that invest in  
their fibre network. It is also important that the Government  
will cover the full costs of that relief. As a former  
councillor, I know the impact that Government reliefs  
can have on local government, and it is important to  
note that the Government have said here that, because  
of the measure's importance, they will meet the full cost  
of the relief.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for  
Aldridge-Brownhills and for Ochil and South Perthshire  
(Luke Graham) for mentioning the impact on Scotland.  
The Bill, of course, has territorial extent to England  
and Wales, but the Barnett formula applies, so it is  
important that we recognise how it affects the whole  
United Kingdom.

As we have heard, constituencies vary across the UK,  
from tightly packed urban settings to sparser rural  
settings. Superfast broadband, based on part-fibre, part-  
copper technology as today, is now available to 93% of  
premises, which is good progress. My hon. Friend the  
Member for Aldridge-Brownhills spoke about the progress  
of the internet, and I recall having a dial-up modem  
that would beep away before connecting at perhaps  
28 kilobits per second—FaceTime or Skype would have  
been inconceivable in those days. We have made huge  
progress, and 93% of premises being able to access the  
part-copper, part-fibre service is good news, but the  
proposed relief provides—the Minister will correct me  
if I am wrong—£60 million-worth of support to telecoms  
companies that invest in their fibre network by installing  
new fibre lines.

Virgin Media is now part of Liberty Global, which,  
to deviate slightly, shows the importance of having a  
competitive corporation tax regime. As has already  
been noted, a competitive corporation tax regime means  
a company such as Liberty has invested in Britain and  
bought Virgin Media, and is now taking it forward. I  
would have thought that the Bill will boost Virgin

10 JULY 2017

101 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

Media's £3 billion “project lightning” network expansion,  
as well as plans by Openreach, a subsidiary of BT, to  
increase its investment in fibre optic. The Bill will also  
help smaller alternative players, which my hon. Friend  
the Member for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse)  
said were priced out of the market in the past due to the  
impact of business rates and other competitive and  
regulatory pressures.

I welcome the Government's aim, through this and  
other measures, to provide superfast broadband speeds  
of 24 megabits per second, or more, for at least 95% of  
the United Kingdom, which is progress beyond what we  
have achieved to date, but we should go further. That is  
why I am pleased that the Digital Economy Act 2017  
provides for every household to have a legal right to  
request a fast broadband connection.

**Michael Tomlinson:** I do not apologise for reinforcing  
the important point, in case Opposition Members say it  
has already been made, that 95% coverage still means  
that 5% of our constituents are left out, so will my hon.  
Friend join me in pressing the Government to ensure  
that the service is truly universal? Although we welcome  
the measures set out in the Bill, we are still speaking up  
for our constituents, the remaining 5%, who are waiting.

**Mr Jayawardena:** As ever, my hon. Friend makes an  
important and cogent point. He is right to champion  
the interests of all the United Kingdom, which is why  
the universal service obligation is so important. The  
obligation, I am sure the Minister will agree, is only the  
first step towards ensuring that Britain is the most  
competitive country and is the place where businesses  
based elsewhere in the world want to do business. As my  
hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills also  
noted, that is even more important in a post-Brexit  
world. We must ensure that we are absolutely match fit  
and ready to go in the next century, which is why it is  
important that every household has a legal right to  
request a fast broadband connection.

As has become customary in our Wednesday exchanges,  
I will reference points raised by my constituents. This is  
not a maiden speech, but Hazeley Lea, a lovely part of  
my constituency, gets less than half a megabit per  
second, which is totally unacceptable. Worse, residents  
say that they have too much downtime because the  
current connection—part-copper, part-fibre—is unreliable.  
It is not just homes, individuals and families but diversified  
rural businesses that are affected. One constituent says:

“Just yesterday, I saw a third visit this week by Openreach to  
my immediate neighbour. I took the opportunity to talk to the  
engineer on site who confirmed there was a major problem  
perhaps with old underground cabling to the area simply giving  
up. He also confirmed that none of the line managers are likely to  
take this further because of the costs to BT to supply new  
cabling.”

That demonstrates that what the Government are trying  
to do is right. Not only are they addressing the old  
underground cabling that is simply giving up—the cabling  
was introduced many, many years ago for technologies  
that are now old-fashioned, as my hon. Friend the  
Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately)  
said—but they are tackling the costs that apply to  
businesses through business rates and other regulatory  
matters. The costs, particularly business rates, have been  
prohibitive in helping businesses to invest.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 102

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

I was on a British-American Parliamentary Group  
visit to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where the weather was  
almost as good as it has been here recently. Importantly,  
I found out that a £70 million grant had got local  
people—the Chattanooga area has a population of just  
over 500,000—not 24 megabits per second, which is the  
UK Government's measure of success in this phase of  
superfast broadband, but 1 gigabit per second through  
providing fibre to the premises, not just fibre to the  
cabinet. That is what the Government are trying to do,  
and it is the way forward.

Coming back across the pond to Stratfield Saye, the  
seat of the Duke of Wellington, the exchange there is a  
problem because, at present, the broadband connection  
given to my constituents, and undoubtedly to the Duke  
of Wellington, comes from Mortimer across the county  
boundary in Berkshire, instead of from Bramley in my  
constituency and the county of Hampshire. Naturally,  
Bramley is much closer to Stratfield Saye than Mortimer  
will ever be. Indeed, the length of cabling required from  
the exchange to the home would be cut in half if the  
connection were provided from Bramley. That shows  
the lack of flexibility in the system. We need to ensure  
that there is the right technology in the right places to  
serve people in the 21st century, not the convenience of  
telecommunications operators from the 20th century.

Some people in Bramley are nearer Chineham in the  
constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Basingstoke (Mrs Miller), but none the less they are  
connected by cables from Bramley. Those cables are  
actually steel, not copper, because apparently when the  
cables were installed by BT, then state-owned—I do not  
know whether the Labour party plans to renationalise  
BT, too—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham  
West and Royton (Jim McMahon) says it is a possibility,  
so perhaps he would like to clarify the matter at the  
Dispatch Box. The point I was making was that BT simply  
said, “It is all right, we don't have to face any competition.  
We'll just shove some steel cabling in there and it  
doesn't matter what happens to local people.” Of course  
when we were talking about telephone and analogue  
technology, that was fine, but we are in this new digital  
age now and we need to make sure people have the right  
technology to their doorstep. That is why we must  
tackle this head-on.

I do not want to be totally critical of BT, as it has  
done a lot of good work in enabling a lot of cabinets  
and coming up with flexibility in the way those things  
are delivered. For example, in the parish of Ellisfield in  
my constituency BT came up with a match funding  
scheme that said, “If the community can raise some of  
the money, we will put in the other half.” That is a very  
innovative scheme for a community so rural that it  
made this commercially unviable to deliver. But therein  
lies the problem: no one should be penalised for accessing  
what is now a utility, as my hon. Friend the Member for  
Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling) rightly said—people  
should be able to expect this. Charging people £558 per  
dwelling not only is on the cusp of what BT might  
ordinarily provide as a commercial arrangement, but it  
was penalising residents in rural areas for living where  
they do.

**Michael Tomlinson:** May I take my hon. Friend from  
Hampshire to Dorset and endorse what he is saying? He  
is advocating greater flexibility within BT and saying  
that although some good work is being done, more

103 *Telecommunications Infrastructure  
(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)  
[Michael Tomlinson]*

could and should be done. Does he agree that we need  
flexibility across the piece, not just in Hampshire and  
his beautiful constituency, so that where difficult rural  
issues arise, sensible solutions are found?

**Mr Jayawardena:** My hon. Friend makes an important  
further contribution to this debate and is right in what  
he says. Let me take him back to the further remarks  
from my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for  
North West Hampshire, who pointed out that Brexit  
providesanopportunity,becauseEUstateaidlegislation  
got in the way of allowing local communities to come  
up with solutions. When I was a local councillor, we  
introduced CITI—the communications improvement  
and technology infrastructure fund—which was a new  
way of providing match funding from the borough  
council, but it was then ruled out of order because it  
was deemed “state aid”. Not only had we, through  
careful management, kept council tax down and not  
increased it, by using the excellent initiatives from this  
Government on match funding and helping local councils  
keep council tax down, but the money that we had saved  
and that we wanted to put to good use for the residents  
of Basingstoke and Deane in north Hampshire could  
not be used because of state aid rules. So we must tackle  
these things and we must deliver those solutions for  
local people.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I am grateful to my  
hon. Friend for the important points he is making  
about the combination of local government and local  
IT companies. We have a similar situation in west  
Oxfordshire, where we have a number of excellent  
companies. Does he agree that through good local  
governance and providing freedom for local companies,  
with sensibly managed local finance, we can find the  
solution to the internet shortages—the notspots we  
have been talking about?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
point. He is right: this is all part of the competitive  
nature that we need to try to ensure is supported. We  
need to provide local solutions to local problems.  
Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you are aware that  
Hampshire County Council has been working to go  
beyond 96% connectivity*—[Interruption.]* If you were  
not aware before, you are now. That could be met if we  
allowed local firms to meet that 4% shortfall. If we  
allowed local firms to bid for further funding from the  
state, unhindered by EU state aid rules—indeed, instead,  
further supported by these business rates initiatives—we  
would close that 4% gap without a shadow of a doubt.

Let me turn from BT, which has had a great benefit  
from the current business rate arrangements, to Virgin  
Media, which should benefit from this. I outlined that  
earlier, but it is important to talk a little more about it  
to outline the importance of the issue to a British  
company based in my constituency; it has its corporate  
headquarters in Hook. It has run a competition, through  
its own commercial judgment, to supercharge local  
communities. Although the company has not yet  
supercharged Hook, which is where it is based—I hope  
it is listening and will do so shortly—it has agreed to  
supercharge Hartley Wintney and Phoenix Green, just  
down the road. That means that those places will have

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure 104

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

ultrafast fibre to the premises very shortly, which is  
good news because residents there will get a head start  
on what the Government aspire for the whole of the  
country to receive. Those residents will receive fibre to  
the premises, which means they will be eligible to get the  
1 gigabit per second telecommunications connectivity  
that is critical for the future.

Businesses will benefit as well—this is not confined to  
households. In Yateley in my constituency, Samsung  
has its European quality control centre. If we want  
those technical businesses to be based in constituencies  
such as mine, we need to ensure they have the connectivity  
to match. Samsung being the technical giant that it is, it  
needs that more than perhaps anyone else.It is therefore  
brilliant news to hear that these business rates initiatives  
will be introduced.

This is not just about the giants; it is also about the  
smaller businesses. Fleet, the biggest town in my  
constituency, has a business called CV-Library. It was  
set up in 2000, in the dotcom boom era. Although that  
was a very different internet era, that remains an internet  
business and it is very successful. It was set up by a  
young carpet fitter who was looking for work and it is  
now the UK's third biggest jobs board. Of course it has  
thrived on the great number of new jobs created under  
the economic management of this Government, and it  
is one of the top 500 most visited websites in the UK.  
So we are talking about a well reputed website.

Thatsmallbusinesshascomealongway,withResume-  
Library allowing it to operate in the United States, and  
it is now thriving as an international business. Again, as  
with Samsung, if we want such businesses to be based  
outside the main towns and cities—outside London  
and across the country, ensuring that we create an  
economy of thenationsandregions,notjustof London  
—we need connectivity that serves businesses such as  
CV-Library and allows them to thrive and to connect  
with the world, as CV-Library has done with Resume-  
Library and will, I am sure, do in future. Incidentally, it  
was the first jobs website to allow people to apply for  
jobs on a mobile phone. I shall come back to that  
important point in a moment.

One resident in Bramley told me that he found it  
“incredible that we are surrounded by much better services and  
yet it appears that we are unable to access these.”  
People such as that resident from Bramley are used to  
going on their mobile phone and connecting to 4G, yet  
in their house they cannot connect to a decent fixed-  
broadband service. He also said:

“I have been told by BT that it is not possible to switch  
exchanges”  
from one to another

“as this is ‘too difficult'”.

In the mobile age, when people can go about their daily  
business while theywalkto work,it is not acceptable for  
something to be simply too difficult for a monopoly  
provider. We must do better, and the Government are.

It is important that the 100% business rates relief is  
focused on encouraging the full-fibre initiative and getting  
that to the premises. Indeed, the digital infrastructure  
investment fund has also been designed as an incentive.  
Traditionally, it has been difficult to finance digital  
infrastructure investment in Britain because the industry  
has been relatively young. The lack of certainty about  
future demand has made investment difficult to secure.

10 JULY 2017

105 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

I hope that the digital infrastructure investment fund,  
along with business rates initiatives such as the one in  
the Bill, will ignite interest, so that private finance will  
invest in this important sector. Digital infrastructure is  
a critical part of our infrastructure, like roads and rail,  
so I hope that the private interest we really need will be  
drawn in. As my hon. Friend the Member for Witney  
(Robert Courts) mentioned, the drawing in of private  
finance will make the market more competitive and  
allow local solutions to rise up and meet local people's  
needs.

Full-fibre networks are so much more resilient than  
the traditional copper-wire networks. I referred to my  
constituent in Hazeley Lea who told me that the copper  
cabling was failing. That is a problem not only for  
Hazeley Lea and North East Hampshire, but for the  
whole country, because the internet is delivered to most  
homes in Britain by underground copper cables. My  
hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills referred  
to the green cabinets that people see springing up, and  
from which bushes are cut away so that they can be  
enabled for fibre, but the final part of the service is still  
delivered by copper. The wires can be degraded by  
distance, as has been the case for my constituents in  
Stratfield Saye and Hazeley Lea; indeed, the constituents  
in Bramley who live near Chineham have the problem  
of the long distance from the exchange in Bramley.

Full-fibre networks seek to run the fibre connections  
straight to the doors of homes or businesses. I make one  
plea to the Government, because there is still no capability  
in planning legislation and the national planning policy  
framework for local councils to mandate fibre to the  
premises, which would solve the problem referred to by  
my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase. They  
can request it, but the only requirement they can make  
is that there be a telephone connection to a home. I have  
been told that, if it is done at scale, particularly on  
larger developments, the cost difference is marginal, if  
existent at all. The Government could easily remove  
that difficulty for councils to mandate fibre, and it  
would be transformational in the new homes that the  
Government aspire to build throughout the whole United  
Kingdom.

**Michael Tomlinson:** My hon. Friend mentioned the  
fact that copper wires can be degraded by age and  
distance, but volume of traffic is also a problem. Does  
he agree that when, on a Saturday night, for example, a  
popular programme is on or more people want to be  
streaming or gaming, the whole system slows down and  
grinds to a halt? That is also part of the degradation  
process.

**Mr Jayawardena:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right  
that copper's capacity is insufficient for today's challenges.  
We must make sure that we deal with not only today's  
challenges but tomorrow's, so we must ensure that there  
is more fibre than we even need today. We do not want  
to end up, perhaps in five or 10 years—not a million  
miles away—with the fibre we install today not being  
good enough for the challenges of tomorrow.

In turning to the challenges of tomorrow, it is important  
to consider mobile communication, which is enabled by  
the fibre broadband that links the mobile masts. Fibre  
provides the connectivity, via the masts, to users who  
perhaps want to do their banking on their phones, as

Telecommunications Infrastructure 106

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

several Members have said. Deploying mobile infrastructure  
remains challenging at times, particularly in remote  
locations or among difficult topography. It is important  
for us to consider the viability of such initiatives as we  
move from 4G to 5G, and as we do so, perhaps we could  
find a remedy for those communities that have not even  
moved to 3G or 4G. We must ensure that those initiatives  
are viable, so that no one is left behind. Mobile  
telecommunications can be an excellent way of providing  
mobile broadband—fast broadband—to rural communities,  
instead of running fibre to those rural homes. It  
could be that part of the solution, part of dealing with  
the final 4%, is to ensure that fibre is run to  
mobile masts, which are then accessible to those rural  
communities.

Reducing operating costs is critical to ensure that the  
potential economic viability of these sites is considered  
properly. I am sure that the Government will consider  
that in the deliberation that they will doubtless have in  
the time ahead. Targeted business rates relief to enable  
fibre cabling to be rolled out to those hard-to-reach  
areas would be particularly helpful in notspots that  
have been badly served by telecoms to date and could be  
much better served by telecoms in future.

It is important to prioritise sites such as railways and  
motorways, as mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members  
for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) and for  
Chelmsford (Vicky Ford). They demonstrated that to  
have connected commuters, which was the term used by  
my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford, we need  
fibre to be run alongside railways.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order.  
*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will have to sit  
down for a second. We cannot both be on our feet. I  
have given a lot of leeway, but I do not want to get too  
involved in 4G, 5G, and telecommunications being passed  
down motorways and railways, as they have absolutely  
nothing to do with what we are discussing. I know that  
you have been asked to filibuster, but do not worry  
because we have so many more speakers to come and  
you might deprive them. Come on, Mr Jayawardena.

**Mr Jayawardena:** Mr Deputy Speaker, filibuster never.  
I am informing the nation.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Yes, but it has got to be on the  
subject that we are discussing. We will be talking about  
cricket next. Come on.

**Mr Jayawardena:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): I  
am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way.  
Mr Deputy Speaker suggests that this is a filibuster. My  
hon. Friend has hardly cleared his throat.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** The worry is that I have heard  
too much already.

**Mr Jayawardena:** Mr Deputy Speaker, you are very,  
very kind, but I shall be bringing my remarks to a close  
very shortly.

It is important to recognise that new fibre, which will  
be rolled out under business rates relief, allows for  
better mobile connectivity in those hard-to-reach areas.

10 JULY 2017

107 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman  
makes a very good point on the topic of infrastructure  
around railways and roads. Does he agree that airports  
are important and need infrastructure as well?

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** I have a good suggestion for the  
House: I think you should put in for an Adjournment  
debate on that very subject. With two Members, I am  
sure that you can do the subject justice.

**Mr Jayawardena:** Mr Deputy Speaker, as ever, you  
make an excellent suggestion. I will speak to the hon.  
Gentleman in due course.

As we allow fibre to be rolled out, using this relief, to  
areas that have not been accessible in the past, it is  
important to reflect on the way in which people are  
changing their behaviour. People are moving to mobile.  
We need to ensure that accessibility to the mobile  
network—the fibre network—is possible. That is why it  
is critical that weworkwith companies suchasNetwork  
Rail to roll out fibre on its land as well as across other  
people's land.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills  
said, all of this is in stark contrast to the way in which  
we used to work. It is important that people are helped  
along this journey. If we want to roll out more fibre, we  
need to ensure that there is proven demand for it,  
otherwise it is simply not commercially viable. We need  
to reduce the operating costs, which we are doing through  
business rates relief for the roll-out of new fibre. It is  
good to see the new digital training opportunities that  
have been created as part of the digital strategy. The new  
digital skills partnership is seeing Government, business,  
charities and voluntary organisations come together,  
which is really positive news. I should declare an interest,  
so I refer Members to the Register of Members'Financial  
Interests. A plan by Lloyds Banking Group to give  
face-to-face digital skills training to 2.5 million people,  
charities and small businesses by 2020 is a good example  
of that partnership. Google has pledged to provide five  
hours of digital skills as part of its commitment, too.  
The idea has been adopted by business.

The strategy and these plans demonstrate that the  
Government take businesses and people seriously in  
rolling out fibre broadband across the country. This is  
part of the cuts to business rates that benefit all rate  
payers and will be worth almost £9 billion over the next  
five years, and it is part of the Government's focus on  
ensuring that we create an economy that serves the  
whole country—all the nations and regions. It is about  
ensuring that the Government are committed to the  
long-term reform of this country.

Who would have thought that Alibaba and Amazon  
would be the big retailers of today, not the greengrocer  
on the high street? Who would have thought that we  
would have been speaking to people across the world on  
FaceTime instead of flying across the world to see  
them? Who would have thought that people would be  
able to watch this speech on their mobile phone rather  
than read it, dare I say, in *Hansard*? I am sure that many  
will.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. I  
have a slight problem. I did not expect to have to bring  
in a time limit—*[Interruption.]* Seriously. I do not want

Telecommunications Infrastructure 108

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

to have to introduce a time limit, but we have the  
summing up in about an hour and there are still five  
speakers to come, so can we aim at around 12 minutes?  
If this continues, two speakers will drop off the end,  
and I certainly would not want that to happen when  
Members have been sitting here all day. I want to help  
Members.

8.41 pm

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): The  
words will ring in my ears: filibuster never, inform the  
nation always. That is a lesson for us all.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. I will give you an extra  
lesson—*[Interruption.]* You will have to take your seat  
for a second, though. You might be informing the  
nation, but it has to be on the subject we are discussing,  
otherwise you are out of order.

**Bim Afolami:** Of course, Mr Deputy Speaker. Thank  
you very much for that kind reminder.

ThisBillmatters.Asmyrighthon.FriendtheMember  
for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), theformerMinister,mentioned,  
it is not necessarily the most thrilling Bill. It is relatively  
short, with six clauses; as a former lawyer, I can appreciate  
that brevity is often harder than writing something very  
long, so I admire the draftsmen's ability in putting  
together something so succinct. The Bill should have  
strong support not just from the Government but from  
all parties, as has already been suggested by Opposition  
speakers.

My constituents in Hitchin and Harpenden, only  
30 to 40 miles from central London, face patchy broadband  
coverage in many areas. I appreciate the point made by  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage—it is  
often harder to get broadband in spread out villages  
and rural areas than in tower blocks and urban areas. It  
is physically harder; I appreciate that, but the village of  
Kimpton, slap-bang in the middle of my constituency,  
has pretty terrible broadband.

Let me give the House some statistics to back my  
point up. In Kimpton, no residence or business receives  
superfast broadband. We are in the bottom 7% in the  
country for average download speed and in the bottom  
0.5% for connections of more than 30 megabits per  
second. There is stilla job to do and, with due deference  
as a new Member of the House, I say to the Government  
that we still have a job to do connecting up rural areas  
in our country. We should not forget that.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): As my  
hon. Friend knows, my 92-year-old aunt lives in Kimpton,  
and he is speaking eloquently on her behalf. Does he  
agree that it is most important, particularly in rural  
areas, that older people living in the community should  
have access that keeps them engaged with their friends  
and family?

**Bim Afolami:** I agree. It is important for people to be  
connected to friends and family; the converse situation  
is one of loneliness in many respects. We live in a society  
that is increasingly atomised, so it is helpful to ensure  
that older members of society have full digital connectivity.  
That is another reason why the Bill is important.

10 JULY 2017

109 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

At a recent meeting of a local business club in my  
constituency, a business owner whose business is situated  
in a rural area just north of Harpenden told me that it  
takes three days to back up her server, such is the slow  
download speed. Business rates relief for the installation  
of full-fibre broadband infrastructure will provide a  
huge incentive for operators to invest in the broadband  
network with the latest technology—a point made  
admirably by several of my hon. Friends, not least my  
hon. Friend the Member for North East Hampshire  
(Mr Jayawardena).

It is important to consider why, in the broader sense,  
itisimportantto have world-leading digital infrastructure.  
Why are we all here? I shall offer a few observations. We  
are effectively going through a new industrial revolution.  
Technology, powered largely by the internet, is driving a  
global future. This country needs to be at the heart of  
that, and rolling out full-fibre broadband is central to  
the challenge. The Bill will make it easier, enabling small  
businesses in rural areas such as mine to access the  
superfast broadband they need. As the Minister said,  
the Bill will break down barriers to business, which  
everybody wants—at least on our side of the House.

The Bill shows that the Government can, in limited  
ways and when the time is right, provide innovative  
solutions to help to solve some of the biggest problems  
choking up areas of the economy. We need strongly to  
support the free market and free enterprise with little  
Government intervention, unless necessary. The Bill  
and the Government's actions are bold. We need to be  
boldenoughtousethetoolsof government to allow the  
private sector to work more efficiently and incentivise it  
to provide better results for our constituents, who send  
us to this place on their behalf, after all.

Business rates relief iswelcome,asmanyhon.Members  
have said, but I urge the Government to ensure that we  
do not lose sight of our manifesto commitment to a full  
review of business rates, and to produce a system that is  
more fit for purpose. In certain ways, the current system  
has shown itself to be capricious, cumbersome and, in  
some senses, frankly unfair.

When discussing a Bill on digital infrastructure, it is  
appropriate to point out the fundamental asymmetry  
and unfairness for bricks-and-mortar businesses paying  
the levy in comparison to the digital technology-based  
businesses with which they often compete on a day-to-day  
basis. We all know businesses on our high streets that  
have this problem. It is important for the House to  
recognisethatmanyinternationaltaxationtreatiesinhibit  
the United Kingdom from taking unilateral action on  
the taxation of global technology businesses because  
their nature is, indeed, global rather than domestic.  
Everybody can appreciate the difficulties with that. I  
urge the Government to look for more international  
agreement on the issue so that we can start to address  
the balance of the business rates paid by physical,  
bricks-and-mortar businesses compared with those paid  
by their digital cousins and friends.

In staying true to the detail and narrow nature of the  
Bill, it is incumbent on me briefly to talk about 5G mobile  
broadband, following on from my hon. Friend the  
Member for North East Hampshire. Now, this may  
seem like a dull topic, but I assure Members that it is  
not—it can be very dull. The reason is that 5G, like  
4G or 3G, is something we take for granted; it is just  
there. We do not think enough about where it comes

Telecommunications Infrastructure 110

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

from or the work that goes into it. However, 5G will be  
the enabler for so much technological development in  
this country.

O2 estimated in a report that 5G infrastructure will  
be just as pivotal as broadband to the wider economy  
over the next five to 10 years and will greatly boost  
British productivity, which all Members of this House  
should wish to see. The benefits are manifold, from  
telecare health apps, to smarter cities, to more seamless  
public services. Those are some of the many benefits  
that 5G mobile broadband can help to bring about, and  
I urge Members to support the Bill, which provides  
someof the digital plumbing that will enable us to bring  
tangible benefits to our constituents.

To take up a point raised by my hon. Friend the  
Member for North East Hampshire about 3G and 4G,  
it is important to note that some areas, especially rural  
areas, are still not on 3G or 4G—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order.

**Bim Afolami:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I am coming to a  
conclusion.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** No, it is not that. I am trying to  
be helpful. I am bothered about time. I would like us  
to discuss broadband infrastructure to houses, rather  
than 3G, 4G and 5G, which is mobile phones. If we  
were having a debate on mobile telecommunications, it  
would be brilliant, but we are not. I have allowed a bit  
of freedom, but I do not want the debate to concentrate  
on that issue. The hon. Member for North East Hampshire  
should know better than to lead you on into discussing  
something I have told him off for.

**Michael Tomlinson:** On a point of order, Mr Deputy  
Speaker. Forgive me, but this is my very first point of  
order, and I am sure you will indulge me as a relatively  
new Member of Parliament. However, in clause 1, there  
is reference to mobile phone telecommunication as well as—

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Don't worry—I can help you. I  
am very bothered about the length of time and the  
number of speakers I am trying to get in, so if we can  
concentrate on the bolts of what it is about, it will be  
much easier to get everybody in to speak. The last thing  
I want to do is not get you in to speak, seeing as you  
have sat here all day. So I think it is better if I can help  
the House move along in the area I think we need to  
discuss. To go back and talk about 3G over 4G is not  
relevant to today's debate.

**Michael Tomlinson** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** I will make the rulings. You can  
listen to my rulings, and we can have a discussion later if  
we need to, because I want to hear you speak in a little  
while.

**Bim Afolami:** Thank you very much, Mr Deputy  
Speaker.

In closing, I should say that the Bill is a significant  
step forward. It helps our country to lead the world in a  
new industrial revolution based on digital technology. It  
also shows that this Government, and indeed any  
Government using their powers effectively, can make

10 JULY 2017

111 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Bim Afolami]*

truly positive impacts on people's lives when acting in  
the right way—in this case, to enable superfast broadband  
to reach more people more quickly.

8.52 pm

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): It is a great pleasure  
to follow the many distinguished speakers in this debate,  
who have made so many excellent points—particularly  
my hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden  
(Bim Afolami), who so eloquently laid out many of the  
issues that many of us face in our own constituencies.

I have a few brief points to make, but if I may I shall  
start with a little trip down memory lane. I have recently  
purchased a new iPhone. In doing so, I remembered the  
first iPhone I ever bought, which connected to a thing  
called EDGE—it did not have 3G. Of course, those  
days are long behind us, and with my new device, I can  
do a great many tasks I just could not have thought of  
in those days.

I say that because today is my baby son Henry's first  
birthday, and I apologise to him in advance, if he ever  
watches this speech, that I am here, rather than speaking  
to him. But all is not lost, because, owing to the wonderful  
invention of mobile phones and the internet, I can take  
part in the happy day. I can, for example, see him and  
speak to him on Skype. For his part, he wonders why on  
earth his father's voice is coming out of a small box my  
wife is holding in front of him.

I can also see photographsandvideosof him opening  
presents. These presents were, of course, ordered from a  
well-known, very large internet company—and a gigantic  
number of them there are, too. His everyday necessities  
are ordered through the internet; there is no longer a  
requirement to go to the shop. Indeed, it is possible,  
although I do not have this system myself, to link up the  
house so that I could turn the lights up and down in his  
room if I wished. I could check on his welfare through a  
webcam that I could view on my mobile phone. The  
most extraordinary, and perhaps slightly disturbing,  
thing is that there is a teddy bear in his room—a  
company called CloudPets produces these—and, using  
an app on this iPhone, I can go online and record a  
message so that when he plays with the teddy bear and  
presses the button on it he can hear my voice. This is  
lovely, of course, on his first birthday.

However, the internet is not just something to amuse,  
and perhaps confuse or even slightly frighten, infants; it  
is of everyday importance for us all. As many hon.  
Members have rightly said, these days the internet  
needs to be seen, as it certainly is by the people of  
Witney and west Oxfordshire, as another essential utility.  
We all know that we are able to get about by road and  
by train, and that we are connected to water, electricity  
and, in some cases, gas. We expect those things now.  
Once, not so many years ago, the internet was seen as a  
bit of a luxury that people might want in order to go  
online and look at websites, but it was not something  
that they had to do. Now it very much is, because so  
many services take place online that it is increasingly  
hardtousethemifwewishtotelephone.Utilitycompanies,  
for example, increasingly encourage us to go online,  
perhaps to pay a bill or change a tariff, rather than ring  
to speak to a person. It is therefore absolutely critical  
that everybody has immediate access to these services.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 112

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

I would like, if I may, to clarify some of the terminology  
that we have discussed in the course of this debate. We  
all fall very quickly into the habit of referring to fast  
broadband, superfast broadband and ultrafast broadband  
—or full broadband, as it were. Superfast broadband—I  
appreciate that the House is aware of this, but it is  
worth dwelling on for a moment—uses fibre-optic cable  
to get to the cabinet but then, from cabinet to house,  
only copper. That is an old system that does not carry  
the data required these days due to attenuation—the  
breakdown of signal over distance and the physical  
effect of the current going through the copper. The  
signal slows down so that even if there is fibre-optic  
cable running to the cabinet, by the time it gets to the  
house the user does not necessarily receive anything like  
superfast coverage. That is why, although I entirely bow  
to the expertise of my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Wantage (Mr Vaizey) and thank him, on behalf of  
constituents, for all the work that he did, there is still a  
job to do, as I think we would all accept. Superfast  
broadband is being rolled out across the entire country,  
but still, in some places, 5% to 10% of people do not  
have it, never mind anything else. We increasingly need  
fibre-optic cable running to the property, which enables  
full-speed broadband all the way.

In my professional life before I was elected, I saw  
exactly why that is. I know that other hon. Members  
will feel exactly the same. As a barrister, I would be  
away at court; the papers are often sent through to  
barristers at the last minute. They would sometimes be  
very big bundles, and our clerks would wish to email  
them to us to save us having to go into chambers to pick  
them up before going home. If I had been in court in,  
say, London, and I wanted to go to chambers in Winchester  
or Oxford before I went home, I would wish to avoid  
that step. I would have to go to my home in Bladon, a  
village in Oxfordshire, to look at the email to see  
whether the papers had been sent to me, but there was  
not enough broadband speed to download them, so I  
would have to get into the car, drive into chambers, pick  
up the physical bundles, and then drive back. All the  
while, I was wasting time, wasting money, downgrading  
my productivity, and adding to the traffic and pollution  
on the roads, all of which was unnecessary. When  
people write to me, as they frequently do, to say that it is  
impossible for them to carry out their business, I entirely  
understand their point, because I have suffered that  
very same frustration.

West Oxfordshire is full of businesses that operate  
from home. Before this debate, I had a look through my  
emails to see how many villages had written to me. Over  
the course of the brief time I have been a Member of  
Parliament, I have been contacted by constituents from  
the Wortons, Spelsbury, Kencot, Lechlade, Bladon,  
Bampton, Bruern, Filkins, Stanton Harcourt, Chastleton,  
New Yatt, Sandford St Martin, Fawler, Minster Lovell,  
Taynton, Langford and Standlake. That is 17 or 18 places  
in all.

I shall concentrate on the example of Chastleton. A  
gentleman from the parish meeting wrote to me—I am  
sure you will be pleased to hear, Mr Deputy Speaker,  
that he made his point succinctly—to say that Chastleton  
is lucky to get a speed of 1.5 megabits per second and  
that that has implications. First, businesses simply cannot  
work from home or find it very difficult to do so.  
Secondly, as I have alluded to from my own experience,

113 *Telecommunications Infrastructure  
(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)*

it affects traffic flow because people have to either  
collect items in person or go to their workplace in  
Oxford, thereby adding to congestion on the A40, which  
hon. Members will know is a subject that I mention  
frequently. Thirdly, on education, children who are  
required to do their homework online simply cannot do  
so in many cases.

If anything, my correspondent has missed out one of  
the real drawbacks of the absence of a proper broadband  
connection, which is its effect on elderly care. My hon.  
Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Bim  
Afolami) has referred accurately to an atomised society.  
When we go away to work, in many cases we leave  
elderly relatives without immediate access to family. It is  
absolutely crucial that people are able to make contact  
with loved ones quickly and easily, and to access the  
necessary services, including online medical advice and  
transport-booking facilities.

I remember my father going abroad on business trips.  
He would telephone during the week and we would wait  
while the signal bounced off the satellite, went around  
the world and came back again. We are a long way from  
those days. When I went to work in New Zealand some  
years ago, I was able to have a video conference with my  
loved ones at home and it was set up very quickly. That  
is all well and good. Those powers exist, but only if  
people have an adequate internet signal, which is clearly  
necessary for businesses, the elderly, family and care.

I know that many hon. Members represent rural  
areas where this issue is the chief concern. However, the  
situation is much the same in cities. The speeds experienced  
by many householders in Westminster and Lambeth are  
not much better than those in the rural areas we represent,  
so let us not think that the issue affects only those of us  
who have lots of small villages in our area. It affects  
cities as well. In fact, a lady who lives on Buttercross  
Lane in my biggest town, Witney, wrote to me to make  
a point about developers, which has also been made by  
my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda  
Milling), who is no longer in her place. My correspondent  
was frustrated that the cabinet is very close but the  
developers are not required to connect the rest of the  
properties. That issue clearly causes immense and  
understandable frustration for my constituent and many  
others.

The digital economy has contributed about 7% of  
national output over the past year and has grown three  
times faster than other areas of the economy, so it is of  
enormous significance to the economy, particularly in  
areas such as mine, where so many people work from  
home, are self-employed and run small businesses. I  
declare an interest as the chairman of the all-party  
parliamentary group for small and micro businesses.  
The issue is very close to my heart.

There have been many bank closures in Carterton. As  
other hon. Members have said, we are told that that is  
because people are increasingly using those services  
online. That is all well and good, provided that they  
have the ability to do so. Although someone in Carterton  
might have a strong signal—not everybody does—that  
is not necessarily the case in the surrounding villages.  
They need one if they are to pay council tax or do  
internet shopping.

When I was younger, if I wanted a particular book I  
had to order it from the local bookshop. It might be  
sourced from the other side of the world and take

10 JULY 2017

Telecommunications Infrastructure 114

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

months to arrive. Some of the romance of that has been  
lost, because we can now order almost anything we  
want and it will appear in a matter of days or, at most,  
weeks. That is one of the wonders of the internet age.  
The same is true of music. Music lovers may remember  
that once upon a time, if we wanted to listen to a  
hard-to-find song or album, it was sometimes possible  
to track it down, but it might have to be ordered from  
abroad. Now, the many well-known streaming services  
make it possible to listen to whatever we like immediately,  
as long as we have a good enough internet service.

Decent, high-speed, ultrafast broadband is absolutely  
crucial for day-to-day necessities and for business. My  
hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon  
Hoare), who is not in his place, has given us an inkling  
of what is required in rural economies. In years gone by,  
the biggest contributor, directly and indirectly, to the  
economy of Witney and west Oxfordshire was something  
called the Cotswold Lion. The Cotswold Lion is actually  
a sheep, and in the not-too-distant past—only 50 or so  
years ago—the blankets and gloves made from its fleece  
were the mainstay of Witney's economy. Now, we are  
looking to unlock tourism. It is essential that those who  
provide accommodation in bed and breakfasts, and in  
the great many houses that are available on short lets,  
can get those properties online.

On Saturday I attended the Witney carnival. At many  
such events all over west Oxfordshire, people sell things  
such as art or food products at small stalls. All such  
businesses are made possible and successful by access to  
good, fast broadband. Without it, they simply will not  
work. I apologise for saying it again, as I have done on  
many occasions in this House, but broadband is not a  
luxury; it is absolutely essential in this day and age. I  
entirely agree with west Oxfordshire residents who write  
to me to point out that they have a slow connection and  
they ought to have a fast one. They are absolutely right.  
It is essential in their personal lives and their businesses.

Broadband is entirely necessary for all of industry, in  
business premises, in home businesses and in the tourism  
sector. As I have said, a great deal of work has been  
done. I thank the Government for the work that was  
done before I came into Parliament and for their continuing  
efforts to roll out fast broadband across my constituency  
and beyond, but we must complete the job. I applaud  
the introduction of a legal right to superfast broadband.  
Coverage in Witney is about 90%, but we need to work  
towards 100%. I welcome the package of measures that  
the Government are introducing, which include the  
universal service obligation and £400 million towards  
the digital infrastructure investment fund.

As I said in an intervention on my hon. Friend the  
Member for North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena),  
I particularly encourage private investment. I am grateful  
to BT for being proactive in my constituency and trying  
to connect as many people as possible. With sound  
money, good local governance, strong local councils  
and wise investment in flexible, agile and cost-effective  
local companies—there are several such companies in  
my constituency—we can provide this full solution.

I will briefly touch on the two clauses in the Bill that I  
consider to be most relevant. The first of them quite  
rightly puts business rates relief for broadband alongside  
the existing relief for small businesses, charitable

10 JULY 2017

115 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Robert Courts]*

organisations and rural businesses. Clause 6 promises  
that the effect will be more or less immediate, and I  
applaud that.

My final point—I do not want to test your patience,  
Mr Deputy Speaker—concerns 5G. I welcome the fact  
that broadband and mobile telephony will be combined  
over the coming years. As we seek to bridge the digital  
divide, we really must fix notspots. I applaud everything  
that the Government have done towards that, and I  
hope that the Bill will be given a Second Reading.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Before I call  
Mr Tomlinson, I want to help him by saying that he  
might want to take a few pages out of his speech. If  
hon. Members keep to 10 minutes each, they will all get  
a chance to speak.

9.9 pm

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): I am very grateful to you, Mr Deputy Speaker,  
for your guidance and for your earlier ruling, which has  
given me the opportunity to speak for 10 minutes,  
rather than the nine, eight or seven minutes I might  
otherwise have had.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. If it is helpful I can make  
the limit eight minutes to give someone else more time.

**Michael Tomlinson:** My meaning is the exact opposite.  
I am very grateful to you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the  
Member for Witney (Robert Courts), for whom I feel  
great sympathy. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends  
as well as Opposition Members have been in a similar  
situation when trying to communicate with members of  
their family on birthdays, important anniversaries and  
the like. He and I, as well as my hon. Friend the  
Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman)—he has arrived  
in the Chamber at the appropriate moment to hear me  
say this—were members of the same chambers and  
therefore in exactly the same situation when trying to  
download papers attached to an email to make sure that  
they arrived in court on time.

I warmly welcome the Bill. As we have heard so many  
hon. Members say, the importance of broadband cannot  
be overstated. It is as important as road and rail, and is  
a vital part of our infrastructure. Although I am pleased  
with the progress the Government are making, I will  
dwell on one or two brief points about where improvements  
still need to be made.

I start with words of congratulation, because it is  
right to acknowledge where the Government are moving  
in the right direction, and to be able to stand up and say  
that 93% coverage for superfast broadband is indeed  
an achievement. I applaud the ambition to achieve  
95% coverage by the end of 2017, and I was pleased to  
hear the Minister say that the Government are on target  
for that. However, it is frustrating for the 5% who are  
still left without it. That point has been repeated this  
evening, but I make no apologies for repeating it again.  
Many of us who have spoken represent constituents

Telecommunications Infrastructure 116

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

who are in exactly that position, and I know that a  
number of my constituents are not consoled by the fact  
that 95% of the rest of the population have access to  
superfast broadband while they do not.

I need not dwell on specific internet speeds; suffice it  
to say that the 1,000 megabits per second lauded in  
relation to the Bill is to be warmly welcomed, but that  
figure would be staggering to my many constituents  
who are struggling with 0.5 to 1 megabits per second  
and really cannot imagine a speed as vast as 1,000 megabits  
per second. However, I will, if I may, dwell on two or  
three brief constituency examples that constituents have  
raised with me. I must declare an interest in that, in the  
village of Lytchett Matravers, I am affected by many of  
the same issues.

The first example involves a constituent who wrote to  
me expressing great concern about broadband speeds of  
between 0.5 and 1 megabits per second. As has been  
said, we use the internet for more and more things these  
days, including education. My hon. Friend the Member  
for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) mentioned  
researching points for educational purposes, but it goes  
further than that because many of our children are  
asked to do homework based on the internet and purely  
on the internet; in fact, they have to access the internet  
to download the homework to do that evening. One  
constituent wrote to me saying that they have to ration  
the amount of homework that their family can do, with  
the children taking it in turns to get on to the computer  
and complete their homework, because speeds of 0.5 to  
1 megabits per second simply do not allow two children  
to do their homework at one and the same time. The  
additional point was made that updating software—with  
Microsoft, people do not get a wonderful DVD or disc  
to put into the computer these days; they actually have  
to download it from the internet—simply cannot be  
done if the speeds are not fast enough.

The second example I was recently given by a constituent  
involves a rural business. Again, the constituent lives  
about 100 metres from a different network that is much  
faster and would allow the business to function properly.  
As it is, he is struggling on less than 1 megabit per  
second and has to go to his place of work to download  
his work. The speeds where he lives simply will not  
allow it. My hon. Friend the Member for North East  
Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena) mentioned an example in  
his constituency in which BT was flexible, but in this  
case BT has not been flexible enough and will not allow  
my constituent to change from one exchange to another,  
despite the distance of merely 50 metres or so.

I am conscious of the time, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I  
want to make one or two final points about postcodes,  
if I may. I know that the Minister is soon to jump up to  
the Dispatch Box, but I want him to take this point on  
board. Quite often the data are arranged by postcode  
and the percentages are calculated on that basis. However,  
some roads have the same postcode but different exchanges.  
I can think of one example in Dorset where it is claimed  
people have the potential to access superfast broadband  
on the basis of the postcode alone, but that is not the  
case because the one postcode has two separate exchanges.

I warmly welcome the measures in the Bill. It will not  
solve all the problems overnight. When my constituents  
look at the full-fibre speeds, with fibre to the door  
rather than just to the cabinet, of course they applaud  
them, but they want them and they want them soon.

10 JULY 2017

117 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for indulging me and  
for giving me a full 10 minutes, and I sit down in  
advance of reaching those 10 minutes.

9.16 pm

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham)  
(Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me  
the opportunity to speak for longer.

It is a pleasure to speak on this Bill tonight, because  
when I campaigned in the by-election back in December  
broadband was one of the major issues. Indeed, trying  
to deliver broadband throughout my constituency is  
part of the five-point plan on which many hon. Friends  
helped me campaign back in those winter months.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Witney  
(Robert Courts) that broadband is essential. That is a  
relatively new thing. I am not that old, but when I look  
back to my childhood, I remember there being one  
BBC computer in a corner of the school that we went to  
use a class at a time. Only when I got to university did  
we really start to use the internet and have the ability to  
send emails. At that stage, we were sending emails only  
to other people within the university—in my case mostly  
to the man who is now my husband.

Now, we cannot conceive of how we could possibly  
live without the internet, whether we are young or old.  
As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Dorset and  
North Poole (Michael Tomlinson) said, people need it  
to be able to do homework. The children of my constituents  
and my own children have been given homework on  
Sumdog and other maths applications that they are  
supposed to do online, but they simply cannot do it  
with broadband speeds of less than 2 megabits per  
second. That is affecting the educational opportunities  
of the children in our most rural constituencies.

Young people in general are having difficulties. When  
they turn on the television and turn on Sky broadband,  
for example, they are told they can watch downloads,  
TV on demand or downloaded films, but they cannot  
because those things are not available to people who live  
in many of the rural areas I represent, where download  
speeds of less than 2 megabits per second are very  
common.

It is perhaps for business people that the lack of  
broadband represents the greatest problem. It is a particular  
problem for small businesses and, in rural areas, for  
farmers, who have to complete their single farm payments  
online. Reloading and reloading and reloading that  
page becomes very wearisome. We are now being asked  
to complete tax returns online—in fact, we will be asked  
to do so four times a year. VAT returns are also done  
online. All this becomes more and more wearisome  
when we have to do it online and we simply cannot do  
it. When businesses want to advertise for new employees  
they do it online and when people apply for those jobs  
they do it online. All those things cannot be achieved  
because we do not have access to what is now, in effect,  
a utility. In many parts of my constituency, it is not  
possible for families to do their shopping online. They  
write to me complaining, “We live in the most rural area  
in the country, and we cannot order our shopping.”

This is, perhaps, of even greater concern to the elderly.  
Jo Cox founded the Commission on Loneliness to help  
people in our community, such as the elderly, who are  
cut off from society. That may be more prevalent in

Telecommunications Infrastructure 118

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

rural communities than it is in cities. The internet offers  
elderly people living in such communities the opportunity  
to be connected to their families through Skype and other  
methods of communication. It also offers opportunities  
for telemedicine. At a time when we face challenges in  
relation to social care and the elderly, telemedicine and  
the use of the internet to monitor the condition of and  
check on the wellbeing of an elderly person can enable  
us to improve our social care offering to people in rural  
communities, and communities everywhere; but if we  
do not have the necessary internet resources, we cannot  
do that.

I welcome the Government's 93% superfast broadband  
coverage—we have made great strides in increasing the  
number of people who have access to this wonder—but  
for those who do not have access to it, the position has  
become increasingly frustrating. Some people living in  
Wellingore wrote to me saying, “We can see the cabinet,  
but we do not have access to it, because we are on a  
different exchange, and by the time the signal reaches us  
from that cabinet, it is so slow as to be virtually useless.”  
Those people are being supported through the community  
fibre partnership, and I hope that in time they will be  
able to benefit from good broadband. The situation is  
similar in Swaton. A constituent wrote to me saying  
that they were full of excitement at the sight of the  
superfast broadband sign with the little box in the  
corner. It is right outside their house, but they are not  
connected to it; they are connected to one down the  
road.

People in Sudbrook—here I must declare an interest,  
in that Sudbrook happens to be the nearest village to  
where I live—were originally told that they would have  
broadband by this September. Unfortunately, however,  
they have now been told that that will not necessarily  
happen because of the railway line, although the railway  
line is not new but has been there for a long time. Their  
broadband seems to have been indefinitely postponed.  
It beggars belief that in this day and age something as  
simple as a branch line should prevent the upgrade of a  
broadband network.

Overall, I think that the Bill, which will abolish  
business rates on fibre broadband for five years, will  
encourage the placement of new fibre lines, and I hope  
very much that that will happen in the rural components  
of my constituency. I hope that, in focusing this benefit,  
the Minister is minded to ensure that providing broadband  
for people in rural communities who are currently suffering  
from a lack of access to that vital utility is given a  
higher priority than increasing broadband speeds from  
very, very fast to even faster in our cities and town  
centres.

9.23 pm

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to be the last Back Bencher to be called in the  
debate, which has been incredibly interesting, although  
I think that, at times, the connection between the clauses  
in the Bill and the contents of speeches was well and  
truly lost. There was a suggestion that constituents of  
ours would have been able to watch the debate online. If  
that is the case, given certain parts of it, I find myself  
feeling sympathy for the 93% of the public who have  
such access. My hon. Friend the Member for North  
East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena), who is no longer  
present, said that innovation would permit constituents

10 JULY 2017

119 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Huw Merriman]*

to watch the entirety of his speech online. Conservative  
Members speculated on whether that same innovation  
would allow the battery in his phone to last quite as  
long. Perhaps there is still some way to go.

None the less, this has been an interesting debate, and  
I am delighted to be able to use the last few minutes to  
further it. Despite great work by my local authority,  
East Sussex County Council, and indeed by the  
Government, too many of my constituents do not have  
a connection to fast broadband. My constituents' age  
profile is high, and in order to balance our local economy  
we must encourage more working-age people to come  
to live and work in East Sussex. It is not too far from  
London, but, from a commuting perspective, particularly  
given our travails with Southern rail, it is too far to be  
attractive to many such younger working-age people.  
My constituency is fortunate in that 75% of it is designated  
as an area of outstanding beauty, so in that sense it  
draws people to want to come there to set up their own  
businesses,buttheywillnotdosowithouttheconnectivity  
of superfast broadband.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): My hon. Friend  
describes a constituency that is different from mine, but  
in many ways we have similar issues. In Gloucester, we  
struggle with the black spots that often arise in urban  
environments. Most of the city is well-covered but there  
are certain black spots where people cannot access  
broadband that enables them to work from home. That  
is similar to the problem that he describes.

**Huw Merriman:** My hon. Friend is right: urban areas,  
as well as rural ones, will not continue to regenerate  
without this problem being fixed.

I welcome the introduction of the Bill and the granting  
of business rate relief as a result for a five-year period  
on fibre and 5G installations. That should act as the  
further incentive that we in my constituency need to  
provide a fix.

I also welcome the previous Bill's introduction of the  
new universal service obligation, which, again, should  
give the last 7% faster broadband. As has been said, this  
type of connectivity infrastructure is, in the modern  
age, akin for our constituents to the delivery of a new  
road or railway in the past. It is vital for the entire  
economy that we do not leave these constituents behind.

As well as recognising the investment from the  
Government via this Bill, and previous funding initiatives,  
I commend Conservative-run East Sussex County Council  
and Labour-run Brighton and Hove Borough Council  
for working together to help businesses and properties  
across East Sussex to access faster broadband. Through  
theire-Sussexproject,mycountyhasallocated£34million  
in funding for areas that are too expensive for the  
market to upgrade itself. Every exchange in East Sussex  
will be included, and the current project will cover an  
area of 660 square miles and over 66,500 premises. It  
will install over 400 new fibre telecoms cabinets and  
other structures and will lay over 1,000 km of fibre—the  
distance between Brighton and Berlin.

The first e-Sussex contract is achieving excellent results  
in bringing better, more reliable fibre broadband to  
many areas that would not otherwise benefit from upgraded  
services. However, there remain properties that are hard

Telecommunications Infrastructure 120

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

to reach—for example, where a property is too far from  
the upgraded cabinet to benefit from any speed uplift.  
“Hard to reach” generally means too expensive for the  
public purse to fund. East Sussex has therefore signed a  
second contract with BT for further investment, so that  
anadditional5,000homesandbusinessesinEastSussex  
will be able to access high-speed fibre broadband.

There has been much talk today of political parties  
coming together over a common interest. Perhaps that  
local example is a positive illustration of the power of  
working together.

**Richard Graham:** Have my hon. Friend's council and  
the council in Brighton introduced in their planning  
requirements an absolute requirement on all developers  
to provide superfast broadband? This is an area where  
many of our councils around the country could do  
more, and I would be interested to learn of his experience.

**Huw Merriman:** I do not believe those councils have,  
but my hon. Friend touches on another issue. I am  
referring to East Sussex County Council and Brighton  
and Hove Borough Council, but outside of Brighton  
but within East Sussex it is the district councils that  
would have the planning condition powers to which he  
refers. Therefore, I doubt that those councils have done  
so, but this is perhaps a good example. of where districts  
can work better together with their county cousins.

This might seem like great news for East Sussex, but I  
am afraid we are starting from a very low base in terms  
of where we are operating from. The recent report by  
the consumer organisation Which? found that Rother  
District Council's geographical area, which covers the  
bulk of the 200 square miles of my constituency, is in  
the bottom 10 of all districts and boroughs in the entire  
British Isles for average broadband speeds. Rother joins  
the highlands, the Shetlands and the Orkney Isles in the  
bottom 10 performing areas. In contrast, the residents  
of Tamworth, which tops the list for speeds with an  
average of 30 megabits per second, are much more  
fortunate. The average speed for Rother is less than  
10 megabits per second.

Bearing in mind that 10 megabits per second is deemed  
to be the minimum acceptable standard by Ofcom, I  
very much welcome the Minister's commitment that  
100% of my constituents will receive 10 megabits per  
second by 2020. The Which? report suggests that the  
increased performance for the Rother District Council  
area will be vital if the Government are to meet their  
100% target. May I therefore put in a blatant invitation  
to the Minister to meet me to discuss what help could be  
offered to my constituents in Rother, in addition to the  
provisions in the Bill and the universal service obligation,  
to enable me to assist the Government in meeting their  
target?

In conclusion, I welcome the Bill as part of a package  
of proactive measures from this Government to deliver  
faster broadband. I should also mention—notwithstanding  
the fact that I just said, “in conclusion”—that I welcome  
the further reforms to the business rate mechanism. I do  
not wish to wander too far from the topic, but I can  
think of many examples of business rates having an  
impact on businesses in which services are being offered.  
We should not forget, for example, that Members of  
Parliament are subject to business rates, as I found out  
to my personal cost when I exceeded my IPSA budget

10 JULY 2017

121 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

for my staff office. I therefore absolutely welcome the  
point made by my hon. Friend the Member for North  
West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse) that business rates  
should be linked to turnover, rather than to premises.  
That would certainly help my constituency. As a further  
meander, Mr Speaker—

**Mr Speaker:** I am much enjoying the hon. Gentleman's  
dilation. There is no prohibition on him dilating a little  
further if he is minded to do so. He clearly has an  
expectant audience.

**Huw Merriman:** You are very kind, Mr Speaker. That  
is helpful, although I think part of what you said was  
perhaps inaccurate.

The other point I wanted to mention was corporation  
tax. I hope Opposition Members will agree that my  
speech has been quite collaborative so far, but I take  
issue with some of them on this issue. Conservative  
Members have pointed out that corporation tax has  
been reduced, yet the overall yield—the amount that  
can be put into public services—has increased. For  
whatever reason, the Opposition want to increase  
corporation taxes, which would reduce the amount of  
money available for public services. That is of course  
illogical.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Huw Merriman:** I will of course give way to a man  
who is anything but illogical.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am very grateful to my hon. Friend  
for giving way. Has he not once again powerfully shown  
the benefits of the Laffer curve, which demonstrates  
that lower rates lead to more tax revenue?

**Huw Merriman:** I thank my hon. Friend for reminding  
me of the Laffer curve, a term I have not heard since I  
was doing A-levels at Aylesbury College, where I was  
studying economics. He is absolutely right.

That brings me to another point about the Opposition.  
As well as supporting the Bill, it is important to support  
its aims, which are to increase business, to increase  
turnover and to increase the amount of money that we  
can put into public services. I am reminded of a recent  
visit to Bexhill business park, where the Government  
are creating funds for a new road. In return, it is hoped  
that investment will be generated for new businesses to  
set up there. It is interesting that many businesses from  
across Europe are looking to set up their headquarters  
in that business park. At a time when business confidence  
is perhaps a little uncertain owing to our position with  
regard to the European Union, it is absolutely essential  
to ensure that we have the lowest possible corporation  
tax base, so that those businesses can have every incentive  
to invest in this country, not just for the short term but  
for the long term. I am sure that they will be absolutely  
delighted that this Government have been returned to  
deliver just that.

In conclusion to my conclusion, I very much welcome  
the steps that this Government have taken to incentivise  
further broadband roll-out. I hope that they will help  
my constituents in Rother, which is, as I have said, in the  
bottom 10 districts—*[Interruption.]* I repeated that in

Telecommunications Infrastructure 122

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

case Scottish National party Members did not hear it  
the first time. I very much look forward to supporting  
the Bill as it spends its many days in Committee.

9.34 pm

**Yvonne Fovargue** (Makerfield) (Lab): The Opposition  
welcome this Bill. It is vital that our homes and businesses  
have access to broadband and that broadband is faster,  
saferandmorereliablethanbefore,whichiswhywewill  
be carefully scrutinising the Bill in Committee. As the  
Chancellor put it, this country was late to the 4G party,  
so we should do all we can to ensure that the UK is at  
the forefront of 5G communications and has full-fibre  
broadband to support it.

There was some doubt that this Bill would appear.  
The policy was originally announced in the Chancellor's  
2016 autumn statement and was due to be implemented  
as part of the Local Government Finance Bill, but it  
was then scuppered by the general election—like a lot  
of things. It was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech,  
and there was some industry nervousness that it had  
been abandoned, but here we are in early July with a  
stand-alone Bill and I am glad that we are.

As we have heard, the Bill has a simple premise—at  
least I thought it was simple before I attended the start  
of this debate five hours ago. It will encourage firms to  
install new optical fibre by providing 100% business  
rates relief backdated to last April for a minimum  
period of five years. We understand that it will cost the  
Exchequer around £65 million by 2022. That is sure to  
be welcome news to the UK's broadband companies,  
many of whom wrote to the Chancellor last February  
to complain that the current business rates regime is not  
fit for purpose and discourages inward investment in  
upgrades.

This legislation meets some of those concerns. The  
fact is that those business leaders were really talking  
about the whole business rates regime. This Bill deals  
with just one aspect when we actually need to be talking  
about the whole system, which many hon. Members  
from across the House have agreed with. There are  
many other changes to the system that could help to  
support businesses, and we outlined some of them in  
our manifesto, including switching from RPI to CPI  
indexation, exempting new investment in plant and  
machinery and ensuring that businesses have access to a  
proper appeals process. I appreciate that this is a stand-  
alone bill dealing with digital infrastructure, but I  
fear that it is no more than a sticking plaster for our  
moribund business rates system when we really need a  
total rethink.

This is a framework Bill, so it is short on detail.  
Conditions of eligibility will be outlined in future  
regulations, for example, which is why we need to scrutinise  
the Bill carefully. I do wonder which firms will benefit.  
The relief is expected to boost the big data providers  
through, for example, Virgin Media's £3 billion “project  
lightning” and BT's Openreach subsidiary, but it is  
unclear whether smaller firms will benefit initially. What  
impact does the Minister expect the reform to have on  
smaller providers? It would be a great shame if this Bill  
was merely for big business. Would it help smaller firms  
if the Bill's provisions could be applied retrospectively  
to capture work on full-fibre networks that has already  
taken place?

10 JULY 2017

123 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Yvonne Fovargue]*

Like many hon. Members, I am worried about how  
the Bill will benefit Britain's rural communities, who  
have not done quite so well out of the broadband  
revolution so far. Many areas of the country, including  
urban areas, have been dogged by poor connectivity. I  
could not get broadband speeds for the past seven years  
in my area, but we were connected just last week because  
the housing company that built my house did not allow  
it to be cabled. However, many customers still do not  
get the advertised speeds that they are paying for. If  
they want a broadband upgrade, they pay for it, but  
they do not always receive what is advertised, so I  
commend the *Which?* report on broadband speeds. We  
pay our water rates, but if the utility company merely  
gave us a trickle out of the tap, we would be quick to  
complain. Many Members have said that broadband is  
the next utility, so why is that not included?

Businesses have suffered from not having the proper  
access to markets and customers that they should have.  
The public have suffered from being cut off from internet  
sites and entertainment sources, and their children are  
doubly penalised because so much modern education  
relies on online resources.

Discussion of digital exclusion has been sadly lacking  
in this debate. Services are increasingly going online. In  
fact, jobcentres have recently closed as people are  
encouraged to apply online for all their benefits and  
council services, yet many people do not have access. In  
my constituency in the borough of Wigan, 99% of  
people have access to fast broadband, but only 74% of  
them have the skills to use it. The cuts in the adult  
education budget are particularly penalising those people  
by preventing them from joining the digital economy  
that we all enjoy.

As I said at the outset, we support the Bill, which is  
an important step towards securing better broadband  
connectivity and access, but it is about more than just  
access. The Bill can work only if it is part of a broader  
picture that, on the one hand, fully incentivises business  
to invest in the future and, on the other, ensures that  
everyone, not just a select few, benefits from the reforms.  
More than just this Bill, that means education to ensure  
that everyone has the skills to take advantage of this  
great step forward.

9.41 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):** We have had  
an interesting and, at times, wide-ranging debate on this  
important Bill. It is good to see such interest from  
Government Back Benchers, but it is slightly disappointing  
not to hear one speech from an Opposition Back Bencher  
on such a critical issue across the country.

The improvement of connectivity in the digital age  
helps individuals in their workplaces and homes, and  
can transform public services and the economy. Improved  
connectivity will bring significant economic rewards,  
with research suggesting that increased broadband speeds  
alone could add £17 billion to UK output by 2024,  
which has been recognised by all Members who have  
spoken today. I thank the many colleagues who made  
such passionate contributions today, which show that  
we all recognise the importance of investing in our  
telecommunications infrastructure.

Telecommunications Infrastructure 124

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

The Bill will ensure that we help to close the digital  
divide and get higher quality, more reliable and resilient  
connectivity to more households and businesses. The  
Bill makes the technical changes needed to introduce  
100% business rates relief for five years for newly installed  
fibre infrastructure. The importance we place on that  
relief is shown by how quickly we have introduced the  
Bill in the Session.

The Chancellor announced at autumn statement 2016  
that we would provide relief on new fibre with effect  
from 1 April 2017. It is therefore vital that we move  
quickly to reassure the sector that the relief will follow.  
Investment decisions have been made on the back of the  
Chancellor's commitment, and it is right that we proceed  
with the Bill to give us the powers to deliver the promised  
relief.

The Bill introduces support that forms part of a  
wider £1 billion package of measures that the Government  
are putting in place to support investment in digital  
infrastructure, and it forms an important part of the  
Government's digital strategy. As such, the Bill will help  
to maintain the UK's current high ranking as an internet  
e-commerce economy, as well as providing significant  
coverage of quick, reliable broadband connections to  
homes across the country.

I want to mention some of the contributions made in  
this debate, starting with that of the hon. Member for  
Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne). He welcomed  
the Bill and also made the economic case for it. I felt he  
acknowledged that this Government are investing in the  
technology of the future. He intimated that the measures  
in the Bill will favour larger providers, but let me  
reassure him that, on the contrary, the Bill actually  
helps the smaller providers and opens up competition.  
It puts those smaller providers on a more level  
playing field, and that view was reiterated in several  
contributions.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned business rate retention,  
and we are absolutely clear that we want local government  
to keep more of the taxes that it raises locally. That  
commitment was in our manifesto and we are looking  
to follow through on it.

**Andrew Gwynne:** This is an important point, which I  
have raised in points of order and through other  
mechanisms in the past week or so. Will the Minister  
clarify that it is still the Government's intention to  
proceed with the measures that were in the Local  
Government Finance Bill relating to the local retention  
of business rates, on the same timetable set out, with the  
changes to the revenue support grant?

**Mr Jones:** As I said to the hon. Gentleman in my  
response to his comments, this Government are absolutely  
committed to allowing local government to keep more  
of the taxes it raises locally. That was in our manifesto.  
He made a very important point, not just then, but  
during his contribution, about local government wanting  
certainty, but he was using a little faux rage, given that  
during the time his party was in government, local  
government had no more than one year of certainty on  
how it would be funded. Local government currently  
has a four-year settlement and therefore greater certainty.  
That said, we are well aware that in the last year of that  
settlement we need to provide certainty to local government,  
and it is our intention to do just that.

10 JULY 2017

125 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned more regular  
revaluations. I can—

**Andrew Gwynne** *rose—*

**Mr Jones:** I am not going to give way; I am going to  
make some progress. On regular revaluations, I just  
want to tell the hon. Gentleman that we are committed  
to the aim of delivering more frequent revaluations.  
The hon. Member for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue)  
also made the important point about the detail of the  
measures in the Bill. As she knows, this is a framework  
and we are going to introduce further regulations to  
implement the Bill. I can assure her that those regulations  
will be put forward before the Committee stage, so that  
hon. Members can scrutinise them during the passage  
of the Bill.

**Andrew Gwynne:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I  
havestoodatthisDispatchBoxonanumberof occasions  
in the past week or so to discuss this important issue; I  
have asked you how we can get a statement from the  
Secretary of State or his Ministers. The last time, the  
Secretary of State did say that we could raise this in a  
debate. I have asked the question and we have still not  
got answers. How do we get that certainty for local  
government?

**Mr Speaker:** The answer to the hon. Gentleman's  
question is that if he does not at first succeed, he must  
try, try again. I am sure that is something his mother  
taught him when he was at school—when he was a  
young boy growing up. What I would say to him is,  
“Persist. Go to the Table Office. Think of the opportunities  
for different types of questions and, as we approach the  
summer recess, the relative urgency or emergency of  
what he seeks.”

**Mr Jones:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Let me move on to contributions made by other right  
hon. and hon. Members. My right hon. Friend the  
Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey) showed his significant  
knowledge in this area. He welcomed the Bill and, given  
that significant knowledge, it was good to see him  
confirm that he thought the Bill would help to incentivise  
the smaller providers and increase competition in the  
sector, a point reiterated by my hon. Friend the Member  
for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse).

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wantage also  
mentioned the impact the Bill would have on our mobile  
infrastructure and 5G, as well as the need to look at the  
planning system to ensure that we have the mobile  
infrastructure we need. I am sure he will be aware that  
provisions were introduced last November as part of  
the Digital Economy Act 2017 to speed up the planning  
process for telecom infrastructure.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr  
(Jonathan Edwards) welcomed the framework for England  
and Wales. As he acknowledged, the Bill's framework  
will allow the devolved Government to take up—or not,  
as the case may be—the measures. He was right to point  
out that funding will be provided for Wales through  
Barnett consequentials.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon  
Hoare) made an important point about the potential  
loss of income for local authorities during the Bill's  
implementation. I can reassure him that if a network is

Telecommunications Infrastructure 126

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

onthelocalratinglist,compensationforlocalgovernment  
will be provided via a grant to cover the particular local  
authority's share of the cost of providing the business  
rate relief.

My hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire  
welcomed the Bill, which I understand fulfils a wish he  
had during the passage of the 2017 Act. He seemed  
extremely pleased that the Government have taken up  
the suggestion to provide this business rate relief.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid  
Kent (Helen Whately) discussed the Bill's importance in  
the context of social inclusion and the tackling of  
loneliness. She referred to rural small businesses that  
would benefit from the delivery of fibre broadband to  
their communities.

My hon.Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills  
(Wendy Morton) recognised that the five-year rate relief  
period would provide a significant incentive to fibre  
broadband. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill  
and Battle (Huw Merriman), she made the perceptive  
comment that this type of fibre broadband is becoming  
as important a part of the nation's infrastructure as our  
road and rail network.

Myhon.FriendtheMemberforBostonandSkegness  
(Matt Warman) made an important contribution. He  
has campaigned tirelessly on this issue and talked about  
the benefit for the Government, with our investment  
being returned many times over because of the increased  
economic activity that will be created.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase  
(Amanda Milling) talked about the importance of having  
fibreconnectivityonnewhousingestates,citingChasewater  
Grange. She also mentioned the opportunity that the  
fibre roll-out could provide to new industrial developments,  
and did not forgo the opportunity to mention the  
Rugeley B power station site, which is extremely important  
to her and her constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for North East Hampshire  
welcomed the Bill and mentioned how, in rural areas  
such as his, its provisions could well assist with tech jobs  
that hitherto may not have been deliverable in rural  
areas.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The Minister  
mentions rural areas; could he reference my constituency,  
Wealden? Broadband is imperative there, not only for  
the farmers who need to log their files and the teachers  
who need to do their Ofsted reports, but for the many  
business throughout the constituency's three towns,  
Uckfield, Crowborough and Hailsham. We need  
connectivity in rural areas, and I hope the Minister can  
comment on that.

**Mr Marcus Jones:** I concur with my hon. Friend. My  
hon.FriendtheMemberforSleafordandNorthHykeham  
(Dr Johnson) made the same comments in regard to  
how these types of measures will help those in her  
constituency engaged in the agricultural industry and  
farming.

In conclusion, this Bill will help businesses and  
households with their broadband and support the economy.  
It is only one of several measures—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sure that the Minister is very  
flattered. The House cannot wait to hear more of the  
oratory.

**Mr Marcus Jones:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

128

10 JULY 2017

127 Telecommunications Infrastructure

(Relief from Non-Domestic Rates)

*[Mr Marcus Jones]*

This is one of several measures that we are taking on  
both broadband and business rates and I commend it to  
the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time.*

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE  
(RELIEF FROM NON-DOMESTIC RATES) BILL  
(PROGRAMME)**

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the Telecommunications  
Infrastructure (Relief from Non-Domestic Rates) Bill:

*Committal*

1. The Bill shall be committed to a Committee of the whole  
   House.
2. Proceedings in Committee of the whole House shall be  
   taken in the following order: Clauses 1 to 4; the Schedule;  
   Clauses 5 and 6; new Clauses; new Schedules; remaining proceedings  
   on the Bill.

*Proceedings in Committee of the whole House, on  
Consideration and up to and including Third Reading*

1. Proceedings in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings  
   on Consideration and any proceedings in legislative grand committee  
   shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion  
   one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which  
   those proceedings are commenced.
2. Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not  
   previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment  
   of interruption on that day.
3. Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall  
   not apply to proceedings in Committee of the whole House, to  
   any proceedings on Consideration or to other proceedings up to  
   and including Third Reading.

*Other proceedings*

1. Any other proceedings on the Bill may be programmed.*—  
   (Rebecca Harris.)*

*Question agreed to.*

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE  
(RELIEF FROM NON-DOMESTIC RATES) BILL  
(MONEY)**

*Queen's recommendation signified.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing  
Order No. 52(1)(a)),*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the  
Telecommunications Infrastructure (Relief from Non-Domestic  
Rates) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money  
provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in  
the sums payable under any other Act out of money so  
provided.*—(Rebecca Harris.)*

*Question agreed to.*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. If, inexplicably, some Members  
do not wish to hear the debate on the future of the King  
George Hospital in Ilford, I hope that they will leave the  
Chamber quickly and quietly, so that we can hear the  
oration from the constituency Member of Parliament,  
and his neighbour, to whom the matter is of great  
importance.

King George Hospital, Ilford

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

9.56 pm

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure  
to be called before 10 o'clock. I wish to begin by saying  
that, earlier this evening, I was at a celebration function  
organised by the Barking, Havering and Redbridge  
University Hospitals NHS Trust celebrating the fact  
that, in March, after three years, it came out of special  
measures. That event was a very good occasion, because  
it enabled me to get even more up-to-date information  
before this debate. The trust has published 10 tips on  
how to climb out of special measures. I am sure that  
other NHS trusts will find that valuable. It is has also  
published the booklet “The Only Way is Up”, which is  
original, and it details the strenuous efforts made by all  
the staff and the management and various people with  
whom they were engaged in order to achieve that great  
progress.

I must say that, in my 25 years in this House, I have  
often had to bring to the attention of the House and the  
Government problems in the NHS in my area. It is not  
the first time that I have talked about the future of King  
George Hospital. Although the hospital, which is one  
of the two—with Queen's Hospital, Romford—in our  
trust, is now improving and is under the best management  
that it has had in 25 years, there are still clouds on the  
horizon. First, there is, inexplicably, a delay in an  
announcement about the future of the North East  
London NHS Treatment Centre where I understand  
there is some difference of opinion between local clinical  
commissioning groups. I must declare an interest here: I  
had an operation on my nose in that facility a few years  
ago and found it to be very good. There is a very strong  
argument that that facility could be brought in-house  
within the NHS, and no longer provided by Care UK.  
That would allow greater flexibility onsite for longer  
planning of what might happen at King George Hospital.

Secondly—I referred to clouds on the horizon—there  
is the ongoing social care crisis, which has impacted very  
much in my local authority and neighbouring local  
authorities, linked to the 40% cuts in funding for Redbridge  
local authority, an ageing population on the one hand and—

10 pm

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

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

**Mike Gapes:** The ongoing social care crisis poses  
major difficulties. We all know that private care homes  
are struggling and that there is an issue of quality. It  
seems to me that one advantage of the King George  
Hospital site is that it is co-located next door to the  
facilities of the North East London NHS Foundation  
Trust's Goodmayes Hospital and various other facilities  
that provide support for people with learning difficulties  
and people with acute, severe and less severe mental  
health problems. It would seem logical, if we are to have  
joined-up NHS treatment, to have alongside a hospital  
facilities for those who need short-term, temporary or  
longer-term care in transition to or from the NHS  
facilities next door. The site is big enough to do that  
and, with imagination, could be a model to be followed.

129

King George Hospital, Ilford

10 JULY 2017

King George Hospital, Ilford

130

We also have a third cloud on the horizon, which  
is the north-east London draft sustainability and  
transformation plan. The Minister will recall that he  
and I had a very useful meeting in February, along with  
his then colleague, Mr David Mowat. We had a useful  
discussion about the implications of the huge deficit in  
north-east London—£586 million—the potential huge  
cuts in the budget over the next four years, and the  
implications they might have. I raised the issue in detail  
in a debate on 16 December 2016 and that was why I  
had the meeting with Ministers.

I am very concerned that the funding gap, even if we  
have predicted regular savings of about £220 million or  
£240 million in the NHS, would still be £336 million by  
2021. One of the most worrying points about the plan—I  
understand it is still a draft and has not been signed  
off—is that I went to a meeting last week when the  
people involved in the organisation considering the plan  
were discussing it and senior figures in the London  
NHS referred to it, saying, “You have to work within  
the basis of the plan.” It has not been signed off or  
approved, but the people in the NHS health economy in  
London are thinking ahead as though it will be.

The plan points out that the population of the north-east  
London boroughs will increase by 18% over the next  
15 years, equivalent to a new city. Normally that level of  
population increase would require a new hospital, but  
there is no provision, no funding and no expectation of  
a new hospital. Instead, the proposal is to downgrade  
King George Hospital in my constituency and take  
away its accident and emergency department. That is  
still in the plan, and it is not a new proposal. In fact, I  
have been campaigning to save the A&E in my constituency  
for more than 10 years. But the formal decision was  
taken by the former Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley,  
only in 2011. That decision, which was linked at the  
time to a suggestion of closing maternity services at  
King George Hospital, provided that those two things  
would happen in around two years. That was in  
October 2011.

The reality is that maternity services went to Queen's  
Hospital in early 2013—I do not question that there  
have been improvements—but the A&E could not close  
as there was no capacity at other hospitals in the region.  
In addition, it was quite clear that it required huge  
capital investment, which was not forthcoming. The  
decision was made in 2011, but in 2013 there was no  
action and the issue was deferred. The trust then went  
into special measures three years ago because of a  
variety of issues, which I have already mentioned.

As the trust comes out of special measures, the  
question becomes whether it will go ahead with the  
plans to close the A&E. Practically, it is impossible for  
that closure to happen soon, but the sustainability and  
transformation plan still states that the intention is to  
close the A&E in 2019. The original suggestion was that  
it would stop the 24-hour service, getting rid of the  
overnight A&E from September this year. That plan  
was dropped in January, and I welcome that, but the  
reality is that it is still in the plan and is still proposed.  
That cloud still hangs over the trust and all its excellent  
staff, who have done so much to bring our hospital out  
of special measures.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): I congratulate my  
hon. Friend on securing this important debate. In my  
capacity as a Labour councillor in the London Borough

of Redbridge, I currently chair a cross-party working  
group on the future of A&E provision in north-east  
London. One frustrating thing is that all the local  
health leads in the area are working to a decision made  
byapreviousSecretaryofState.Thatministerialdecision  
still stands and the leads have to work towards it. They  
do not believe that is achievable or clinically sound. Yet,  
they point to the Secretary of State when pressed to  
abandon the plans. I hope that the Minister might be  
able to reverse that ministerial decision and remove the  
sword of Damocles from our A&E department.

**Mike Gapes:** I am grateful for that intervention as it  
saves me from making the same point. During the  
election campaign, the Secretary of State went to my  
hon. Friend's constituency for a private Conservative  
party function. He was asked by the local paper, the  
*Ilford Recorder*, about the plans to close the A&E at  
King George Hospital. He said that there were no plans  
to close it in the “foreseeable future”. Now, I do not  
know how big the crystal ball is. I do not know what  
kind of telescope the Secretary of State has and which  
end he is looking through. The fact is that “foreseeable”  
does not necessarily mean that the A&E will not close  
in 2019. If it is not going to close in the near future or  
even in the medium term, why not lift the cloud of  
uncertainty over the staff and over the planning process?  
Then we could have a serious look at the draft sustainability  
and transformation plan for north-east London, which  
is partly predicated on the closure of A&E at King  
George Hospital.

In January, the trust wrote a letter saying:

“It is our intention to make the changes by 2019 but please be  
assured nothing will happen until we are fully satisfied all the  
necessary resources are in place, including the additional capacity  
at the neighbouring hospitals, and we have made sure it is safe for  
our patients. In the meantime, the existing A&E facilities at King  
George will continue to operate as now.”

The reality is that there is no additional resource in  
terms of the capital that would be required to provide  
the beds for 400 patients at King George overall. We  
face a very uncertain future. If the A&E closed, where  
would those patients go? There would be a need for  
capital investment at Queen's and for big capital investment  
at Whipps Cross. That would take time and resources,  
at a time when NHS budgets are seriously pressed. And  
we still have that huge deficit in our regional health  
economy.

Why not take that issue off the agenda? Last month,  
my hon. Friend and I jointly wrote a letter with the  
leader of Redbridge Council, Councillor Jas Athwal, to  
the Secretary of State. We requested that he formally  
reverse the decision taken by his predecessor, to allow  
certainty and to allow more sensible planning.

Last week, one of our health campaigners, Andy  
Walker, who put in various questions and freedom of  
information requests—he is a very persistent campaigner—  
received a response from the Barking, Havering and  
Redbridge trust, commenting on this issue. It used the  
same formulation:

“We have been very clear that no changes will be made until we  
have the relevant assurances that it is safe to do so and this  
remains the case.”

That formulation has been used for several years; it is  
like a stuck record. It is not safe to make the changes.  
Why not have a new, imaginative approach that says,

131

King George Hospital, Ilford

10 JULY 2017

King George Hospital, Ilford

132

*[Mike Gapes]*

“Let's look at social care. Let's look at the potential for  
developing the site. Let's look at collaboration between  
the mental health services of the North East London  
NHS Foundation Trust. Let's look at providing particular  
forms of housing and support.” This area could be a  
model for a new way forward.

I know from discussions I have had that people in  
various NHS organisations are working on such possibilities,  
but they cannot go any further than possible explorations  
while this cloud—the threat to close the A&E—still lies  
on the table. If the Secretary of State would take it off  
the table, we could have some serious discussions about  
improvements to health facilities. We could deal with  
not just the A&E but other issues.

On the King George site at the moment, we also have  
an urgent care centre. It recently had a Care Quality  
Commission inspection and was rated as “requires  
improvement”. That is an indication, again, of the  
problems we face. I have a lot of inadequate GP facilities  
in my constituency; I have lots of problems with people  
coming to me complaining that they cannot get through.  
Primary care in north-east London faces a crisis of  
retention, recruitment and standards of services. If we  
could make imaginative use of the facilities at the King  
George Hospital site, we could make a big difference to  
primary care, as well as to the acute services and the  
mental health services next door.

My plea to the Minister and the Government is this:  
take the closure of the A&E off the table, and let us  
then work collaboratively to improve the NHS in north-east  
London and in my constituency.

10.14 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip  
Dunne):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Speaker, and to contribute to another debate introduced  
by the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes). I  
congratulate him on his tenacity in keeping the subject  
of King George Hospital at the forefront of Health  
Ministers' minds in recent years, not least during my  
tenure. As he rightly said, he and I had a meeting in  
February with my former colleague, David Mowat, to  
discuss many of the issues that he has raised this evening.  
I therefore hope that he will forgive me if he has heard  
some of my remarks before. I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) on joining us.  
He obviously has experience of these matters as well,  
given his role in the local council.

I join the hon. Member for Ilford South in paying  
tribute to the achievement of all the staff and management  
involved at Barking, Havering and Redbridge University  
Hospitals NHS Trust in exiting special measures after  
what has undoubtedly been a long journey for them  
over the past three years. I was very pleased that they  
were able to exit special measures in March of this year.  
That is a huge tribute to everyone involved in ensuring  
that they were focused on the areas where the CQC had  
identified what was not best practice. They have focused  
on improving the deficiencies, and the fact that they  
were awarded an “improved” rating enabled us to take  
the decision we did. I also join him in congratulating the  
quality of management now substantively in place within  
the trust, at least one of whose members has himself  
been a beneficiary of treatment locally; I think it was

for a different complaint from the one that the hon.  
Gentleman was treated for in the intermediate treatment  
centre. That was a very substantial experience, and all  
credit to that member of the executive team.

The hon. Gentleman touched on a couple of clouds,  
as he described them. The first was the intermediate  
treatment centre, which conducts elective and planned  
procedures provided by an independent provider, Care  
UK. As he will appreciate—in fact, this took place under  
the previous Labour Government, when the independent  
sector provided capacity to support the NHS in a number  
of areas—we have had a policy of allowing independent  
providers to be commissioned to undertake care, and it  
is a matter for the local commissioners in his area to do  
so; it is not for me to tell them who are the best  
providers to be able to undertake care. I am very pleased  
that he was a beneficiary of some of that care. It will be  
up to the commissioners, working with the NHS, to  
decide who is best to provide services in his area as they  
come up for renewal from time to time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the social care challenge  
that exists in north-east London, as it does in many  
other parts of the country. That is why we decided in the  
Budget in March this year to inject an additional £1 billion  
into the adult social care budgets of local authorities  
across the country and a further £1 billion in the next  
financial year. Moreover, last week, we announced some  
measures to scrutinise the performance of localauthorities  
in managing those budgets—in particular, so that they  
contribute to the patient flow challenge, which we experience  
in many of our hospitals, including the King George:  
patients occupying hospital beds in acute settings who  
have no medical reason to continue to be there, because  
of the challenge of providing placements in the community.  
It is important that there is closer integration with  
social care through the local authorities, but also, as he  
rightly identifies, through other NHS providers, particularly  
if they are co-located on the site. He mentioned what he  
describes as an opportunity for the North-East London  
NHS Foundation Trust to work alongside Barking,  
Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust  
to try to smooth the passage and find other opportunities  
in the community for more appropriate flow. That is  
very interesting and I hope he is engaging with the  
leadership of the sustainability and transformation plan  
and proposing imaginative ideas, in the hope that they  
will be assessed appropriately when consideration is  
given to the provision of the future pattern of healthcare  
in his area.

The hon. Gentleman focused mostly on the challenge  
to A&E at King George. I will spend most of the rest of  
my remarks addressing his concerns as best I can. He  
will appreciate that, across the country, the NHS is  
coming together, through the STPs published at the end  
of last year, to identify the right pattern of care across  
an individual NHS footprint. North-east London has  
come together with the STP for that area. Our view is  
that that is the right way to encourage a more holistic  
approach to the future provision of NHS services. It  
needs to be led by clinicians and those responsible for  
managing NHS organisations, and it needs to work in a  
collaborative and perhaps more open way than it has in  
the past with local authorities, which have a part to  
play, as I have said, in facilitating the passage beyond  
hospital and back into the community.

133

King George Hospital, Ilford

10 JULY 2017

King George Hospital, Ilford

134

Weareabsolutelyclearthatanysignificantservicechange  
that arises out of the implementation of STPs, if they get  
to that stage, must be subject to full public consultation,  
and proposals must meet the Government's four  
reconfiguration tests, which are support from clinical  
commissioners,clarityontheclinicalevidencebase,robust  
patient and public engagement, and support for patient  
choice. Additional NHS guidance means that proposed  
service reconfigurations should be tested for their impact  
on overall bed numbers in the area, which the hon.  
Gentleman has identified appears to be absent from the  
STP at present. I urge him to continue to challenge that  
in his area.

**Wes Streeting:** Will the Minister clarify whether he  
expects the STP process to now publicly consult on any  
future proposal to close the A&E at King George  
Hospital? Furthermore, were the STP to recommend to  
Ministers that the A&E should remain, will they heed  
that advice and agree that the STP process should not  
be constrained by the decision made in 2011by the then  
Secretary of State?

**Mr Dunne:** I am going to have to disappoint the hon.  
Gentleman, because I am not in a position to second  
guess the conclusions of the STP discussions and  
recommendations. It is appropriate for them to take  
into account clinical decisions made in the recent past,  
one of which is the decision about the A&E at King  
George. It is up to the STP management to decide  
whether to take that forward as the STP evolves. It is  
right that the STP management looks at health provision  
in the round. It will be responsible for delivering healthcare  
to local residents and it needs to take into account all  
the information sources available to it. I do not think it  
is right to say that it necessarily has to re-consult on  
certain issues. It needs to form a view on the right  
configuration and then use its available data sources  
and go through the processes.

I will try to explain to the hon. Gentleman the  
process that, as I understand it, is now under way in his  
area. Both hon. Gentlemen are right to say that, in  
2011, on advice from the independent reconfiguration  
panel, which approved the proposal, the then Secretary  
of State took the decision that the north-east London  
scheme should be allowed to proceed. The Secretary of  
State made it clear at the time—it has since been repeated  
in response to questions about the health authorities in  
the area—that no changes were to take place until it was  
clinically safe to do so. I believe that remarks that the  
Secretary of State might have made when visiting the  
area recently must be considered in that context.

There have been a number of changes since the  
decision was made, and there are four elements to the  
process. First, the STP team is reviewing and revalidating  
the modelling used back in 2010 to ensure that the proposals  
that were made remain appropriate, as one would expect  
the team to do. Secondly, the governing members of the

CCG board, the trust board and the STP board will  
need to agree the business case that arises from the STP  
recommendations. Thirdly, if that is achieved, NHS  
England and NHS Improvement will be required to  
approve the business case. Finally, it is envisaged that a  
clinically led gateway assurance team—an NHS construct  
—will manage a series of gateway reviews at different  
stages of the process from planning to implementation,  
as the project proceeds, to assure system readiness and  
patient safety at every step of the way, should the decisions  
necessary to get there be taken in the intervening period.

**Mike Gapes:** Does the Minister think that the whole  
process could be completed by 2019?

**Mr Dunne:** I will have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman,  
because it is not for me to prejudge how long the  
process would take. In all honesty, I think it is most  
unlikely that it would be completed in less than two  
years. It is conceivable that it would be concluded by the  
end of 2019, but a two-year process is likely to be  
required as a minimum.

In the meantime, CQC visits and reports will continue  
on a routine basis. Now that the trust is out of special  
measures, those visits will be somewhat less frequent  
than they were while the trust was in special measures.  
Any information coming out of that process will inform  
decisions taken by the trust and the STP area.

In my final comments, I want to reassure the hon.  
Gentlemen and their constituents that the proposals  
include a new urgent care centre at King George Hospital  
to provide emergency support to local residents for the  
majority of present A&E attendances. Blue-light trauma  
andemergencycasesrequiringfullsupportfromemergency  
medical teams would be taken to other hospitals in the  
area, but the majority of cases currently treated at King  
George would continue to be treated there. The new  
urgentcarecentrewouldbenefitfromseveralimprovements,  
including more space and access for diagnosis, X-ray,  
blood tests and so on. I hope that that gives the hon.  
Gentlemen some reassurance that the facilities that  
remained at King George would continue to provide the  
majority of their constituents with the care that they  
would need in an emergency.

**Wes Streeting:** Is the Minister saying that the STP  
process should not be constrained by the 2011 decision  
if those in charge of the process think that that was the  
wrong decision?

**Mr Dunne:** The process should be informed by the  
decisions taken in 2010, but it will be up to today's STP  
leadership to decide what to do.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.29 pm

*House adjourned.*

135

11 JULY 2017

136

House of Commons

*Tuesday 11 July 2017*

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

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

CITY OF LONDON (OPEN SPACES)BILL

*Ordered,*

That the promoters of the City of London Corporation (Open  
Spaces) Bill, which originated in this House in Session 2015-16 on  
22 January 2016, may have leave to proceed with the Bill in the  
current Session according to the provisions of Standing Order  
188B (Revival of bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.)*

MIDDLE LEVEL BILL

*Motion made,*

That the promoters of the Middle Level Bill, which originated  
in this House in the previous Session on 24 January 2017, may  
have leave to proceed with the Bill in the current Session according  
to the provisions of Standing Order 188B (Revival of bills).—(*The  
Chairman of Ways and Means.)*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*To be considered on Tuesday 18 July.*

NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY BILL [*LORDS*]

*Ordered,*

That the promoters of the New Southgate Cemetery Bill  
[*Lords*], which originated in the House of Lords in Session  
2015-16 on 25 January 2016, may have leave to proceed with the  
Bill in the current Session according to the provisions of Standing  
Order 188B (Revival of bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and  
Means.)*

SESSIONAL RETURNS

*Ordered,*

That there be laid before this House Returns for Session

2016-17 of information and statistics relating to:

1. Business of the House
2. Closure of Debate, Proposal of Question and Allocation of  
   Time (including Programme Motions)
3. Sittings of the House
4. Private Bills and Private Business
5. Public Bills
6. Delegated Legislation and Legislative Reform Orders
7. European Legislation, etc
8. Grand Committees
9. Panel of Chairs
10. Select Committees.—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.)*

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

*The Secretary of State was asked—***Illegal Wildlife Trade**

1. **Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): What  
   steps his Department is taking to help tackle the illegal  
   trade in wildlife. [900338]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** I wish to begin by congratulating  
Iraq's security forces on liberating Mosul from the  
pitiless grasp of Daesh. The flag of Iraq flies once more  
in the country's second city and I pay tribute to the  
pilots of the RAF who played a vital role in supporting  
this operation, delivering more airstrikes than anyone  
else apart from the United States. The House can take  
pride in what they have done.

On the illegal wildlife trade, we can be pleased with  
the agreement that the Prime Minister helped to secure  
at the G20 summit in Hamburg. It is about cracking  
down not only on the trade in charismatic megafauna,  
but on those who engage in gunrunning, people trafficking  
and much other human misery, as well as illegal wildlife  
trafficking. We can be proud of what we are doing.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I applaud the efforts the Government  
are making in this area. I am also pleased that the UK  
will host the illegal wildlife trade conference in 2018.  
Can the Foreign Secretary confirm how much money  
the Department has committed to tackling the illegal  
wildlife trade and how effectively the money is being  
spent?

**Boris Johnson:** I can confirm that we are increasing  
our contribution to £26 million—another £13 million  
to tackle the illegal wildlife trade. I have myself seen  
what UK-financed projects are doing in Kenya to crack  
down on this vile trade.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I say to the Foreign  
Secretary that we simply have to give this subject a  
much higher priority than we do—not only our  
Government, but across the world. Every week or month  
we see programmes on our televisions—55 African  
elephants are poached every day. He has to make this a  
priority. It is not good enough for us to look at our  
television screens and feel sorry about it—we have to have  
a far greater commitment to do something about it.

**Boris Johnson:** I completely share the hon. Gentleman's  
zeal and passion. The UK has in fact been in the lead on  
this for several years now, and we will continue to push  
the agenda, not just at the G20, as the Prime Minister  
did, but at the IWT summit that we will host in October  
2018 in London.

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Will  
my right hon. Friend talk a little about his strategy on  
this issue, because the link between the illegal wildlife

137

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

138

trade, smuggling, people trafficking, and lawlessness  
and violence in many countries is extremely real? Addressing  
the illegal wildlife trade may seem esoteric, but it is not:  
it is about the stability of many nations that are firm  
partners of the United Kingdom.

**Boris Johnson:** My hon. Friend is right: this is far  
from esoteric. It not only touches the hearts of millions  
of people in our country—as the hon. Member for  
Gedling (Vernon Coaker) said—but helps to cause increased  
human misery. The same people are involved in trade in  
drugs, arms and people, worth up to £13 billion a year,  
and we are playing a major part in frustrating that  
trade.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): There is increasing evidence  
that the UK's legal ivory market has been used as cover  
for illegal trade. What discussions will the Foreign Secretary  
have with colleagues about an all-out ban on the ivory  
trade, as previously committed to?

**Boris Johnson:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, the  
Government have a commitment to an all-out ban on  
the sale of ivory in this country, and that is what we  
intend to pursue.

**Exiting the EU**

1. **Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): What steps his  
   Department is taking to help support and deliver an  
   effective departure for the UK from the EU. [900339]

14. **Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): What  
steps his Department is taking to help support and  
deliver an effective departure for the UK from the EU.  
[900351]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** My Department continues to  
support EU exit negotiations, and the Government  
work to strengthen our relations with partners worldwide.  
As a champion of free trade, we will continue to seize  
the opportunities afforded by Brexit and guarantee our  
long-term global prosperity.

**Rachel Maclean:** Businesses in my constituency are  
seeking to make the most of the opportunities that  
Brexit provides for them, but can my right hon. Friend  
assure me that he will work closely with the Department  
for International Trade and the Department for Exiting  
the European Union to ensure that businesses that are  
already trading with the single market are helped to  
build new export markets for their goods and services  
around the world, to secure their continued prosperity?

**Boris Johnson:** Absolutely. I congratulate my hon.  
Friend on what I believe is her first question—I think it  
is a very good one. She can reassure her constituents  
that not only will the excellent companies in her constituency  
be able to continue to enjoy free trade with the rest of  
the European Union—with the EU27—but they will, of  
course, have the additional opportunity afforded by the  
new free trade deals that we will be able to strike with  
countries around the world. I am pleased to say that  
they were queuing up to make that point to the Prime  
Minister at the G20 in Hamburg.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Today is the feast day of St Benedict,  
the patron saint of Europe, who famously warned about  
“murmuring in the community” against the abbess. Will  
my right hon. Friend please proclaim that we do not  
want any murmuring from anyone against our vision of  
an open, free trade Europe—the best possible free trade  
deal, leading the world towards free trade and untold  
prosperity?

**Boris Johnson:** My hon. Friend has made an excellent  
point. Members on both sides of the House know very  
well that 80% or 85% of us were elected on a very clear  
manifesto pledge to come out of the European Union,  
to come out of the single market and—as the leader of  
the Labour party has said—to come out of the customs  
union as well. Nothing could be clearer than that. I  
think that what the people of this country want us to do  
is get on and deliver a great Brexit, and I have no doubt  
that, with the support of Opposition Members, we can  
achieve it.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Does the Foreign  
Secretary agree with the Chancellor and the First Secretary  
of State that we shall need a transitional period of at  
least three years during which we will remain under the  
jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice?

**Boris Johnson:** No. Neither the Chancellor nor the  
First Secretary of State has said any such thing.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. My apologies to the right hon.  
Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), who rose  
momentarily after his right hon. Friend the Member for  
Exeter (Mr Bradshaw)—cue him being called second,  
but I am sure he does not mind.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): I am grateful,  
Mr Speaker.

In March, the Foreign Secretary said that leaving the  
EU with no deal would be perfectly okay. Last month,  
however, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that that  
would be a very, very bad outcome for Britain. Given  
that the two positions are clearly completely contradictory,  
who should the British public believe?

**Boris Johnson:** I think that what the British public  
can take from both the Chancellor and myself—and,  
indeed, from the vast majority of Labour Members, as I  
understand their position—is that we all want to get on  
and do the deal, to do the best deal possible, and to  
leave the EU.

**Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): What  
lessons does my right hon. Friend take from the Australian  
Government, who negotiated free trade deals with China,  
Japan and South Korea in very short order by focusing  
on trade itself rather than getting bogged down in  
disputes with regard to standards, legalities and regulations?

**Boris Johnson:** I agree very much with what my hon.  
Friend has said. I think that, with a bit of gumption and  
a bit of positive energy, there is no limit to what we can  
achieve, and we should get on and do it. Of course, we  
cannot ink in the free trade deals now, but we can  
certainly pencil in the outlines.

139

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

140

**Mr Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op):  
Yesterday, the Prime Minister's spokesman was reported  
as saying that,

“the transition rules could involve the European Court of Justice  
for a limited time...that's all a matter for negotiation.”

That is the quote that was reported. So can the Foreign  
Secretary confirm this change in Government policy,  
and set out the rationale behind it?

**Boris Johnson:** We are in a negotiation whose objective  
is to come out from under the penumbra of the European  
Court of Justice, and outside the EU legal order, and  
that is what we will achieve.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Since we  
joined the Common Market on 1 January 1973 until the  
date we leave, we will have given the EU and its predecessors,  
in today's money in real terms, a total of £209 billion.  
Will the Foreign Secretary make it clear to the EU that  
if it wants a penny piece more, it can go whistle?

**Boris Johnson:** I am sure that my hon. Friend's words  
will have broken like a thunderclap over Brussels and  
they will pay attention to what he has said. He makes a  
very valid point; the sums that I have seen that they  
propose to demand from this country seem to me to be  
extortionate, and I think that to “go whistle” is an  
entirely appropriate expression.

21. [900358] **Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and  
Dinefwr) (PC): Will the Secretary of State ensure, in  
a spirit of co-operation, that the final Brexit deal is  
endorsed by the devolved Parliaments before it is  
signed?

**Boris Johnson:** As the hon. Gentleman knows very  
well, we work closely under the Joint Ministerial Committee  
to bring in the devolved Administrations and make sure  
the great deal we are going to get has their endorsement  
and approval.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
Further to the question by the right hon. Member for  
Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), did my right hon. Friend  
hear the report on the “Today” programme this morning  
that other European leaders were making it clear that  
they would not accept a deal on any terms, and does he  
share my view that what is sauce for the goose is sauce  
for the gander?

**Boris Johnson:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on the  
birth of what I believe is his sixth child. He makes a very  
good point about the negotiating stance of our friends  
and partners across the channel. They do sound at the  
moment pretty hard over, as we say in the Foreign  
Office, but I have no doubt that in the fullness of time a  
suppleness will descend, and a willingness to compromise,  
because, after all, a great Brexit deal, a great free trade  
deal, and a deep and special partnership is in the  
interests of both sides of the channel.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): Given the  
Prime Minister's appeal to these Benches to help her  
out today, where does the Foreign Secretary think there  
are areas for compromise?

**Boris Johnson:** As I have said before, the striking  
thing about this debate is how much unanimity there  
really is between the two sides of the Chamber on these  
fundamental questions, and I have been very struck that  
the leader of the Labour party seems to be very much  
on all fours with the objectives of the Brexit—*[Interruption.]*He very much agrees with the position we are taking,  
and I hope to see him in the Lobby with us.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I hate to  
disagree with the Foreign Secretary: while he is right to  
say that the Leader of the Opposition is fully behind the  
Government and those on the Conservative Benches  
are fully behind the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary,  
the Opposition are hopelessly split on this issue, and is  
that not hindering the Government's negotiating position?

**Boris Johnson:** It is not for me to comment on the  
ability of the Labour leader to control his own party. I  
take it that Labour Members are all following official  
Labour party policy, which is to come out of the EU  
and the single market. If they are not, they can stand up  
now and, by their questions, betray their real position,  
but as far as I know they are supporting the will of the  
British people as expressed last year. If they wish to  
dissent from that, now is the time.

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury)  
(Lab): May I start by welcoming the new Foreign Office  
Front Benchers to their positions? Back in July last  
year, they chastised me when I wrongly accused them of  
being an all-male team. If only I had waited a year, I  
would have been correct after all.

Talking of female Tory MPs, the hon. Member for  
Newton Abbot (Anne Marie Morris) used a disgusting,  
racist phrase in her comments at the East India Club,  
and I hope the Foreign Secretary will join me in condemning  
them; I hope he will agree that derogatory, offensive  
language deriving from the era of American slavery has  
no place in modern society. But the hon. Lady was at  
least trying to ask a valid question—a question about  
what would happen if Britain failed to reach a deal on  
Brexit. So may I ask the Foreign Secretary to answer  
that question today? Can he explain what that no deal  
option would mean for the people and businesses of  
Great Britain?

**Boris Johnson:** As I said before, the chances of such  
an outcome are vanishingly unlikely, since it is manifestly  
in the interests of those on both sides of the channel to  
get a great free trade deal and a new deep and special  
partnership between us and the European Union. That  
is what we are going to achieve.

**Emily Thornberry:** I thank the Foreign Secretary for  
that answer, but unfortunately it leaves us none the  
wiser. This is slightly baffling because it was, after all,  
the Prime Minister—the Prime Minister for now, at  
least—who decided to put the no deal option on the  
table. She could not stop using the phrase during the  
election campaign. But now, when we ask what it would  
mean in practice, the Government refuse to tell us. The  
Foreign Affairs Committee said in December:

“The Government should require each Department to produce  
a ‘no deal' plan, outlining the likely consequences. and setting  
out proposals to mitigate potential risks.”

It went on to state that anything less would be a  
“dereliction of duty”, and that we cannot have a repeat—

141

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

142

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I apologise for interrupting the  
right hon. Lady but she really does need to bring herself  
to a single-sentence question, because there are lots of  
colleagues who want to take part. She is normally very  
succinct, but today is an exception. Return to form!

**Emily Thornberry:** Given that a plan for no deal  
would be worse than that dereliction of duty, will the  
Foreign Secretary spell out publicly what no deal would  
mean? If he is not prepared to tell us that publicly, can  
he reassure us that at the very least he has a detailed  
private plan to manage that risk?

**Boris Johnson:** There is no plan for no deal, because  
we are going to get a great deal. For the sake of  
illustration, I remind the right hon. Lady that there was  
a time, which I am old enough to remember, when  
Britain was not in what we then called the Common  
Market.

Mayflower Pilgrims

1. **John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): What discussions he  
   has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture,  
   Media and Sport on celebrating the 400th anniversary  
   of the Mayflower pilgrims in 2020 in the UK and  
   abroad. [900340]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** Foreign Office officials are working closely  
with colleagues from the Department for Digital, Culture,  
Media and Sport to prepare for the 400th anniversary. I  
am pleased that Oliver Colvile, the former Member for  
Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport, has been appointed  
chair of the Mayflower committee by the Prime Minister.  
The committee will make the most of the opportunity  
to commemorate the legacy of the pilgrims and the  
special relationship.

**John Mann:** I thought the Prime Minister wanted  
help from Opposition Members, and here I am, available—  
the re-elected co-chair of the all-party parliamentary  
group for the Mayflower pilgrims—unlike Olly, who  
now has other pursuits to pursue. I was prepared to  
offer my services to take on that role, rather than a  
non-parliamentarian. Nevertheless, can the good people  
of Bassetlaw expect support from this Government, as  
promised by George Osborne, to properly celebrate the  
fact that the pilgrims and their legacy—including the  
modern United States—originated in Bassetlaw?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** At least the hon. Gentleman did  
not claim that Bassetlaw had strong coastal links. We  
already welcome his contribution to the House in the  
form of the comments he made on 9 March 2016, when  
he reminded us that the anniversary would provide an  
“historic opportunity” for us to celebrate. Across the  
House, we will think of every possible way in which we  
can do so to best effect.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): The importance of  
this anniversary, in British-American relations, can hardly  
be overstated. Would not 2020 be a more suitable date  
for a state visit from the President of the United States,  
to mark that anniversary, rather than in the months  
to come?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I note my hon. Friend's suggestion,  
but that matter is already in train and the visit—offer to  
the President—stands.

**Ukraine**

4. **Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): What steps  
he is taking to support economic and political development  
in Ukraine. [900341]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** The UK is in the lead on this  
issue, helping Ukraine to make the vital reforms that it  
needs, and to continue to crack down on corruption,  
which is so important if we are going to encourage  
long-term and continued investment in a successful  
Ukraine.

**Mr Whittingdale:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend  
on the organisation last week of the Ukraine reform  
conference in London, which demonstrated that Britain  
will continue to play a leading role on the world stage in  
the years to come. Can he confirm that, while Ukraine  
still faces major challenges, progress is being made in  
areas such as tackling corruption? Will he also tell us  
what more can be done to assist it?

**Boris Johnson:** May I get the ball back over the net by  
congratulating my right hon. Friend on becoming chair  
of the all-party parliamentary group on Ukraine? All of  
us in this House have a clear interest in a strong and  
successful Ukraine, which is why we have invested another  
£33 million in helping the Ukrainians to tackle their  
governance problems. The House should be in no doubt  
about what is going on in Ukraine. It is, if you like, an  
arm wrestle between two value systems: our way of  
looking at the world and the Russian way of looking at  
the world. It is vital for our continent and for this  
country that our way prevails. With British help, I  
believe that it is prevailing and will prevail.

23. [900360] **Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Is not one  
of the real problems that the Russians are actively  
meddling in Ukraine? So far, there has been no sign of  
all the efforts that Britain has rightly made paying  
dividends in Russia stopping its corrupt meddling in  
that country.

**Boris Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
right to say that the fault lies squarely with Russia.  
Russia annexed Crimea and continues to drive the  
problems in the Donbass. The UK is contributing to the  
efforts to stave off Russian military meddling with the  
non-lethal equipment that we have agreed to send to  
Ukraine. More importantly, however, we are engaged in  
helping the Ukrainians to sort out their domestic political  
scene and to crack down on corruption. To be fair to  
them, not only are they seeing growth of 1.5% or 4%,  
depending on whose figures are to be believed, but they  
have made more progress in cracking down on corruption  
in the past three years than in the past 25 years. A very  
different country is being born.

**Canada: Diplomatic Relations**

5. **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): What  
recent assessment he has made of the strength of the  
UK's diplomatic relations with Canada. [900342]

143

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

144

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** Our bilateral relationship is strong because it  
is a deep bond of friendship that is rooted in our shared  
histories and common values. We look forward to  
strengthening those ties over the coming years and have  
agreed to hold regular strategic talks to maximise the  
full potential of this important bilateral relationship.

**Andrew Percy:** I thank the Minister for that response.  
Canadian investment is hugely important in my  
constituency and across the UK. As we move forward  
with leaving the European Union and seeking a free  
trade deal with Canada, our relationship will be more  
important—specifically our relationships with the provincial  
governments. Do we have a network in place across  
Canada to ensure that we are making the best of those  
relationships?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** On the House's behalf, may I express  
our sympathy to all those in British Columbia who have  
been affected by the damaging wildfires? Our consulates-  
general in Calgary, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver  
work with provincial governments to increase bilateral  
trade and investment, particularly in the infrastructure  
sector. We are working across all levels of the Canadian  
Government to ensure that British companies can take  
full advantage of the opportunities offered by the  
Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I  
have strong family relationships in Canada. Is the Minister  
not aware that senior diplomats in Canada are absolutely  
aghastathowthisGovernmentarehandlingourwithdrawal  
from Europe and its impact on world trade? They  
believe that this swashbuckling sector of Ministers are  
not the right people—*[Interruption.]* Well,Ihavetosay  
that positive energy and gumption will not give us a  
good deal in Europe. We need people who have an eye  
for detail; this Foreign Secretary has no idea about  
detail.

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I simply do not recognise the analysis  
that the hon. Gentleman offers the House on any matter  
that he just mentioned. Our opportunities for future  
trade with Canada will be enormous once we have left  
the European Union.

24. [900361] **Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I thank the  
Minister for his answers so far. As he will be aware, 2017  
marks the 150th anniversary of the Canadian  
Confederation, and our two nations have faced together  
some of the most difficult challenges in history during  
that period. Does he agree that that provides a great  
opportunity to build on our relationship and that we  
should reject the nonsense that we have just heard?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** Yes, I agree emphatically with my  
hon. Friend. We offer our congratulations to Canada  
on the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation,  
and we are pleased that Their Royal Highnesses the  
Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall were able  
to join the celebrations in Ottawa to mark the occasion.  
On a practical basis, the Foreign Secretary met Foreign  
Minister Freeland last week and agreed to hold regular  
strategic talks to ensure that we can maximise the full  
potential of this important and close bilateral relationship  
way beyond the expectations of the hon. Member for  
Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman).

Diplomatic Relations: Philippines

6. **Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): What  
steps he is taking to strengthen diplomatic relations  
with the Philippines. [900343]

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):**We have a strong and wide-ranging relationship with  
the Philippines on prosperity, education and security  
issues. Ministerial visits to the Philippines and annual  
high-level talks between officials help to progress that  
co-operation—my hon. Friend the Member for Reading  
West (Alok Sharma), the former Minister for Asia and  
the Pacific, was there as recently as last December—which  
enables us to discuss human rights concerns while pursuing  
closer diplomatic and trade links.

**Justin Tomlinson:** My constituent Kevin Taylor has  
been held in the Philippines since 2008. The Filipino  
authorities continually delayed his case, held him in  
unsafe conditions and, finally, sentenced him to 12 years  
for an employment offence. They have now failed even  
to acknowledge a clemency request, despite his very  
poor health. With his health failing further and amid  
concerns about the safety of the institution, and with  
his parents worried that they will not see him again, will  
my right hon. Friend set out what is being done to  
support the family's efforts to bring him home?

**Mark Field:** I thank my hon. Friend for all his assiduous  
work over many years on behalf of Mr Taylor's parents,  
his constituents in North Swindon. We have been providing  
ongoing consular and welfare support to Kevin Taylor  
since his arrest almost 10 years ago. Most recently, he  
was visited in prison, and we liaised with his parents  
only yesterday. Our consular support has also extended  
to delivering funds and vitamins. Most recently, we  
requested additional medical appointments after Mr Taylor  
brought his health concerns to our attention. A clemency  
request was made as recently as 2015, but I reassure my  
hon. Friend that we will do our level best to continue  
that work. I will be in touch with our department in  
Manila to ask it to redouble those efforts in the days  
ahead.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): In the  
year since Rodrigo Duterte became President of the  
Philippines, 13,000 people have been killed. He has  
threatened to extend martial law across the entire country,  
and last week he said that he would eat the livers of  
terrorists with salt and vinegar, but the Secretary of  
State for International Trade claims that Britain has  
“sharedvalues”withPresidentDuterte.CantheMinister  
tell the House which values we share with the President?

**Mark Field:** The hon. Lady will recognise that there  
are shared values on international trade, and it is not an  
issue of ditching anything else. I, like her, am very  
concerned by the high death toll in the war on illegal  
drugs that has come to a head under President Duterte.  
We have been urging much more thorough and independent  
investigations into all violent deaths, and the Foreign  
Office has repeatedly raised, and will continue to raise,  
human rights concerns with the Administration. I hope  
to visit Manila at some point to make precisely the case  
that the hon. Lady has made.

145

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

146

Zimbabwe

1. **Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): What recent assessment

he has made of the political and economic situation in  
Zimbabwe. [900344]

**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** I pay tribute  
to the hon. Lady's long campaign on this subject. Our  
policy on Zimbabwe continues to be to try to balance  
our deep distaste at the horrifying record of the Mugabe  
regime with a genuine concern for the humanitarian  
needs of the Zimbabwean people, who have suffered  
terribly over the past 40 years.

**Kate Hoey:** I welcome the Minister to his position  
and wish him every success.

Mugabe spent $53 million on private travel overseas  
last year. At the same time, the United Kingdom is  
paying proportionately more in aid to that country than  
to any other country in Africa. Does the Minister think  
that, with the elections coming next year and Mugabe  
refusing to implement the 2013 constitution, now is the  
time to put some of that money into helping voter  
education in those rural areas controlled by ZANU-PF,  
or we will not have free and fair elections?

**Rory Stewart:** I agree. We are trying to balance a very  
difficult thing, which, as the hon. Lady says, is the  
terrible performance of the Mugabe regime with the  
fact that people in that country have been dying of  
cholera and suffering extreme humanitarian need. The  
hon. Lady is absolutely correct that focusing on free  
and fair elections is one of the most important things  
we can do in a country such as Zimbabwe.

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con):  
The policy of incremental engagement with Zimbabwe  
is obviously the best—sometimes an unpalatable best—  
policy, but will the Minister consider visiting Zimbabwe  
in the near term, as that would be a great step forward  
and would perhaps put the UK in a better position for  
the relationship in the longer term?

**Rory Stewart:** My hon. Friend has huge expertise as a  
former Africa Minister. The decision on whether or not  
I, as the Minister, visit Zimbabwe depends a great deal  
on the genuine commitment to reform of the Zimbabwean  
Government, and I will be guided by the ambassador in  
the country on when such a visit would be necessary  
and possible.

**Venezuela**

1. **Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con):

What discussions he has had with his international  
counterparts on the breakdown in the rule of law in  
Venezuela. [900345]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** My colleagues and I are in close contact with  
our international counterparts, including most recently  
at the Organisation of American States summit in Cancun  
last month. I issued a very strong statement on 6 July,  
utterly condemning the 5 July attack on Venezuela's  
National Assembly and its elected Members, and calling  
for the Venezuelan Government to uphold the constitution  
andshowrespectfordemocraticinstitutions.Thatstatement  
was echoed by many colleagues across the world.

**Robert Neill:** The Leader of the Opposition described  
the regime in Venezuela as offering an “alternative  
agenda” from which we could learn. The alternative  
agenda has seen the economy collapse and poverty  
increase. It has seen scores of people killed in civil  
unrest and now an attempt to undermine both the  
elected Congress and the independent attorney general.  
Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Her Majesty's  
Government strongly condemn the attempt by the Maduro  
regime to rewrite the constitution and rub out democracy?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** The Leader of the Opposition does  
seem to be a great fan of the Venezuelan Government,  
giving a passable impression himself of Fidel Castro,  
onesometimesthinks.WhatishappeningtotheVenezuelan  
economy gives us a clear indication of what would  
happen to the UK economy if ever the right hon.  
Gentleman were Prime Minister.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):  
What practical steps have the British Government taken  
to deal with famine on the border between Venezuela  
and Colombia?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** There are no easy such attempts; we  
do not have a bilateral programme, but we are in touch  
with the United Nations. The hon. Lady's very question  
illustrates the extent to which the Venezuelan Government  
have driven their own people to poverty; they are running  
short of the some of the most basic goods on which  
they have to live.

**Illegal Settlements: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

1. **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): What  
   steps he is taking to encourage the Israeli authorities to  
   stop the building of illegal settlements in the Occupied  
   Palestinian Territories. [900346]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** We  
regularly raise these issues with Israel, calling for a  
reversal of thepolicyof settlementexpansion.Ireiterated  
that in the House of Commons last week, and recently  
both the Foreign Secretary and I have made statements  
strongly condemning proposals for new settlement  
expansion in both the west bank and East Jerusalem.

**Tommy Sheppard:** Only last week, the right-wing  
Israeli Government announced a further expansion of  
the illegal settlement programme, so it is clear that  
whatever action the British Government are taking it is  
not working. Is it not therefore time that Her Majesty's  
Government gave a more robust response to this problem,  
including by discouraging investment in and trade with  
the illegal settlements, and ensuring the proper labelling  
of importedgoodsso that they are designated as coming  
from “an illegally Occupied Palestinian Territory”?

**Alistair Burt:** This is a long and difficult process, as  
the hon. Gentleman rightly knows. We have a policy on  
labelling, and continued conversations will go on with  
the state of Israel in relation to suggestions, such as we  
heard last week, that new housing units should be built  
in East Jerusalem. This is a complex process and the  
UK does not believe in boycotts or sanctions, but clear  
labelling has been in place for some time so that consumers  
can take their choice.

147

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

148

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): We  
have contributed to a number of EU structures that  
have been demolished. Will my right hon. Friend ask  
the Government of Israel for our money back?

**Alistair Burt:** I think my right hon. Friend is referring  
to some work done by the EU. The EU has not sought  
compensation from the state of Israel in relation to  
that, and no decision has been taken on any further  
action.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): Settlements are a  
barrier, but they are far from the only barrier to peace.  
The building blocks for the peace process are trade and  
economic development in the west bank; demilitarisation  
and democracy in Gaza; and support for co-existence  
projects that get Israelis and Palestinians working together,  
the funding for which, I am sorry to say, this Government  
have stopped. Will the Minister reinstate funding for  
co-existence projects, to build the peace process?

**Alistair Burt:** The hon. Gentleman understands this  
issue extremely well, and I agree with his analysis that  
this is a complex issue, where there are many different  
building blocks to try to revitalise the peace process,  
and settlements are far from the only barrier to that.  
Trade and investment remain important, but we will be  
looking further at what prospects there are for any new  
initiatives. I am aware of the co-existence projects that  
he mentions, and I will certainly be looking at that when  
carrying out my joint responsibilities in the Department  
for International Development.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): We  
are all glad to see the Minister for the Middle East back  
and working on this issue again, but this is the second  
time in the space of a week that the Foreign Secretary  
has declined to speak about the middle east and devolved  
the job to the Minister instead—and that follows his  
failure even to mention Israel or Palestine in the Tory  
election manifesto. I simply ask the Minister: when are  
we going to hear the Foreign Secretary stand up and  
condemn the new illegal settlements?

**Alistair Burt:** I thank the hon. Lady for her warm  
welcome. I much enjoy being back in this role, no  
matter what is thrown at me as part of it. The Foreign  
Secretary strongly condemned the proposals that were  
announced for the west bank recently. I like to think he  
has confidence in his Minister for the Middle East—as  
he has confidence in his full ministerial team—to answer  
appropriate questions, although I have never known  
him to be shy of answering a question when necessary.

Climate Change

1. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op):  
   What steps the Government are taking to support the  
   implementation of the Paris agreement on climate change.  
   [900347]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** The United Kingdom was  
instrumental in securing the Paris agreement on climate  
change. We are helping other countries to meet their

targets and we are confident that we will be able to meet  
our own groundbreaking target of reducing emissions  
by 80% by 2050.

**Alex Norris:** Last week, Downing Street said that the  
Prime Minister intended to challenge President Trump  
on climate change at the G20 meeting. Would it not  
have been better to do that before he announced that  
the United States was pulling out of the Paris agreement,  
rather than after?

**Boris Johnson:** As I have told the House before, we  
have repeatedly made our views clear to the US  
Administration. We have expressed our dismay that  
they have withdrawn, but on the other hand all Members,  
on both sides of the House, should in all fairness  
acknowledge that the United States has made and continues  
to make, even under this Administration, substantial  
progress in reducing greenhouse gases. This country has  
reduced CO2 emissions by 42% since 1990, despite a  
67% increase in GDP; the United States has achieved  
comparable progress, and we intend to encourage it on  
that path.

**Mr Khalid Mahmood** (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab):  
Following Donald Trump's isolation on the issue of the  
Paris agreement at last week's G20 summit, and his  
further postponement of his visit to the UK, I ask the  
Secretary of State a simple question: do the Government  
still regard President Trump as the leader of the free  
world? If so, how do they rate the job he is doing, as a  
mark out of 10?

**Boris Johnson:** I hesitate to say it, but we certainly  
regard as very considerable the Prime Minister's achievement  
in getting the US President to sign up to the G20  
agreement on climate change, as she did.

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury)  
(Lab): What?

**Boris Johnson:** Absolutely right. The Prime Minister  
was instrumental in getting the Americans to sign up to  
the communique. Members on both sides of the House  
will appreciate that whatever their disagreements with  
the current incumbent of the White House, the President  
of the United States is the leader of our most important  
ally, and he therefore deserves this country's respect and  
consideration.

Human Rights

1. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What discussions he  
   has had with his counterparts in other countries on  
   promoting human rights. [900348]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** With  
the Foreign Secretary's permission, I can say that ensuring  
the promotion of human rights and engaging with this  
issue is an essential part of the foreign policy of global  
Britain. Ministers meet their counterparts regularly and  
raise issues including those relating to LGBTI people,  
gender equality, modern slavery, freedom of belief and  
religion, the death penalty and torture. This is an essential  
part of who we are as the United Kingdom and the  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

149

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

150

**Liz Twist:** Back in March, the UN Human Rights  
Council established an independent commission to  
investigate the many alleged atrocities committed against  
the Rohingya people in Myanmar. In the light of ongoing  
abuses, including recent reports of Rohingya women  
being raped by the security forces, does the Minister  
agree that the perpetrators of such crimes should be  
brought to justice as a matter of urgency, and what  
steps is he taking to progress these cases?

**Alistair Burt:** I welcome the hon. Lady to the House.  
I was recently in Burma and was able to reaffirm the  
United Kingdom's support for the independent United  
Nations Commission. Again, those in Burma are wrestling  
with this very difficult issue. The United Kingdom  
remains very close to the humanitarian needs of the  
Rohingya people in Rakhan.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): The World  
Trade Organisation estimates that three out of four new  
trade deals include provisions to improve human rights  
around the world. What discussions has my right hon.  
Friend had with his colleagues in the Department for  
International Trade to ensure that, where appropriate,  
our new trade deals include obligations to improve  
human rights?

**Alistair Burt:** My right hon. Friend is right: ensuring  
that human rights are an essential part of the United  
Kingdom's policy on trade deals is an important part of  
the future and will continue to be a key part of our  
prosperity drive.

25. [900362] **Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): Following  
the arrests of Amnesty International Turkey director  
and chair, Idil Eser, and Taner KiIiq—both examples of  
a worrying shift away from respect for human rights in  
Turkey—what steps is the Foreign Secretary taking to  
ensure their immediate and unconditional release?

**Alistair Burt:** The right hon. Lady knows these issues  
extremelywell.Myrighthon.FriendtheForeignSecretary  
raised the matter with his counterpart, and the Prime  
Minister raised it with the President of Turkey at the  
G20. This remains a very important issue for the United  
Kingdom.

15. **Mr Gary Streeter** (South West Devon) (Con):  
[900352] On his recent visit to Burma, did my right hon.  
Friend encourage the Burmese Government to allow  
full access and to co-operate fully with the fact-finding  
mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for  
Refugees into human rights issues in that country?

**Alistair Burt:** Yes, indeed. It is a difficult issue, but we  
have made it clear that the UN independent report  
needs full consideration. We have urged the Government  
to do all they can to facilitate what the UN needs to  
complete its work. An internal investigation is already  
being carried out by the Burmese Government.

19. [900356] **Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab):

Kamal Foroughi and Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe are in  
prison in Iran. We have been unable to gain access to  
them through our consul. What efforts are being made

to use other countries to ensure that the human rights  
and, in particular, medical needs of these two people  
are protected?

**Alistair Burt:** I met Richard Ratcliffe and the family  
just last week. I have already raised this issue directly  
with my counterpart, the Deputy Foreign Minister of  
Iran, and with the Iranian ambassador here. We remain  
very concerned about this and other consular cases  
involving Iran. I assure the hon. Lady and the House  
that we will continue to raise them at the highest level.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I hopeto hearbrieflyfromFabian  
Hamilton from the Front Bench, because I want to get  
through two more questions.

**Fabian Hamilton** (Leeds North East) (Lab): As the  
Government celebrated their victory in the High Court  
over arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the number of people  
affected by the cholera epidemic in Yemen passed 300,000.  
Humanitarian workers now face the agonising choice of  
whether to use their dwindling food supplies to feed  
those children suffering from malnutrition or those  
infected with cholera. In that context, will the Minister  
tell the House why the Saudi-led coalition continues to  
use British bombs to attack farms, food factories and  
water plants?

**AlistairBurt:**Yesterday'scourtjudgmentwasunequivocal  
in stating that the United Kingdom had fulfilled its  
obligations on controlling the arms trade. The work  
being done with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on its  
response to international humanitarian law was  
fundamental to that judgment. The situation in Yemen  
remains a humanitarian disaster. The United Kingdom  
is actively involved in seeking to do all it can. The  
cholera outbreak is currently claiming some 6,500 new  
cases every day. I am pleased that the Department for  
International Development is fully engaged and is trying  
to do all it can to mitigate these actions.

**Mr Speaker:** Question 12.

**Zac Goldsmith** (Richmond Park) (Con): My right  
hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):

He is new, and I thought that I was new too.

**Maldives**

1. **Zac Goldsmith** (Richmond Park) (Con): What  
   recent assessment he has made of the political situation  
   in the Maldives. [900349]

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):**Like many in the House, I am concerned that democratic  
freedoms continue to face restriction in the Maldives.  
Pressure on Opposition politicians, including arrests  
and prosecutions, has grown. Human rights activists,  
civil society and the media are under increasing threat.  
Her Majesty's Government, I assure the House, raise  
these issues frequently with the Government of the  
Maldives, and we led the recent UN statement in the  
June Human Rights Council.

151

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

152

**Zac Goldsmith:** Apologies, Mr Speaker; I am new to  
the House.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will know that a  
coalition of opposition parties in the Maldives, led by  
former President Mohamed Nasheed and committed to  
democracy and to improving relations with this country,  
has secured a majority in that country's Parliament.  
Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the  
regime of President Yameen might resort to illegal  
means to prevent Parliament from functioning properly  
in that country?

**Mark Field:** I am very concerned about that prospect.  
In recent years, in any part of the political environment  
in the Maldives, no one's hands have been entirely  
clean—it has not been a happy situation across the  
board. The Government's biggest regret is that the  
Maldives unilaterally left the Commonwealth in 2016,  
and I very much hope that a new regime will bring them  
back into the international regime.

**UN Peacekeeping Operations**

13. **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab):  
What assessment he has made of the potential effect of  
proposed reductions to US financial contributions to  
the UN budget on the delivery of UN peacekeeping  
operations. [900350]

**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** We should  
pay tribute to what the United States has done with its  
peacekeeping budget. It provides well over a quarter of  
the global peacekeeping budget: over $2 billion a year,  
which is largely not “odable”. We need to pay tribute to  
the US and to encourage it to continue to play a role, as  
it is a central part of peacekeeping worldwide. Its sticking  
to the congressional limit of 25% is vital for UN  
peacekeeping operations.

**Mr Cunningham:** Does the Minister agree that the  
loss of financial support from the US will be devastating  
for UN agencies such as the World Food Programme  
and the UN Refugee Agency? Will he therefore urge the  
Trump Administration to reconsider their planned cuts?

**Rory Stewart:** It is absolutely right, of course, that in  
the current global situation UN peacekeeping operations  
are vital, but reforms can be introduced. The move in  
Cote d'Ivoire to close down the peacekeeping operation  
and the changes in Darfur are welcome. We can reduce  
peacekeeping costs, but it is vital that the United States  
and others continue to play a strong role. American  
financial support has been vital for the past 50 years,  
and we hope that it will continue to be over the next 50.

**Topical Questions**

**Mr Speaker:** May I remind colleagues that topical  
questions are supposed to be short? If Members insist  
on asking long questions they will be cut off, as it is not  
fair on colleagues.

T1. [900328] **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): If he  
will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** My immediate priority is to  
help to resolve the tensions in the Gulf, where Britain  
has old friendships and vital interests. That is why I  
have just returned from visits to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait

and Qatar, where I reinforced the need for dialogue and  
de-escalation. Tomorrow, I will attend a summit in  
Trieste on the western Balkans region, where the UK is  
playing a vital role in guaranteeing stability and resisting  
Russian ambitions.

**Bob Blackman:** In Jammu Kashmir yesterday terrorists  
brutally murdered seven Hindu pilgrims, including five  
women, as they undertook amaranth yatra. What action  
has my right hon. Friend taken to condemn that terrorist  
outrage, and what support will he give to recovering  
and bringing to justice the terrorists, who, we believe,  
emanate from Pakistan?

**Mark Field:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question.  
We are in close contact with the Indian and Pakistani  
high commissioners about Kashmir. I assure him that  
we will bring this up over the next 24 hours and ask for  
a plan of action, as he requests.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): Does the  
Foreign Secretary agree that if there is to be an extension  
of military action in Syria there should be a full debate  
and vote in the House?

**Boris Johnson:** That is for the Leader of the House to  
consider, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that no such  
request has been made. The difference in the American  
Administration's attitude and engagement, for which  
many Opposition Members have called, is to be welcomed.

T2. [900329] **Sir Nicholas Soames** (Mid Sussex) (Con):  
As America appears to be voluntarily surrendering  
both power and influence, and with our impending  
departure from the main platform of our influence over  
the past several decades, is it not vital that the Foreign  
Office now invests substantially to beef up our  
diplomatic effort so that we may retain our prosperity,  
security and influence abroad?

**Boris Johnson:** I am delighted to welcome my right  
hon. Friend to a cause that is gathering strength among  
Members on both sides of the House. Everybody  
understands that a truly global Britain must be properly  
supported and financed. We have a world-class network  
of 278 embassies and legations across the world. We  
have the best foreign service in the world, but it needs  
proper financing and support.

T4. [900331] **Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): The  
Foreign Secretary has spoken in the past about his  
ardent opposition to female genital mutilation. Will he  
therefore have a word with the Home Secretary, who is  
yet to respond to me and my constituent Lola Ilesanmi?  
She is threatened with deportation and her child faces  
mutilation. I raised her case with the Prime Minister but  
have yet to receive an answer.

**Boris Johnson:** I think I heard the hon. Lady raise this  
matter before. The case of her constituent is, indeed,  
very troubling. I am sure that the Home Secretary will  
have picked up what the hon. Lady has said today.

T3. [900330] **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I welcome  
the part played by British forces in stabilising the threat  
posed by Daesh. What role does my right hon. Friend  
see for British forces in ensuring that such an  
insurgency does not recur?

153

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

154

**Boris Johnson:** I thank my hon. Friend for a really  
excellent question. It is one thing for us to drive Daesh  
out of Mosul and Raqqa, but we must ensure that the  
reasons it sprouted in those cities do not recur and that  
the Sunni minority in Iraq have conditions of governance  
that give them confidence in the future of their country.

T5. [900332] **Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East)  
(Lab): Not since the Suez crisis have the United  
Kingdom Government been so comprehensively  
defeated at the United Nations as they were last week  
over the Chagos Islands. In this week's spirit of  
bipartisan co-operation, should the Foreign Secretary  
not just grant the right of return?

**Boris Johnson:** I respectfully disagree with the hon.  
Gentleman. In point of fact, we secured rather more  
positive votes than we expected. As it happens, the  
other side of the case got fewer than half the members  
of the UN in support of its cause. Most impartial  
observers would agree that that side of the case had  
been substantially weakened as a result—not that it was  
a strong case to begin with.

T10. [900337] **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con):  
Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said last week  
that he would continue paying prisoner salaries, even to  
people who have murdered innocent civilians, if it cost  
him his job. Does the Minister agree that there is no  
way in which there will be peace in the middle east  
without co-existence projects and support for  
co-existence on the Palestinian side?

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** My  
hon. Friend is right: there are a number of barriers on  
the Palestinian side to being able to make progress,  
including support for incitement and terror. The  
Department for International Development is looking  
extremely carefully to ensure that no payments go in the  
wrong direction. It is certainly true that the Palestinian  
Authority needs to look very hard at ensuring that it is  
not giving the wrong signals as we try to make progress  
on the middle east peace process.

T6. [900333] **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab):  
We are having Foreign Office questions, and still my  
constituent Ray Tindall and the other men of the  
Chennai Six are incarcerated in India. Will the  
Secretary of State pick up the phone to his opposite  
number in India and do a deal to get the men deported  
so that Ray and I can have a pint in Chester before the  
summer is out?

**Boris Johnson:** I appreciate the persistence with which  
the hon. Gentleman campaigns for his constituents. He  
has raised this issue with me several times. As he would  
like, I have personally raised the matter repeatedly with  
my Indian counterparts. They have told me that they  
cannot interfere in their court system any more than we  
can interfere in our own. That is where the matter  
currently stands, but I assure him that we continue to  
raise it on his behalf and on behalf of his constituents.

**Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): It is striking that  
Commonwealth countries trade 25% more with each  
other at a cost that is 90% lower than with non-  
Commonwealth countries. Does the Minister agree that,  
as we leave the EU, we have a great opportunity to

boost our mutual trade and security interests by enhancing  
our diplomatic relations with Ghana and other  
Commonwealth countries?

**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** I pay tribute  
to my hon. Friend, who is our trade envoy to Ghana.  
Ghana is one of the most impressive recent developments  
in Africa, with three recent transitions of democratic  
power and a rapidly growing economy. It is a huge  
example of how the Commonwealth can become one of  
the great success stories of Britain's next five years, as  
we move towards the Commonwealth Heads of  
Government Meeting.

T8. [900335] **Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven  
and Lesmahagow) (SNP): The Paralympic games in  
Rio were a great success, showcasing inspirational  
talent and the importance of sports inclusion  
worldwide. What discussions has the Foreign Office  
had with Japanese counterparts to lend our full support  
to the Tokyo Paralympic games?

**Mark Field:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question.  
She can rest assured that a huge amount of work is  
going on, partly on the security side, with my right hon.  
Friend the Minister for Security, but there is also, very  
importantly, as she rightly says, the sheer organisation.  
We are working closely to make sure there is seamless  
progress between 2012 and 2020, albeit that we have  
had Rio in the meantime. I think the Paralympic games  
in Tokyo are going to be a great success.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): In  
the next few weeks, the House of Representatives  
Government from Benghazi in Libya are coming to visit  
the UK. Would my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary  
or any of his colleagues on the Front Bench like to meet  
them, because they are playing a pivotal role in trying to  
keep peace in Libya?

**Alistair Burt:** An expansion of the Libyan political  
agreement is necessary to move matters along. There is  
a lot happening on the political and the business side in  
Libya as it gets back on its feet. I would be happy to  
meet those whom my hon. Friend wants to bring forward.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Given the collapse of  
the talks in Cyprus and the fact that the Government  
remain a guarantor of the process, what are they going  
to do now?

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** Very sadly, the Cyprus talks, on which people  
had done so much work for over two years, collapsed in  
the early hours of Friday morning in Crans-Montana,  
near Geneva. This was a once-in-a-generation chance  
to reunify the island; sadly, it has been missed and  
rejected, so we go back to the status quo ante. It is an  
enormous pity—indeed, a tragedy—for future generations  
that agreement was not reached.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): In  
view of the continuing concerns about human rights in  
Hong Kong, does my right hon. Friend the Foreign  
Secretary intend to make any further representations on  
the joint declaration?

155

Oral Answers

11 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

156

**Mark Field:** I hope my hon. Friend will be assured  
that the UK has been very active in emphasising the  
significance of the Sino-British joint declaration—a  
legally binding treaty registered with the UN that continues  
to be in force today. During my meeting with the  
Chinese ambassador on 5 July, I stressed the UK's  
strong commitment to that joint declaration. We urge  
the Chinese and the Hong Kong special administration  
Governments and all elected politicians in Hong Kong  
to refrain from any actions that fuel concerns or undermine  
confidence in the one country, two systems principle.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The  
Foreign Secretary has rightly underlined the importance  
of US-UK relations in this new world, but that relationship  
is kept alive by cultural and exchange programmes such  
as the Fulbright programme, which is now imperilled by  
President Trump's proposal to cut 47% from its budget.  
Will the Foreign Secretary make representations to  
underline the fact that we think programmes such as  
Fulbright should be expanded and not pushed to the  
point of extinction?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I stand here as a Kennedy scholar,  
which is a very similar structure, and we have a fantastic  
programme of Chevening scholars sponsored by the  
ForeignOffice.Myrighthon.FriendtheForeignSecretary  
has confirmed that he will raise the Fulbright scholarships  
with Secretary Tillerson when he next sees him.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): With 250,000 people  
from Burundi now refugees as a result of the repression  
and human rights abuses in that country, what is the  
Foreign Secretary doing to stimulate dialogue to resolve  
the political impasse there?

**Rory Stewart:** The situation in Burundi is very disturbing.  
We call, above all, on the Burundian President to respect  
the Arusha accords and to give proper space to the  
former Tanzanian Prime Minister in leading the peace  
talks. In Burundi, as in so many countries in the world,  
the only long-term solution is a political solution to a  
humanitarian crisis.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
Will the Foreign Secretary meet the members of the  
all-party group for friends of Syria to discuss the desperate  
need to get more aid to the hundreds of thousands  
being starved to death by al-Assad in Syria?

**Boris Johnson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
persistence in pursuing this cause. He is absolutely  
right, and we have spoken across this Chamber many  
times about the humanitarian crisis in Syria. I will have  
great pleasure in meeting the Syria group to discuss  
what the UK is doing, but the House will know that this  
country is the second biggest contributor of humanitarian  
relief aid to Syria in the world.

**Sir Hugo Swire** (East Devon) (Con): While I welcome  
the fact that the Prime Minister raised the issue of the  
Chennai Six with Mr Modi at the G20, may I urge my  
right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to focus his

efforts on the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and to  
seek an urgent meeting with her? Our boys have been  
languishing in jail there for almost four years—I visited  
them myself—and it is time, frankly, that they were  
brought home.

**Boris Johnson:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. He suggests an interesting avenue for further  
work. I will certainly look at the possibility of talking to  
the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Whether we will be  
any more successful with her in making our points, I  
will ascertain, but we will leave no stone unturned.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Last week, at the  
same time as representatives of 57 Parliaments were  
meeting in Minsk to discuss co-operation on human  
rights issues, the Belarusian authorities were convicting  
a human rights activist on charges on which defence  
witnesses were not allowed to testify. The defendant was  
taken to hospital during the trial and convicted in his  
absence. What action are the Government taking to  
make sure that the authorities in Belarus recognise the  
absolute right of anyone to a fair trial?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** The most important thing we can  
do is to enhance our bilateral relations by visiting. No  
Minister has visited Belarus for many, many years, if at  
all, and I intend to do so at the earliest opportunity.

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): As well  
as the physical rebuilding of Mosul, one of the ways to  
reassure the people of Mosul is to devolve power to  
them, for which the Iraqi constitution allows. Will the  
Foreign Secretary urge the Iraqi Administration to look  
seriously at devolving power to the people of Mosul?

**Boris Johnson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is  
of course right. Iraq is an ethnically divided and religiously  
divided country. We must make sure that everybody  
feels properly represented in the new constitution, and  
devolution to Mosul is certainly an option that we will  
be exploring.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): Further to  
the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for  
Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), before the Foreign  
Secretary meets the all-party friends of Syria group,  
will he discuss a comprehensive strategy to protect  
civilians with the Department for International  
Development and the Ministry of Defence so that we  
can have a proper joined-up strategy at last?

**Boris Johnson:** I can tell the hon. Lady that that is  
already happening.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I am extremely grateful to the Foreign  
Secretary. I recognise that there is still unsatisfied demand,  
but not as much as there might have been if I had not  
overrun, which I was pleased to do. I am sure that the  
Foreign Secretary was equally enthusiastic.

157

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

158

Taylor Review: Working Practices

12.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James):** With  
permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement  
about the independent review of modern working practices  
which was led by Matthew Taylor and published earlier  
today.

The review sets out that British business is successful  
at creating jobs, enhancing earning power, and improving  
life chances across the UK. Employment rates are the  
highest since records began. Unemployment and economic  
inactivity are at record lows. More people are in work  
than ever before, and minimum wage rates have never  
been higher. This is a story of success that this Government  
will seek to sustain.

The UK economy's continued success is built on the  
flexibility of our labour market, which benefits both  
workers and business. Businesses can create jobs and  
individuals can find work because our labour market  
regulation balances the demands of both. Minimum  
standards set a baseline beyond which there is flexibility  
to set arrangements to suit all parties. Our dynamic  
approach responds well to fluctuations in the economic  
cycle, without the structural weaknesses present in some  
other countries. It is important that we preserve this  
success but also enhance it further. While the majority  
of people employed in the UK are in full-time, permanent  
employment, globalisation, demographics and especially  
technology are changing the way in which we work. We  
need to make sure the British labour market stays  
strong and everyone in the UK benefits from it.

That is why last year the Prime Minister asked Matthew  
Taylor, chief executive of the Royal Society of Arts, to  
lead an independent review into employment practices  
in the modern economy. That review has now been  
published, and I am delighted to lay a copy in the  
House Library today. It is a thorough and detailed piece  
of work for which I am very grateful, not only to  
Matthew and his panel members but to the numerous  
businesses, trade unions, organisations and individuals  
who have provided their views on this very important  
topic.

The review has a strong, overarching ambition that  
all work in the UK should be fair and decent, with  
realistic scope for fulfilment and progression. Matthew  
has outlined seven principles to meeting that ambition.  
I urge hon. Members to examine those principles and  
the rest of the report in detail, since it is an important  
contribution to a crucial subject.

In summary, those principles are that our national  
strategy for work should be explicitly directed towards  
the goal of good work for all; that platform-based  
working offers welcome opportunities for genuine flexibility,  
but there should be greater distinction between workers—or,  
as the review suggests renaming them, “dependent  
contractors”—and those who are fully self-employed;  
that there should be additional protections for that  
group and stronger incentives for firms to treat them  
fairly; that the best way to achieve better work is through  
good corporate governance, good management and  
strong employment relations; that it is vital that individuals  
have realistically attainable ways to strengthen their  
future work prospects; that there should be a more

proactive approach to workplace health; and that the  
national living wage is a powerful tool to raise the  
financial baseline of low-paid workers, but it needs to  
be accompanied by sectoral strategies, engaging employers,  
employees and stakeholders to raise prospects further.

This is an independent review addressed to  
Government. Although we may not ultimately accept  
every recommendation in full, I am determined that we  
consider the report very carefully and we will respond  
fully by the end of the year.

Matthew Taylor has been clear: the UK labour market  
is a success—the “British way” works. He has also said,  
however, that there are instances where it is not working  
fairly for everyone. For example, he highlights where  
our legislation needs updating or where flexibility seems  
to work only one way, to the benefit of the employer.  
We recognise the points made. We accept that as a  
country we now need to focus as much on the quality of  
the working experience, especially for those in lower-paid  
roles, as on the number of jobs we create, vital though  
that is.

This Government have made a commitment to upholding  
workers' rights. The Prime Minister has said repeatedly,  
in this House and elsewhere, that as we leave the EU  
there will be no roll-back of employment protections.  
The Queen's Speech also set out that this Government  
will go further than that and seek to enhance rights and  
protections in the modern workplace. Today's publication  
of the “Good Work” review, and the public consideration  
of Matthew's recommendations that will follow, will  
help to inform the development of our industrial strategy  
this autumn. I commend this statement to the House.

12.42 pm

**Rebecca Long Bailey** (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): When  
the Prime Minister took office last year, she stood on  
the steps of Downing Street stating that she was on the  
side of working people. Despite that rhetoric, the  
Conservatives have been in government for seven years  
and in that time have done very little for working  
people. They have presided over a lost decade of  
productivity growth. They have implemented the pernicious  
Trade Union Act 2016, which is, frankly, an ideological  
attack on the trade union movement, curbing its ability  
to fight for and represent workers' interests. They have  
inflicted hardship on public sector workers with a pay  
cap that was confirmed for yet another year by the  
Department for Education yesterday. They promised  
workers on boards, but rowed back scared when powerful  
interests said that they were not particularly keen on the  
idea. And they introduced employment tribunal fees,  
which have made it much harder for workers to enforce  
their rights.

Today's publication of the Taylor review was a real  
opportunity to overhaul the existing employment system  
in a way that would protect workers in a rapidly changing  
world of work. But, in the words of the general secretary  
of Unite, the biggest union in the UK:

“Instead of the serious programme the country urgently needs  
to ensure that once again work pays in this country ...we got a  
depressing sense that insecurity is the inevitable new norm.”  
Indeed, the Minister confirmed that she might not  
even accept all the proposals in the Taylor report, in  
any event.

159

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

160

Although the report is positive in sentiment in many  
areas, it misses many opportunities to clamp down on  
exploitation in the workplace. I do not have time to  
cover them all today, but I have specific concerns that  
the report may allow the Government to interpret references  
to the so-called dependent contractor in such a way as  
to allow them to row back on recent court victories for  
workers such as Uber drivers and those who work for  
Pimlico Plumbers.

Recent case law has suggested that a worker on a  
platform should be entitled to the minimum wage as  
long as the app is switched on and they are ready and  
willing to accept trips. However, the review suggests  
that the platform may insist on payment by piece rate,  
such that only an average driver, working averagely  
hard, will earn 1.2 times the minimum wage. That raises  
issues of enforcement and regulation—what constitutes  
a reasonable piece rate across platforms?—and it is  
something of a retreat from the common law position.  
Will the Minister confirm that the Government will not  
undermine workers' rights on the minimum wage in  
that way? Founder of Pimlico Plumbers and Conservative  
donor Charlie Mullins said this morning that the report  
holds Pimlico Plumbers up as an example of

“best practice in the gig economy.”

This is a company that our judicial system has found to  
be an example of worst practice.

The report does very little to strengthen the enforcement  
of workers' existing rights. Although Taylor agrees with  
Labour's position on shifting the burden of proof to  
employers in determining self-employed status, the report  
does little else in that area, and it needs much more  
work. There is, for example, no movement at all on  
employment tribunal fees, which are a barrier to justice  
for many workers.

If the Prime Minister wanted ideas on strengthening  
workers' rights, she could just have come to us. Just four  
of our manifesto commitments would go a long way to  
ending the scourge of exploitation in the gig economy:  
giving all workers equal rights from day one; strengthening  
the enforcement of those rights by beefing up and  
better resourcing Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs,  
rather than imposing pernicious cuts, and by allowing  
trade unions access to every workplace; abolishing  
employment tribunal fees; and fining employers who  
breach labour market rights and regulations.

In the spirit of the so-called collaboration that the  
Prime Minister is so desperately seeking, will the Minister  
commit today to implementing those four simple measures,  
as a start? If not, will she accept that the Conservative  
party is not, and never will be, on the side of working  
people?

**Margot James:** I am glad that the hon. Lady found  
some positive aspects in the report on which to compliment  
Matthew Taylor. I appreciate that she will not have had  
time to read it all yet, but I urge her to do so. It contains  
many recommendations that will be of benefit to workers  
and are worthy of the greater consideration that the  
Government will give them.

I will not comment on each of the recommendations  
that the hon. Lady raised, because they are Matthew  
Taylor's suggestions and, as I have said, they will be  
given due consideration. She criticised the Government's  
record, so I would like to remind her that this Government

have introduced the national living wage and presided  
over the minimum wage reaching its highest rate, in real  
terms, since its introduction. The wage increases in the  
last year have been highest among the lowest paid,  
thanks to the national living wage. We have nearly  
doubled the budget for the enforcement of the national  
living wage. We have doubled fines for companies that  
underpay their employees. We have banned the use of  
exclusivity clauses in zero-hours contracts. We have  
done all that against the backdrop of protecting the  
growth in employment, which is, at almost 75%, at its  
highest level since records began.

Our record is one of achievement. The hon. Lady  
criticises us for enacting the Trade Union Act 2016, but  
most reasonable people would not criticise the idea that  
workers who are members of trade unions should have  
a proper say when their union decides to take strike  
action. That is the primary purpose of the legislation.

It is not all a garden of roses, otherwise the Prime  
Minister would not have requested Matthew Taylor to  
undertake the report. The Prime Minister said, when  
she announced Matthew Taylor's investigation, that  
flexibility and innovation are vital parts of what make  
our economy strong, but it is essential that those virtues  
are combined with the right support and protections for  
workers. The Taylor review came to understand that  
flexibility does work for many people, and it is clear that  
an agile labour market is good for protecting employment.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Does  
my hon. Friend agree that productivity is at the heart of  
boosting wages for lower-paid workers? There are some  
really good examples of employers, working with the  
Living Wage Foundation and others, who have managed  
to boost the pay of lower-skilled workers by focusing on  
productivity, and that should be at the heart of this  
issue.

**Margot James:** I wholeheartedly agree with my hon.  
Friend. Productivity is central to our industrial strategy.  
We have established a £23 billion fund to promote  
quality jobs, better skills and the higher pay that is, as  
he says, so important.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I refer  
to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial  
Interests and my trade union activity over the 20 years  
before my election.

Today's response to the Taylor review from the  
Government tells us everything we need to know about  
their frailty and approach to workers' rights—a weak  
set of proposals that probably will not be implemented  
and a set of talking points that leaves the balance  
of power with employers and big business. It was interesting  
that neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister mentioned  
or commended the role of the trade unions in securing  
fair rights at work. Does the Minister agree that a “right  
to request” is different from a fundamental right enshrined  
in law? If a request is refused, what enforcement action  
will the Government take to force employers to do better?

Does the Minister accept that the report makes no  
distinction between a flexible workforce and the exploitation  
of that workforce? Does she also agree that while the  
Taylor report tries to propose new rights, some of those  
rights have been secured by trade unions taking employers  
to court, as the shadow Minister suggested? Can the

161

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

162

*[Chris Stephens]*

Minister tell us what action the Government will take to  
enforce minimum wage payments when 200,000 workers  
in the UK are not paid the minimum wage? Will the  
Government advertise rights at work services, such as  
the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and does  
the Minister agree that it is time for a fair rights at work  
Act to guarantee fundamental rights at work?

**Margot James:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
critique. The “right to request” has been useful and  
valuable when it comes to requesting flexible employment.  
In any case, it is a recommendation that Matthew made,  
but it certainly warrants careful consideration. The  
hon. Gentleman mentions enforcement, and we are  
committed to making sure that workers on zero-hours  
contracts or the minimum wage get paid what they are  
legally entitled to be paid. That is why we have doubled  
the resources available to HMRC in the last two years  
to ensure enforcement of those important laws.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): I welcome  
Matthew Taylor's report today and commend the Minister  
for her statement, especially on tackling maternity and  
pregnancy discrimination, which the report says has  
doubled in the last decade and needs more action. Will  
the Minister outline what provisions in the report address  
the issues raised by the Women and Equalities Committee  
about workers' lack of rights to access antenatal care  
during the working day, which the Minister—in her  
response to the Committee's report—indicated would  
be addressed through the Taylor report?

**Margot James:** I commend my right hon. Friend for  
the work that the Committee, which she chaired, has  
done to tackle the outrageous discrimination against  
pregnant women, which has no place in the modern  
workplace. There are provisions in the Taylor report,  
but work is ongoing across Government to improve the  
opportunities for pregnant women in the workplace to  
ensure that we make history of such discrimination.

**Frank Field** (Birkenhead) (Lab): As someone who  
lobbied the Prime Minister with reports on the gig  
economy to establish such an inquiry, may I thank the  
Minister for her statement today? May I tease from her  
a little more about the Government's position on the  
trade-off between minimum standards at the vulnerable  
end of the labour market and flexibility? If the news  
reports are right, Matthew Taylor goes for flexibility  
rather than always implementing the national minimum  
wage. May we have an undertaking from the Government  
that they will always abide by the national minimum  
wage, even if that means a loss in flexibility?

**Margot James:** I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman  
on all the work he did on these matters in chairing the  
Work and Pensions Committee in the last Parliament. I  
can assure him that minimum wages rates are sacrosanct.  
There will be no trade-off when it comes to ensuring  
that everybody is paid at least the minimum wage.  
When he reads the report, he will be more encouraged.  
Many of the people who attended the Taylor review's  
evidence sessions said that they liked the flexibility of  
working atypically and that we should not lose that, but  
that flexibility should not be a one-way street with

individuals absorbing all the risk. Although we will  
consider the recommendations further, I assure the  
right hon. Gentleman that I very much agree with those  
sentiments.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Does  
the Minister welcome the fact that the review established  
that the majority of employers follow good practice,  
and agree that our focus should be on those who do not  
to ensure that we level the playing field for all employers,  
all employees and all businesses?

**Margot James:** I agree strongly with my hon. Friend.  
Employers who choose to break the rules—they are a  
small minority, but they exist—must expect consequences  
for their actions. The vast majority of businesses behave  
properly towards their employees, and they must not  
find themselves at the wrong end of an uneven playing  
field.

**Jo Swinson** (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I declare an  
interest having done some work with the Chartered  
Institute of Personnel and Development during my  
time outwith the House.

I welcome the Prime Minister saying that there will  
be no roll-back of workers' rights, but let me just say  
that those words are rather a departure from my experience  
of the Conservative position when I was Liberal Democrat  
Minister for employment relations in the coalition. I  
know that the Minister is genuine on this important  
issue, and it is a thoughtful report of more than 150 pages.  
As she prepares the Government's response to the report,  
will she commit to consulting widely across the House  
through debates and speaking to the Select Committees  
on Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on Work  
and Pensions, and on Women and Equalities, to get the  
right response?

**Margot James:** I thank the hon. Lady for her comments  
and commend her for her role in the coalition Government.  
I am glad that she acknowledges that the Government  
have moved forward in their appreciation of the difficulties  
faced by certain workers in the areas on which Matthew  
Taylor has focused. I can give her every assurance that  
we will indeed consult widely not only with industry,  
trade unions and members of the public, but across the  
House.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I welcome the  
report. At this early stage, can my hon. Friend give any  
indication as to what enhanced opportunities may be  
created for people with disabilities who are in the world  
of work or trying to enter it? They are a very important  
part of our constituency.

**Margot James:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
important point. The Department for Work and Pensions  
is undertaking various measures to improve the chances  
of people with disabilities accessing the workplace, and  
my Department is giving all the support it can to that  
inquiry.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): Matthew Taylor  
said today that he wants employers to pay national  
insurance for people with whom they have a controlling  
and supervisory relationship. Do the Government plan  
to implement that aspect of the Taylor review, and can

163

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

164

the Minister reassure workers that the Government do  
not plan to U-turn on their U-turn and increase national  
insurance for the genuinely self-employed?

**Margot James:** I can assure the hon. Lady that, as the  
First Secretary of State said earlier this week, Parliament  
has spoken on the issue of national insurance class 4  
contributions. That matter is now settled, and will not  
be revisited. I agree with her that we should pay close  
attention to ensure that people who are genuinely contracted  
to provide an ongoing service are given the protections  
that workers enjoy, and are not falsely labelled as self-  
employed.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): On a similar point,  
will my hon. Friend confirm that there is a real risk that  
introducing the term“dependentcontractors”willfudge  
the issue of whether someone is really employed or  
self-employed? Should we not focus on ensuring that  
the line is drawn in the right place and that those who  
engage so-called dependent contractors are paying  
employers' national insurance, so that our own tax  
regime does not distort the market?

**Margot James:** We will certainly consult carefully on  
those points. We will make sure not only that the  
Treasury is satisfied in respect of tax issues, but that we  
are satisfied that people are getting their rights if they  
are employees or workers—or, as Matthew Taylor is  
proposing to rename them, dependent contractors.

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): The Minister has  
welcomed the report. Is she in a position to accept any  
of its specific recommendations today? Can she tell us  
when there will be legislation to implement at least  
something in it, or is this all going to be batted off into  
the long grass?

**Margot James:** As I said earlier, we will look at and  
consult on every single recommendation, but at this  
very early stage it is not really for me to say which I am  
personally inclined to recommend accepting and which  
I am not. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will bear  
with us. Over the next six months—well, I said by the  
year end; it might be a little longer than six months—we  
will consult widely across the House, and the right hon.  
Gentleman will have every opportunity to make his  
views known.

**Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): I spent 45 years in the  
gig economy, and what I liked about it was that it was  
very flexible. In order to build a career, I found myself  
delivering bacon across north London from Smithfield  
market. I also became a removal man, among many  
other things. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is  
welcome that the report supports a flexible labour market,  
and is not in favour of restricting that flexibility when  
individuals want it?

**Margot James:** I think my hon. Friend has read the  
summary of Matthew Taylor's report very carefully  
because he understands that balance. He does not want  
us to end the flexibilities that have helped him in his  
career and close them off for people who are starting  
out on their careers now. As I have said, however, we  
must of course ensure that protections are in place.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): It is not just my constituents who are part of  
the gig economy who do not have security. Many of my  
constituents have jobs in which they work 15 hours a  
week. They are pleased and proud to be working, but  
when they want full-time employment they instead see  
more people in the same organisations being given  
part-time hours. When will the Government get to grips  
with that element of the economy, and ensure that all  
those workers have a fair deal and the chance to work  
the full-time hours that they want so much?

**Margot James:** The whole basis of the report is good  
work and the aspiration of good work for all, including,  
I believe, the constituents to whom the hon. Lady refers,  
but let me reassure her. Two years ago, the Office for  
National Statistics labour force survey found that nearly  
70% of people on zero-hours contracts were content  
with the hours that they were working. However, that  
does mean that a third want more hours, which is a  
finding that we must embrace in the context of some of  
the changes that Matthew Taylor is recommending to  
help to achieve the good work and the working hours  
that the hon. Lady's constituents want.

**Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): I, too,  
welcome the report. Does my hon. Friend agree that  
flexibility in the labour market benefits workers and  
employers equally?

**Margot James:** My hon. Friend asks me a difficult  
question. I do believe—Matthew Taylor's report bears  
this out—that flexibility benefits employers and employees,  
but I am afraid that the evidence given to the inquiry  
suggested that in too many cases that flexibility is a  
one-way street, as I said earlier. We must deal with the  
problem of people who are really at risk and whose  
employment position is far too insecure.

**Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): I welcome the Minister's  
commitment to the Government's upholding of workers'  
rights, but as part of the Government's response to the  
report, will she consider enabling workers to uphold  
their own rights? Will she look again at the fees for  
employment tribunals, which have led to a 70% reduction  
in cases brought by single claimants, such as those  
working in the gig economy, against their employers?

**Margot James:** The hon. Lady makes an important  
point, but it is really a matter for the Ministry of Justice.  
Matthew Taylor has not actually recommended that we  
get rid of fees for employment tribunals, and I think we  
should recognise the positive aspect: the upsurge in the  
number of employment disputes that have been settled  
through mediation. However, I will continue to look at  
the issue that the hon. Lady raises.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): The report praises and supports flexibility in the  
labour market, where individuals want it. Does my hon.  
Friend agree that it may be especially, but not exclusively,  
beneficial to students and young people?

**Margot James:** I do agree with my hon. Friend. The  
figures suggest that nearly 20% of people on zero-hours  
contracts are students. Such flexibility also benefits  
many people who have parenting or caring responsibilities

165

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

166

*[Margot James]*

and do not want to work full-time. We certainly do not  
want to end that flexibility but, as I have said, we do  
want to improve protection.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The  
gigeconomybringsinsecurework.Insecureworkdemands  
new rights, but those rights will be worthless unless the  
Government are prepared to put more resources into  
enforcement, regulation and inspection. Will the Minister  
commit herself to providing those additional resources  
when implementing the Taylor review?

**Margot James:** I very much agree with the right hon.  
Gentleman that enforcement is crucial. As I said, we  
have doubled the resources available to HMRC for  
enforcing the minimum wage and they will continue to  
rise throughout this Parliament. We have also strengthened  
the powers of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse  
Authority, and the recently appointed director of labour  
market enforcement has been tasked with bringing the  
work of the three major enforcement bodies together to  
understand the extent of the abuse and to recommend  
ways of giving those agencies the resources that will  
enable them to deal with it. I hope that the right hon.  
Gentleman will be pleased with the outcome, in due  
course.

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): I welcome  
the report and my hon. Friend's statement. Does she  
agree that not only is it absolutely right for us to ensure  
that workers are treated fairly, but it is good for businesses  
too, because they will have a more engaged and therefore  
more productive workforce?

**Margot James:** I heartily agree. This is all about  
improving work so that we have good work, with people  
who are able to grow in their careers, and a system in  
which those who are low-paid to start with need not be  
low-paid forever but can aspire to a better future. That  
will benefit British productivity and, as my hon. Friend  
suggests, improve the competitiveness of British companies.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Lab): Vital protection  
for all workers is provided by trade union membership  
and by trade union recognition. Since my time at the  
TUC more than 40 years ago, trade union membership  
in Britain has halved, while workers' and trade union  
rights have been undermined by Tory legislation. When  
will the Government reverse that legislation?

**Margot James:** The Government cannot mandate  
people to join trade unions. Trade unions are still an  
important force for the protection of workers' rights  
among the sectors of the economy in which they are still  
dominant, and I commend them for their work.

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): If one  
talks to drivers for Uber or cleaners using platforms  
such as Hassle, they will largely acknowledge the benefits  
of flexibility to them. To coin a phrase, would it not be  
morally unacceptable to misread the 21st-century labour  
market and construct a set of rules that forced those  
people out of work, rather than allowing them to stay  
in it?

**Margot James:** My hon. Friend will no doubt be  
pleased that Matthew Taylor very much agrees with his  
thesis.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): Over  
1 million workers are being exploited by sham umbrella  
companies and bogus self-employment. Changes to tax  
policyarewhatisneededtotacklethat,buttheGovernment  
prohibited Matthew Taylor from making any firm  
recommendations on changing tax policy, so how seriously  
can we take the Minister's comments today, and when  
oneartharetheGovernmentgoingto eventually address  
these tax anomalies?

**Margot James:** I assure the hon. Lady that no bar  
was put in front of Matthew Taylor; he was able to  
investigate as freely and as fairly as he saw fit. It is up to  
the Treasury to assess the tax situation and any potential  
loss of revenue, which of course arises due to bogus  
self-employment.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): To contrast  
the previous question, will my hon. Friend join me in  
recognising one of the key findings of the review:  
thanks to the Government's tax policies, once tax levels  
and tax credits are taken into account, average take-home  
pay for families with at least one member in full-time  
employment is higher in the UK than in any other G7  
country?

**Margot James:** I commend my hon. Friend for bringing  
that important fact to the notice of the House.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): I am pleased  
to hear the Minister promoting this Marxist revolution  
that we are now living through, as the means of production  
are increasingly in the hands of the workers. Further to  
what she has just said, does she agree that the answer to  
some of the challenges is not just better regulations, but  
helping people to organise? If so, will she meet me, the  
Community trade union, the co-op movement and Indycube  
to discuss our work helping the self-employed to organise  
and unionise?

**Margot James:** I am aware of the independent union  
of self-employed workers; it has been a force and has  
contributed to the inquiry. However, I will be only too  
pleased to meet the hon. Lady and her Community  
organisers as part of my consultation.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): There is a marked  
difference between people who set up a business and  
take risks, including the risk of self-employment, and a  
few unscrupulous employers who force workers to go  
self-employed. In response to this excellent report, what  
will my hon. Friend do to ensure that people who are  
genuinely self-employed continue to receive benefits,  
but the unscrupulous employers do not?

**Margot James:** My hon. Friend makes a good point.  
We do not want to stand in the way of the incentives for  
people who genuinely take a risk by starting a business.  
They are the majority, and we do not want to do  
anything that upsets that balance. At the same time, as  
my hon. Friend will realise, we need to end the scourge  
of fake self-employment.

167

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

168

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)  
(PC): Disappointingly, the report does not go far enough  
on the issue of zero-hours contracts. The Labour Welsh  
Government have failed to support the prohibition of  
zero-hours contracts in devolved areas on seven occasions.  
Is it not the case that vulnerable workers in Wales are  
being let down by both the Tories and the Labour  
party?

**Margot James:** As I have said, many individuals want  
to work in the flexible way that is afforded by zero-hours  
contracts, and almost 70% of people on those contracts  
are happy with their hours. As I have also said, we must  
take steps to promote the value of good work as an  
opportunity for the third who are not, whether they are  
in Wales or the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): The  
Minister tells us that 20% of such people are students  
and that 70% are satisfied. Can she complete the hat-trick  
by telling us what the mean weekly earnings for someone  
on a zero-hours contract actually are?

**Margot James:** I am afraid I will have to write to my  
right hon. Friend with that answer.

**Mr Speaker:** Put a copy in the Library; I am sure it  
will be of educational value to all of us.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):  
Matthew Taylor writes in his report:

“We must equip our children and young people to enter the  
labourmarketsuccessfully,butGovernment,employersandindividuals  
also need to make sure everyone is best placed to thrive throughout  
what might be a working life spanning 50 years or more.”  
How do the Government square that with the previous  
Prime Minister's policy of stopping compulsory work  
experience in schools, which in its first year led to a  
drop of 60,000 work experience placements in our  
schools across the country? Will she look at that again?

**Margot James:** That is a matter for the Department  
for Education. I agree that work experience is very  
important to young people and I am sure the Secretary  
of State will look favourably on that. My Department is  
looking to boost opportunities for lifelong learning to  
engender a culture in which people can progress in their  
careers.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con):  
Before I became a Member of Parliament, I was self-  
employed for almost 30 years. I was also the self-  
employment ambassador to the previous Prime Minister,  
David Cameron, and I worked with Matthew Taylor on  
this report. I found him to be extremely non-partisan  
and an absolute gentleman. May I urge my hon. Friend  
to accept the proposed measures for the self-employed,  
especially the maternity and paternity benefits?

**Margot James:** I will certainly take on board my hon.  
Friend's views, which are based on many years' experience.  
I thank him for his contribution to the report.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): We have flexibility in  
the labour market on one side of the coin, but insecurity  
for people in employment on the other. There has been  
criticism,forinstancefromUnitetheunionthismorning,

that insecurity is to be the new norm, and we want to  
avoid that. Will the Minister think about reversing the  
coalition's decision to extend from one year to two the  
protection of employment threshold?

**Margot James:** I do not accept the premise that  
insecurity is the new norm. One of the purposes of this  
report was to look closely at the extent of insecurity and  
to produce recommendations on how that might be  
mitigated when it is not desired by the workers. I will  
consider the question that the hon. Gentleman raises,  
but it was not addressed in this report.

**Teresa Pearce** (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): Speaking  
at the launch this morning, Mr Taylor suggested that  
traditionalcash-economyworkerssuchaswindowcleaners  
could use an app to collect money and declare directly  
to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, so why does  
Uber, which has the most cutting-edge, fully automated  
app, not seem to declare the payments it makes to  
drivers directly to HMRC or to collect the national  
insurance numbers of drivers? Will the Minister strongly  
suggest that it does so?

**Margot James:** The app was one of the most interesting  
suggestions. There might be limitations to the apps  
currently available, but in no way was Matthew Taylor  
advocating that these should be mandatory. They should,  
however, be available in a more sophisticated form than  
at present.

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): As the Government  
look towards this gig economy, will they consider Matthew  
Taylor's remarks that:

“Our welfare system is a cruel mess”?

On universal credit, he said that

“no one outside Government thinks it will make the system  
fairer...There is a better way. A universal basic income...can  
improve incentives and rewards for work, increase human freedom  
and dignity”.

Will the Government consider his conclusions?

**Margot James:** That matter has not been addressed  
by the report. I urge the hon. Gentleman to address his  
questions to Work and Pensions Ministers.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Matthew  
Taylor urges the Government to consider reducing tribunal  
fees. May I urge the Minister to go further, particularly  
in relation to pregnancy discrimination? Get on with  
abolishing them, and extend the period during which a  
case can be brought before a tribunal, because a period  
of pregnancy and maternity is a busy time when people  
are unlikely to be thinking about a court case.

**Margot James:** I agree with the hon. Lady's concluding  
remarks and hope she will input her views as part of the  
consultation.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): The Minister has  
twice referred to the fact that flexibility seems to work  
only one way—to the benefit of the employer. Does that  
flexibility include her Government's failure to prosecute  
a single employer in Wales last year for flouting the  
minimum wage rules?

169

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

Taylor Review: Working Practices

170

**Margot James:** To correct the record, I was not  
saying that flexibility was always a one-way street in  
favour of the employer; I said that this was, in exceptional  
cases, a real problem that needs addressing, but that is  
not necessarily the norm. In response to the other  
matters the hon. Lady has raised, I urge her to contribute  
her views as we go through the consultation.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): When  
the Minister is considering how to respond to the  
review, will she talk to her colleagues in the Department  
for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport about the youth  
full-time social action review, which is considering the  
question of long-time volunteering? I realise that these  
are slightly different issues, but there is still a considerable  
overlap. The question of safeguards and protections is  
the same in some cases, so it seems sensible to wrap the  
two together.

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman makes good  
points about volunteering and the framework that governs  
it, and I hope that he will make them during our  
consultation.

**JimMcMahon**(OldhamWestandRoyton)(Lab/Co-op):  
I want to ask the Minister two quick questions. First,  
on the extension of workforce protections, will that  
include secondary contractors? For instance, if one  
person in a team of three or four is the main contractor,  
will dependent contractor status be extended to other  
people in the team? Secondly, while being a dependent  
contractor might provide a minor uplift for people who  
are self-employed, does the Minister agree that some  
employers will see this as an opportunity to downgrade  
people with employment protection to the status of  
dependent contractor against their will?

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman raises a number  
of issues. There is no intention to downgrade anybody's  
rights. We want to be in a position to safeguard people's  
rights and, when possible, improve them—we certainly  
do not want to downgrade them. I am sure that he will  
put his detailed observations into our consultation.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): This Government  
continue to justify the existence of zero-hours contracts  
on the basis of flexibility, but the problems could largely  
be addressed if flexible working could be properly expanded  
and given a framework so that we knew exactly what it  
meant. Will the Government use this opportunity to  
properly expand flexible working and explain what it  
actually means?

**Margot James:** I cannot accept the premise behind  
the hon. Gentleman's question. We are not seeking to  
end zero-hours contracts, because too many people  
want them and the flexibility associated with them, but  
we are seeking to root out abuse where it exists.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Taylor review recommends that the Government should  
make it easier for people in flexible arrangements to  
take their holiday entitlement. In the past, the Minister  
has struggled to explain the Government's powers in  
this area. Will she tell us what powers currently exist to  
enforce the payment of holiday pay and, with the  
summer fast approaching, will she act on the Taylor  
report's recommendations swiftly?

**Margot James:** I can reassure the hon. Lady that  
Matthew Taylor has recommended that we take the  
issue of holiday pay seriously and ensure that it applies  
to all workers who are entitled to it. The Treasury will  
be taking forward those suggestions.

**HelenGoodman**(BishopAuckland)(Lab):TheMinister  
is right to say that the transfer of risk is at the heart of  
the problem. Drivers at AO World in my constituency  
are classified as self-employed but treated as employees  
without rights. Is there anything in the Taylor report  
that would end the practice of fining drivers every time  
there is an accident?

**Margot James:** Perhaps the hon. Lady would like to  
write to me with more details because this is the first  
time I have heard of that particular practice. It certainly  
sounds wrong, and I would be delighted to consider it  
further within the powers that currently exist.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Page 11 of Mr Taylor's  
report says:

“we have to examine why, with employment levels at record highs,  
a significant number of people living in poverty are in work.”  
For as long as I have been here, when Members have  
askedquestionsaboutpoverty,ithasbeentheGovernment's  
practice to respond with statistics about employment  
and unemployment. Will they now finally accept that  
such a thing as in-work poverty not only exists, but is a  
brutal fact of life for millions of people on these islands?

**Margot James:** We have always been absolutely  
committed to reducing poverty, wherever it exists. The  
national living wage has gone a long way towards  
providing workers with a framework so that they need  
not sink into poverty, and I urge the hon. Gentleman to  
consider that fact further.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): As someone  
who has done a few gigs in his time, may I urge the  
Minister to reject the execrable think-tankery jargon of  
the term “dependent contractor”? Work is work, and  
workers are workers. “Dependent contractors of the  
world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains,”  
is not going to change anything.

Margot James *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. For those new Members of the  
House who are not aware of the musical distinction of  
the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), I  
can inform them that he is an illustrious member of the  
parliamentary rock band, MP4. If colleagues have not  
yet heard the band, they have not fully lived. I hope that  
they will hear the band in due course, preferably in  
Speaker's House, where it has played before and will  
play again.

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman refers to the  
term “dependent contractor”. This recommendation  
was designed to improve clarity and to increase the  
chances of workers getting the rights to which they are  
entitled, but it is just that: a recommendation. He is free  
to lobby against our acceptance of it during the course  
of our consultation.

171

Taylor Review: Working Practices

11 JULY 2017

172

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I  
welcome the report's acknowledgement that employment  
tribunal fees are a barrier to justice. The recommendation  
of fee-free tribunals to establish employment status is  
positive, but what can be done to ensure the quality of  
representation at the tribunals? What protection will  
there be to prevent the detrimental treatment of someone  
bringing a claim? Is it also the case that, once someone's  
status has been determined, a fee will still have to be  
paid?

**Margot James:** One of Matthew Taylor's  
recommendations is that before an employee takes a  
case to an employment tribunal, they should receive  
firm advice on what their status is in reality. That would  
end a huge amount of uncertainty and unnecessary  
expense. We will consider that and all the other  
recommendationsinthisexcellentreport,whichIcommend  
to the House. I found much of it inspiring, and I hope  
that we can all work together to improve the quality of  
work in this country, as well as the number of jobs.

Points of Order

1.26 pm

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): On a point of order,  
Mr Speaker. Would it be in order for a Minister to  
attend the House and make a statement on why there is  
no one authority with responsibility for the safety of  
rivers and canals? Last night, my 12-year-old constituent  
Owen Jenkins drowned at Beeston weir. It appears that  
he went into the River Trent to assist another youngster  
who had got into difficulty in the water. This seems to  
have been an act of great courage by a remarkable  
young man, and I am sure that the whole House will  
join me in sending our heartfelt condolences to his  
family, his friends and all the other pupils at Chilwell  
School. Summer is here and the schools are now breaking  
up for the holidays. Our rivers, canals, quarries, ponds  
and lakes are potentially dangerous places, especially  
for children and youngsters, yet there is no one authority  
that has responsibility for safety in those areas. I think  
that a Minister should come along to the House and  
explain how we can ensure that all those places are safe  
for all of us, and especially for young people.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for  
her point of order, and for her courtesy in giving me  
notice of her intention to raise it. She has paid warm  
and eloquent tribute to young Owen Jenkins, and I am  
sure she speaks for all of us in saying that we send our  
deepest condolences to all his friends and family. We  
shall remember the remarkable courage that he showed.  
I am not aware of the intention on the part of any  
Minister to come to the House to make a statement on  
this matter, but the right hon. Lady asked whether it  
would be in order for a Minister to do so. It certainly  
would, and we still have several sitting days before the  
recess. If a Minister were to come to the House to make  
a statement on that matter, to explain the delineation of  
functions and the allocation of responsibilities and to  
answer questions about this, that would be very well  
received by the House and, I dare say, by the family of  
young Owen Jenkins.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. I understand that the Prime Minister  
has announced that there is to be a judge-led public  
inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal. Would it  
not have been better if, just for once, such an announcement  
could have been made to hon. Members in this House?

**Mr Speaker:** The short answer is that it is better if key  
announcements of policy or other Government intent  
are communicated first to the House when the House is  
in session. I have been attending to my duties in the  
Chair, so I am unaware of the announcement. It may  
well be that it will be warmly welcomed, and I do not  
cavil at that, but the hon. Gentleman asked me a  
specific question, to which I have given him a specific  
answer.

Yesterday, when the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) sought leave to  
secure an emergency debate on a specific and important  
matter, namely her sense of the need for a full public  
inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal, there had  
obviously been no such announcement. I judge that it  
was indeed a proper matter to be debated under the

173

Points of Order

11 JULY 2017

174

*[Mr Speaker]*

terms of Standing Order No. 24. Notwithstanding any  
announcement outside of the House, an indication of  
parliamentary opinion on the subject remains extremely  
germane and arguably just as urgent. I agreed to it  
yesterday but, more particularly, the House gave its  
approval to the hon. Lady to pursue this matter, and I  
felt and still feel that it warranted and warrants up to  
three hours of debate today. I am grateful to the hon.  
Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), but the  
announcement certainly does not in any way dissuade  
us from a proper and comprehensive focus on this  
matter now.

Contaminated Blood

*Emergency debate (Standing Order No. 24)*

1.31 pm

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I  
beg to move,

That this House has considered the need for an independent  
public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal.

May I first thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing this  
emergency debate? This is the first such debate on the  
contaminated blood scandal, and it arises, as you know,  
after further evidence of criminal actions was produced  
by the right hon. Andy Burnham and after a joint letter  
calling for a Hillsborough-style inquiry from all six  
non-Government Westminster party leaders. After the  
announcement this lunchtime from Downing Street of  
a full inquiry into the scandal, emergency debates may  
become an even more popular route to get the Government  
to listen and act.

In the light of the announcement, I want to acknowledge  
all the people who have been involved in getting us to  
this point. I will start by thanking my constituent Glenn  
Wilkinson for his persistence and dogged determination  
when he came to see me in 2010 to tell me his story. I  
have kept him at the centre of whatever I have attempted  
to do on this issue. I also thank the many individuals  
and campaign groups who have fought for years to get  
to this point: the Manor House group, the Contaminated  
Blood Campaign, and Tainted Blood. I thank the  
Haemophilia Society, in particular Liz Carroll, its chief  
executive, and Jefferson Courtney, the policy and public  
affairs manager. Over 2,400 individuals have tragically  
lost their lives. They are not here to see this announcement,  
but their voices live on through their family members,  
who have never given up fighting for them. The campaign,  
which has run for many years, has at times had the great  
benefit of brilliant investigative journalists, including  
Caroline Wheeler of *The Sunday Times*, who was formerly  
a correspondent on the *Hull Daily Mail*, and the many  
researchers and journalists who worked on the BBC  
“Panorama” documentary on the disaster from just a  
few months ago. I know that the *Daily Mail* is not  
a favourite of yours, Mr Speaker, but it also ran a good  
story on its front page last week.

I thank the 111 parliamentarians who are members  
of the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia  
and contaminated blood, particularly my co-chair the  
hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley),  
the previous chair Jason McCartney, who is no longer a  
Member, Margaret Ritchie and Mark Durkan, who are  
also no longer Members but were vocal in the campaign,  
and of course the right hon. Andy Burnham, who set  
outclearlyinhisvaledictoryspeechwhythiswasunfinished  
business and why we needed a public inquiry. Finally, I  
thank the late right hon. Paul Goggins, who was a huge  
inspiration in this cause.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): My hon. Friend is  
completely right to thank all those people, but there is  
one person missing from that list: herself. The whole  
House should thank her for her tireless work over the  
past seven years on this absolutely brilliant campaign.  
This shows how Parliament should work: a constituent  
raised the issue with her; she campaigned on it non-stop;  
she was not fobbed off; she pursued it doggedly; and  
she has played a huge role in bringing us to this point.

175

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

176

Last night, I had a load of emails from constituents  
who have been affected by this scandal, and I want to  
say how grateful they are to my hon. Friend for the  
work that she has done.

**Diana Johnson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
those comments, but this is down to the combined effort  
of so many people over so many years.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has been  
dogged in her determination and in not giving up. My  
constituent David Thomas came to see me in similar  
circumstances, as many constituents have done with  
Members on both sides of the House, but if he had not  
done so I would not even have been aware of the  
scandal, let alone of the need to deal with it so fully.  
Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the  
national and regional groups, such as Haemophilia  
Wales, who have done so much to stand up for those  
affected in particular locations? Their work has highlighted  
that this was a legacy issue from the UK Department of  
Health and that complications relating to the devolved  
status of health services across the UK need to be  
addressed in the inquiry.

**Diana Johnson:** My hon. Friend makes that point  
well.

I want to comment on how we handle disasters and  
on the best way forward for a Hillsborough-style inquiry  
established by the Government.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I add my  
congratulationstothehon.Ladyonherbrilliantleadership  
on this issue. While the announcement is incredibly  
welcome news, does she agree that there is an urgency  
here, because the people who continue to suffer need  
help now? There is a danger of the process going on for  
years and leaving them still waiting for support.

**Diana Johnson:** The right hon. Gentleman makes an  
important point. The timetabling of any inquiry needs  
to be set out clearly, and I hope that the Minister may  
be able to help us with that.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): I am  
grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way on that point,  
and I congratulate her and Andy Burnham, because  
this issue has been going on for a very long time. Has  
she had any indication from No. 10 Downing Street  
about the form of the inquiry? Some of my constituents  
have similar problems to her constituents, so can she  
give us any clarification?

**Diana Johnson:** Just like every other Member, I have  
only seen what is out in the media, and I understand  
that there will be a consultation on the form of the  
inquiry. I am sure that the Minister will be able to help  
us in his contribution.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I  
join in the tributes to the hon. Lady and the all-party  
group, of which I have been a member, because this is  
an example of how Parliament can work well. There is a  
family in Letchworth who said to me:

“As a family, we have suffered years of misery because of this  
scandal.”

Does the hon. Lady agree that it is right to consult the  
victims and their families on the form of the inquiry?

**Diana Johnson:** Absolutely. The right hon. and learned  
Gentleman makes a good point and I will come on to  
that.

I do not need to remind the House of the damage  
that public disasters do to all those who are affected, as  
we know from the Hillsborough tragedy in 1989 and,  
more recently, the appalling fire at Grenfell Tower.  
Every public disaster of this kind is different: their  
causes differ; the victims suffer in different ways; and  
the measures necessary to support those affected, and  
their families, also differ. However, every victim has a  
fundamental right to one thing: answers. They deserve  
to be told what went wrong, why it went wrong, and  
who is responsible for what happened. The story of the  
injustice they have suffered needs to be set out and told  
to the wider public. Their voices need to be heard.  
Apologies, compensation and other forms of support  
are essential, but if their right to answers is not also  
satisfied, they will be denied true and meaningful justice.

**Mark Tami** (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): My hon. Friend  
is making a powerful case, and I thank her for all her  
work. As she said at the beginning, many, many victims  
have died. Their families are still here and are still  
grieving, and they need answers as much as the victims.

**Diana Johnson:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
This tragedy has taken the life of more than 2,400 people  
with haemophilia, infected mainly through blood factor  
concentrates. Many others, without bleeding disorders,  
infected through blood transfusions and other means  
have also lost their lives. Thousands more have been left  
devastated. The survivors have been left to live with a  
combination of HIV, hepatitis C and a range of other  
viruses.

My constituent Glen Wilkinson is one such individual.  
He has haemophilia and was infected with hepatitis C  
when he was just 19 during a routine tooth operation.  
Glen is one of thousands of people who have fallen  
victim to the worst treatment disaster in the history of  
our NHS, and one of the worst peacetime disasters ever  
to take place in this country. Indeed, each of the 15 or  
so non-terrorist related public disasters I have looked  
at—ranging from the Bradford City stadium fire in  
1985 to the Clapham Junction crash in 1988, the  
Marchioness disaster and, of course, Hillsborough—was  
a tragic event, and I do not wish to detract from the  
magnitude of those events, but the House should note  
that all those disasters led to a public inquiry.

Hon. Members and their affected constituents are  
entitled to ask why the same has not happened with  
contaminated blood. Had more than 2,400 people died  
over the course of one day or one year, it would be  
inconceivable for any Government to refuse calls for a  
public inquiry, yet the devastation caused by the  
contaminated blood scandal has been spread not over  
days or years but over several decades.

We must also bear in mind the profound effect this  
scandal has had on one community, those with bleeding  
disorders,manyofwhomwereprovidedwithcontaminated  
blood factor concentrates sourced from profit-making  
American firms. Virtually everyone who had haemophilia  
at the time has been infected.

Hon. Members will appreciate that the impact can be  
devastating when friends and close-knit communities  
are hit by a collective tragedy. Consider, for example,

177

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

178

*[Diana Johnson]*

the Treloar school for disabled children, a special school  
with a large number of pupils with haemophilia: 72 of  
its pupils have died because of this scandal. Many were  
forced to be silent to the suffering, either for fear of the  
stigma of having HIV, hepatitis C or other viruses, or  
because they were not even aware that they had those  
conditions. Important though that distinction is, it does  
not excuse the fact that successive Governments of all  
colours have sidestepped the issue for too long.

Internationally, an investigation saw the imprisonment  
of the former head of France's blood transfusion service  
and his deputy, and a former French Health Minister  
was found guilty of manslaughter. In Japan, three company  
executives were imprisoned and an official was convicted  
on negligence charges. In the United States, the private  
companies involved in this tragedy paid out millions in  
out-of-court settlements across the world.

But nothing of that kind has happened in the UK. In  
1991, in response to the threat of court cases, the  
Government set up an ex gratia payments scheme.  
There was no implication of liability, no use of theword  
“compensation”andwaiversrenouncingtheindividual's  
right to the take further legal action had to be signed  
before they could obtain small sums of money.

**Mrs Anne Main** (St Albans) (Con): A constituent,  
who does not wish to be named, wants us to include the  
remit of the Skipton Fund in this review. She, and many  
others, feel that the remit was wrongly drawn up, and  
that she and others have been denied the justice they  
should have had.

**Diana Johnson:** The hon. Lady makes an important  
point.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend on her work on this issue. I welcome the  
fact that there will be a public inquiry, eventually and at  
last. Does she agree that that public inquiry should  
address why the UK was the last country in the western  
world to introduce a test for hepatitis C, why vital  
documents were destroyed by the Department of Health  
and why the UK took 13 years to be self-sufficient in  
blood products, when it took Ireland only five years?

**Diana Johnson:** Those are important questions for  
any inquiry to address.

On today's announcement, the Westminster leaders'  
joint letter of 7 July provided a blueprint for how such  
aninquiryshouldbeconducted.First,aswithHillsborough,  
there should be a commitment to secure full public  
disclosure of details related to this tragedy, through a  
process managed by the affected community. There  
should be a mechanism to ensure all public bodies  
involved in the scandal are compelled to give oral and  
written evidence to the inquiry. There need to be assurances  
that the inquiry will cover the role of American firms in  
providing blood factor concentrates to people with  
haemophilia. There should also be an investigation not  
just of the run-up to the scandal but of its aftermath.  
Finally, the inquiry has to address the allegations of  
criminal conduct. As I said earlier, I hope the Minister

will also be able to help us with a timetable for the  
inquiry, as those affected have waited so long to get to  
this point.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I pay  
tribute to the hon. Lady's chairpersonship of the all-party  
parliamentary group. My constituent Cathy Young is  
grateful to her and to other MPs, because those affected  
would have given up if not for Members of Parliament  
pursuing this issue. Cathy Young now has access to her  
husband's health records, which she describes as a fairy  
tale. Does the hon. Lady agree that those affected by  
this scandal, if they have not already done so, should  
get, and have a look at, their family health records?

**Diana Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important  
point, and I certainly agree.

**JimMcMahon**(OldhamWestandRoyton)(Lab/Co-op):  
I pay tribute to the hon. Lady for her outstanding  
leadership on this important issue. My constituent Alex  
Smith has been affected by contaminated blood. A  
great deal has been said about the Government response  
and the potential criminal cover-up, but there is also the  
immoral way in which the victims have been treated and  
the payments they receive. Many are living in absolute  
destitution and poverty as a result of Government  
penny-pinching, which should form part of the review.

**Diana Johnson:** My hon. Friend is correct. We need  
to look carefully at the support that has been provided  
for this group, and at what should be provided in the  
future.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I add my thanks,  
on behalf of my constituent Haydn Lewis and his  
family. Haydn and his brother have died, and other  
members of their family have been affected. Does my  
hon. Friend agree that we should learn from the lessons  
of the thalidomide inquiry and compensation fund to  
ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes that were  
made on thalidomide?

**Diana Johnson:** That is an excellent point, and it  
needs to be considered.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): Will the hon. Lady  
give way?

**Diana Johnson:** I will give way one last time.

**Hywel Williams:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for  
giving way. I pay tribute to her on behalf of myconstituent  
Jane Jones, whose family have had to deal with great  
privation for many years because of the scandal. In a  
written answer to the Welsh Assembly on 27 March  
there was confirmation that the payments continue to  
bemadeonanexgratiabasis,butwithnoliabilitybeing  
accepted. The answer was in Welsh, but it confirms that  
the payment of £10,000 to a partner or widow continues  
on an ex gratia basis.

**Diana Johnson:** Thatgoestotheheartof it.Therehas  
never been any finding of liability, which has resulted in  
very low payments being made on a support basis,  
rather than on a compensatory basis.

179

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

180

I strongly believe, and I think the majority of the  
APPG believe, that a Hillsborough-style inquiry is the  
best way forward in this case, putting those affected at  
the heart of whatever is created and set up. They should  
be given the opportunity to have an input into the terms  
of reference. They should be able to look at people  
being considered as the chairperson or panel members  
of the inquiry, which has to have the support and  
confidence of all those affected. That is why the  
Hillsborough inquiry seemed to work effectively. In the  
case of Hillsborough, this was known as “Families  
First”, and I hope that approach might be able to  
continue in this inquiry as it is set up. All those affected  
need to be treated with the utmost respect and reverence,  
and to be fully consulted; any information that becomes  
available should first go to them.

In the remaining few minutes, I wish to talk about the  
four questions that I think the inquiry needs to look at.  
Andy Burnham set out in his speech why an inquiry was  
necessary, and of course he was one of two former  
Health Secretaries, the other being Lord Owen, who  
had raised serious concerns about the scandal. We  
know that the “Panorama” programme and the *Daily  
Mail* article followed. Given what Andy Burnham said  
and all the developments in the past few months, serious  
questions still need to be addressed by a public inquiry.  
First, why did the Government not act sooner to protect  
blood supplies once the risks became known? And why  
were we so reliant on American commercial products  
for haemophilia patients?

The UK was not self-sufficient in blood supplies, so  
profit-making American companies played a considerable  
role in supplying factor concentrates to haemophilia  
patients. That blood was sourced from much riskier  
patients, including prison inmates, who were much more  
likely to have infections and had a financial incentive to  
be less than honest about their risks of infection. The  
dangers of American products were discussed in public  
not from the 1990s, nor the 1980s, but from 1970. As the  
*Daily Mail* reported last week, files now suggest that at  
least as early as 1980 officials had even put an estimate  
on the number of haemophilia patients being infected  
from these products with what we now know to be  
hepatitis C. They put the figure at 50 a year, yet it was  
not until 1986 that they took any action to address that.

If the whole of the UK had been self-sufficient in  
blood supplies, fewer haemophilia patients would have  
been infected. We know that, because Scotland had  
higher levels of self-sufficiency than England. As the  
BBC “Panorama” programme outlined, that meant that  
haemophiliacs in England were twice as likely to be  
infected with HIV as those in Scotland. Even in the  
mid-1980s, when the dangers of hepatitis C and HIV  
became known, it appears we could have acted sooner  
to remove risky blood products. And when the United  
States started screening its commercial products from  
March 1983, we carried on using non-screened American  
supplies that we had purchased before then; how can  
that possibly be justified?

My second question for the inquiry is: why were  
patients kept in the dark and not told of the risks once  
they became known? There are many aspects to this  
controversy that I know other hon. Members may wish  
to touch on, but I want to draw the House's attention to

developments in 1983, in the midst of the AIDS epidemic,  
when there was still uncertainty over whether AIDS was  
a blood-borne disease.

In November 1983, the then Health Minister, the  
right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke),  
told Parliament that there was

“no conclusive evidence that. AIDS is transmitted by blood  
products.”—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 327-8W.]  
Yet earlier that same year his Department was preparing  
internal documents that said the opposite: in August  
1983, that same Department was telling practising  
homosexuals and drug users not to give blood because  
of the risk of transmitting AIDS; in the summer of  
1983, the Department was preparing a blood donor  
leaflet that said AIDS was “almost certainly” transmitted  
by blood and blood products; in July 1983, the UK  
Haemophilia Centre Doctors' Organisation said that  
young children with haemophilia should receive a less  
risky form of blood product due to the dangers of  
AIDS; and between March and May 1983, the Scottish  
National Blood Transfusion Service prepared a leaflet  
for blood donors, which included “haemophiliacs” and  
“recipients of blood transfusion” on a list of people  
who could get AIDS, and asked those same individuals  
not to give blood. Of course, the Scottish Penrose  
inquiry itself acknowledged that in adopting its position  
in November 1983, the then Government relied on

“a highly nuanced use of language.”

My third question is: why were some people tested for  
viruses without their knowledge and only told of the  
results many years later? There are many such cases of  
this happening, but I will make reference to just one:  
Jonathan Evans first tested positive for HIV in 1984 yet  
was not told of this until seven months later, in mid-1985.  
That posed a huge health risk to his wider family, and  
the history of this scandal is full of cases of spouses  
infecting each other. Tragically, the virus took his life.  
His son, Jason, was just four years old when his father  
died. He is still campaigning for justice for his father,  
and he has been instrumental in generating recent news  
coverage in the *Daily Mail* article and elsewhere.

Fourthly, there are allegations of a criminal cover-up,  
on an industrial scale, from the highest ranks of government  
downwards. At every stage of this scandal, there are  
concerns that officials knew more than they were letting  
on. Almost everyone affected by the scandal has  
encountered issues with lost medical records. Others  
have recovered their files, only to find that any mention  
of the connection with contaminated blood has been  
removed. Some individuals today are unable to access  
financial support via the Skipton Fund because of what  
has happened to their medical records. These cases of  
lost records also extend to the highest level of government.  
During the Archer inquiry, Lord Owen requested his  
departmental papers from the time when he was a  
Health Minister in the 1970s. He was told they had been  
destroyed

“under the 10-year rule”,

even though there is no evidence of the existence of  
such a rule.

Finally, when people were forced to sign waivers in  
1991, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, they were  
asked to commit to bringing no further hepatitis C  
litigation as well as HIV litigation. These individuals  
did not yet know they had hepatitis C, as the disease has

181

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

182

*[Diana Johnson]*

a long incubation period. It seems that the inescapable  
conclusion is that departmental officials knew more  
than they were willing to disclose.

In conclusion, earlier this week the Prime Minister  
expressed her intention to work more with other party  
leaders to act in the best interests of this country. She  
has shown a laudable commitment to that with respect  
to other public disasters, including the child abuse  
inquiry and the Hillsborough disaster. Alongside the  
many thousands of people who have campaigned for  
justice for so long, I want to personally thank her for  
showing that same commitment with respect to the  
contaminated blood tragedy.

There are still questions to be answered on the detail  
of an inquiry. In welcoming this announcement, we  
must also be mindful of those who will never see its  
results: the more than 2,400 people who have tragically  
lost their lives. Many never even knew of the true scale  
of the scandal that was impacting on them. Those  
infected, and their families, will be waiting anxiously to  
know that the Prime Minister's announcement will truly  
give them the justice they have so long been denied. But  
today the Prime Minister has earned a place in history  
as someone who has listened to an issue that her  
predecessors had ignored, and put party politics aside  
in the name of giving people the answers that are their  
basic right. For that, she has my gratitude.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Just before I call the first speaker  
from the Back Benches, I should say that at this stage I  
have not imposed any formal time limit, but a substantial  
number of people wish to contribute. Therefore, I know  
that the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim  
Zahawi) will exercise a magnificent self-denying ordinance  
in the length of his oration.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): On a point of order,  
Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Do we really have to have it? I know  
what I am doing and am perfectly capable of handling  
the matter. If it is about the order of speeches—

**David Hanson** It is the Minister—

**Mr Speaker:** No, no. I do not need to be advised by  
the right hon. Gentleman on the handling of the debate.  
Let me just say that in so far as this was not clear, it was  
as a result of a failure of communication between the  
two Front-Bench teams. These matters should be sorted  
out between the Government and the Opposition, not  
with people yapping at each other across the Floor of  
the House or very close to the Speaker's Chair. The  
Speaker is happy to give effect to what the two sides of  
the House want, within reason, but that was not made  
easy on this occasion, and I am seeking to address the  
matter by consensus. I know that the right hon. Gentleman  
means well and his offer of assistance is greatly appreciated,  
but I do not need to take him up on it on this occasion.

1.59 pm

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): I am very  
grateful to you, Mr Speaker. May I join colleagues in  
paying tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon

Hull North (Diana Johnson) and the work she has done  
in leading the all-party group, as well to my hon. Friend  
the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley),  
who has been a joint chairman of that group?

I have been working with the victims in my constituency  
since 2011—for the past six years—and I consider myself  
a new boy when it comes to this particular tragedy and  
scandal. My right hon. Friend the Member for North  
East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) has spent many hours  
working tirelessly on behalf of those of his constituents  
who are victims. I pay tribute to him; I know he wanted  
to take part in the debate but could not because of  
Government business.

I thank the Prime Minister for listening to the victims  
of this extraordinary tragedy and to colleagues in the  
House, and announcing the inquiry. I acknowledge the  
Minister's saying to colleagues that the Government are  
in listening mode on the inquiry's terms of reference  
and that they will put the victims at its heart. That is  
what the victims would expect, and they will be grateful  
for it.

Many victims—this is certainly true of my constituent  
Clare Walton—initially did not want an inquiry; they  
wanted a settlement instead. I pay tribute to Andy  
Burnham for his work on this issue, as well as to the  
journalists the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
North cited. The new evidence that was uncovered led  
Clare Walton to change her view, and she is now very  
much supportive of and looking forward to engaging  
with the inquiry.

It is important that the inquiry looks into the subsequent  
treatment of victims and holds the relevant bodies to  
account. On Clare Walton's behalf, I have been attempting  
to communicate with the Macfarlane Trust, which was  
one of the five charities set up to help the victims. I say  
“help,” but I have to tell the Minister that in my experience  
the Macfarlane Trust has done anything but help my  
constituent. It has behaved in an utterly despicable way.  
It refuses to meet my constituent or me—I have requested  
meetings for the past six years, but they always come  
back with a reason why they cannot meet.

The trustees of the Macfarlane Trust have bullied my  
constituent and “fed her with scraps”—those are her  
words—while at the same time having a charge over her  
property for all this time and making a profit on it. The  
trust refuses to discuss the future of the charge on her  
property. The scheme administrator will soon be changed  
to the NHS business advisory service, so she wants to  
know what will happen when that change takes place. I  
hope the Government will take some of these issues  
away and respond more fully at the appropriate time.  
The Macfarlane Trust says that it cannot give any more  
information until it has clarity from the Department of  
Health about transitional arrangements; Clare really  
wants that clarity. I hope the Minister will intimate, as  
his predecessor did, that the Macfarlane Trust is not  
much longer for this world. I have struggled even to  
speak to the trust on the phone.

Another of my constituents, Adrian Melson, is  
particularly concerned about the discretionary payments  
on which many victims rely. I hope that as the Minister  
begins to look at the evidence before him he will look  
closely at making sure that, if discretionary payments  
have become something much more permanent, they  
are recognised as such and not treated as discretionary.  
Under the previous Prime Minister, whom I commend

183

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

184

for coming out and wanting to resolve this issue, we  
promised our constituents that no victim would suffer  
financially under any compensation structure we put in  
place.

I shall take Mr Speaker's eloquent words on board  
and end there, other than to say that this is not a party  
political issue: successive Governments have failed the  
victims. I hope we can now come together and have this  
inquiry, but we must make sure that there is a clear  
timeline and a deadline.

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Mon) (Lab): I congratulate my  
hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson) on her leadership on this issue. On the  
hon. Gentleman's point about coming together, it is  
important for this issue to be considered at a UK level,  
because it predates devolution. It is important that the  
Minister—I thought he was going to speak second in  
the debate—works with the devolved Administrations  
and that any future compensation is provided at a UK  
level so that there are no second-class citizens in the  
United Kingdom.

**Nadhim Zahawi:** I think the victims who looked at  
theScottishsettlementhavetakenthatpointonboard—that  
is certainly the case with Adrian Melson—and I am  
sure that the Government listened to the hon. Gentleman's  
view. Let us come together and provide a clear timeline  
for when the victims can get not only justice but  
compensation.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am extremely grateful to the  
hon. Gentleman for that. Just before more Opposition  
Members are minded to grumble about the fact that the  
Minister has not yet spoken, and that he is not necessarily  
next, I should point out that I was in receipt of  
representations from Opposition Front Benchers on  
this matter. Some communication between Members on  
the Opposition Front Bench and Back Benches would  
be greatly advantageous to the conduct of our proceedings.  
Before I call the shadow Minister for public health, the  
hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West  
(Mrs Hodgson), may I gently implore her to speak for  
no more than 10 minutes, and preferably for fewer,  
because there are a lot of Members who wish to contribute?  
After the hon. Lady, the Minister of State, the hon.  
Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), will helpfully set out  
the Government's position. We will then open up to a  
wider debate. I will not promise complete satisfaction,  
because that is without precedent in the House, but I  
will try to ensure that there are as many happy Members  
as possible.

2.6 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland  
West) (Lab): Thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker.

First and foremost, thanks must go to my outstanding  
hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson), who has so valiantly campaigned on  
this issue for numerous years now. Without her and the  
dedicated resolve of her and all those she cited who  
have been involved in this campaign, we would not be  
where we are today. Thanks must also go to the former  
Member for Leigh, Andy Burnham, for the debate he

led at the end of the previous Parliament, for which I  
had the honour of being present. He helped to add  
expediency to this issue with his commitment to go to  
the police with the evidence he has if the Government  
failed to come forward with an inquiry to seek justice  
for those who have been neglected

For too long, the contaminated blood community  
have been simply failed by their Government and ignored  
by those who have let the demands of those affected fall  
on deaf ears, leaving the community without justice. It  
is very welcome—as we have heard in the news in the  
past hour and a half or so—that an inquiry may finally  
be happening, and I look forward to hearing further  
details from the Minister when he responds. I am grateful  
that he and you, Mr Speaker, have allowed me to speak  
first so that he can answer the questions I pose. This is a  
rather unusual format, and I had no prior knowledge  
that it was going to be changed. I hope that other  
Members who speak and pose questions will get a  
response from the Minister; I do not know whether he  
will get two bites at the cherry or will have to intervene  
to answer other Members' questions.

This emergency debate is timely and allows the House  
to have its voice heard fully, which is right after the  
decades of neglect the contaminated blood community  
has faced. At any point prior to 12.30 pm, when the  
announcement was made in the news, the Minister  
could have come forward and made a statement. That  
would have saved my hon. Friend the Member for  
Kingston upon Hull North from having to apply for an  
emergency debate yesterday. It feels like the order of  
things has been a little forced, and it is sad that it has  
had to be forced in this way. But we are where we are.

Labour Members are resolutely in favour of a  
Hillsborough-style public inquiry, as we made clear in  
our manifesto acouple of months ago—my hon. Friend  
the Member for Kingston upon Hull North and I  
pushed for that to be included. The Labour party  
believes that that style of inquiry would get to the heart  
of the problems that unfolded in the 1980s and hold to  
account those who were to blame for this scandal,  
before it is too late. It is not just our party, but all the  
parties—especially those on the Opposition Benches—that  
have made a commitment to stand up for those people  
seeking justice. That was so clearly documented in the  
joint letter, which was published on Sunday, from the  
leaders of every single opposition party here in this  
House, including, I am pleased to say, of the Democratic  
Unionist party.

Last November, in a debate secured by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North, we  
discussed a whole host of issues that this community  
faces, including how people could be compensated for  
the terrible events that have occurred. Today, we are  
here to debate the fight for justice, which should have  
happened a lot sooner.

In my contribution, I want to impress on the Minister  
two key points: first, that the previous two inquiries  
have, categorically, not been sufficient in seeking justice,  
which is why a Hillsborough-style inquiry must be  
actioned; and, secondly, that the evidence presented so  
far is clear that if we are to have truth and reconciliation  
after the murky covering up of this scandal, then the  
strongest of daylight must be shone on every aspect,  
leaving no stone unturned.

185

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

186

*[Mrs Sharon Hodgson]*

The two previous inquiries—the Archer inquiry in  
2009 and the Penrose inquiry in Scotland in 2015—did  
not go far enough in the eyes of the affected community  
in getting the truth and justice that they deserve. The  
Archer inquiry, which was not Government-backed,  
failed because there were no Department of Health  
witnesses giving evidence to the convened panel. The  
Penrose inquiry also did not go far enough in seeking  
the truth, as it was unable to compel witnesses from  
outside Scotland when, at the time of the scandal, most,  
if not all, of the decisions were made in Whitehall. That  
failure to compel witnesses to attend from outside Scotland  
meant that the inquiry failed to provide the justice and  
answers that people from right across the UK deserved.

There are many allegations around this scandal, ranging  
from Department of Health officials destroying evidence  
as partof the cover-up, to victims' medical details being  
tampered with to hide the cause of their infections.

**Ian Austin:** Two of my constituents have two particular  
matters that they want the inquiry to consider: first, one  
said that he was infected with hepatitis C and exposed  
to the HIV virus, but was not informed of that by the  
NHS until years afterwards and he wants to be assured  
that the inquiry will reveal why the truth was hidden;  
the second wants to know about doctors and scientists  
being paid by the drug companies and about the precise  
nature of those deals. He thinks that those deals have to  
be really properly and rigorously exposed by this inquiry,  
so that we can get to the bottom of whatever vested  
interests existed during this scandal.

**Mrs Hodgson:** I thank my hon. Friend for his  
intervention. The evidence on those things has been  
well documented, especially by the former Member for  
Leigh and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North. Those who have lived with these  
conditions, who are brave enough to come forward—and  
who are at the sharp end of this heinous negligence and  
the recent uncovering reported in the *Daily Mail* last  
week—have proved just how important it is that a  
Hillsborough-style inquiry is set up.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):  
Does my hon. Friend agree that the report, “Self Sufficiency  
in Blood Products in England and Wales” is unauthorised,  
and could be perpetuating inaccuracies and outright  
lies, as my constituent says in a letter to me?

**Mrs Hodgson:** All of this evidence will have to be  
examined. In recent days, constituents affected by this  
scandal have been in contact with my office with intricate  
details that must be addressed. It is important that  
those questions, no matter how small they may be, are  
answered, as they reflect the issues that have inextricably  
affected that person's whole life. It is most important  
that those issues are addressed, so that those who have  
lived with the ramifications of this serious negligence  
can finally have the justice that they deserve.

Getting to the bottom of the allegations and the  
evidence and having a full and frank inquiry that brings  
justice for the many people affected are the reasons why  
we must have this inquiry. As the joint letter by the

Opposition leaders said, if a panel were to be convened,  
it must disclose any and all documents related to the  
scandal, which involves the victims at every stage; and it  
must compel all parties involved to participate in the  
disclosure process and not to hinder justice any further.  
It must also investigate the events leading up to an  
individual's infection and the aftermath, including  
allegations of medical details being tampered with,  
whether people were unknowingly tested for viruses  
without their knowledge and whether enough was done  
to identify those at risk of infection. As part of this  
inquiry, there must also be an investigation into the role  
of profit-making American firms, which supplied the  
blood factor concentrates to people with haemophilia.

Although none of this will bring back loved ones and  
those who have died as a consequence of this scandal,  
or change the life circumstances of those who are alive  
today living with these conditions inflicted on them,  
there is still something that we can do, which is to hold  
an inquiry. It is the very least that we can do. The  
thousands of people affected by this scandal must be  
supported and we must stand beside them in seeking  
justice, as that is our duty as elected representatives of  
the public.

I want to conclude with this final remark: none of us  
here has a magic wand—I know that our constituents  
think that we do—and we cannot turn back time and  
stop this scandal happening. Sadly, that power does not  
exist, but the power that does exist, at the behest of the  
Minister before us today, is that of facilitating the  
justice for those who live with the aftermath of this  
scandal. Here, today, we can send a message—a loud  
and strong message to thosewho campaign on this issue  
day in, day out—that Parliament has listened and is on  
their side. We in this House have heard them; we in this  
House are there with them; and we in this House will do  
all that we can for them in their quest for justice. We  
cannot let them down. We can help facilitate the truth  
once and for all. Parliament is listening to the individuals  
who have spent decades fighting against the system to  
get the truth that they seek, and the Government must  
listen to Parliament. Parliament is saying: fix this, provide  
those thousands of people who never asked for this to  
happen to them with the justice that they so rightly  
deserve. We cannot fail them any longer.

2.16 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip  
Dunne):** I thank you, Mr Speaker, for explaining to the  
House the sequence in which we are speaking today in  
this very important debate.

I wish to start by offering my personal apology to all  
those who have been affected by the tragedy of infected  
NHS-supplied blood or blood products. This has had a  
terrible impact on so many individuals and families. I  
know that, quite rightly, there have been many debates  
on the subject in this Chamber, which have been prompted  
by the quite proper concern of Members on both sides  
of this House over many years.

There have been two previous inquiries on this issue:  
the privately funded Archer report, which was published  
in 2009, and the Scottish Government-funded Penrose  
inquiry report, which was published in 2015. However, I  
am aware that, over the years, there have been several  
calls for a full independent inquiry.

187

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

188

In addition to those reports, the Department of Health  
has worked to bring greater transparency to the events.  
Many documents relating to blood safety, covering the  
period from 1970 to 1995, have been published and are  
available on The National Archives website. Those  
documents provide a comprehensive picture of events  
and decisions, many of which were included in the  
documents reviewed by the Penrose inquiry. However, I  
recognise that, for those affected, these steps do not go  
far enough to provide the answers that they want or to  
get to the truth of what happened.

In the light of those concerns and of reports of new  
evidence and of allegations of potential criminality, we  
think that it is important to understand the extent of  
what is claimed and the wider issues that arise. I am  
pleased to be able to confirm to the House that the  
Government intend to call an inquiry into the events  
that led to so many people being infected with HIV  
and/or hepatitis C through NHS-supplied blood or  
blood products.

**Norman Lamb:** I am very pleased with the news that  
the Minister has just confirmed. Will he ensure that the  
process that is followed—I very much support a  
Hillsborough-style inquiry—facilitates the ability to bring  
criminal charges so that the full force of the law can be  
applied to anyone who may be guilty of criminal  
wrongdoing?

**Mr Dunne:** I shall come on directly to the form that  
the independent inquiry should take, and I hope that  
that will help to address the right hon. Gentleman's  
question.

We have heard calls for an inquiry based on the  
model that was used to investigate the Hillsborough  
tragedy—the so-called Hillsborough-style panel—which  
would allow for a sensitive investigation of the issues,  
allowing those affected and their families close personal  
engagement with an independent and trusted panel.  
There have also been suggestions that only a formal  
statutory inquiry led by a senior judge under the Inquiries  
Act 2005 will provide the answers that those affected  
want. Such an inquiry would have the power to compel  
witnesses and written evidence—an apparent shortcoming  
in previous reports. The Government can see that there  
are merits in both approaches, and to ensure that whatever  
is established is in the interests of those affected we will  
engage with the affected groups and interested parties,  
including the all-party parliamentary group, before taking  
a final decision on the type of inquiry.

**David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): Will the  
terms of the inquiry allow for recommendations to be  
made about the correct levels of compensation for  
those who have been affected?

**Mr Dunne:** I shall make a little progress, then endeavour  
to answer that.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and  
Ministers at the Department of Health will meet those  
affected and their families so that we can discuss the  
issues and understand their preferences directly about  
the style, scope and duration of the inquiry.

**Diana Johnson:** I am grateful for what the Minister is  
saying, but can he give a time estimate of when the  
meetings will take place? My experience of the Department

of Health is that, on this issue, deadlines are not met  
and things have to be dragged on to the Floor of the  
House to get Ministers to respond. Is there a set timetable  
for when a decision will be made and those meetings  
held?

**Mr Dunne:** The hon. Lady, who has taken an active  
lead in encouraging inquiries, will want to make sure  
that we get it right. We will take the time that is  
necessary to consult colleagues and interested groups.  
Our intention is to be able to come back to the House as  
soon as practicable—I anticipate in the autumn.

**David Hanson:** The Minister has mentioned the  
Department of Health, and he will know that my  
constituents live under a devolved Administration in  
Wales but were infected in a hospital in Liverpool.  
What consultation is he undertaking with the Welsh  
Assembly, including on the schemes that it is running,  
and on the liability ultimately for any objective?

**Mr Dunne:** We recognise that there is a legitimate  
interest for all constituent nations in the United Kingdom.  
As many of these incidents took place before devolution,  
we intend to consult devolved Governments.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con):  
Does my hon. Friend agree that, quite rightly, the  
inquiry has to give answers to the victims of the scandal  
and their families? There will be great interest in the  
conclusions of the inquiry in the House and among the  
wider public to ensure that historical circumstances that  
led to the scandal are never repeated.

**Mr Dunne:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Mr Dunne:** I shall make a little progress on devolved  
matters before responding to other colleagues. Regardless  
of the style of the inquiry, our intention is that it should  
cover the whole of the UK, so we will be in direct  
contact with counterparts in Wales, Northern Ireland  
and Scotland to discuss that with them and to seek their  
views before determining those aspects of the inquiry.

**Lady Hermon** (North Down) (Ind): First, I apologise  
to the House, the Minister and to you, Mr Speaker, for  
not being present at the beginning of this very, very  
important debate. The Minister said that he is going to  
consult on the inquiry, which will be UK-wide. He will  
know that we do not have an Assembly, and there is no  
corresponding Health Minister in Northern Ireland,  
which is absolutely disgraceful. There is no prospect of  
our having such a Minister before the autumn, so with  
whom will the Minister liaise in Northern Ireland in the  
Assembly's absence?

**Mr Dunne:** We will ask the Northern Ireland Office  
to facilitate discussions with officials and representatives  
in Northern Ireland.

**Albert Owen:** On the point about devolution made by  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (David  
Hanson), is the Minister telling the House that this is a  
UK-wide inquiry and that the consultation will take

189

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

190

*[Albert Owen]*

place across the UK, so that there will be equality for  
peoplesuchasMrandMrsHutchinsoninmyconstituency  
in the outcome of the inquiry?

**Mr Dunne:** The scope of the inquiry will be determined  
as part of the discussions which, as I have said, will take  
place over coming weeks and short number of months.  
Our intention is that the devolved Administrations and  
their residents will have full access to participation in  
the inquiry, irrespective of where people live or were  
infected.

The Government intend to update the House once  
the discussions are complete, and I encourage colleagues  
with a specific interest to engage in discussions through  
the all-party group or other relevant groups. In the  
meantime, if anyone in the House or outside has any  
evidence of criminality, they should take that evidence  
to the police as soon as possible. If anyone has any  
other evidence that they want the inquiry to consider, I  
would request that they submit it to the inquiry once it  
has been established. The Government will write to  
everyone in receipt of payments from the current schemes  
to make sure that they all know about today's  
announcement and to inform them of next steps.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I very much welcome  
the Minister's comments. Will he confirm that when the  
scope of the inquiry is drawn up care will be taken not  
to do anything that might endanger future trials? Will  
he further emphasise that anyone with information  
should make sure that it is made available to the police?

**Mr Dunne:** My hon. Friend will recollect that the  
recentHillsboroughinquirygaverisetocertaininformation  
that was made available to the police and led to charges  
being made. We would envisage that the inquiry that is  
established would have the ability to do the same thing  
if appropriate.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Dunne:** I must make progress, because Mr Speaker  
has encouraged me to take 10 minutes so that everyone  
can make a contribution, and I have already exceeded  
that.

I should like to take the opportunity to inform the  
House that implementing the reforms to the infected  
blood ex-gratia support scheme remains a priority for  
the Government. That is why, as David Cameron established  
a year or so ago, within this spending review period,  
until 2020-21, up to £125 million of additional funding  
has been added to the budget for the ex-gratia support  
scheme. That more than doubles the annual spend over  
the spending review period. The second consultation on  
scheme reform, which closed on 17 April this year,  
received over250responses.Theconsultationcontained  
proposals for a special category mechanism that would  
allow people with stage 1 hepatitis C to apply for the  
higher annual payment, greatly increasing the number  
of individuals eligible for the higher payment. The  
responses are being looked at and the consultation  
response will be published in due course. All the annual  
payments will remain linked to the consumer prices  
indexandwillbedisregardedfortaxandbenefitpurposes.

**Stephen Doughty:** I thank the Minister for what he  
said about input into the inquiry. As the new chair of  
the all-party group on HIV and AIDS, I am sure that  
our members will want to contribute. I want to press  
him on the financial liabilities arising from the inquiry  
and the impact of devolution. Will he guarantee that,  
no matter where anyone was infected or where they live  
now, they will be treated with equality across the United  
Kingdom when it comes to financial liabilities and  
payments arising from the inquiry?

**Mr Dunne:** I have just described the additional  
contribution to the financial scheme for England. It will  
be for the inquiry to decide whether it wants to make  
recommendationsaboutfinancialarrangements.Atpresent,  
I am not in a position to give the hon. Gentleman the  
confirmation that he is seeking. That will have to come  
through the inquiry.

**DrJulianLewis**(NewForestEast)(Con):Myconstituent  
Lesley Hughes was infected with hepatitis C in 1970,  
but this was discovered only about three years ago. Will  
any consideration be given to those long years of suffering  
when the compensation scheme is put into effect?

**Mr Dunne:** I offer my sympathy to my right hon.  
Friend's constituent for the challenges she finds herself  
facing. We have to say at this point that it will be down  
to individuals to make their applications. We will respond  
to the consultation in due course. I strongly encourage  
my right hon. Friend to make representations on his  
constituent'sbehalf to the inquiry when it is established.

**Chris Stephens:** I thank the Minister for being extremely  
generous in giving way. May I press him on the issue of  
health records? Many families are still trying to establish  
what has actually happened, while the Minister is discussing  
the scope of the inquiry. Should we write to the Minister  
if there are any issues with families obtaining health  
records?

**Mr Dunne:** I think it would be appropriate to write to  
the inquiry, once it is established. I completely concur  
with an earlier point about ensuring that any evidence  
of medical records being tampered with should be  
made available to the inquiry.

I am afraid that I must bring my remarks to a  
conclusion. I thank those on both sides of the House  
who have worked tirelessly on the issue over the years. I  
add my voice to those of others who have already  
spoken to commend the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon HullNorth (Diana Johnson).She has spoken very  
powerfully in the House on this subject not only today,  
but on many occasions and for many years. I also  
commend my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing  
West (Sir Peter Bottomley), who co-chairs the all-party  
parliamentary group. As the hon. Member for Kingston  
uponHullNorthdid,Ithankpastand present members  
of that group, notably the former chair, Jason McCartney,  
late of this parish. Finally, I thank ministerial colleagues  
who have handled this delicate issue in previous  
Administrations, particularly my right hon. Friend the  
Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt),  
who has worked so hard not just for his constituents,  
but for all those affected by the tragedy.

191

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

192

**Mr Speaker:** I appeal to the Scottish National party  
spokesperson certainly not to exceed 10 minutes, and  
preferably less. The Minister took a little longer, but he  
did take several interventions and was setting out the  
Government's position, but there is no requirement  
or need for the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire  
(Dr Whitford) to take quite as long.

2.32 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): As  
the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana  
Johnson) said, 2,400 people have died following the  
worst disaster in NHS history. That was due to a  
shortage of blood and clotting factors, which led to the  
NHS sourcing products from America. The problem is  
that the factor IX concentrates for men with haemophilia  
or women with Von Willebrand disease are made from  
thousands of samples. The moment one or two people  
within that collection are affected is the start of the  
virus, and that was why these patients were affected at a  
much higher rate than those who had a single blood  
transfusion. The problem is that the issue goes back  
decades and it has not been properly dealt with, as has  
been said already.

There have been multiple debates, statements and  
urgent questions on the issue during the two years in  
which I have been in the House—I, too, pay tribute to  
the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North for  
keeping at it with the all-party parliamentary group—but  
most of them have been about support. It was only last  
July that the Government finally came forward with a  
strengthened support package for these people. It is  
important to recognise that the payments are not  
compensation; they are ex gratia support payments, and  
they do not recognise the loss and suffering of the  
victims of contaminated blood. This seemed to come  
about only after the Scottish Government came up with  
a much more generous package in the form of a much  
larger lump sum, ongoing payments and, in particular,  
a 75% pension to the spouse and bereaved families.  
Such people still do not get sufficient support here in  
England, but it is not right that someone who has lost a  
partner to this scandal is not compensated.

We heard in March this year—a mere seven months  
after the announcement of a support package—that the  
Government were consulting on perhaps restricting who  
would qualify for the highest payments, and that the  
payments would not be index-linked. The youngest  
remaining victim is approximately 35. They have a  
whole lifetime to go through. That might be a shortened  
lifetime in comparison with ours, but we cannot suddenly  
leave people in poverty further down the line. These  
things need to be dealt with. I welcome the Minister's  
commitment that the payments will be linked to the  
consumer prices index. We may need a debate on support,  
but that is not what this debate is about.

**Hywel Williams:** I am reluctant to interrupt the hon.  
Lady's remarks, but may I point out that the support  
also extends to Wales, not just to England? As far as I  
understand it, there is also a £10,000 payment for  
spouses in Wales. Is it the hon. Lady's understanding  
that the inquiry's terms of reference will include the  
actions of the Governments in Wales, Scotland and  
possibly Northern Ireland, as well as what has happened  
in England? I had intended to ask the Minister that  
question, but could not make an intervention.

**Dr Whitford:** The Scottish Government set up the  
Penrose inquiry, but I would assume that any inquiry  
will look at the whole UK, and the Minister has committed  
to that. It must be remembered that the decisions that  
led to the scandal were taken here and in Whitehall.  
This was before devolution. Governments such as the  
Scottish Government have tried to step up to support  
citizens who have been affected, but getting the answers  
to what caused the situation is a matter for this place.

**Catherine West:** Does the hon. Lady agree that the  
lack of trust has been enhanced by documents such as  
“Self-Sufficiency in Blood Products in England and  
Wales”? That was a Department of Health document,  
but many people felt it was inaccurate and contained  
outright lies?

**Dr Whitford:** The inquiry will have to look at all those  
things. Documents, patients' records, things that were  
altered and hidden, and things that are hiding behind  
public interest barriers now all need to be opened up so  
that light can be shed on the matter, as with Hillsborough.

Penrose was a Scotland-only inquiry. The Department  
of Health was invited to take part and turn it into a  
UK-wide inquiry, but it declined. One of the key weaknesses  
of the inquiry was that Penrose did not have the right to  
summon documents or people.

I remember when the scandal started to unfold in the  
'80s. As a surgeon who was, of course, using blood on  
her patients, I remember how shocked I was at the mere  
thought that an action I might have taken could have  
harmed a patient I was looking after. In my elective  
surgery, I set about chasing every single blood cell to  
avoid spilling blood. I used electrocautery and all sorts  
of modern techniques. If I were to wheel out the staff  
from my theatre now, they would moan about how long  
I used to spend doing that. If a clinician is dealing with  
someone who has been hit by a bus, however, they have  
no choice.

I remember a critic of Penrose in 2015 saying that  
they were surprised that clinicians showed so much  
trust in the quality of blood, but a clinician who is using  
hundreds of drugs, implants, machines and blood products  
must be able to trust them. We have no mechanism  
personally to check them. That is the role of the  
Government and all their agencies. It is why we have  
licensing and inspections, and it is why action must be  
taken when there is a suspicion of harm. Failing to act,  
hiding and not dealing with the situation at the time all  
happened pre-devolution, and this inquiry must take  
account of that.

At a conference in Glasgow in 1980, clinicians were  
already raising concerns about changes in the liver  
function of patients who were receiving blood concentrate  
for haemophilia. A 1981 meeting of the UK's Blood  
Transfusion Research Committee, which we have all  
read about recently, recognised that about 50 patients a  
year developed some form of liver damage. Yet the  
decision at that meeting appeared to be to let that  
continue and simply to study the situation, using those  
patients as a way of developing a test for what was  
known at the time as non-A, non-B hepatitis. It is  
important that we ensure that this inquiry looks at all  
this. The official from the Department of Health and

193

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

194

*[Dr Whitford]*

Social Security who was at that meeting would not  
attend Penrose. Such people need to be called by this  
inquiry.

Going forward, the inquiry must include the families  
and the victims so that we are sensitive to what they  
want to know. This is also about not just the Government  
but producers—and not just producers in America. We  
try to make ourselves feel better by blaming this on the  
States, where people bought blood, and where people  
with addictions, people living in poverty and prisoners  
were used. In the mid-70s, prisoners in this country  
were also used, and it is claimed that that was encouraged  
by the Home Office as part of prisoner rehabilitation.  
We need the documents on that; we need to understand  
if that decision was made. UK producers have often  
been found wanting in the quality of product they came  
up with, so we must not pat ourselves on the back and  
imagine that the UK product was somehow safe and  
that this was all due to the US. We need to follow this  
right down and get the answers.

These people have been failed so many times, over  
and over, and it is crucial that that does not happen  
again. We need to keep the Government on their toes.  
We need to have reports back from this inquiry as it is  
set up, so that we know what it is actually going to look  
into. If we fail to get answers this time, and particularly  
if we fail to deliver compensation for the lives lost, the  
suffering, the failure to get a mortgage or insurance,  
and the costs of care, we will have failed these people all  
over again.

2.41 pm

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I congratulate the  
hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana  
Johnson) on securing this important debate. I was in the  
Chamber when the former Member for Leigh raised  
these very concerning issues, which need to be looked at  
in the inquiry. That struck a chord with me, so I am  
delighted to be back in the Chamber to see this debate.

Like many Members on both sides of the House, I  
have been contacted by constituents who have told me  
about their experiences and about how contaminated  
blood has affected them, their family life and their  
friends. Every so often as a constituency MP, we meet  
the saddest constituents who tell us the most heartbreaking  
stories. We sit there week in, week out, and those stories  
resonate with us, but they are not stories for the victims—  
they are daily life. These are wrecked lives, but the  
people have done nothing wrong of their own accord—it  
is pure injustice.

It is clear that the contaminated blood products that  
were used decades ago have continued daily to affect  
people's lives in a devastating and destructive way.  
When I have heard the stories of how people have been  
affected, they have lived with me, and I can understand  
the campaigning that has been done by Members on  
both sides of the House. I am therefore delighted to talk  
about my constituents' experiences.

Today, we finally recognise what has happened, and  
the Government are ready to tackle this injustice. I am  
delighted that that is being done in the name of the  
victims and their families, who did nothing to bring this  
on themselves.

After I became the MP for Eastleigh in May 2015, I  
met one of my constituents from Bishopstoke, Gary  
Webster, who has been left coping with HIV, hepatitis C  
and possibly variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease as a  
result of the NHS blood products that were used during  
a routine procedure in the 1980s to treat his haemophilia.

**Dr Whitford:** It will be important that the inquiry  
goes far enough back. The decision to heat-treat albumin  
for hepatitis B was made in the mid-60s, but we did not  
treat concentrates. We need to make sure that all these  
conditions are included.

**Mims Davies:** I thank the hon. Lady for that input. It  
is absolutely right that she, like all our constituents,  
brings her experience to this. We need to make sure that  
we do go back far enough.

Last year, Gary attended a debate we had here once  
again to discuss this heartbreaking issue. He attended a  
specialist school in Alton, where he was one of many  
haemophiliacs. He told me that he kept in contact with  
around 100 other students, all of whom had been  
affected by contaminated blood, although only around  
20 were still alive. These students all contracted illnesses  
through blood products they had received because of  
their haemophilia. Tragically, Gary's story is similar to  
that of thousands of others across the country.

Other constituents, some of whom wish not to be  
named, have had grave financial burdens placed on  
them and their families as a result of the diseases they  
contracted from contaminated blood, which have affected  
their lives. It is only right that we support those whose  
lives have been significantly affected by these contaminated  
products. I am therefore pleased to hear about the  
additional support that the Government will provide to  
those who have been roundly affected. I am particularly  
pleased that the annual payments for those with hepatitis  
stage 2 will increase to £15,500, and then to £18,500 in  
2018-19. Payments to those co-infected with HIV and  
hepatitis stage 2 will also go up, to £36,500 by 2018-19. I  
am pleased to see that these payments will be linked  
to CPI.

That will help to support all our constituents we  
know have been affected. I know from speaking to Gary  
and others about the real hardship and challenges these  
conditions have brought to their lives, and about the  
difficulty they face in working, and in bringing up and  
supporting their families in the way they would have  
liked had they not been affected.

Almost £400 million has been paid out to those  
affected by five different organisations, which have been  
funded by the Department of Health. I am delighted to  
hear about the £125 million the Government have  
committed as additional funding for the reformed scheme,  
which will double the Department's annual spend on  
the scheme over the next five years. Thatmoneymustgo  
to the people who really need it—that should absolutely  
be noted—because the daily-life decisions they have  
made have been really difficult because of their financial  
impact.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Lab): The hon. Lady  
talks about a reformed scheme, and some people have  
fallen outside the existing scheme. My constituent Sharon  
Moore, who suffered a transfusion of contaminated  
blood, has been told that she is outside the criteria.

195

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

196

Would the hon. Lady urge the Government to look at  
cases again under the new scheme to make sure that  
people are not missed and not excluded unnecessarily?

**Mims Davies:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing  
that point forward. There is nothing more frustrating  
for an MP than hearing that people have just fallen  
outside the bracket. That is the worst place to be, and  
the scope of the inquiry will perhaps give us the chance  
to look at that.

This Government have done significantly more than  
other Governments to protect those who have been  
affected. There is a commitment to ensure that we pull  
the five fairly complex schemes together and transfer  
them into a new scheme in 2017. These people have  
complicated and difficult lives anyway, and it is only  
right that we make it easier for victims to get the  
support they need.

I am so pleased that the Prime Minister made her  
announcement this morning and that there will be a full  
and wide-ranging inquiry into the tragedy. I am pleased  
that the inquiry will be drawn together by the victims, to  
support and suit the victims. I am pleased that they will  
finally have a voice—the strongest voice possible—so  
that they can get the most and the fullest answers they  
can, which is what they deserve. It is only right that this  
consultation will be held with those affected by this  
terrible injustice, so that their families also have a voice.

I hope that the inquiry will provide answers for those  
who are looking for them. In particular, there are concerns  
about criminality—when I heard that issue raised in  
this House, it was extremely concerning. We now have a  
vehicle to get people's voices heard, and if there is  
anything that should be going through the courts, we  
can do something about that.

With this inquiry, we have an opportunity to make  
sure that no voice is lost, and that the victims and their  
families get the right inquiry, the fullest compensation  
and the answers they rightly deserve.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. May I just advise the House that  
with the exception of the maiden speaker whom I am  
about to call, colleagues should be thinking in terms of  
speeches of five minutes each, or at most six, if the  
Chair is to accommodate everybody? I am sure there  
are colleagues who would like to expatiate eloquently  
and at length, and on other occasions they might be free  
to do so, but that will have to wait, I say to the hon.  
Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter), for the  
long winter evenings that lie ahead. Before that, I hope  
that we can give a warm, enthusiastic and encouraging  
welcome to our maiden speaker, Anneliese Dodds.

2.50 pm

**Anneliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): Thank  
you very much indeed, Mr Speaker. I am very grateful  
to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull  
North (Diana Johnson) for securing this debate.

As the new MP for Oxford East, I must say that it is a  
shame to me that it was the Oxford haemophilia centre  
that produced blood products which resulted in many  
people contracting blood-borne diseases, and further,  
that guidance from the centre in the early 1980s advocated

the use of humans to test infectivity. I will repeat  
that—the use of humans to test infectivity. However, I  
am very proud of the people from Oxford who have  
campaigned for so many years for justice, along with  
many others mentioned by my hon. Friends. Their  
fight, as we have heard, has been simply for truth and  
for accountability so that events like these can never  
happen again. As I start my maiden speech, I would like  
to dedicate my words to them and to all the other  
people in Oxford who fought for justice against all the  
odds—not least, also, the survivors of the Bullfinch  
sexual abuse scandal, whose bravery has been remarkable  
and an inspiration.

I am enormously grateful to the people of Oxford  
East for electing me as their representative. As such, I of  
course take over from Andrew Smith, who served us for  
three decades as our MP and who many people in all  
parts of this House knew very well. Like many people,  
Andrew came initially to Oxford unsure of whether it  
would become his home, but quickly recognised the  
potential of our great city, not least because as a student  
he met, very quickly, his wonderful wife Val, who was  
also known by many people in this House. Val was an  
incredibly powerful advocate for the community of  
Blackbird Leys, which she served as a county and city  
councillor for many years. Her wisdom and her kindness  
is still very sadly missed by many of us.

Andrew is undoubtedly best known in Oxford East as  
a diligent constituency MP who cares passionately about  
our city and all its people, including of course those  
living in his home community of Blackbird Leys. But  
Andrew also had a very distinguished career in Parliament,  
including serving in the Cabinet as Chief Secretary to  
the Treasury from 1999 to 2002, and then as Secretary  
of State for Work and Pensions from 2002 to 2004.  
Andrew's work, with others, lifted more than a million  
pensioners and half a million children out of poverty,  
helped restore the national finances—a piece of history  
often ignored or, sadly, distorted in this House—and  
brought in some of the biggest increases in health and  
overseas aid spending our country has ever seen. Andrew  
also presided over groundbreaking disability rights  
legislation, set up the pension protection fund, and  
helped bring in the pension credit, among many, many  
more transformative initiatives.

Andrew is none the less an incredibly humble man.  
He always stressed how his achievements came about  
through working with others, either in this House or in  
Oxford. In fact, Andrew is so humble that when he was  
in the Cabinet running Britain's welfare state, his own  
television was so dilapidated that it had to be whacked  
many times before it would actually work. He is very  
intelligent but also very straightforward, without any  
airs or graces, and is immensely respected for it. I am  
sure that Members in all parts of this House will wish  
him very well for a long and very happy retirement.

Oxford East could be imagined as a constituency  
filled only with gleaming spires, detectives driving Aston  
Martins, and mysterious university dons. But while  
Oxford East boasts two excellent universities and bustles  
with students during term time, Oxford also has an  
impressive industrial heritage, and enormous further  
industrial potential, with the right infrastructure investment  
and support. What was the Pressed Steel Company  
plant, now BMW Cowley, produces nearly a quarter of  
a million Mini cars every year. Its engineers, technicians

197

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

198

*[Anneliese Dodds]*

and apprentices are among the best in the world. Oxford  
as a city voted to remain in the EU, although some  
areas in the city had a majority to leave. Whether people  
voted to leave or to remain, no one voted to deny our  
city its potential. It is essential that European markets  
remain open to businesses like BMW Cowley, and that  
we retain Oxford's many and various links with European  
and global science, as well as protecting the EU citizens  
who have made their home in our city.

In fact, Oxford is a city that has always looked  
outwards, as the first ever Oxfam shop on Broad Street  
reminds us. People with roots from all over the world  
call Oxford East their home. I am very proud that in my  
constituency we have five mosques, many different Christian  
churches, and substantial Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and  
Jewish populations. But I feel that the potential of  
many people from all of our communities in Oxford  
East is currently being held back.

Yesterday I attended the funeral of Bill Buckingham,  
who had been a Labour councillor and campaigner in  
Oxford East for 70 years; he died at the age of 96. Bill  
was among many who came back after serving our  
country in the second world war, determined that Lloyd  
George's promise after the first world war now had to  
be turned into a socially inclusive reality, with homes  
built for heroes as part of mixed communities to be  
proud of. As Bevan put it at the time, we needed  
high-quality housing where the doctor, the grocer, the  
butcher and the farm labourer could all be neighbours,  
without social distinction.

What of that ambitious vision survives now? House  
prices and rents in Oxford are the least affordable in  
Britain outside London. Renters of homes have fewer  
rights than if they were renting a sofa or a fridge. The  
rules for housing benefit have been changed so people  
whose families have lived in Oxford for generations are  
being forced out of their city for the crime of merely  
earning an average, not above-average, wage; and, to  
pay for the right to buy in housing association properties,  
up to a third of Oxford's remaining council stock could  
vanish.

For me, people doing their best to bring up their  
children on low incomes in Oxford are today's heroes  
and heroines. Often running between more than one job  
to make ends meet, I must say that it comes as a slap in  
the face to them when they hear politicians refusing to  
admit that there is such a thing as in-work poverty. I  
was disturbed to hear that repeatedly in this House last  
week. Britain, and especially Oxford, urgently needs  
more genuinely affordable homes, with affordability not  
covering homes worth £400,000, as is currently the case.  
Renters need stronger rights, and they need, above all, a  
system that recognises houses as homes—as places to  
live and not merely investment opportunities. We also,  
of course, need to unlock the potential of our communities  
and not allow them to be asset-stripped.

I live on the Rose Hill estate in Oxford with my  
family—I am very pleased that some of them are here  
today. It is a wonderful, friendly place, albeit one where  
almost half the children on the estate grow up in  
poverty. Bill Buckingham, along with many other local  
people, kept Rose Hill's community centre going through  
thick and thin, even when it burned down, and now we  
have a new centre on my estate, but other community

facilities have been run down in recent years. I loved  
meeting other parents during baby sessions at the children's  
centre when I had my first child four years ago. As you  
can see, he is quite grown-up now, albeit a little bit tired.  
But by the time my daughter arrived 18 months ago,  
there were no more baby sessions available. Instead, the  
children's centre is only available for supervised contact  
sessions and for two—that is two—hours a week of  
supervised play. Community spaces such as children's  
centres may not grab the headlines, but for many people  
they mean the difference between loneliness and friendship,  
between ill-health and wellbeing, and between division  
and neighbourliness.

Oxford East and its incredible people have so much  
potential, but too often, I feel, they are being held back.  
As their MP, I am ambitious for our city and its people,  
and I will devote the time they have given me in this  
place to ensure a better, brighter and fairer future for  
them, and for people like them, across this country.

2.58 pm

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I, too,  
start by paying tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for her leadership  
and persistence on this issue, on which she and my hon.  
Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim  
Zahawi) have done tireless work. I welcome the Minister's  
statement that a public inquiry will happen on this most  
important of issues. The Prime Minister has clearly  
listened to views across the House on the matter.

At one of my first surgery appointments, Richard  
and his wife came to see me to tell me his story. Richard  
was a haemophiliac who was sent to a school for the  
physically disabled in Hampshire when he was 11. For  
six years, he was given hundreds of thousands of units  
of factor VIII. Prior to that he had been given  
cryoprecipitate, which was perfectly workable in moderating  
his condition. The factor VIII prophylactic treatment  
was meant to prevent the dangers caused by haemophilia.  
It changed Richard's life. Sadly, 64 of the 75 people  
from Richard's school are no longer with us. Many of  
those young people died in their early teens.

This case is a double tragedy. Richard and his wife  
told me the very good news that, in later life, they  
decided to have children, but due to the risk of his  
hepatitis affecting the unborn baby, they had to have a  
termination, so they are childless as well as having been  
affected by terrible diseases throughout their lives.

I neglected to congratulate the hon. Member for  
Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on her very fine maiden  
speech. She certainly made a far better job of it than I  
did of mine when I stood here two years ago. Her  
tremendous words were highly relevant to the topic  
under discussion. I am sure she will make many further  
fine contributions in the years ahead.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Does my hon. Friend  
agree that the inquiry needs to consider the challenges  
faced by people affected by contaminated blood who  
want children? A constituent of mine had one round of  
IVF treatment covered by the NHS, but he was not  
entitled to a second round, so he had to pay for it  
himself. We should consider such issues and their effect  
on people in the round.

199

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

200

**Kevin Hollinrake:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
These terrible diseases have so many tragic implications.  
Through no fault of their own, people did not know  
that the treatments would have an adverse impact on  
their health.

Helen was infected in the 1980s, but it was only when  
she moved to my constituency in 2006 and registered  
with a new GP that she was diagnosed with hepatitis  
and its associated difficulties. She has had many consequent  
health problems, including four strokes, diabetes and  
rheumatoid osteoporosis. It has had a huge impact on  
her life. She calls her health a “ticking time bomb”. She  
had to relocate back from France after trying to set up a  
new life there with her husband and two children.

I have spoken to both of those constituents today. It  
is incredible how lightly they seem to carry their burdens.  
They have moved on from the principal issue, which  
was compensation, and what they want now is a public  
inquiry to get to the bottom of this. It is about getting  
answers. I am not saying that compensation is not  
important—it is hugely important, particularly for their  
spouses and children—but today they want answers.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): My hon. Friend  
is making a very good case. Does he agree that, while we  
welcome the Government's inquiry and the funding  
given so far, transparency should be at its core? That is  
what it is all about.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** I absolutely agree. The Minister  
may confirm at the end of the debate, if he gets the  
chance, that the Government have released all the relevant  
documents in their possession. It is absolutely right that  
there should be full transparency and that key witnesses  
who were involved in this tragedy should be interviewed.

One of the biggest outstanding questions is: what  
was known? Helen told me that, despite the fact that she  
did not find out until 20 years after she was infected, the  
hospital had known for years. That is a tragic set of  
circumstances.

Richard sent me a passage that he found during his  
research. As early as 1975, Dr Joseph Garrett Allen,  
then professor of surgery at Stanford University in  
California, wrote to Dr William Maycock, then head of  
the transfusion service in the UK, to warn him of the  
severe dangers of using US-pooled plasma sourced  
from paid skid-row donors and prisoners. He said that  
the situation was extraordinarily hazardous.

My constituents want answers to the following questions.  
What was known about the risks? Was Parliament  
informed about the change from self-sufficiency to imported  
products? What was found out and why were the products  
not withdrawn? Was it a cover-up or negligence? Did  
clinicians take a paternalist approach or was it simply  
incompetence?

I welcome the fact that this Government have done  
more than any other on compensation and transparency.  
I welcome the public inquiry and hope I can play my  
part in making sure that my constituents, their loved  
ones and everyone else affected by this terrible tragedy  
get answers.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):**Order. May I remind hon. Members that Mr Speaker  
asked that speeches be kept to about five minutes?

3.6 pm

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I pay tribute  
to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson) for her sterling work, and to Andy  
Burnham and so many others who have pursued the  
issue relentlessly over the years. It is a testament to their  
commitment that they have kept going, even when all  
hope seemed to be lost.

I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Oxford  
East (Anneliese Dodds) for her excellent maiden speech.  
I am sure that we share a lot of common ground, and I  
hope we will work together over the coming months  
and years.

Before Parliament broke up back in April, Andy  
Burnham laid a challenge to all the parties to include in  
their manifestos a commitment to the victims of  
contaminated blood. I am very pleased and proud that  
my party saw fit to do so. Our manifesto stated:

“Victims of contaminated blood products deserve answers.”  
In 2008, the SNP Scottish Government established the  
Penrose public inquiry, which reported in 2015. In  
government we have also worked with stakeholder groups  
to develop a substantially improved compensation scheme,  
which is now the best in the UK. SNP MPs will support  
a full public inquiry for the rest of the UK, and I am  
very proud to stand by those words today.

I am incredibly pleased and surprised to hear that the  
Government have changed their stance. When we last  
met in April it did not feel as though much more was  
going to happen, so the change in the Government's  
attitude is very welcome. I do not want to appear  
churlish, but the changed numbers in this Parliament  
mean that some things that seemed impossible before  
are now open for debate. I am very glad about that.

There has been recognition of the limitations of  
Penrose and what the Scottish Government could do.  
We could not compel witnesses to attend and we had a  
limited remit to consider negligence, so it is good that  
we now have this opportunity to relook at all the issues.  
I am also glad to hear the Government commit to  
working with the devolved Administrations, because we  
have the experience of an inquiry, limited though it was.  
I hope to hear more about the ways in which the  
Scottish Government and victims in Scotland will be  
brought in as part of the process.

In the April 2016 debate, I mentioned my constituent  
Maria. I have not been able to reach her to ask for her  
views, because this debate and the Government's  
announcement came so very late in the day, but I want  
to put on the record again that Maria contracted hep C  
in 1981 from a blood transfusion following a miscarriage.  
She did not find out for many years. Even when she  
sought a diagnosis, it took two years to get it. She would  
want this House to know that, having lived with hep C  
for 36 years, she does not want charity. She does not  
want vouchers or handouts; she wants to be treated  
fairly and with dignity. That is the very least she deserves  
from this process.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD):  
The Oxford haemophilia centre serves my constituents.  
I thank the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
North (Diana Johnson) for securing this debate. Does  
the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss)  
agree that victims want not just transparency but justice,  
and that if we find evidence of a cover-up, the individuals  
involved should face the full force of the law?

201

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

202

**Alison Thewliss:** I absolutely agree. I am glad that the  
hon. Lady raised that point, which I was about to move  
on to. Without that justice, the victims will never feel as  
though they have been well served. They will feel as  
though they have lost out and there has been no justice.

The inquiry must look at the changing of medical  
records. Somebody must have issued a clear instruction  
to do so, because such cover-ups do not happen by  
themselves. We must find the lines of responsibility  
whereby people were told, “Delete those records, and  
don't tell people about this. Test people, but do not let  
them know.” All those outstanding questions must be  
answered, and we must find out what was known, when  
and by whom. In the search for answers, we must  
recognise that some questions cannot be answered because  
the relevant information is held in the United States.  
Ministers must reach out and speak to their counterparts  
in other parts of the world to try to find answers. Ways  
must be found to co-operate with the American  
Government.

We need to be able to have confidence in our current  
processes. I understand that the US started screening  
blood donations in 1983, but we did not start doing so  
until 1991. Every time I donate blood, I am conscious  
that the integrity of the system is based on my honesty,  
at every stage. We must find better ways to ensure that  
our systems are as robust and secure as possible.

The Government have said that during the inquiry  
they will reach out to those who receive funds through  
the current schemes. I hope that that will be done in  
co-operation with the devolved Administrations where  
they have responsibility. I encourage the Government to  
find as many ways as possible to contact people and let  
them know what is happening. In some cases, the individual  
concerned may have died and their family members  
may not be aware of what is going on. We must reach  
out as widely as possible through advertising, social  
media and all other means at our disposal to involve as  
many people as possible in the inquiry.

People must be supported to attend and give evidence  
to the inquiry. The experience may be very traumatic for  
some, and they may need counselling or financial support  
to enable them to attend and to ensure that the required  
documents reach the inquiry. The Haemophilia Society  
has said that we must treat such documents with the  
utmost care and protection. People are, quite rightly,  
sceptical about how their documents will be treated,  
and we must enable them to trust that if they submit  
evidence, it will be not be lost. That goes for Government  
evidence as well as for private evidence belonging to  
members of the public.

We have waited far too long for justice on this matter.  
I encourage the Government to maintain the sense of  
urgency during the inquiry, to make sure that it is not  
dragged out over many, many years without the victims  
receiving answers. The victims have waited far too long  
for justice, and they should not have to wait much  
longer.

3.12 pm

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): It is a pleasure to see  
you in your place, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the  
first time that I have had the honour to be in the  
Chamber when you are sitting in your rightful place in  
the Chair.

My involvement in the contaminated blood scandal  
was as, I think, the second Minister for public health the  
hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana  
Johnson) had occasion—I nearly said the great  
misfortune—to come to see. She brought to that meeting  
all the vim and vigour with which she has pursued this  
campaign over seven long years. It has taken seven  
years for justice to be brought about, and that is too  
long.

I think I am right in saying that when the hon. Lady  
came to see me, her biggest concern was the burning  
injustice. To me, something inherent in the matter just  
felt wrong. I could not put my finger on it, but I was  
convinced that something was not right. The attitude of  
some of the people I encountered strengthened that  
feeling. They wanted to sweep the matter under the  
carpet, so that they no longer had to deal with it, and  
move on to other ways of helping the unfortunate  
victims.

There are two elements to all this. The first great  
injustice is the terrible scandal itself, which happened  
decades ago and which Governments—of all three colours,  
including the coalition Government—failed to grasp as  
I and others in government wanted them to.

The second great injustice concerns money. I pay full  
tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for North  
East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), who absolutely got  
it, and to my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Guildford (Anne Milton). After the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull North asked her question of the  
Prime Minister last week, my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Guildford and I sat here together. I will  
not repeat everything that we said to each other, but it  
boiled down to, “For goodness' sake”—or words to  
that effect—“let's just get on and get this done  
properly.” We were talking not just about a public  
inquiry, but, most importantly, about the money. I also  
pay tribute to Jane Ellison, the previous Minister for  
public health, because I know that she got this as well.

To get a public inquiry, it was necessary to submit to  
the Government all the extra material that has been  
forthcoming in recent times, as further evidence of the  
need for such an inquiry. No matter how much Ministers  
and hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the  
House care about something and see why it should be  
done, political will is required to make it happen. I pay  
handsome tribute to the Prime Minister for not messing  
about. I know that she will have been supported by wise  
words from the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), and from the Secretary of  
State, who made the case to her. She has grabbed it by  
the horns, done the right thing and given us a public  
inquiry.

I want to go further and talk about the second grave  
injustice. I was reminded of correspondence that I have  
had with constituents whose son is a haemophiliac. As  
if being the parents of a haemophiliac was not hard  
enough, he was diagnosed at the age of nine with AIDS  
and hep C. He has faced real challenges in his life, which  
has been blighted by plain prejudice—I have heard  
horrible stories about the bullying he encountered at  
school—because of the triple combination from which  
he suffers. Now he is married, he is the father of a child  
and he owns his own home. His parents, who have  
suffered not just injustice but the real difficulty of  
watching their son suffer, are such wonderful people.

203

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

204

They give you every faith in people's goodness. They  
have no grievances against anybody; they just want a  
proper financial package.

The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford)  
talked about the fact that victims receive an ex gratia  
payment rather than compensation. I remember those  
schemes, and I was horrified to hear from my hon.  
Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim  
Zahawi) that they have not been sorted out. I beg the  
Government to scrap them, and, in blunt, simple terms,  
to give these people the money that they deserve and  
need:donotgivethemthatmoneyasexgratiapayments;  
do not make them scrabble around to find bits of paper  
that they have to take with them, cap in hand, to ask for  
money. As if they have not suffered enough, how demeaning  
is it for them to have to go and, as they see it, beg for  
bits of money?

I urge the Government to get a load of money—these  
things are possible; we know that it can be done—of the  
sum that is required. I know that it is not quite so  
simple, but the next thing to do is to look not at liability,  
but at quantum, as we lawyers call it. How much would  
each individual, or their widow or survivor, be entitled  
to if liability was not an issue? Then, I ask the Government  
to do the right thing. I do believe that they can find the  
money. I know that many in government, including the  
former Prime Minister, David Cameron, absolutely got  
this. For whatever reason, his term in office was not the  
right time to do something, but he understood the  
human side, as did many of us.

It is now time to sort out the second grave injustice—the  
money. Get the money together, put it in a pot, decide  
quantum and give these people everything that they  
deserve and need. Then, finally, the last grave injustice  
and national scandal will have been sorted out and  
solved. Of that, we will all be able to be proud.

3.19 pm

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Like my hon.  
Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson), I became engaged in this issue after  
2010, when constituents contacted me, and one constituent  
in particular—a remarkable man called Andrew March,  
whom I shall say a little about in a moment.

I feel slightly ashamed that I did not fully understand  
the utter tragedy of contaminated blood, which has not  
been with us for seven years; it has been with us for  
more than 30 years. As a country, we need to own up to  
the fact that we do not do these things very well. The  
same is true of Hillsborough and, in many ways, of  
Grenfell. These are not matters that have happened and  
then been dealt with appropriately. They are things that  
we have failed to address over years, if not decades.

I would say one or two things on the remit and type  
of inquiry, because these are multiple failings. Yes, of  
course, there is the failing that led to the infections and  
the multiple infections in the first place, but, until  
recently the Government would not even mention the  
word “negligence”. Now, I am pleased to say, due in  
large part to what Andy Burnham has done, we are  
talking about criminality, but it has taken a long time to  
get there. On how the victims have been treated by the  
establishment, again, one could make comparisons with  
what happened with Hillsborough over many years,  
such as the way that they have been ignored and badly

treated. In relation to recompense and financing, that  
includes the fact that the various trusts and schemes, as  
well as the quantum involved and the administration,  
have been appalling.

I have said to Minister after Minister over the past  
seven years that a bespoke solution is needed. We are  
talking about a finite and decreasing number of people,  
and we need a bespoke solution for each of those  
individuals and families, because everybody is in a  
different position according to their circumstances, health  
and personal needs.

I again pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for  
KingstonuponHullNorth,andtomanyotherMembers—I  
am surprised that the all-party group does not have  
650 members, rather than 111—but the real credit goes  
to the victims themselves, who had to fight and fight  
and fight to get very little.

I have felt frustration taking part in every debate on  
the subject over the past seven years and during the  
endless meetings with Ministers through the all-party  
group, so I am glad that the Minister has said that his  
mind is open on the type of inquiry. We need an inquiry  
with powers, such as an inquiry held under the Inquiries  
Act 2005 with powers to call witnesses and interrogate  
them under oath. We need the forensic skills that a  
judge would bring, but at the same time the inquiry  
needs to have credibility and trust. We do not want to  
start making the same mistakes that we made with the  
sex abuse inquiries and are beginning to make, I am  
afraid, in the Grenfell inquiry.

The other day, I was listening to Dr Richard Stone on  
the radio. He assisted the Macpherson inquiry and was  
trustedbythelocalcommunity.Weneedhereacombination  
of those forensic skills and people who know the issues  
and know the people involved, and are trusted by them.  
We have to have full access to documentation. We have  
to have proper rights of audience for the victims and  
their families. We have to have full representation. That  
means legal aid. I hope that in the same way that the  
Government are now discovering their neglect of social  
housing over many years has been a mistake, they will  
discover that the cuts in legal aid are also a mistake and  
are false economies.

I say that while paying tribute to what the Minister  
has said today, but remembering that in the previous  
debate, which Andy Burnham held in this House only  
some two months ago, we were told that a public  
inquiry was not appropriate. Let us consider just some  
of the issues that are being dealt with here: non-consensual  
testing; victims not being informed of the results of that  
testing; non-consensual research involving previously  
untested patients; people being informed, if they were  
informed, in hospital corridors or through the post; and  
minors being told without their parents being present.  
All this was happening in our country in the relatively  
recent past.

Then there is the cover up—the allegations in relation  
to documents being destroyed and people not being  
prepared even to answer questions. All that has to be  
addressed through this inquiry.

Given the time, may I end by talking about Andrew  
March, as a large part of my involvement in the investigation  
is down to him? With his consent, I shall discuss personal  
details, which, courageously, he wants in the public  
realm because he wants us to get to the bottom of this.  
In a letter to me earlier today, he wrote:

205

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

206

*[Andy Slaughter]*

“I have been looking at my medical notes, and have discovered  
that essentially, I am one of the patients who was not informed by  
their hospital (in my case Coventry and Warwick Hospital) that I  
had non-A non-B hepatitis throughout the 80s, and similarly, I  
was not informed that I had Hepatitis C when the hospital tested  
me without myself or my parents knowing”—  
he was a minor at the time—

“despite testing me years earlier, without myself or my parents  
knowing. I only found out ‘by accident' in October 1992, when I  
transferred my care to the Royal Free in London”.

Andrew quotes from the letter from the consultant at  
the Royal Free, who said:

“On further discussion he did not seem to be aware that he was  
Hepatitis C antibody positive and we therefore spent some considerable  
time discussing our understanding of Hepatitis C infection and  
the implications of antibody positivity.”

Andrew says:

“I am a severe haemophiliac, and one of only 250 HIV positive  
haemophiliacs who remain alive today. Of those originally infected  
in the 1980s, more than three-quarters have died during the  
course of the past 3 decades. Many of them were my friends.

I was also infected with hepatitis B and C, and despite treatment,  
I continue to live with the adverse effects of cirrhosis of the  
liver. I am also one of the 3,872 haemophiliacs (and persons  
with bleeding disorders), who have been notified as being considered  
‘At-Risk' of vCJD (the human form of Mad Cow Disease).”

This avoidable tragedy has completely transformed  
Andrew's life and put him at huge disadvantage. He has  
never received a proper explanation. He has never been  
properly recompensed. Despite that, he has devoted his  
life to ensuring justice for all the victims. We owe it to  
him and to all those other victims—many of them,  
unfortunately, already dead—to drill down forensically  
into this tragedy, and to do so reasonably speedily and  
in a way that leaves nothing unexposed. If we do not do  
that, a reducing number of people will get justice.

3.27 pm

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): I welcome you,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, as this is the first time I have  
spoken with you in the Chair.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for  
Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter). The case he mentioned  
is almost unreal, and few of us could believe it to be  
true if we had not lived through this issue ourselves. I  
pay tribute to all the campaigners up and down the  
country who have worked so hard to get this issue on  
the agenda—in particular the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson), but also many Members  
from across the House. This shows us pulling together  
and how Parliament should work. It has taken a long  
time, but we can make a difference. I hope this really  
will make a difference to those victims who have suffered,  
and that today's announcement will change people's  
lives once the public inquiry gets going. I would very  
much like to thank the Prime Minister and the Government  
for listening and for responding over this tragic affair.

When I became MP for Taunton Deane, one of the  
first people who came to see me, who does not want to  
be named, visited my surgery to tell me the desperate  
story of how his whole life had been blighted by being  
treated—inadvertently—with infected blood, as in so  
many other examples that we have heard today. I was  
quite naive. I had never engaged with anybody in that

situation before, and I was deeply shocked by his account  
of all that he had gone through for his whole life. Being  
given infected blood had plagued and blighted his life.  
He was ill, of course, but also his quality of life was  
affected. One of the effects that resonated most with me  
was that it affected his relationship with his son—he did  
not have the time to spend with him. We all take for  
granted that we can leave our children an inheritance,  
even if it is not very much—some money for a car or a  
share of a house. My constituent was distraught and  
felt he had not done justice to his son because his illness  
meant that he had a problem holding down jobs. Not  
only was he suffering from the blight of the illness, but  
he carried that guilt with him.

My constituent raised two practical concerns with me  
about the system. First, he felt that the level of financial  
support was not sufficient to enable him to feel secure  
and he was constantly struggling. Secondly, the scheme  
that administered his payment—the Macfarlane Trust,  
which other hon. Members have mentioned—did not  
work effectively and as a result did not adequately  
support those it was designed to help.

I have spoken on this issue several times in the  
Chamber and in Westminster Hall, as well as privately  
to the Department of Health. I was pleased to hear that  
the Government had listened to our voices and it is  
welcome that this autumn a new single scheme will be  
introduced, with additional funding of £125 million, to  
replace the complicated system of five different support  
schemes. The devil will be in the detail, but I know that  
the Government will take into consideration all the  
comments from the consultation. I hope that that will  
iron out some of the problems that so many people have  
struggled with and make life better for the victims.

I am also pleased with the moves that the Government  
have made on transparency—another issue that hon.  
Members have mentioned. I appreciate the serious concerns  
about how this has been handled in the past, but I know  
that Ministers are keen from now on to make all information  
readily available. That has been promised in the inquiry  
announced today.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): I am grateful  
to my hon. Friend for giving way because I, too, have a  
constituent who has been infected by contaminated  
blood since the 1960s. He will be delighted with the  
public inquiry, because he wants to know why it happened  
and how he can gain access to proper compensation.  
Transparency is vital in this case.

**Rebecca Pow:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
intervention and I could not agree more. Transparency  
should be the nub of the inquiry, because it is important  
for my constituent and for all those who have had their  
lives changed forever through no fault of their own. We  
must remember that they have not brought it on themselves.

I thank the Government for listening and giving the  
issue the attention it deserves. I also thank them for  
more than doubling the Department's annual spend in  
this area. Let us make sure that the funding gets to the  
people who really need it. I thank the Government for  
announcing the inquiry as I will be able to give my  
constituent a glimmer of hope both that the Prime  
Minister has understood the issues and called for the  
inquiry, and that we will get the inquiry right. Public  
inquiries are rare events and we need to make sure this

207

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

208

one works. New evidence will emerge, and I urge that all  
relevant and commercially sensitive documents are made  
available. With the right framework, progress can be  
made and—I hope—the right thing done at last. I urge  
the Minister to ensure above all that the inquiry does  
not drag on too long. For those who have suffered for  
too long already, time is of the essence.

3.33 pm

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): I want to  
speak in this debate on behalf of my constituents Lin  
AshcroftandtheSmithfamily,victimsofthecontaminated  
blood scandal.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford  
East (Anneliese Dodds) on an excellent maiden speech.  
She rightly highlighted the importance of the campaign  
and her local campaigners, and we look forward to  
hearing many more speeches from her. I also add to the  
tributes to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson). We are having this  
debate because of her, and she has worked tirelessly on  
the issue with other hon. Members. She has a parliamentary  
life well spent on the issue, let alone allthe other matters  
that she has campaigned on. But she has done this for  
the victims, and, in welcoming the Government's  
announcement of a public inquiry today, I agree with  
her that it is so important that the families are at the  
heart of it. The inquiry has been a very long time  
coming; we failed this community many, many times,  
and they need to be at the heart of it and have confidence  
in it.

It is absolutely shameful that 45 years have passed  
since the first people were infected with HIV and hepatitis  
from NHS-supplied contaminated blood and blood  
products, yet we have still not got to the truth for the  
members of the community who are affected. They  
have been let down so often, but they still come here  
relentlessly, all these years later, to see Ministers and  
lobby MPs to fight for justice. I pay tribute to them for  
their strength. I remember a family telling me, not so  
long ago, that in the end they had to stop going to the  
funerals of the friends whom they had made as part of  
this campaign, because it had become too heartbreaking:  
there were just too many funerals to go to. I think that is  
really sad.

As the former Member of Parliament for Leigh said  
in his last speech in this place, there is plenty of new  
evidence that backs up what campaigners have known  
and felt in their bones for many years: that the risks  
posed by contaminated blood were known by the authorities  
and pharmaceutical companies at the time but it was  
still used; that people were used for testing and as  
guinea pigs; and that efforts were made to suppress that  
truth. Let us remember that these were people who went  
to the NHS for treatment and were infected by blood  
provided by the NHS—provided by the state. They have  
had to fight for years for that to be acknowledged, and  
no fault has ever been admitted by either the Government  
or the pharmaceutical companies that supplied the  
contaminated blood products. It was said that that was  
because no one could have known about the problem at  
the time but, as a result of the work of campaigners,  
Members and the media, we now have that new evidence  
that risks were known. The inquiry must start now, so  
that we can get to the truth once and for all.

As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for  
Kingston upon Hull North, more than 2,400 people  
have died and the lives of thousands more have been  
wrecked. I want to talk about just one of those people,  
Colin Smith from Newport in my constituency. He was  
one of the youngest victims of the contaminated blood  
scandal, and what happened to him illustrates just why  
the inquiry cannot come quickly enough.

Colin went into hospital in 1983 when he was eight  
months old with a minor ear condition. As a haemophiliac  
he received factor VIII, which the family learned, following  
a freedom of information request, had come from a  
batch from a prison in Arkansas. He spent his short life  
fighting illness. He died, aged seven, of AIDS and  
hepatitis C in 1990. The family did not know he had  
hepatitis C until three years after his death: it had been  
kept secret, as so much was kept hidden. I hope that  
that will be examined in the inquiry, because people like  
Haydn Lewis, who was mentioned earlier by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens),  
had to battle and battle to obtain such information.

Colin died aged seven in his mum's arms, weighing  
about the same as a baby. I have told his story before in  
the Chamber. It is a heartbreaking story, but telling  
such stories is an important reminder of why we are  
here today. It is also an important reason for having a  
public inquiry. We now know something that Colin's  
family knew in their hearts, I think, for many years, but  
have since outlined on “Panorama”and in *Private Eye.*One of the recently unearthed letters written by Colin's  
haemophilia specialist in 1983 recorded that, following  
his minor incident,

“without any evidence of intracranial bleeding the child was still  
given factor 8”.

The specialist added that

“all these materials carry the risk of hepatitis but this is something  
haemophiliacs have to accept”.

He said that he would keep Colin under

“close observation as months go by”.

Six years later, after Colin had died, the same specialist  
wrote to pharmaceutical companies saying that he could  
not supply any more “samples” because Colin was no  
longer at his facility. Colin's family were not aware of  
that until much later. That and other evidence needs to  
be put before the public inquiry so that witnesses can be  
called under oath and all documents can be disclosed,  
because it indicates that the risks of using this blood—  
supplied by profit-making American companies—were  
known in 1980 or earlier, three years before it was given  
to Colin.

Colin's tribute on the Tainted Blood website says:

“Thousands of people, like Colin... didn't make it this far. He  
never had the chance to join the cubs, play football for his school,  
have a girlfriend, go travelling or get married. Instead, his short  
life was filled with hospitals, doctors and illness. He was just a  
little boy, but a very special one who we, at TB, always keep in  
mind as we campaign.”

He is in my mind every day, because when at home in  
my constituency I often drive past the Smith's house,  
with my eight-year-old son sat in the car next to me, and  
I imagine how I would feel if this had happened to me.  
So I just say this to the Minister: would I have been  
happy if there was a public apology and would I have  
been happy with the limited financial support that  
people felt they had to beg for, or would I want to

209

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

210

*[Jessica Morden]*

finally get to the truth? Nothing can bring back Colin  
and others, but we can at leasthave a public inquiry that  
gets this right. We need to get it right this time, because  
Colin's family and others have been through so much  
over the years that we cannot let them down again.

3.40 pm

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): It was interesting to  
hear the reflections of the hon. Member for Newport  
East (Jessica Morden) and the personal stories she  
recounted. That was what brought me to this issue two  
years ago when I was first elected. Someone came into  
my office who was heavily disabled, but who should  
have been fit and healthy. They were relatively young—not  
much older than me—but their whole life had been  
dominated by a series of treatments they received back  
in the 1980s.

This is not an issue of someone having had a couple  
of opportunities taken away, having lost a couple of  
quid, or needing to work a little longer before finally  
being able to retire. This is about people who literally  
had their whole lives, which were going reasonably,  
taken away, with all opportunities removed. For many—  
about 2,500 people—literally the end of their life was  
caused by a treatment programme that should have  
helped to cure them.

I agree with the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire  
(Dr Whitford) that doctors in a hospital or an operating  
theatre would not be able to look at every single thing;  
they have to rely on the agencies that vet and certify  
things as safe. Clearly, in this instance, there was a huge  
failure.

I am pleased about the progress that has been made  
over the past couple of years. When I first spoke on this,  
I remarked that I suspected that my predecessor, at the  
time he was elected in 1997, would not have expected his  
successor in 2015 to still be talking about the issue. It is  
therefore very welcome that we will finally have a public  
inquiry to examine exactly what went wrong.

I was reassured to hear the Minister saying that there  
will be genuine consultation around the terms of reference,  
as they will be very important. If there is evidence of  
criminal wrongdoing, no aspect of the inquiry should  
prevent people from being held to account for any  
criminal liability in a court of law. It would be a great  
pity if the inquiry that finally brought about justice and  
answers also prevented people from being held to account  
in a criminal court.

I was reassured to hear the Minister's reference to the  
Hillsborough inquiries— obviously charges have followed  
on from that, although I will not go into them—and I  
hope that the same pattern can be established for this  
inquiry if there is evidence to support it. I am sure that  
we would all join the calls that anyone with evidence  
should hand it over to the police immediately. People  
certainly should not be withholding anything that would  
be of interest to the police and might identify whether  
individuals need to be held to account.

It is right that there will be proper consultation on the  
form of the inquiry. It certainly will need to be able to  
compel people to take part and provide evidence. I was  
reassured to hear that the Minister is carefully considering  
those issues, because that could make quite a difference.

If there is an awareness that criminal sanctions might be  
available but people can just choose not to take part,  
that might have a negative impact on getting to the  
truth of what has happened.

It is appropriate that there is some form of time limit  
on getting to the answers. We can all think of examples  
of public inquiries that took a long time and seemed to  
drag on forever. Although people have had to wait  
decades for this process, there is a limit to how much  
longer many of the victims—and, in many cases, the  
children and families of those who have already passed  
on—will be able to wait for the final answers about  
what happened.

**Lady Hermon:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware  
that the Prime Minister recently made the wise  
announcement that the Government would introduce  
an independent public advocate to help victims following  
disasters.Doesheagreethatitwouldbewhollyappropriate  
for this independent public advocate to be appointed in  
time to represent bereaved families and victims right  
across the UK in this very sensitive and difficult case?

**Kevin Foster:** The hon. Lady makes a powerful point.  
I am sure that the Minister will have heard it and will  
wish to consider, as part of the consultation, how the  
inquiry is structured and how the victims are represented.  
I can imagine, given the victims' experience over the  
past 30 years, that they might have strong views on  
whether they should be represented by a state-appointed  
person or someone they know themselves. It is important  
that the way in which they are represented should be  
determined through consultation. I am sure that all  
points will be carefully considered to ensure that these  
people are represented appropriately.

In my constituency, three ladies have raised this matter  
with me constantly: Jean Hill, Michelle Digby and  
Margaret Murray. They have been determined to pursue  
the matter, to find answers and to reach justice. Even  
while I have been in the House for the Minister's speech,  
Margaret has been in touch to ask when the compensation  
payments will be made, given that the forms were sent  
out over 12 months ago. It is important that we resolve  
all these issues as well as finding the answers to what  
happened 30 years ago.

I welcome the Minister's statement today, and I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
North (Diana Johnson) on her pursuit of this matter  
and on securing the debate. I also congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter  
Bottomley), who has been diligent in pursuing these  
cases. I hope that those who have suffered for too long  
can finally get the answers that they deserve and have an  
absolute right to receive.

3.46 pm

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Thank you for calling  
me to speak, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the first  
chance I have had to speak under your chairmanship,  
and I congratulate you. I also congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds)  
on her maiden speech. She made a powerful intervention  
on behalf of her constituents, and I wish her well in her  
parliamentary career, which I hope will be at least as  
long as that of her predecessor, Andrew Smith, who

211

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

212

served in the House for more than 30 years. It is also  
appropriate for me to pay tribute, as have many hon.  
Members, to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on behalf of all the  
Members who have supported her in the all-party  
parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated  
blood, which has more than 111 members from both  
sides of the House. The group has looked at the real  
effects and causes of this scandal, as well as examining  
the recompense and support given to the people who  
have suffered as a result of it, and I should like to  
comment on those issues today.

There are two clear issues that we need to address.  
The first covers the history of these events, what caused  
them, what could have been done to prevent them and  
who is liable and responsible. The second covers the  
question of what the state does for those who have no  
blame in this matter, and what type of support is given  
to those who are now facing the challenges resulting  
from the scandal. I do not expect the Minister of State,  
Department of Health, the hon. Member for Ludlow  
(Mr Dunne), to be able to answer all these questions  
today. It is clear that the efforts of my hon. Friend the  
Member for Kingston upon Hull North and other hon.  
Members, and the letter from the six party leaders, have  
focused the Government's mind on how to respond. I  
accept and understand that, but it is none the less  
important to put some challenges to the Minister about  
the form of the inquiry. The Welsh Government in  
Cardiff publicly called for an inquiry in January, and I  
know that they will be interested to know that they have  
the support of the House here today for that response.

I raise these issues because, like all hon. Members  
who have spoken today, I have constituents for whom  
the impact of the contaminated blood scandal has run  
through their lives over the past 30 years. They wish to  
remain anonymous, and that is quite right, but I have  
met them and I have seen the impact that it has had on  
their lives. This involves not only the trauma of the  
people who were infected and have since died in large  
numbers but the fact that people cannot get insurance  
and often cannot maintain stable employment. They  
have the problem of not knowing whether they are  
going to live or for how long, and not knowing what  
will happen to their relatives when they die. I have  
constituents with young children who might have to  
face the consequences of their early death at any time.

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly** (Huntingdon) (Con): The right  
hon. Gentleman is making a powerful case, and he has  
just mentioned a point that I was going to make. Many  
of the people who were badly affected have not been  
catered for to date. They include constituents of mine  
whose father was infected and who died. They ended up  
in a children's home and their lives have been totally  
devastated, yet they are not within this process. They  
should be.

**David Hanson:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good  
point. The constituents who have approached me are  
concerned about what will happen to their children in  
the event of their death. They are concerned about the  
lack of insurance and the costs as a whole. This worry  
has been mentioned already, but in one case the records  
relating to the time of the infection have been lost by the  
state so some people may not be able hold anyone liable

because the records have simply disappeared. I hope  
that the inquiry looks in detail at that those challenges.

I was pleased to hear from the Minister that the  
inquiry will be UK wide. The scandal happened before  
devolution, but I have constituents in Wales who were  
infected in Liverpool, which is under the Department of  
Health's jurisdiction. I have constituents who were infected  
in Wales who live in Wales. I have also had correspondence  
with people who were infected in Wales but now live in  
other constituencies. It is important that we look at the  
picture as a whole. The Minister has given some indication  
of it today, but I will be interested to hear about how  
the devolved Administrations will be involved under the  
ultimate terms of reference. I want to hear about how  
the consultation will happen, what the terms of reference  
will be, and what opportunities there will be for input  
into the process. My constituents will want to ensure  
that we get to who is responsible, why it happened, what  
could have been done and, ultimately, whether any  
compensation or redress is needed to help meet the  
challenges they face, such as the one mentioned by the  
hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly).

Given that it will be a Hillsborough-style inquiry, it is  
important that the Minister—not today, but in due  
course—clearly sets out not only the terms of reference,  
but the terms of engagement. I was going to make the  
same point as the hon. Member for North Down (Lady  
Hermon) in that, to be frank, my constituents want to  
try to get on with their lives. Something happened to  
them when they were younger over which they had no  
control, but it has not engulfed their entire lives, so it  
would be helpful if the Government set out how victims  
can engage with the public inquiry in due course. It may  
be possible to engage through organisations such as the  
Haemophilia Society and others, but how will individuals  
who may not be involved with any organisation get  
representation? They may need financial support for  
that representation—perhaps they could have the  
independent advocate that was mentioned by the hon.  
Member for North Down—and they need to be able to  
put their case to the inquiry effectively.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): I am also pleased  
to speak on this occasion with you in the Chair, Madam  
Deputy Speaker. Picking up on my right hon. Friend's  
point, a constituent of mine called Michael from Runcorn  
wants justice, but he wants justice that involves all the  
families. He wants them to be engaged and to be able to  
shape this Hillsborough-style inquiry. I welcome the  
inquiry that the Prime Minister and the Minister have  
announced, but people are impatient for justice that is  
shaped by the victims.

**David Hanson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The  
point that I want to finish on—*[Interruption.]* Does the  
Minister want to intervene?

**Mr Dunne:** Briefly. I remind the right hon. Gentleman,  
who is making some important points, that we intend to  
contact all the families who are in touch with us through  
the different schemes to alert them to today's announcement,  
so that they will have the opportunity to contribute to  
our determination of the best form of inquiry. On the  
hon. Gentleman's second point, it will be for the inquiry,  
once it is established, to determine how it engages with  
people, and those involved will be interested in any  
advice from Members or others.

213

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

214

**David Hanson:** I am grateful for that intervention,  
because that reassures me and my constituents about  
the process. I simply say that confidence, transparency  
and ensuring that people feel like they can have their say  
properly and effectively will be key. The inquiry should  
also have some timescale, so that people know how  
much of their lives it will take up. If the Minister can do  
those things and perhaps inform the House about the  
inquiry's budget, staffing and the other things that we  
would expect in any inquiry, that will help to reassure  
people that the Government are not just responding to  
events and pressure from my hon. Friend the Member  
for Kingston upon Hull North, but are keen on getting  
a positive outcome for the innocent victims of what is a  
national scandal. I hope that the Minister will keep the  
House and, in particular, those who have been infected  
informed, because at the end of the day this is about  
their lives and their futures. The uncertainties that they  
have faced demand the compassionate and considered  
support that I am sure the Minister will give them.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):**Order. I do not want to impose a formal time limit, but I  
would ask Members to try to keep to four minutes. I  
will not then have to impose a formal time limit.

3.55 pm

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): I welcome  
you to your place, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I join other Members in paying tribute to all those  
affected by this terrible tragedy, to the families of those  
affected and to hon. Friends and hon. Members, including  
the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana  
Johnson) and my hon. Friends the Members for Worthing  
West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and for Stratford-on-Avon  
(Nadhim Zahawi). I also pay tribute to the new hon.  
Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) for delivering  
her maiden speech in this important debate.

I speak today to give a voice to a constituent, who  
understandably wishes to remain anonymous. He was  
born with haemophilia and has had to endure that  
terrible chronic condition, the treatment for which has  
poisoned him—he has been infected with both HIV and  
hepatitis C. Those infusions have condemned him to a  
life of pain, of serious medication, which has its own  
side-effects, of major surgery and of worry. “Worry”  
seems an inadequate word to describe the constant  
weight that must be on his mind, and on the minds of  
those who love him, each and every day of his life.

This tragedy has affected every single day and every  
single aspect of his life, from his marriage to his ability  
to work and his family. He told me recently that he and  
his wife have told their grown-up child of his condition  
and his infections because, as he told me, “when is the  
right time to tell your child that you have HIV and  
hepatitis C?” So my constituent welcomes today's  
announcement. He asks for a Hillsborough-style inquiry  
because, as others have said, people affected by this do  
not have time on their side.

I must declare an interest as a barrister. I hope the  
public inquiry will ensure that public money is directed  
towards those who need it most, namely the victims and

their families, not towards massively expensive tribunal  
costs. I state that warning to any of my former colleagues  
in the legal profession.

I am conscious that some of my colleagues wish to  
speak in this debate, so I will finish by talking about  
a school photograph that my constituent brought into a  
surgery. It was like any other school photograph—children  
smiling, and with teachers on either end of the row—but  
this photograph was different. It showed my constituent's  
class at the special school he had to attend because of  
his medical condition. Eight of his school friends had  
haemophilia. Four of those eight are now dead as a  
result of contaminated blood infections, and another is  
so ill that, in his early 50s, he is forced to live in a  
specialist care home because of how his body has been  
left.

My constituent and the thousands of others we have  
heard about today are the victims of a terrible episode  
in our national life. They have fought for justice for  
30 years, and I thank this Prime Minister and this  
Government for listening and acting. I hope this inquiry  
delivers answers for those affected.

3.59 pm

**Peter Heaton-Jones** (North Devon) (Con): This is  
also the first time I have had the pleasure of speaking in  
this House with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy  
Speaker, so may I welcome you to your position? I also  
echo what has been said in thanking the hon. Member  
for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for  
being able to secure this important debate. Let me also  
say that it was a pleasure to be in the Chamber for the  
maiden speech by the hon. Member for Oxford East  
(Anneliese Dodds). I congratulate her on taking her  
seat.

I am not going to take up too much of the House's  
time in this debate, but I want to draw the House's  
attention to the case of a constituent of mine, one that I  
have raised in this House before; I have been fortunate  
to be called to speak on this issue in a number of  
different debates. My constituent Sue Threakall has  
been communicating with me for more than two years.  
She was one of the first people to come to me after my  
election in 2015 to raise this issue, and this was one of  
the first cases I decided to take up and follow. Other  
colleagues have made this point, but I, too, have to feel  
a sense of shame that I was not aware of the background  
to this story before I started to hear some of the  
personal testimony.

I merely intend to read out part of an email that Sue  
Threakall sent to me yesterday, when it became clear  
that this emergency debate was going to be held—I have  
been in constant touch with her. She asked me briefly to  
share with the House her story, and I am doing so  
because it says in more powerful words than anyone else  
could why it is so important that we have this full public  
inquiry. At the time of this email, we were not aware of  
the Government's announcement, which I warmly welcome.  
I pay tribute to not only my hon. Friend the Minister of  
State, but the Prime Minister for driving this forward.

Let me share with Members what Sue Threakall  
wrote to me in her email yesterday:

“My husband, Bob Threakall, died in 1991, aged 47. Despite  
being a severe haemophiliac, he had lived a relatively normal life  
until he was given commercial blood products. Following that his  
health, and his life, followed a deep and dark downhill path.

215

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

216

He contracted Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. He died a  
terrible death, which I believe was wholly avoidable.

He was NEVER informed about the risks known at the time of  
imported Factor 8.

He was NEVER told he had Hepatitis C, and indeed I only  
found out myself a few years ago.

His HIV test result was withheld from him for many months,  
thus leaving me at risk. I was fortunate...many women were not.

From Autumn 1990 until two days before he died, months  
later, with shadowing on his lungs and despite being at high risk  
of contracting pneumonia, he was left UNTREATED.

He never had the chance of seeing his eldest son married, nor  
met his grandchildren.

He didn't see his middle son graduate from university.

He didn't see his youngest son pass his 11 plus and go to  
grammar school.

Following his death our family basically fell apart. Grief sent  
us in different directions and for many years we were completely  
broken. The fallout is still there today, bubbling away, just below  
the surface.”

Sue writes in conclusion:

“It is my firm opinion, following campaigning and researching  
since 1985, that haemophiliacs were used as guinea pigs. I believe  
that, had people acted differently at the time, Bob, and so many  
others, would almost certainly be alive and well today.”

I found Sue's email extremely moving, and I have  
repeated her words to the House today because they say  
better than almost any of the rest of us could why the  
decision that has been taken by the Government to hold  
this public inquiry is so welcome. I will be following this  
process carefully to ensure that the form of the inquiry  
is the best it can be, so that victims and survivors, such  
as my constituent, can get the truth, fairness and justice  
that they deserve.

4.3 pm

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham)  
(Con): I wish to start by echoing what has been said by  
so many in paying tribute to the victims of this tragedy,  
their families and those many hon. Members who have  
campaigned tirelessly for such a long time to ensure that  
this public inquiry takes place. I also pay tribute to our  
Prime Minister who, after so many people have not, has  
listened to these concerns and has organised this full  
public inquiry.

As a doctor, I prescribe blood products—and that  
will be continuing every day—often for people who are  
not in the position to make decisions for themselves. I  
prescribe blood for babies who have been born very  
prematurely and for children who have cancer—people  
who are not in the position to make these decisions, just  
liketheyoungsterswithhaemophiliaandotherconstituents  
who have been mentioned.

This is an issue of trust. It is important that when  
people go into hospital and receive treatment they are  
able to trust that the risk-benefit decision that is made  
with them or, if they are very small or very unwell, on  
their behalf, is made on the basis of all the known facts  
and all the available information. With the contaminated  
blood scandal, it appears that that was not the case.  
Despite the fact that people knew that HIV, hepatitis  
and hepatitis B were transmissible through blood products,  
that information was not made available to the people  
receiving such products. The bloods were not being  
properly screened, and even when, as I understand it,  
bloods were being screened elsewhere, these products  
were being used on people in the UK.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Trust is the key  
word—trust and faith, if people have that, in the inquiry.  
Every story is different. My constituent Barry Flynn is a  
twin. His twin is not here, but on his behalf he wants to  
be able to trust the inquiry. He wants the victims to be  
heard and to decide the remit, and he wants their  
evidence to be taken. Does my hon. Friend agree that  
that is the way to get trust?

**Dr Johnson:** Absolutely; the victims and their families  
have the right and deserve to know what happened.  
They deserve answers to their questions. They need to  
know when people knew that these blood products  
could be causing harm and, if those people did know,  
why the products were still given.

The House should be under no illusions—I am sure it  
will not be, after listening to many eloquent Members  
describe their constituents' cases—about the suffering  
people have been through, losing their family members.  
There is a stigma that still exists today around many of  
these medical conditions, particularly HIV. Other people,  
such as victims' wives and children, have been put at  
risk, and many others still suffer today from poor  
health.

I very much welcome the announcement of the public  
inquiry, which I hope will get to the bottom of all the  
issues. I hope that the victims receive the compensation  
they deserve.

4.7 pm

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): May I, too, welcome  
you to your new role, Madam Deputy Speaker? I am  
absolutely delighted. I congratulate the hon. Member  
for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on her brilliant  
maiden speech and pay tribute to the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for being  
such a doughty champion of this issue in Parliament.

This debate has been conducted in a way we can all  
recognise as hugely positive. It has been very constructive,  
which I think is what people out there in the country  
would expect—they would expect us to conduct this  
debate responsibly because this issue very much affects  
people's lives. I am acutely aware of that because one of  
my constituents who has been caught up in this tragedy  
is Sue Wathen, a local teacher whose husband is a  
councillor. They are friends I care about very much.  
Rather like several of my colleagues, I was shocked  
when, shortly after I was elected, Sue and Peter asked  
me to go around to their house, where they told me all  
about the things they had gone through and the difficulties  
that Sue was facing in trying to access the Harvoni  
treatment that she so desperately needed.

I know that Sue will be sat at home watching this  
debate and will welcome the Government's announcement  
no end. Things went so disastrously wrong in the past  
and we need to get to the bottom of that. A particular  
shock to Sue was that she was diagnosed as having her  
condition after some 30 years. It was a bombshell: she  
was marking books in her office at school when she  
received the telephone call telling her that she had this  
condition.

The most welcome thing about today's announcement  
is the firm commitment to ensure that the victims of  
this tragedy are properly listened to and are really  
involved in shaping the inquiry. There are lessons to be

217

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

218

*[Tom Pursglove]*

learned from what happened with Hillsborough. It does  
not surprise me in the slightest that the Prime Minister  
is so committed to addressing this issue: we have seen  
hertakeupanumberof injustices, of which Hillsborough  
is one example. I hope that we can get to the bottom of  
this particular tragedy. The victims know how it affects  
them on a day-to-day basis. They know what the  
consequences are for their families and they should be  
listened to and encouraged to help shape the inquiry.

One key point that I suspect will come up in these  
discussions in the weeks and months ahead is access to  
treatment. Unfortunately, from time to time, NHS  
bureaucracygetsinthewayof people accessing treatments.  
In Sue's case, we went through a multitude of dramas to  
get the Harvoni treatment that she so desperately needed.  
In the end, we were successful. I am very grateful to  
Ministers for all their efforts in helping to achieve that. I  
remember what Sue said to me when we first had that  
early conversation. She said, “I am not worried about  
compensation; I just want to get better.”There is a lot in  
that. These are all issues that the public inquiry should  
consider and address. I welcome it very much and look  
forward to the debates ahead.

4.10 pm

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Like other  
hon. Members, Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome  
you to the Chair. I also wish to put on record my thanks  
to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson) for securing this debate. In the short  
time that I have been a Member of this place, I have  
been struck by her determination and perseverance  
with this campaign. Clearly, it is an issue that goes right  
across the Chamber. I also wish to thank and to recognise  
all those Members who are not in the Chamber today  
or who have perhaps moved on following the election  
for playing a part in this campaign. That includes David  
Cameron, who, at his last Prime Minister's questions,  
said that he wanted more to be done on this very  
important issue.

This is a very important matter to many of us both  
inside and outside this House. As we have heard today,  
so many constituents have been affected by this issue  
and are still affected today. It was first brought to my  
attention about a year ago when a constituent came to  
my surgery, but the issue that she raised was slightly  
different. We have heard a lot of stories about victims  
and those who are suffering as a result of the contaminated  
blood tragedy, but this lady came to raise the issue of  
support for the spouses of those who have died from  
contaminated blood. She had a number of questions  
and concerns, particularly around the discretionary  
payment fund. In particular, she wanted to know  
exactly what her position was, saying that she felt as  
though she was in limbo when it came to her monthly  
payments.

This is a tragedy that means so much to so many  
people. Through no fault of their own, they have suddenly  
found themselves in hardship and really suffering as a  
result of what has happened. We know that this tragedy  
goes back to the 1970s and 1980s and that it is an issue  
that has spanned several Governments. It is a long-running  
issue, but for those families in my constituency and  
across the country, it is still a priority for them and

rightly so. From what we have heard from the Minister  
today and from the Prime Minister in her statement, I  
sense that it is still a priority for the Government as  
well. We should continue to provide support for those  
affected by this tragedy.

Iamveryconsciousof time, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
so I will draw my comments to a close by saying that I  
hope that this inquiry brings together all the parties,  
including the families and the victims, because, after all  
the time that has elapsed, there are still families who  
want answers, and a sense of conclusion and closure to  
this tragic issue.

4.13 pm

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I, too, welcome  
you to your place, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have a  
confession, or an apology, to make: when I was first  
briefed on this issue, I put it into the “too difficult to  
deal with” category—perhaps it was too niche, too  
much of the past. It lacked a contemporary feel to it. I  
was wrong and the hon. Member for Kingston upon  
Hull North (Diana Johnson) has proved the point today,  
and she is to be congratulated on that.

Listening to this debate, I have been reflecting on the  
fact that so many of our constituents view this place  
through that very narrow prism of 30 minutes or so on  
a Wednesday. This debate has shown Parliament at its  
best—Members from across the parties with an interest  
in an issue coming together to try to find a solution. I  
welcome the words of the hon. Lady in relation to my  
right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister. As a number of  
hon. Members have pointed out, many Ministers have  
listened, and just as many Ministers listened to the  
tragedy of Hillsborough. My right hon. Friend the  
Prime Minister seems to have something in her essence,  
as she does not listen but decides to act in a fair, calm  
and sensible way, always in the pursuit of justice for our  
constituents and fellow citizens.

This issue speaks to a time long past—a different  
time for procedures, practices and medical processes. It  
certainly predates patients' rights and, as a number of  
hon. Members have said, the devolution settlement,  
which will doubtless throw up challenges for the inquiry.  
However, it is also a contemporary issue, as it causes  
pain, suffering and anxiety, as many colleagues across  
the House have referenced. I strongly welcome the  
Government's decision to move towards a single payment  
scheme. Having five silos to which people can try to  
apply and have to justify their needs to—my hon.  
Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim  
Zahawi) alluded to such cases—has added indignity to  
injustice.

Money is not everything, as a number of colleagues  
have said. Yes, the ill health unnecessarily—and probably  
avoidably—experienced by sufferers as a result of  
contaminated blood means that they must bear greater  
medical costs as well as greater social and lifestyle costs.  
But the inquiry is crucial. I confess that I am sanguine,  
on a personal level, as to whether there should be a  
panel or a judge-led inquiry. If the latter—I agree  
entirely with the Minister that this has to be done in  
concert with the survivors to identify the best way—I  
hope that we can rally around the authenticity of the  
judge and not question their motivation or bona fides.

219

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

220

The sufferers do not have time on their side, and we  
must move forward quickly. This is a campaign that has  
festered too long.

I conclude by congratulating again the hon. Member  
for Kingston upon Hull North. I hope that people who  
are suffering, who are bereaved, who are in pain, or who  
are anxious today are in some way sustained and comforted  
by a brighter glimmer of the hope of justice at the end  
of the tunnel.

4.17 pm

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): I thank the  
Government very much for the announcement. I am  
new to the issue, and I pay tribute to hon. Members  
who have done much work in previous years, including  
the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana  
Johnson), my hon. Friends the Members for Worthing  
West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and for Stratford-on-Avon  
(Nadhim Zahawi), and others who had the wisdom to  
champion this cause when it was not fashionable to  
do so.

Islanders who have been affected will be relieved that  
all the truth behind the scandal will come out. I suspect  
that some of it will make for very difficult listening  
indeed. I did not know whether I should speak in this  
debate, but I decided to do so after listening to the  
moving experiences of some of my residents, who asked  
me to come to the Chamber and listen to the debate. I  
am glad that I have done so, and I thank them for that  
suggestion.

I represent residents, as we all do, who have lived with  
this for decades, including people who contracted illnesses  
linked to contaminated blood, some of whom were  
infected when only nine years old. One resident, Janet  
Sheppesson from Freshwater in the west of my constituency,  
worries not only for herself but for members of her  
family. She told me that her life had been turned upside  
down by the contaminated blood:

“My infection has caused me to suffer from a disabling and  
debilitating autoimmune disease. You may be amazed, as I am, to  
know that, despite all this, I was refused funding for the new  
generation, direct-acting antiviral treatment for Hepatitis C by  
NHS England and was obliged to buy it myself earlier this year.”  
Not only do the residents I represent suffer but they feel  
that the NHS, which let them down in the first place  
along with others, has not provided the support that it  
should have done, which concerns me.

The light of investigation, whether by the Government,  
media or interested parties, is critical to making progress  
in our society, to upholding justice and to lessen suffering.  
Those inquiries are often difficult, as we have seen from  
Hillsborough and may well see from Grenfell Tower  
and others. Such inquiries ask questions of those in  
authority and test the system. The outcome should be  
justice and, as other hon. Members have said, trust in  
the system and in people here, who are doing the right  
thing and battling for their constituents.

Islanders want to know the answers to a series of  
questions, some of which have been asked. I will not  
repeat those, but there are two or three outstanding  
questions. Will the Government at some point explain  
the difference between a statutory and a Hillsborough-like  
inquiry, especially for my constituents who are interested  
in participating in it? How will the widows and families  
of the 2,400 people who have already died be treated as  
participants, and how will their financial and other

claims be handled? The potential criminal elements  
have to be investigated to their ultimate conclusion.  
Will the Minister reassure us that the inquiry will be  
time-limited, while being as comprehensive as possible?

4.21 pm

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): I thank the hon.  
Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson)  
for calling the debate and for her indefatigable campaigning  
on the subject. I congratulate the hon. Member for  
Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on an excellent maiden  
speech; I am confident that it was the beginning of  
many excellent contributions in this Chamber.

Many colleagues on both sides of the House have  
been tireless in their advocacy for the victims of this  
unspeakable tragedy over many years. I am a relative  
newcomer to the issue, but I speak today on behalf of  
my constituent Jackie Britton, who lives in Portchester.  
Jackie has met me on many occasions, for she, too, has  
not given up on this fight. She contracted hepatitis C in  
1982 from a blood transfusion during childbirth, but  
she was only diagnosed in 2011. For many years, she has  
been afflicted with and has suffered from a debilitating  
illness. Her daughter has also been very ill with various  
medical conditions.

I am sure that Jackie would welcome today's news  
about a public inquiry into this matter. It is clear that  
the Government are seriously reflecting the concerns  
and voices of those who have been tragically affected by  
the incident. The inquiry is the latest in a series of  
actions taken by this Government over several years.  
The Government have increased the amount of money  
spent on payments to victims to record levels since  
2016, with an additional £125 million in support funding  
for those who need it. I am pleased that the Government  
announced last year that they would reform the package  
of support measures for those affected. For the first  
time, almost 2,500 beneficiaries with chronic hepatitis C  
were eligible to receive an annual payment of £3,500 a  
year. That progress results from listening and action on  
the part of the Government.

I will conclude my comments because I am aware that  
other colleagues want to contribute. There is nothing  
that anybody can do to change the past, and this awful  
incident and tragedy, but I hope, for the sake of Jackie  
and all those victims about whom we have heard today,  
that the inquiry—the process of discovering the truth  
and bringing some justice to those affected—will provide  
some solace and finality to this heartbreaking tragedy.

4.24 pm

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly** (Huntingdon) (Con): Welcome  
to your place, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you  
for squeezing me in at the end of the debate.

For the many reasons explained in the many excellent  
speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the  
House, I have been really impressed and pleased that  
the Government have thought this issue through afresh,  
which is significant, given the previous inquiries and  
many debates on it. The apology given by the Minister  
today was an important step, which will be appreciated  
by the victims.

I note what the Minister said on the need to consult  
on the form of the inquiry. Given the numerous positions  
on that issue alone, he has made the right decision to

221

Contaminated Blood

11 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

222

*[Mr Jonathan Djanogly]*

engage with the affected groups. However, I hope that  
an element of urgency will now be forced into this  
process to move things forward, and that we think  
always about the victims and how they have been waiting  
so long.

I hope the inquiry will look into the decision to  
acquire these products in the first place and into who  
was responsible—that is, at the period before anyone in  
the UK became infected.

This is a tragic story from start to finish. I acknowledge  
the persistence and total commitment of my affected  
constituents and those involved in the wider campaign  
to seek the truth. It is due to them that we are here  
today, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on leading the all-party  
group and on calling this debate.

We must acknowledge that there are variations in the  
interpretation of the facts and history of this scandal.  
One of my constituents, Tony Farrugia, feels that evidence  
from his infected father's medical notes—namely, a  
letter—was removed from them. The letter was noted in  
the 1991 HIV litigation, but has been removed since.  
When my constituent received the notes, the letter was  
missing, and his attempts to retrieve it from the Department  
of Health have failed. The letter states that his father  
was given a bad batch of F8 in 1980, and that was  
reported on on 7 June 1983. However, surprisingly, his  
father was not told until February 1985—nearly two  
years later.

I do not know the answers to those questions, and I  
do not believe that my constituent knows all the answers,  
but it seems to me from discussions with my constituents,  
and from the limited documentation I have seen, that  
there was a series of horrific mistakes, leading to a series  
of unimaginable consequences. That makes it really  
important that we get to the truth of what happened.

Efforts to deal with this issue to date—and we need  
to recognise that there have been a number—simply  
have not satisfied the people concerned, or many of  
them at least. The point is that many people affected by  
this tragedy—especially children and wider family  
members—have not been offered compensation. In any  
event, they do not feel that there will ever be closure  
until the full facts are known and they themselves are  
included in the process.

I do appreciate that the Government feel there has  
been proper disclosure of the information they have,  
but the fact remains that there is a clear disconnect  
between the various parties on this issue. As ever with  
such events, it is not just what happens between the  
various parties where one can see fault, but in the lack

of information afterwards. That not only can make the  
original situation worse, but is immensely frustrating  
for the victims' families.

As has been explained to me by my constituents Tony  
Farrugia and Chris Smith, who are members of the  
Fatherless Generation action group, this is a scandal of  
epic proportions, and I look forward to seeing continued  
progress on it.

4.27 pm

**Diana Johnson:** It is delightful to see you in your new  
place in the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker. I  
congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford  
East (Anneliese Dodds) on her maiden speech. That  
was an excellent start, and I am sure she will have a very  
long career in the House of Commons.

We have heard some really important and excellent  
contributions. I think we were all moved by the contribution  
from my hon. Friend the Member for Newport East  
(Jessica Morden) when she talked about Colin Smith—a  
little boy who received contaminated blood products  
when he was quite tiny, and who eventually died of  
AIDS and hepatitis C. That reminded us all that this is  
about boys and girls, husbands and wives, and brothers  
and sisters who have been affected by this scandal.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Does my hon.  
Friend agree that these blood products should have  
been withdrawn as soon as the risks involved in their  
use became clear?

**Diana Johnson:** That is a good point, and I hope the  
inquiry will be able to get to grips with it.

I am really pleased we have had this announcement  
today from the Government, but I gently say to the  
Minister that we will not be going away on this:  
parliamentarians on both sides of the House will be  
following carefully how the consultation takes place  
and who is consulted, and making sure that there is a  
good, timely timetable, that there is legal support for  
those who need help with representation, and that there  
are regular updates to Parliament.

I want to finish with a quote from a person who has  
just emailed me and says that this is

“just the end of the beginning and still a long way to go before  
truth, justice and holding to account are achieved”.

We will now be watching very carefully what the  
Government do next.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the need for an independent  
public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal.

223

11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

224

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

*Considered in Committee*

[MR LINDSAY HOYLE *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

AIR TRAVEL ORGANISERS' LICENCES

4.31 pm

**Karl Turner** (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): I beg  
to move amendment 2, in page 1, line 13, at end insert—

“(4) The Government must publish a review within one year of  
this Act receiving Royal Assent on the impact on UK consumers  
using EU-based companies affected by changes to consumer  
protection introduced by this section.”

*This amendment requires the Government to review the impact of  
provisions under this section to ensure that they are not adversely  
affecting UK consumers using EU-based companies.*

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):**With this it will be convenient to consider clause 1 stand  
part.

**Karl Turner:** The amendment would require the  
Government to review the impact of clause 1 to ensure  
that it does not adversely affect UK consumers using  
EU-based companies. Essentially, the clause updates  
ATOL—the air travel organisers' licence—to ensure  
that it is harmonised with the 2015 EU package travel  
directive. The provision therefore extends ATOL to  
cover a wider range of holidays and protect more  
consumers. UK travel companies, we are told, will be  
able to sell more seamlessly across Europe, as they will  
need to comply with protections based not in the country  
of sale, but the country in which they are established.  
Those are the objectives that the Government seek to  
achieve. There is no difference of principle between the  
Government and the Opposition on this matter. Indeed,  
it is due to the package travel directive that it has been  
necessary to put such a provision into the Bill.

However, we seek clarification on some issues, which  
was why we tabled amendment 2. The amendment  
would provide a guarantee that the Government will  
review the impact of the ATOL revisions to ensure that  
they do not adversely affect UK consumers using EU-based  
companies. The whole idea of the clause is to improve  
the range of protections available. The broad substance  
of the changes to ATOL are necessary and are broadly  
welcome. As I said, they will harmonise UK law with  
the latest EU package travel directive, and that should  
have many benefits. A wider range of operators, including  
more dynamic package providers, are likely to be covered  
by the changes. That will hopefully bring protection to  
many more UK holidaymakers who are not covered  
under existing ATOL provisions.

For UK travel companies, standards will have to be in  
line with those of the country in which the company is  
established, rather than the place where the company  
sells the holiday. That should mean that companies  
established in the UK can sell far more seamlessly  
across Europe by simply adhering to the widely respected  
ATOL flag. However, the changes at the EU level could  
have adverse effects for UK consumers who purchase

their holiday or travel from EU-based travel companies,  
rather than British companies that sell into other European  
countries.

Amendment 2 would address that issue. The changes  
made through the directive will now mean that EU-based  
companies selling in the UK will have to adhere to  
ATOL-equivalent insolvency protections laid out in the  
member state where the business is based. In practice,  
that could lead to unintended consequences and, more  
significantly, costs for UK consumers. Processes and  
timescales for recompense may be distinctly different  
from what many travellers would expect under the  
current ATOL provisions, which are in many ways  
regarded as the gold standard.

The impact assessment warns:

“If consumers purchase a trip from a business established  
elsewhere in the EU and the company becomes insolvent there  
may be some costs to the consumer of processing a claim with a  
non-UK insolvency protector.”

Based on the latest Civil Aviation Authority figures, this  
will affect not just a relatively small number of  
holidaymakers. If this goes wrong, more than 500,000  
passengers could be compromised, so a significant number  
of people could be adversely affected. It is therefore  
important that the Government take steps to anticipate  
and prepare for any possible negative impacts.

Amendment 2 would achieve that by requiring the  
UK Government to monitor the impact on UK consumers  
using EU-based companies. That would help to inform  
whether the UK Government should consider issuing  
further guidance, or co-operating with consumers and  
member states to ensure that protections are adequate.

The changes envisaged by the clause clearly make  
sense and are in line with what is required under the  
package travel directive. There is no doubt that when  
UK-established companies are selling into other countries,  
the consumers in those countries will have the benefit of  
the gold standard of ATOL protection. However, we  
are concerned about the protection given by EU-based  
companies selling in the UK. We hope that it will be  
equivalent to that under ATOL, but it will be subject to  
the rules and regulations of the EU country concerned.  
We are nervous about whether UK holidaymakers could  
lose out, so we are asking the Government to consider  
the issue and to monitor the situation properly.

As with so many other things, the environment is  
changing, particularly in relation to Brexit. ATOL will  
still be there post-Brexit, but we will explore possible  
changes when we discuss the next group of amendments.  
The package travel directive will no doubt still be there  
for those states that will still be members of the EU.  
What is uncertain at this stage is what the interface will  
be between the two things post-Brexit.

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): I have been  
following the hon. Gentleman's line of thought carefully.  
He seems to be seeking full protection for UK consumers  
buying in the EU. The EU package travel directive  
applies while we are still a member of the EU, but when  
we cease to be a member, the repeal Bill will have put its  
provisions in UK legislation, so surely the hon. Gentleman's  
argument is unnecessary.

**Karl Turner:** With respect, we do not know that yet,  
and nor do we know what the insolvency arrangements  
will be for companies abroad. The Government must  
address this real issue.

225

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

226

Stephen Hammond *rose—*

**Karl Turner:** I will not give way.

We ask the Government to get the ball rolling within  
a year of the Bill receiving Royal Assent, but a regular  
review is also needed, particularly in the light of Brexit.  
Our amendment is supported by the Association of  
British Travel Agents and other travel organisations.  
Despite ministerial assurances, we want our amendment  
to be made to the Bill, so we will press it to a Division.

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** I welcome the spirit in which the Opposition  
have gone about their business on these provisions. We  
have had measured and sensible exchanges, first when  
we started to explore the issues in the Vehicle Technology  
and Aviation Bill earlier this year, before the election,  
and subsequently in last week's Second Reading debate  
on this Bill. There is a determination across the House  
to get these matters right and a recognition that the  
protections that these measures offer travellers are  
important. Furthermore, as the Opposition spokesman  
made clear a moment or two ago, there is a recognition  
that we need to maintain the fitness for purpose of these  
arrangements to take account of changing circumstances  
in the travel market.

We must remember the context in which we are  
considering the amendment. The whole House shares  
the view that it is right for ATOL to continue and to  
respond to changing market conditions, and that the  
Government must do their part by ensuring that the  
necessary framework is in place. In respect of the  
amendment, I can go even further.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): Will the Minister give  
way?

**Mr Hayes:** I will happily give way, after I have made  
this telling and interesting point. I said to Labour  
Members not long ago that I understand that it is now  
de rigeur for parties from across the House to work  
together. That has become immensely fashionable recently;  
frankly, however, it has been my practice forever. I feel  
as though the world is catching up with me, and that is a  
great place to be.

**Julian Knight:** The Labour spokesman suggested earlier  
that there might be some rowing back of holidaymakers'  
rights after we leave the EU, but is that not quite wrong?  
The UK has led the charge in the EU for holidaymakers'  
rights. Will the Minister reassure the House yet again  
that we will protect holidaymakers' rights post Brexit?

**Mr Hayes:** Although I do not want my sermocination  
to be excessive, I will deal with those matters at greater  
length in my later remarks. My hon. Friend is right to  
say that Britain can be justly proud of our record  
in respect of ATOL. To be clear, the Labour party  
acknowledged that on Second Reading a few days ago.  
There is an acceptance across the House that Britain  
has done this well; that that is recognised in continental  
Europe; and that there is a desire to ensure that future  
arrangements are inspired by, and perhaps even emulate,  
the best practice exemplified by the United Kingdom.

I said that I could go further still in building a bridge  
across the House, and that is because I am sympathetic  
to the aims behind the amendment. It is crucial that we

carefully craft our policy, and the regulatory framework  
is the key to good governance. To gubernate is to be  
prepared to listen and learn, and it is absolutely right  
that we do so in respect of the changes that the Bill will  
make. It would not be fair to set any of this in stone,  
which is why I accept the need to consider these matters,  
as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl  
Turner) set out, in the context of future changes to our  
relationship with Europe.

As I have said repeatedly, I am open-minded about  
reviewing the effects of these changes, but let me explain  
a little more. The Bill introduces the ability for ATOL to  
protect sales by businesses established in the UK and in  
other member states. It will be for protection schemes in  
other member states to provide the protections for UK  
consumers to which the amendment refers. That is not  
our responsibility—we do not have the power that the  
amendment suggests we should have—so I am not sure  
that the amendment works on a technical level.

The amendment does, however, highlight an important  
point, which it is right for us to consider. It seems to me  
that the hon. Gentleman's argument was twofold: first,  
that we need to understand the potential impact on UK  
consumers of purchasing from traders that are based  
overseas under different protection regimes; and, secondly,  
that we need to consider how Government should keep  
that element of protection under review. Let me deal  
with those points in turn.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Will my right hon.  
Friend give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I will happily give way to my hon. Friend,  
who is a great authority on these matters, having led the  
process that resulted in the directive that was mentioned  
earlier.

4.45 pm

**Vicky Ford:** I do recall mentioning in the Chamber  
the last time we discussed the Bill that I chaired the  
negotiations on the package travel directive in my previous  
role.

My right hon. Friend refers to the technicalities of  
theamendment.Ofcourseweshouldcontinuetoreviewthe  
impact of the changes on British consumers, because  
the Bill means that the ATOL guarantee will cover  
companies based in the UK, not companies selling into  
the UK, so it would not, for example, have caught the  
Low Cost Holidays situation last year.

On the technicalities of the impact assessment, if we  
read the underlying package travel directive, member  
states in Europe are not due to implement—

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):  
Order.

Vicky Ford *rose—*

**The Chairman:** Order. It is one thing to intervene, but  
another to make a speech. Please, if the hon. Lady  
needs to do that, she should do it over a couple of  
interventions. When I stand and say, “Order,”she should  
please sit down. I do not want to stop a new Member;

227

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

228

I want to try and help you, but you have to help me as  
well. If you need to come back, I am sure the Minister  
will give way again.

**Mr Hayes:** I am extremely grateful, Mr Hoyle.

I will address my hon. Friend's remarks later in my  
brief speech. She is right, of course, that it is too early  
to know how the package travel directive will lead to  
changes in purchasing behaviour across borders. That  
was a point that the hon. Member for Kingston upon  
Hull East made, too. We hope—

**Karl Turner:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I thinkthismightmakethehon.Gentleman's  
point even better than itwouldbe otherwise. I described  
earlier the desire of the Europeans essentially to—I hate  
to use this word, because it is so often a loaded term  
when it emanates from the EU, but I will—harmonise  
arrangements across Europe, but he is right to say, as is  
my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky  
Ford), that we do not know.

**Karl Turner:** That is the precise reason we need a  
review.

**Mr Hayes:** Yes, which is why I have said that, in  
principle, I agree. I will come to how I am going to  
satisfy the hon. Gentleman by assuaging his fears. He  
has already declared his intent to divide the Committee,  
Mr Hoyle, but I might be able to persuade him not to. I  
might be able, in the generous remarks that I am about  
to make, to discourage him from that course of action.  
We shall wait to see.If I do not,I amnot going to blame  
myself. Just so you know, Mr Hoyle, there will be no  
self-blame here; I will blame it on the hon. Gentleman.  
But let me do my best.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is not clear  
how this will work out. If other member states implement  
as they are required to, consumers will be able to  
purchase across Europe knowing that the protection  
offered will need to meet the improved standards in the  
new directive. In practice, that should see insolvency  
protection across the EU improved to levels, as my hon.  
Friend the Member for Solihull (Julian Knight) said,  
that are broadly in line with ATOL.

There is also an increased onus on member states to  
ensure that businesses in their own territory have effective  
protection in place, but if the Civil Aviation Authority  
or trading standards has doubts or concerns about  
traders based overseas, it will be able to contact designating  
bodies in other member states to check compliance. We  
will ensure—I say this directly to the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull East and to the shadow Secretary  
of State, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy  
McDonald)—that compliance in other member states is  
a matter that the CAA monitors, and that it makes  
contact with its like in those member states to ensure  
that proper practice is being observed. But—

**Vicky Ford:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I will, before I move to the next exciting  
piece of my speech, because I want to go further to  
satisfy all Members of the House.

**Vicky Ford:** Given that other member states do not  
need to implement this measure until halfway through  
next year, would not an impact assessment within a year  
be too soon? Should we not be calling for a more  
constant and regular review of the impact on British  
holidaymakers, and a review once the system is established  
in 2021, say, like the European legislation?

**Mr Hayes:** In that punchy and pithy intervention, my  
hon. Friend made the point that I made when we  
debated these matters in the Committee considering the  
previous legislation of which this was originally a part.  
That is rather convoluted, but it makes the point. I said  
that the problem with an early review is that it would be  
too early and would not take account of the changing  
circumstances in exactly the way she suggests. But I am  
minded to go further. Given that we discussed the issue  
in Committee on the Vehicle Technology and Aviation  
Bill, I want to make two further points.

First, the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment  
Act 2015—I have a copy with me for the benefit of any  
hon. Member who may wish to look at the particular  
clauses—makes a review obligatory within five years of  
the passing of the legislation. That existing obligation  
would of course apply to ATOL. However, we can do  
betterthanthat.IamproudofmyDepartment'sreputation  
for producing robust analysis to underpin and inform  
policy decisions, including providing full regulatory  
impact assessments to assess the effect of significant  
changes to regulation. That is a principle to which we  
have adhered in recent years throughout the ATOL  
reform process. We have already reformed ATOL once,  
in 2012, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
East knows. We went through a consultation exercise,  
which I also have with me, and it is important that we  
continue the process of consulting and publishing the  
kind of impact assessments I have described before any  
regulatory changes take place.

It is really important that, when we changed the Civil  
Aviation Act 1982 in 2012 better to reflect current  
market practice, the call for evidence on the long-term  
review of the ATOL scheme produced responses that  
both informed the changes we made then—as they  
certainly did—and any further changes.

**Julian Knight:** My right hon. Friend has been most  
generous in taking interventions. He mentioned that  
ATOL was last reformed in 2012. Is not the truth that  
the process will notendwithBrexit or with the Bill?It is  
an ongoing process of reform and renewal.

**Mr Hayes:** That is true and in a sense it is more  
catalysed by the changing character of communications  
and the way in which people organise and book their  
holidays than it is by our relationship with the continental  
countries of Europe. It is affected by both, but my hon.  
Friend is right to say that even if we were not leaving the  
European Union—and, my goodness, I am glad we are  
—we would still need to reflect on and consider changes  
that take account of the changing patterns of the way in  
which people organise and book their holidays. Indeed,  
he is right that the process of reflection, consultation,  
impact assessment and review needs to be a continual one.

Last year we consulted on the changes to the Civil  
Aviation Act 1982 that we are discussing today. We are  
about to launch a series of consultations on the detailed

229

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

230

*[Mr John Hayes]*

regulations that will follow, including on this particular  
issue. Each stage of the work will be the subject of  
impact assessments and consultations, so we will both  
consult and publish impact assessments on each stage  
of the changes that I have described and which will be  
drawn to the House's attention by various hon. Members—

**Stephen Hammond** *rose—*

**Mr Hayes:** I see another hon. Friend who wishes to  
do so.

**Stephen Hammond:** I always hesitate to stop the  
Minister in full flow because he is such a joy to hear.  
Surely his commitment is the key point, because the  
Government consulted in 2012 and have committed to  
consulting in bringing in this legislation and aligning  
ATOL with the European directive. That needs to continue,  
because we will not transpose it into law until next year.

**Mr Hayes:** That is also true, and it is certainly true  
that we cannot be premature about imagining, or  
speculating about, the outcome of that process; but I  
think we can offer some certainty about our determination  
to consult on the arrangements in respect of this particular  
set of regulations—partly, of course, because they exist  
irrespective of the European Union. ATOL's coincidental  
genesis with our entry to the European Union is just  
that, a coincidence. ATOL, I guess, would have existed  
regardless of our relationship with the European Union.  
Indeed, the regulatory and legislative framework that  
underpins it is domestic. So the domestic legislation  
that gave life to ATOL, and continues to do so, was very  
much at the behest of this Parliament, and of successive  
Governments—of all parties, by the way—who have  
continued to support that scheme.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): This is a fascinating  
topic. Are we seeing an example of what happens when  
EU regulation is really rather good, and we accept that  
and transpose it into our law? Does my right hon.  
Friend not agree that there are many who supported  
our leaving the EU on the basis of some, I think,  
fanciful notion—I am sorry, Mr Hoyle, but I think this  
is an important point—that we would be stripping away  
all this sort of regulation and entirely doing our own  
thing? This proposal, however, seems to be rather a  
good idea.

**Mr Hayes:** In the darkest recesses of the darkest  
places there is occasionally a glimmer of light, and so it  
is with the European Union. One would not want to  
claim that every single aspect of every single thing that  
has been done over all the years of its existence has been  
malevolent. There is the odd measure which may be  
said to have shed just a glimmer of light, and in that  
sense, my right hon. Friend may be right.

Let me move on. During an evidence session earlier  
this year, Richard Moriarty of the Civil Aviation Authority  
told the Committee considering the Vehicle, Technology  
and Aviation Bill that he hoped the Government

“will follow the practice that they have followed today: consult  
with us, consult the industry, do the impact assessment, and so  
on.” —*[Official Report, Vehicle Technology and Aviation Public  
Bill Committee,* 14 March 2017; c. 65, Q150.]

For the reasons that I have given, the current process  
is one from which I will not deviate. We will ensure that  
any changes that are made after the passing of the Bill,  
or as a consequence of it, will be subject to that rigorous  
and transparent process; but I want to go even further  
in satisfying the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
East, because even that is not enough for me.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the Air Travel  
Insolvency Protection Advisory Committee, or ATIPAC,  
as it is commonly known. Earlier, I described darkness  
and glimmers of light in respect of the European Union.  
So it is with Labour Governments. It is a great mistake  
in politics to demonise one's political opponents, because  
Governments of all colours do some things well and  
some things less well. All Governments introduce legislation  
that they subsequently regret, and omit to introduce  
legislation that they should. In grown-up politics and  
proper political debate—and this is a mature Parliament  
that is capable of such debate—we should freely  
acknowledge that.

In 2000, a Labour Government set up ATIPAC. Its  
purpose was to provide advice for the Civil Aviation  
Authority, the Air Travel Trust and the Secretary of  
State for Transport on policies that should be pursued  
to protect customers. It consists of representatives of  
industry, consumers, the CAA and Trading Standards,  
which means that it is well placed to provide an informed  
and independent review of policies. That committee  
already submits a substantial report to the Secretary of  
State each year. I have a copy of such a report, for the  
consideration and, I hope, education and enjoyment of  
any Member who may wish to cast an eye over it. The  
report includes drawing the Secretary of State's attention  
to any concerns on which ATIPAC's view is that further  
action is necessary to maintain strong consumer protection.  
This includes advice on changes in the market and,  
where appropriate, their potential impact on consumers  
and the financial protection arrangements.

5pm

I am sure—absolutely confident—that the committee  
is already minded to keep a close eye on the impact of  
the directive on UK consumers. However, in the light of  
this amendment, the brief debate we have enjoyed and  
the responsible stance taken by those on the Opposition  
Benches—

**Julian Knight:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I am moving to my exciting peroration,  
but I will give way.

**Julian Knight:** Is my right hon. Friend saying that the  
industry experts—the people who really know—are saying  
in effect that this amendment is superfluous and is  
unnecessary?

**Mr Hayes:** I do not want to disagree with any hon.  
Member unnecessarily, and certainly not with a Member  
on my side of the Chamber. However, it is true—as my  
hon. Friend will know as he is a student of these  
matters who has taken a keen interest in this Bill from  
its inception—that ABTA has produced a briefing for  
this debate, and in a moment I will go through it in  
some detail. While it is true that ABTA welcomes, as the  
Opposition have, the changes that we are making to

231

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

232

ATOL, and there is a broad recommendation from it  
that we should be doing just that, it has given a detailed  
critique of the measures we are introducing and the  
amendments, and, at face value—that is something of  
an understatement—it seems rather sympathetic to the  
Opposition amendment. However, it will not have had  
the benefit of the further commitment I am about to  
give, which this Committee will be the first to know, for  
that is as it should be.

I am now going to catch the eye of the hon. Member  
for Kingston upon Hull East. I am sure that that  
independent committee, which was set up by a Labour  
Government for the very purpose of reviewing these  
matters regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose  
and with the mission of observing and making  
recommendations in the interests of consumers will  
doubtless want to consider the impact of the changes  
we are making, and will of course be aware of the  
contextual changes in our relationship with the European  
Union and the effect of the directive on other countries  
and their arrangements. Nevertheless, I am prepared to  
write to the committee reflecting the sentiments the  
hon. Gentleman has articulated persuasively enough—I  
was going to say “so persuasively,” but I do not want to  
overstate the case—to encourage me to make this  
commitment, and to ask it not only in its annual report  
to review the implementation of these changes, but also  
to take account of the other remarks he has made.

**Vicky Ford:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that  
ATIPAC meets every year to review issues affecting  
consumer protection for British travellers buying not  
only from EU-based companies, but from anywhere  
they wish to travel in the world so, of course, British  
travellers will have this review every year?

**Mr Hayes:** On the pithiness index that you are clearly  
keeping, Mr Hoyle, that was not quite as pithy as my  
hon. Friend's first intervention, but it is still pithy  
enough for me—and, I am sure, for you, Mr Hoyle, the  
ultimate arbiter of these things. My hon. Friend is  
absolutely right, of course: the committee, set up by a  
previous Labour Government, does indeed have exactly  
that purpose. It produces that annual report, which is a  
public document, but I have said that I would go further  
than that and request that that committee looks particularly  
at the very things this amendment seeks. So, not only  
are we going to have impact assessments and full and  
comprehensive consultations, not only have I committed  
to subjecting any further regulations to that kind of  
transparent and open debate with the appropriate scrutiny,  
and not only does the committee exist for the very  
purpose of producing an annual report in the interests  
of defending consumers in this field of work, but,  
further than that, I will to write to the committee to tell  
it that it should do exactly as the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull East has asked.

**Vicky Ford:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I am frightened that my hon. Friend's  
pithiness will decline over time, but I give way to her.

**Vicky Ford:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if  
we pass this Labour amendment, we will be asking for a  
review that is to take place anyway, and that the amendment  
is therefore unnecessary?

**Mr Hayes:** That is a perfect cue for what I was about  
to say. Knowing that the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull East is a reasonable and sensible man, and  
knowing that the shadow Secretary of State has some  
experience in this field, having debated these matters  
with me on more than one occasion, I cannot believe  
that a responsible Opposition would, in the light of the  
pledges I have made today, on the record, push these  
matters to a vote.

I will ask the committee—which is already there to  
do as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East  
has asked and is already producing the annual report  
that the amendment requests—to deliver the very assurance  
that he has requested. Those experts—for that is what  
they are—submit their report to the Secretary of State  
within four months of the end of each financial year.  
However, I am going to go even further. I am determined  
that the hon. Gentleman will be so captivated, encouraged  
and illuminated—not surprised; I would not go that far,  
because he knows what a good bloke I am—by the  
offers that I have made that he really will not want to  
push this matter to a vote. I am going to go further. The  
committee, which does indeed publish an annual report,  
can, as necessary, report more frequently if circumstances  
require. Should it believe that it needed to do so because  
of this legislative change, we would, ironically, have less  
scrutiny, fewer reports and less analysis if we were to  
pass the amendment than is the case now.

**AndyMcDonald**(Middlesbrough)(Lab)*indicateddissent.*

**Mr Hayes:** There are those on my side of the House  
who take a less generous view than I do of the Labour  
party. However, I know that what I have just described  
is not the intention of Her Majesty's Opposition. They  
do not want to have less scrutiny, less analysis, less  
certainty or less clarity. They want the same degree of  
clarity that I seek. I am prepared to acknowledge that.  
However, the effect of their amendment might be to  
leave us in a worse position than we are in at present,  
and that surely cannot be right.

**Ms Nadine Dorries** (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): I apologise  
for intervening so soon after arriving in the Chamber.  
Does my right hon. Friend not agree that most of these  
issues will be taken care of in the great repeal Bill anyway?

**Mr Hayes:** That is of course right; the committee will  
look at all those matters in that context. I said that  
earlier. I have also said, however, that I want to go  
further and to ensure that this stands proud as an  
example of analysis. Of course the great repeal Bill and  
our relationship with the European Union are bound to  
be the context in which the committee considers these  
matters; I guess that that is true. However, these ATOL  
arrangements predate our relationship with the European  
Union, or, if they came into force at the same time, it  
was a coincidence. Given that they are framed in domestic  
legislation rather than European legislation, I believe  
that ATOL would have existed regardless of our association  
with the European Union.

**Stephen Hammond:** Just for clarity, when I intervened  
on the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, he was  
making a point about insolvency, but the generous offer  
that my right hon. Friend just made would clearly cover  
insolvency as well.

233

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

234

**Mr Hayes:** Generosity needs to be reciprocal. It is not  
for me to say how the Opposition will conduct their  
affairs, but surely they will recognise that we are going  
as far as it is possible to go to ensure that the process is  
reviewed in precisely the way that the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull East described. He says that we  
cannot be absolutely certain how things will pan out in  
practice, and I agree. The spirit of his amendment  
seems to be the right one, so I have made it clear that I  
will facilitate just such an analysis of the impact of the  
changes. The point is that it is not as if the mechanisms  
do not exist for us to do that, and they do not merely  
rely on the legislative strength of the Small Business,  
Enterprise and Employment Act 2015, which says that  
there must five-yearly reviews. Issues will go to the  
committee responsible for overseeing such matters, which  
was set up by a previous Labour Government, and we  
will insist that the impact is reviewed—more than once  
a year if necessary.

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): May I ask my right  
hon. Friend for more clarity on that? Can the committee  
review things as often as it wants? I am sure that the  
committee will have been taking this debate seriously  
and that this particular part of it will be receiving  
attention. Can he confirm that he will be encouraging  
the committee to take its responsibility to review the  
proposal very seriously?

**Mr Hayes:** As you know, Mr Hoyle, it is not my habit  
to speak at length in this House. I like to abbreviate my  
remarks to a sufficient degree to make my point, but not  
to exaggerate the arguments. In the light of that intervention,  
however, I am inclined to go into rather more detail  
about the ATIPAC report, which is the document submitted  
to the Secretary of State in the way that I have described  
and then made public. The latest report states:

“The Committee's role is to provide informed advice to the  
Government and the regulatory authorities on financial protection  
for consumers in the event of a holiday company's insolvency. Its  
Constitution sets out the role and membership of the Committee,  
and can be reviewed in Appendix 4.”

I will not go into the details of appendix 4.

**Hon. Members:** Go on!

**Mr Hayes:** Well, okay. I am being persuaded to do so  
by popular demand and acclamation.

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):**Order. The Minister says “by popular demand”, but  
those Members were not here when he first started. He  
has had to wait until now.

**Hon. Members:** Start again!

**Mr Hayes:** I have drawn them to the Committee by  
the power of my oratory and my performance. They are  
like moths to a flame.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): Will my right  
hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hayes:** So, appendix 4, to which I referred—

**Hon. Members:** Give way!

**Mr Hayes:** Oh! I will happily give way to my hon.  
Friend.

**Simon Hoare:** May I say to my right hon. Friend,  
with the seriousness and candour that the moment  
demands, that he is a bright flame on a dull and grey  
afternoon to which the moths of Parliament are being  
drawn?

**Mr Hayes:** I do not know whether anyone else wants  
to—

**The Chairman:** Order. The danger is that someone  
might blow out that light. Come on, Minister.

**Mr Hayes:** I just wondered whether anyone else wanted  
to intervene in a similar vein.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con) *rose—*

**Hon. Members:** Hurrah!

**Mr Hayes:** I will give way to my hon. Friend.

**Mims Davies:** I thank the Minister for giving way. It  
has been announced today that easyJet is to fly for the  
first time from Southampton airport, which is in my  
constituency. It is fantastic news, and I am heading off  
in about 10 minutes—*[Laughter.]* Like me, is the Minister  
wary of committing the Government to something that  
may adversely impact the industry during the Brexit  
process? I say that on what is a positive day for my  
constituency.

5.15 pm

**Mr Hayes:** There is no wish to do that on either side  
of the House. There is general agreement on both  
sides of the House that the measure must act in the  
interests of both consumers and businesses. It is certainly  
in the mutual interest of the travel industry and of those  
who use it that these protections are in place, which is  
precisely why Governments of all colours and persuasions  
have continued to invest in and support ATOL over the  
years, and it is why I said earlier, before a number of  
Members entered the Chamber, that there is general  
cross-party agreement among all contributors to these  
discussions that it is necessary to reform ATOL to take  
account of the changing way in which people book  
their holidays online and in other ways. People plan  
holidays rather differently from how they once did.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): My  
right hon. Friend and Lincolnshire neighbour, as a  
Transport Minister, has been diligent in attending to the  
concerns of my constituents about the infamous Bull  
Ring bottleneck in Horncastle, where the A153 and  
A158 cross. Has he paid the same diligence, care and  
attention to this Bill, such that he is able to reassure the  
Committee that the amendment is not to be passed and  
that we must keep the Bill as it is?

**The Chairman:** I have been quite generous to Members  
coming in late and intervening. If you are going to  
intervene, let us have short interventions.

**Simon Hoare:** It was short.

235

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

236

**The Chairman:** Mr Hoare, I assure you that I do not  
need any advice. I remind the Minister that there are  
others who wish to speak, including on his own Benches.

**Mr Hayes:** Then I will draw my remarks to a gradual  
conclusion. I have already brought my introductory  
remarks to their conclusion, and I am now moving to  
the main thrust of my response to the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull East.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Far  
be it from me to prevent the Minister from continuing  
to drag things out. I apologise, but I do not have one of  
the intervention sheets that have been circulated. A few  
interventions ago, the hon. Member for Mid Bedfordshire  
(Ms Dorries) suggested that the great repeal Bill will  
account for this amendment. Can the Minister explain  
how the yet-to-be-published great repeal Bill will supersede  
or take account of it?

**Mr Hayes:** What I actually said is that the Air Travel  
Insolvency Protection Advisory Committee, which is  
missioned to consider these matters in the way I described,  
will doubtless take account of the contextual changes  
associated with our independence from the European  
Union, and I use the word “independence” advisedly. It  
is inconceivable that the committee would not make  
reference to that in its annual report, but I also said that  
I would write to draw the committee's attention to the  
specificity of the measures we are bringing before the  
House to ensure that it carries out the very kind of  
report and review called for by the amendment.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): Will the Minister give  
way?

**Mr Hayes:** I really must press on.

Appendix 4 of the annual report is categorical about  
the committee's constitutional role, and it sets out the  
committee's membership, which includes the Association  
of British Travel Agents, the Association of Independent  
Tour Operators, the Association of Airline Consolidators,  
the Board of Airline Representatives in the UK and the  
Travel Trust Association. The committee also includes  
up to 10 independent members, of whom one will be the  
chair. Of course, as I set out earlier, the committee's  
independence and expertise mean that it is in a perfect  
place to do the very work that the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull East perfectly properly recommended  
to the House and that the amendment seeks to achieve.

Therefore, in the light of the fact that the Government  
have already obliged in law to review legislation within  
five years and have set up the independent panel of  
experts to report; that I have committed to seek guidance  
on the important issues the hon. Gentleman raises and  
to write to that committee asking it to review the  
legislation; and that the committee will report more  
often than annually as necessary, it would be extraordinary  
if the Labour party pushed this matter to the vote. It  
would be unreasonable for it to do so, but in the end  
that is a matter for it, not for me.

**Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP):  
Last week, there was uncharacteristic consensus in  
welcoming the Second Reading of this Bill, as it is  
perfectly desirable and sensible to update the ATOL

scheme to ensure more protection for travellers when  
they go on holiday and to align it with the latest EU  
directive. However, there undoubtedly are a number of  
questions that will arise in relation to this scheme once  
the UK leaves the EU. We need cast-iron guarantees  
that the rights of and protections for travellers will not  
be diminished after Brexit.

On Second Reading, the Minister was clear in saying  
that he wished to protect passengers, but we lack the  
detail on that. We do not know when the UK will  
develop its own system of passenger rights and  
compensation in the aviation sector after Brexit, how  
similar it will be to current arrangements or how it will  
affect EU airlines and passengers. Scottish National  
party Members fully support the Government's reviewing  
the impact of provisions under this amendment; surely  
it is right that they review the impact of the provisions  
to ensure that UK consumers are protected and are not  
disadvantaged by using EU-based companies. When we  
leave the EU, passenger rights must not be affected, and  
consumers and companies based in the UK and/or the  
EU need clarity on what their obligations are in respect  
of the ATOL scheme.

We have heard today that this will all be taken care of  
in the great repeal Bill, and I am sure we all hope it will.  
Last week, the Minister said he was keen to protect  
consumers, and I am optimistic that that will be in  
evidence today. His reasons for resisting reviewing the  
impact of provisions under this amendment do not  
seem clear. Periodic reviews still make sense; having a  
review within one year will inform the impact of the  
provisions and will still be helpful. The Minister is an  
eminent and sensible man, but I am at a loss here: if  
ATIPAC already carries out yearly reviews, why resist  
this? The reviews we are talking about merely write into  
legislation something that it appears is already happening.  
What has the Minister to lose? The committee provides  
advice, we are told, and this amendment writes into  
legislation—

**Mr Hayes:** This is very simple: if something is already  
happening—if it is already in law—one does not have to  
legislate for it again.

**Patricia Gibson:** The Minister is being a wee bit  
disingenuous here—

**The Chairman:** Order. That is not a word we would  
use, and I am sure the hon. Lady can think of something  
much more pleasant. The Minister is a nice man, after  
all, and I do not believe he would mislead the House.

**Patricia Gibson:** The Minister is an eminently sensible  
man, but the point is that I can only wonder why he is  
resisting yearly reviews which he has told us already  
happen. If they already happen, why not write them  
into this piece of legislation, if for no other reason than  
to reassure passengers as we face a post-Brexit world?  
I know he is an honourable man, and I urge him to  
reconsider and accept the amendment.

**Karl Turner:** The Minister is a terribly generous chap,  
but his attempts to pacify the Opposition with his  
promise of a letter to ATIPAC simply are not enough.  
That does not cut the mustard, so we will push the  
amendment to a vote.

237

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

238

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 271, Noes 305.  
**Division No. 5] [5.24 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Alexander, Heidi  
Ali, Rushanara  
Amesbury, Mike  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Austin, Ian  
Bailey, Mr Adrian  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Blackford, Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
Blomfield, Paul  
Brabin, Tracy  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brake, rh Tom  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre

Brown, Alan  
Brown, Lyn

Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris

Buck, Ms Karen  
Burden, Richard  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cable, rh Sir Vince  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Chapman, Jenny  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Clwyd, rh Ann  
Coaker, Vernon  
Coffey, Ann  
Cooper, Julie  
Cooper, Rosie  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil  
Crausby, Sir David

Creagh, Mary  
Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Cunningham, Mr Jim  
Davey, rh Sir Edward  
David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
De Piero, Gloria  
Debbonaire, Thangam  
Dent Coad, Emma  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese

Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Drew, Dr David  
Dromey, Jack  
Duffield, Rosie  
Eagle, Ms Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Ellman, Mrs Louise  
Elmore, Chris  
Esterson, Bill  
Evans, Chris  
Farrelly, Paul  
Farron, Tim  
Field, rh Frank  
Fitzpatrick, Jim  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flint, rh Caroline  
Flynn, Paul  
Fovargue, Yvonne  
Frith, James  
Furniss, Gill  
Gaffney, Hugh  
Gapes, Mike  
Gardiner, Barry  
George, Ruth  
Gibson, Patricia  
Gill, Preet  
Glindon, Mary  
Godsiff, Mr Roger  
Goodman, Helen  
Grady, Patrick  
Grant, Peter  
Gray, Neil  
Green, Kate  
Greenwood, Lilian  
Greenwood, Margaret  
Griffith, Nia  
Grogan, John  
Gwynne, Andrew  
Haigh, Louise  
Hamilton, Fabian  
Hanson, rh David  
Hardy, Emma  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
Harris, Carolyn  
Hayes, Helen  
Hayman, Sue  
Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Mr Mark  
Hendry, Drew  
Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
Hill, Mike  
Hillier, Meg  
Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hollern, Kate  
Hopkins, Kelvin  
Hosie, Stewart  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hussain, Imran  
Jardine, Christine  
Jarvis, Dan  
Jones, Darren

Jones, Gerald  
Jones, Helen  
Jones, Mr Kevan  
Jones, Sarah  
Jones, Susan Elan  
Kane, Mike  
Kendall, Liz  
Khan, Afzal  
Killen, Gerard  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kyle, Peter  
Laird, Lesley  
Lake, Ben  
Lamb, rh Norman  
Lammy, rh Mr David  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Chris  
Lee, Ms Karen  
Leslie, Mr Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Lewis, Mr Ivan  
Linden, David  
Lloyd, Stephen  
Lloyd, Tony  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Caroline  
Lucas, Ian C.

Lynch, Holly  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema  
Marsden, Gordon  
Martin, Sandy  
Maskell, Rachael  
Mc Nally, John  
McDonagh, Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McDonnell, rh John  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McInnes, Liz  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Monaghan, Carol  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Moran, Layla  
Morden, Jessica  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Osamor, Kate  
Owen, Albert  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pidcock, Laura  
Platt, Jo

Pollard, Luke

Pound, Stephen  
Powell, Lucy  
Rashid, Faisal  
Rayner, Angela  
Reed, Mr Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
Rodda, Matt  
Rowley, Danielle  
Ruane, Chris  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Ryan, rh Joan  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Sherriff, Paula  
Shuker, Mr Gavin  
Skinner, Mr Dennis  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smeeth, Ruth  
Smith, Angela  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Eleanor  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, Laura  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Owen  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Starmer, rh Keir  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeting, Wes  
Stringer, Graham  
Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
Swinson, Jo  
Tami, Mark  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Turner, Karl  
Twigg, Derek  
Twigg, Stephen  
Twist, Liz  
Vaz, rh Keith  
Vaz, Valerie  
Walker, Thelma  
Watson, Tom  
Western, Matt  
Whitehead, Dr Alan  
Whitfield, Martin  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Williams, Hywel  
Williams, Dr Paul  
Williamson, Chris  
Wilson, Phil  
Wishart, Pete  
Woodcock, John  
Zeichner, Daniel  
**Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Vicky Foxcroft and  
Nic Dakin**

239

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

240

Adams, Nigel  
Afolami, Bim  
Afriyie, Adam  
Aldous, Peter  
Allan, Lucy  
Allen, Heidi  
Amess, Sir David  
Argar, Edward  
Atkins, Victoria  
Bacon, Mr Richard  
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
Baker, Mr Steve  
Baldwin, Harriett  
Barclay, Stephen  
Baron, Mr John  
Bebb, Guto  
Bellingham, Sir Henry  
Benyon, rh Richard  
Beresford, Sir Paul  
Berry, Jake  
Blackman, Bob  
Blunt, Crispin  
Bone, Mr Peter  
Bottomley, Sir Peter  
Bowie, Andrew  
Bradley, rh Karen  
Brady, Mr Graham  
Brereton, Jack  
Bridgen, Andrew  
Brine, Steve  
Brokenshire, rh James  
Bruce, Fiona  
Buckland, Robert  
Burghart, Alex  
Burns, Conor  
Burt, rh Alistair  
Cairns, rh Alun  
Cartlidge, James  
Cash, Sir William  
Caulfield, Maria  
Chalk, Alex  
Chishti, Rehman  
Chope, Mr Christopher  
Churchill, Jo  
Clark, Colin  
Clark, rh Greg  
Clarke, Mr Simon  
Cleverly, James  
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey  
Coffey, Dr Therese  
Collins, Damian  
Costa, Alberto  
Courts, Robert  
Cox, Mr Geoffrey  
Crabb, rh Stephen  
Crouch, Tracey  
Davies, Chris  
Davies, David T. C.  
Davies, Glyn  
Davies, Mims  
Davies, Philip  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Dinenage, Caroline  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
Docherty, Leo  
Dockerill, Julia  
Donelan, Michelle  
Dorries, Ms Nadine  
Double, Steve  
Dowden, Oliver  
Doyle-Price, Jackie

**NOES**

Drax, Richard  
Duddridge, James  
Duguid, David  
Duncan, rh Sir Alan  
Dunne, Mr Philip  
Ellis, Michael  
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
Elphicke, Charlie  
Eustice, George  
Evans, Mr Nigel  
Evennett, rh David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
Fernandes, Suella  
Field, rh Mark  
Ford, Vicky  
Foster, Kevin  
Fox,rhDrLiam  
Francois, rh Mr Mark  
Frazer, Lucy  
Freeman, George  
Freer, Mike  
Fysh, Mr Marcus  
Gale, Sir Roger  
Garnier, Mark  
Gauke, rh Mr David  
Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
Gibb, rh Nick  
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl  
Glen, John  
Goldsmith, Zac  
Goodwill, Mr Robert  
Gove, rh Michael  
Graham, Luke  
Graham, Richard  
Grant, Bill  
Grant, Mrs Helen  
Gray, James  
Grayling, rh Chris  
Green, Chris  
Green, rh Damian  
Greening, rh Justine  
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic  
Gyimah, Mr Sam  
Hair, Kirstene  
Halfon, rh Robert  
Hall, Luke  
Hammond, rh Mr Philip  
Hammond, Stephen  
Hancock, rh Matt  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harrington, Richard  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Simon  
Hayes, rh Mr John  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heappey, James  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Heaton-Jones, Peter  
Henderson, Gordon  
Herbert, rh Nick  
Hinds, Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollingbery, George  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Hollobone, Mr Philip  
Holloway, Adam  
Howell, John  
Huddleston, Nigel

Hughes, Eddie

Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy

Hurd, Mr Nick  
Jack, Mr Alister  
James, Margot  
Javid, rh Sajid  
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
Jenrick, Robert  
Johnson, rh Boris  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Johnson, Gareth  
Johnson, Joseph

Jones, Andrew  
Jones, rh Mr David  
Jones, Mr Marcus  
Kawczynski, Daniel  
Keegan, Gillian  
Kennedy, Seema

Kerr, Stephen

Knight, rh Sir Greg  
Knight, Julian  
Kwarteng, Kwasi  
Lamont, John  
Lancaster, Mark  
Latham, Mrs Pauline  
Leadsom, rh Andrea  
Lee, Dr Phillip  
Lefroy, Jeremy  
Leigh, Sir Edward  
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver  
Lewer, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Brandon  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
Lidington, rh Mr David  
Lord, Mr Jonathan  
Loughton, Tim  
Mackinlay, Craig  
Maclean, Rachel  
Main, Mrs Anne  
Mak, Alan  
Malthouse, Kit  
Mann, Scott  
Masterton, Paul  
May, rh Mrs Theresa  
Maynard, Paul  
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
McPartland, Stephen  
McVey, rh Ms Esther  
Menzies, Mark

Mercer, Johnny

Merriman, Huw  
Metcalfe, Stephen  
Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
Milling, Amanda  
Mills, Nigel  
Milton, rh Anne  
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
Moore, Damien  
Morgan, rh Nicky

Morris, David  
Morris, James

Morton, Wendy

Mundell, rh David  
Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
Murrison, Dr Andrew

Neill, Robert  
Newton, Sarah

Nokes, Caroline  
Norman, Jesse

O'Brien, Neil

Offord, Dr Matthew

Opperman, Guy

Parish, Neil

Patel, rh Priti

Paterson, rh Mr Owen

Pawsey, Mark

Penning, rh Mike

Penrose, John

Percy, Andrew

Perry, Claire

Philp, Chris

Pincher, Christopher

Poulter, Dr Dan

Pow, Rebecca

Prentis, Victoria

Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark

Pursglove, Tom

Quin, Jeremy

Quince, Will

Raab, Dominic

Redwood, rh John

Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob

Robertson, Mr Laurence

Robinson, Mary

Rosindell, Andrew

Ross, Douglas

Rowley, Lee

Rudd, rh Amber

Rutley, David

Sandbach, Antoinette

Scully, Paul

Seely, Mr Bob

Selous, Andrew

Shapps, rh Grant

Sharma, Alok

Shelbrooke, Alec

Simpson, rh Mr Keith

Skidmore, Chris

Smith, Chloe

Smith, Henry

Smith, Julian

Smith, Royston

Soames, rh Sir Nicholas

Soubry, rh Anna

Spelman, rh Dame Caroline

Spencer, Mark

Stephenson, Andrew

Stevenson, John

Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain

Stewart, Rory

Streeter, Mr Gary

Stride, rh Mel

Stuart, Graham

Sturdy, Julian

Sunak, Rishi

Swayne, rh Sir Desmond

Swire, rh Sir Hugo

Syms, Mr Robert

Thomas, Derek

Thomson, Ross

Throup, Maggie

Tolhurst, Kelly

Tomlinson, Justin

Tomlinson, Michael

Tracey, Craig

Tredinnick, David

Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie

Truss, rh Elizabeth

Tugendhat, Tom

Vara, Mr Shailesh

241

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

242

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vickers, Martin | Wiggin, Bill |
| Villiers, rh Theresa | Williamson, rh Gavin |
| Walker, Mr Charles | Wilson, Sammy |
| Walker, Mr Robin | Wollaston, Dr Sarah |
| Wallace, rh Mr Ben | Wood, Mike |
| Warman, Matt | Wragg, Mr William |
| Watling, Giles | Wright, rh Jeremy |
| Whately, Helen | Zahawi, Nadhim |
| Wheeler, Mrs Heather | **Tellers for the Noes** |
| Whittaker, Craig | **Stuart Andrew and** |
| Whittingdale, rh Mr John | **Andrew Griffiths** |

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**Clause 2**AIR TRAVEL TRUST

**Patricia Gibson:** I beg to move amendment 1,  
page 2, line 10, at end insert—

‘(8) Regulations under subsection (6) may not be laid before  
Parliament until the Secretary of State has published an  
assessment of their impact and has launched a consultation on  
the proposed amendments to the definition of “Air Travel  
Trust.””

*This amendment requires the Secretary of State to undertake an  
impact assessment and launch a consultation before bringing  
forward any regulations to amend the definition of Air Travel Trust  
under this Act.*

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):**With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 3, page 2, line 10, at end insert —

‘(8) Before laying regulations under subsection (6), the  
Secretary of State must publish a full impact assessment and  
consult on the proposals.”

*This amendment would require the Government to undertake a full  
impact assessment and consultation before bringing forward  
regulations to create any new air travel trusts through an  
affirmative resolution.*

Clause stand part.

**Patricia Gibson:** Amendment 1, which stands in my  
name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), would require  
the Government to undertake a full impact assessment  
and consultation before introducing any regulations to  
amend the definition of air travel trust under the Bill.  
Clause 2 requires that—*[Interruption.]*

**The Chairman:** Order. There is a lot of conversation.  
I really am struggling to hear, and I am not sure  
whether the mic is picking up this speech. Would hon.  
Members please have their conversations when they  
have left the Chamber?

**Patricia Gibson:** Clause 2 requires only that the Secretary  
of State has an affirmative resolution from each House  
of Parliament, but that is not enough. The Government  
should be required to conduct a proper consultation  
and assess the potential impact of any proposed changes  
to the ATOL scheme and air travel trust that they  
intend to introduce through secondary legislation. Any  
proposals must be fully transparent, and consumers  
and businesses alike must be formally consulted in the

process to allow for proper scrutiny. We trust that the  
Minister will accept that and our reasons for tabling  
the amendment.

**Mr John Hayes:** I can satisfy the hon. Lady entirely. I  
fully intend to ensure exactly what she asked for: full  
consultation and a comprehensive impact assessment in  
respect of any regulations to be made under these  
measures. On that basis, I hope she will withdraw the  
amendment. If she does not, she will look rather daft.

**Karl Turner:** We will press amendment 3 to a Division.  
We seek a commitment that the Minister gave in the  
Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill Committee—that  
the Government would conduct a thorough impact  
assessment and consultation before implementing the  
power. Clause 2 relates to the Air Travel Trust, which is  
the legal vehicle that holds the money that is then used  
to refund consumers under ATOL protections. It gives  
the Secretary of State the power to define separate trust  
arrangementstoreflectdifferentmarketmodels,prefiguring  
some of the changes in the package holiday market  
mentioned by the Minister.

Amendment 3 would require the Government to  
undertakeafullandproperreview,andpublicconsultation,  
before introducing any of the changes that would be  
enabled under the powers in clause 2. Unlike clause 1,  
clause 2 does not seem directly relevant to harmonising  
EU and UK regulations. Instead, it is a dormant power  
that the Government will retain in order to make  
considerable changes to ATOL, and particularly to the  
Air Travel Trust. That is where Brexit comes in because,  
were such changes to happen, they would most likely be  
in the event of the UK leaving the European Union.

During one of the VTABCommittee evidence sessions,  
Richard Moriarty of the Civil Aviation Authority—a  
trustee of the current Air Travel Trust—said that he  
recognised the possible merits of separating the trust to  
reflect the variations of products in the market. However,  
he explained that we simply are not there yet, and that it  
would be wrong for the Government to use the Bill as a  
means of making wholesale changes without due  
consultation. The Minister made it clear in a letter to  
my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Andy  
McDonald) that changes would be made only through  
the affirmative procedure, yet the Bill does not account  
for any further consultation as part of this measure.

The Government's impact assessment explicitly states  
that it

“does not consider proposals for ATOL reform, beyond what is  
required”

in the package travel directive. It would therefore be  
rather inappropriate for the Minister to go beyond that,  
without providing assurances that proper consultation  
and scrutiny will take place if the Government are  
minded to go beyond changes that were already envisaged.

During the VTAB evidence session, Mr Moriarty  
said that he hoped the Government would

“follow the practice that they have followed today: consult with  
us, consult the industry, do the impact assessment, and so on.”  
Amendment 3 simply says that. It is fair and reasonable  
and would guarantee scrutiny of further changes that  
may come down the track regarding ATOL protection.

243

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

244

**Patricia Gibson:** In the light of the Minister's assurances  
to the House, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendment proposed*: 3, page 2, line 10, at end insert

“(8) Before laying regulations under subsection (6), the  
Secretary of State must publish a full impact assessment and  
consult on the proposals.” —*(Karl Turner.)*

*This amendment would require the Government to undertake a full  
impact assessment and consultation before bringing forward  
regulations to create any new air travel trusts through an  
affirmative resolution.*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 274, Noes 307.

**Division No. 6] [5.44 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Alexander, Heidi  
Ali, Rushanara  
Amesbury, Mike  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Austin, Ian  
Bailey, Mr Adrian  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Blackford, Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
Blomfield, Paul  
Brabin, Tracy  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brake, rh Tom  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre

Brown, Alan  
Brown, Lyn

Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris

Buck, Ms Karen  
Burgon, Richard  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cable, rh Sir Vince  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Chapman, Jenny  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Coaker, Vernon  
Coffey, Ann

Cooper, Julie  
Cooper, Rosie

Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil

Crausby, Sir David  
Creagh, Mary

Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon

Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Cunningham, Mr Jim  
Dakin, Nic  
Davey, rh Sir Edward  
David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
De Piero, Gloria  
Debbonaire, Thangam  
Dent Coad, Emma  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Drew, Dr David  
Dromey, Jack  
Duffield, Rosie  
Eagle, Ms Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Ellman, Mrs Louise  
Elmore, Chris  
Esterson, Bill  
Evans, Chris  
Farrelly, Paul  
Farron, Tim  
Field, rh Frank  
Fitzpatrick, Jim  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flint, rh Caroline  
Flynn, Paul  
Fovargue, Yvonne  
Frith, James  
Furniss, Gill  
Gaffney, Hugh  
Gapes, Mike  
Gardiner, Barry  
George, Ruth  
Gibson, Patricia  
Gill, Preet  
Glindon, Mary  
Godsiff, Mr Roger  
Goodman, Helen  
Grady, Patrick  
Grant, Peter  
Gray, Neil

Green, Kate

Greenwood, Lilian  
Greenwood, Margaret

Griffith, Nia

Grogan, John

Gwynne, Andrew

Haigh, Louise

Hamilton, Fabian

Hanson, rh David

Hardy, Emma  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet

Harris, Carolyn

Hayes, Helen  
Hayman, Sue

Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Mr Mark

Hendry, Drew

Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
Hermon, Lady

Hill, Mike

Hillier, Meg

Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon

Hollern, Kate

Hopkins, Kelvin

Huq, Dr Rupa

Hussain, Imran

Jardine, Christine

Jarvis, Dan

Jones, Darren

Jones, Gerald

Jones, Helen

Jones, Mr Kevan

Jones, Sarah

Jones, Susan Elan

Kane, Mike

Kendall, Liz

Khan, Afzal

Killen, Gerard

Kinnock, Stephen

Kyle, Peter

Laird, Lesley

Lake, Ben

Lamb, rh Norman

Lammy, rh Mr David  
Lavery, Ian

Law, Chris

Lee, Ms Karen

Leslie, Mr Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma

Lewis, Clive

Lewis, Mr Ivan

Linden, David

Lloyd, Stephen

Lloyd, Tony

Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Ian C.

Lynch, Holly

Madders, Justin

Mahmood, Mr Khalid

Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema

Marsden, Gordon

Martin, Sandy  
Maskell, Rachael

Mc Nally, John

McCabe, Steve

McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonagh, Siobhain

McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.

McDonnell, rh John  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McInnes, Liz  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Monaghan, Carol  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Moran, Layla  
Morden, Jessica  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Onasanya, Fiona  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Osamor, Kate  
Owen, Albert  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pidcock, Laura  
Platt, Jo  
Pollard, Luke  
Pound, Stephen  
Powell, Lucy  
Rashid, Faisal  
Rayner, Angela  
Reed, Mr Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
Rodda, Matt  
Rowley, Danielle  
Ruane, Chris  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Ryan, rh Joan  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Sherriff, Paula  
Shuker, Mr Gavin  
Skinner, Mr Dennis  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smeeth, Ruth  
Smith, Angela  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Eleanor  
Smith, Laura  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Owen  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Starmer, rh Keir  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeting, Wes  
Stringer, Graham

245

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

246

Sweeney, Mr Paul J.

Swinson, Jo

Tami, Mark

Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Turner, Karl

Twigg, Derek

Twigg, Stephen

Twist, Liz

Vaz, rh Keith

Vaz, Valerie  
Walker, Thelma  
Western, Matt

Adams, Nigel  
Afolami, Bim  
Afriyie, Adam  
Aldous, Peter  
Allan, Lucy  
Allen, Heidi  
Amess, Sir David  
Argar, Edward  
Atkins, Victoria  
Bacon, Mr Richard  
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
Baker, Mr Steve  
Baldwin, Harriett  
Barclay, Stephen  
Baron, Mr John  
Bebb, Guto  
Bellingham, Sir Henry  
Benyon, rh Richard  
Beresford, Sir Paul  
Berry, Jake  
Blackman, Bob  
Blunt, Crispin  
Bone, Mr Peter  
Bottomley, Sir Peter  
Bowie, Andrew  
Bradley, Ben  
Bradley, rh Karen  
Brady, Mr Graham  
Brereton, Jack  
Bridgen, Andrew  
Brine, Steve  
Brokenshire, rh James  
Bruce, Fiona  
Buckland, Robert  
Burghart, Alex  
Burns, Conor  
Burt, rh Alistair  
Cairns, rh Alun  
Cartlidge, James  
Cash, Sir William  
Caulfield, Maria  
Chalk, Alex  
Chishti, Rehman  
Chope, Mr Christopher  
Churchill, Jo  
Clark, Colin  
Clark, rh Greg  
Clarke, Mr Simon  
Cleverly, James  
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey  
Coffey, Dr Therese  
Collins, Damian

Costa, Alberto  
Courts, Robert

Whitehead, Dr Alan  
Whitfield, Martin  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Williams, Hywel  
Williams, Dr Paul  
Williamson, Chris  
Wilson, Phil

Wishart, Pete

Woodcock, John  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:  
Vicky Foxcroft and  
Jeff Smith**

**NOES**

Cox, Mr Geoffrey  
Crabb, rh Stephen  
Crouch, Tracey

Davies, Chris

Davies, David T. C.

Davies, Glyn

Davies, Mims

Davies, Philip  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Dinenage, Caroline  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan

Docherty, Leo

Dockerill, Julia  
Donelan, Michelle  
Dorries, Ms Nadine

Double, Steve

Dowden, Oliver  
Doyle-Price, Jackie

Drax, Richard  
Duddridge, James

Duguid, David  
Duncan, rh Sir Alan

Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
Dunne, Mr Philip

Ellis, Michael  
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
Elphicke, Charlie  
Eustice, George  
Evans, Mr Nigel  
Evennett, rh David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
Fernandes, Suella  
Field, rh Mark

Ford, Vicky

Foster, Kevin  
Fox,rhDrLiam  
Francois, rh Mr Mark

Frazer, Lucy

Freeman, George  
Freer, Mike  
Fysh, Mr Marcus  
Gale, Sir Roger

Garnier, Mark  
Gauke, rh Mr David  
Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
Gibb, rh Nick

Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl

Glen, John  
Goldsmith, Zac  
Goodwill, Mr Robert  
Gove, rh Michael  
Graham, Luke

Graham, Richard

Grant, Bill  
Grant, Mrs Helen

Gray, James  
Grayling, rh Chris  
Green, Chris  
Green, rh Damian  
Greening, rh Justine  
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic  
Gyimah, Mr Sam  
Hair, Kirstene  
Halfon, rh Robert  
Hall, Luke

Hammond, rh Mr Philip  
Hammond, Stephen  
Hancock, rh Matt  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harrington, Richard  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Simon  
Hayes, rh Mr John  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heappey, James  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Heaton-Jones, Peter  
Henderson, Gordon  
Herbert, rh Nick  
Hinds, Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollingbery, George  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Hollobone, Mr Philip  
Holloway, Adam  
Howell, John  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Hughes, Eddie  
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy  
Hurd, Mr Nick  
Jack, Mr Alister  
James, Margot  
Javid, rh Sajid  
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
Jenrick, Robert  
Johnson, rh Boris  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Johnson, Gareth  
Johnson, Joseph  
Jones, Andrew  
Jones, rh Mr David  
Jones, Mr Marcus  
Kawczynski, Daniel  
Keegan, Gillian  
Kennedy, Seema

Kerr, Stephen  
Knight, rh Sir Greg  
Knight, Julian  
Kwarteng, Kwasi  
Lamont, John  
Lancaster, Mark  
Latham, Mrs Pauline  
Leadsom, rh Andrea  
Lee, Dr Phillip  
Lefroy, Jeremy  
Leigh, Sir Edward  
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver  
Lewer, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Brandon  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
Lidington, rh Mr David

Lord, Mr Jonathan  
Loughton, Tim  
Mackinlay, Craig  
Maclean, Rachel  
Main, Mrs Anne

Mak, Alan

Malthouse, Kit

Mann, Scott

Masterton, Paul

May, rh Mrs Theresa

Maynard, Paul

McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
McPartland, Stephen  
McVey, rh Ms Esther  
Menzies, Mark

Mercer, Johnny

Merriman, Huw  
Metcalfe, Stephen  
Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
Milling, Amanda

Mills, Nigel

Milton, rh Anne  
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
Moore, Damien

Morgan, rh Nicky

Morris, David

Morris, James

Morton, Wendy

Mundell, rh David

Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
Murrison, Dr Andrew

Neill, Robert

Newton, Sarah

Nokes, Caroline

Norman, Jesse

O'Brien, Neil

Offord, Dr Matthew

Opperman, Guy

Parish, Neil

Patel, rh Priti

Paterson, rh Mr Owen

Pawsey, Mark

Penning, rh Mike

Penrose, John

Percy, Andrew

Perry, Claire

Philp, Chris

Pincher, Christopher  
Poulter, Dr Dan

Pow, Rebecca

Prentis, Victoria

Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark

Pursglove, Tom

Quin, Jeremy

Quince, Will

Raab, Dominic

Redwood, rh John

Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob

Robertson, Mr Laurence

Robinson, Mary

Rosindell, Andrew

Ross, Douglas

Rowley, Lee

Rudd, rh Amber

Rutley, David

Sandbach, Antoinette  
Scully, Paul

Seely, Mr Bob

Selous, Andrew

Shapps, rh Grant  
Sharma, Alok

247

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

248

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Shelbrooke, Alec | Tracey, Craig |
| Simpson, rh Mr Keith | Tredinnick, David |
| Skidmore, Chris | Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie |
| Smith, Chloe | Truss, rh Elizabeth |
| Smith, Henry | Tugendhat, Tom |
| Smith, Julian | Vaizey, rh Mr Edward |
| Smith, Royston | Vara, Mr Shailesh |
| Soames, rh Sir Nicholas | Vickers, Martin |
| Soubry, rh Anna | Villiers, rh Theresa |
| Spelman, rh Dame Caroline | Walker, Mr Charles |
| Spencer, Mark | Walker, Mr Robin |
| Stephenson, Andrew | Wallace, rh Mr Ben |
| Stevenson, John | Warman, Matt |
| Stewart, Bob | Watling, Giles |
| Stewart, Iain | Whately, Helen |
| Stewart, Rory | Wheeler, Mrs Heather |
| Streeter, Mr Gary | Whittaker, Craig |
| Stride, rh Mel | Whittingdale, rh Mr John |
| Stuart, Graham | Wiggin, Bill |
| Sturdy, Julian | Williamson, rh Gavin |
| Sunak, Rishi | Wilson, Sammy |
| Swayne, rh Sir Desmond Swire, rh Sir Hugo Syms, Mr Robert Thomas, Derek Thomson, Ross  Throup, Maggie | Wollaston, Dr Sarah Wood, Mike Wragg, Mr William Wright, rh Jeremy Zahawi, Nadhim |
| Tolhurst, Kelly | **Tellers for the Noes:** |

Tomlinson, Justin

Tomlinson, Michael

**Andrew Griffiths and  
Stuart Andrew**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 3 and 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

New Clause 1

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF LEAVING THE EU ON CONSUMER  
PROTECTION UNDER THE ATOL SCHEME

(1) The Secretary of State must carry out an assessment of the  
potential impact of the UK's exit from the European Union on  
consumer protection under the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing  
scheme and the Air Travel Trust.

just as has happened during our EU membership. The  
UK cannot be left behind, stagnating in a post-Brexit  
world.

New clause 1 is an extremely important move to  
provide some comfort and confidence to consumers; a  
lack of guarantees will otherwise leave passengers vulnerable  
and might put people off booking holidays. That could  
only be bad news for our outbound tourism economy,  
which is so vital for jobs in Scotland and the rest of the  
UK. We intend to press the new clause to a Division.

6pm

**Mr John Hayes:** As I did with the amendments, I start  
by saying that I fully endorse, and indeed support, the  
purpose of the new clause. By the way, I am grateful to  
thehon.MemberforNorthAyrshireandArran(Patricia  
Gibson) for withdrawing her earlier amendment following  
the assurances that I gave her. I say to the hon. Member  
for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) that I am  
fully committed to full consultation and a full impact  
assessment on the regulations as they are rolled out as a  
result of the Bill.

The point is that the ATOL legislation is not dependent  
on the package travel directive. The Bill will harmonise  
ATOL with the package travel directive in the immediate  
term. As I made clear earlier, ATOL legislation and  
protection will remain in place as we leave the European  
Union. They are made by, framed in and supported by  
domestic legislation.

Although I understand the point that the hon. Member  
for North Ayrshire and Arran makes, I have to tell her  
that the new clause is unnecessary, because ATOL is  
enshrined in an Act of this Parliament, and only this  
Parliament can change that. Mindful of that; mindful  
of the assurances that I have given about consultation,  
further review and impact assessments, which I repeat;  
mindful of the fact that, as I have mentioned, there will  
be a review of all these matters; and given what I have  
said about ATIPAC, I hope that she might withdraw the  
new clause.

(2) The Secretary of State must lay a report of the assessment  
before Parliament within 12 months of the passing of this Act,  
and once in each calendar year thereafter.—*(Patricia Gibson.)*

*This new clause would require the Government to report regularly  
on the effect of Brexit on consumer protection under the ATOL  
scheme and to report annually on the progress that is made.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Patricia Gibson:** I beg to move, That the clause be  
read a Second time.

The new clause stands in my name and that of my  
hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun  
(Alan Brown). It would require the UK Government to  
report regularly on the effect of Brexit on consumer  
protection under the ATOL scheme and to report annually  
on the progress they have made.

Brexit throws up great uncertainties, not least in the  
aviation sector with regard to passenger rights,  
compensation schemes and how much change and/or  
stability can be expected. There is also the question of  
how EU airlines and passengers may be affected. The  
overriding concern about the Bill, welcome as it is, is  
that consumer protections must be safeguarded and,  
furthermore, that such protections must continue to be  
enhanced and updated as society and technology evolve,

**Karl Turner:** New clause 1 seems eminently sensible.  
These consumer protection measures require an assessment,  
so we will support the new clause.

*Question put,* That the clause be read a Second time.

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 273, Noes 308.

**Division No. 7]**

**[6.1 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Alexander, Heidi  
Ali, Rushanara  
Amesbury, Mike  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Austin, Ian  
Bailey, Mr Adrian  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Blackford, Ian  
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
Blomfield, Paul

Brabin, Tracy

Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brake, rh Tom  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre

Brown, Alan

Brown, Lyn

Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris

Buck, Ms Karen  
Burgon, Richard  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cable, rh Sir Vince  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
Carden, Dan

249

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

250

Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Chapman, Jenny  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Clwyd, rh Ann  
Coaker, Vernon  
Coffey, Ann  
Cooper, Rosie  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil  
Crausby, Sir David  
Creagh, Mary  
Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Cunningham, Mr Jim  
Dakin, Nic  
Davey, rh Sir Edward  
David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
De Piero, Gloria  
Debbonaire, Thangam  
Dent Coad, Emma  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Drew, Dr David  
Dromey, Jack  
Duffield, Rosie  
Eagle, Ms Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Ellman, Mrs Louise  
Elmore, Chris  
Esterson, Bill  
Evans, Chris  
Farrelly, Paul  
Farron, Tim  
Field, rh Frank  
Fitzpatrick, Jim  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flint, rh Caroline  
Flynn, Paul  
Fovargue, Yvonne  
Foxcroft, Vicky  
Frith, James  
Furniss, Gill  
Gaffney, Hugh  
Gapes, Mike  
Gardiner, Barry  
George, Ruth  
Gibson, Patricia  
Gill, Preet  
Glindon, Mary  
Godsiff, Mr Roger  
Goodman, Helen  
Grady, Patrick  
Grant, Peter  
Gray, Neil  
Green, Kate  
Greenwood, Lilian

Greenwood, Margaret  
Griffith, Nia

Grogan, John  
Gwynne, Andrew

Haigh, Louise  
Hamilton, Fabian  
Hanson, rh David

Hardy, Emma  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet

Harris, Carolyn  
Hayes, Helen  
Hayman, Sue  
Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Mr Mark

Hendry, Drew  
Hepburn, Mr Stephen

Hermon, Lady

Hill, Mike

Hillier, Meg

Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hollern, Kate

Hopkins, Kelvin  
Hosie, Stewart  
Huq, Dr Rupa

Hussain, Imran  
Jardine, Christine

Jarvis, Dan  
Jones, Darren

Jones, Gerald

Jones, Helen

Jones, Mr Kevan

Jones, Sarah

Jones, Susan Elan  
Kane, Mike

Kendall, Liz  
Khan, Afzal

Killen, Gerard  
Kinnock, Stephen

Kyle, Peter  
Laird, Lesley

Lake, Ben  
Lamb, rh Norman  
Lammy, rh Mr David  
Lavery, Ian

Law, Chris  
Lee, Ms Karen  
Leslie, Mr Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Lewis, Mr Ivan  
Lloyd, Tony

Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Ian C.

Lynch, Holly  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema  
Marsden, Gordon

Martin, Sandy  
Maskell, Rachael

Mc Nally, John  
McCabe, Steve  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonagh, Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McDonnell, rh John  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor

McGovern, Alison  
McInnes, Liz  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Monaghan, Carol  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Moran, Layla  
Morden, Jessica  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Onasanya, Fiona  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Osamor, Kate  
Owen, Albert  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pidcock, Laura  
Platt, Jo  
Pollard, Luke  
Pound, Stephen  
Powell, Lucy  
Rashid, Faisal  
Rayner, Angela  
Reed, Mr Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
Rodda, Matt  
Rowley, Danielle  
Ruane, Chris  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Ryan, rh Joan  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Sherriff, Paula  
Shuker, Mr Gavin

Adams, Nigel  
Afolami, Bim  
Afriyie, Adam  
Aldous, Peter

Allan, Lucy  
Allen, Heidi

Amess, Sir David  
Argar, Edward  
Atkins, Victoria  
Bacon, Mr Richard  
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
Baker, Mr Steve  
Baldwin, Harriett  
Barclay, Stephen  
Baron, Mr John  
Bebb, Guto  
Bellingham, Sir Henry  
Benyon, rh Richard  
Beresford, Sir Paul

Skinner, Mr Dennis  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smeeth, Ruth  
Smith, Angela  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Eleanor  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, Laura  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Owen  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Sobel, Alex  
Starmer, rh Keir  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeting, Wes  
Stringer, Graham  
Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
Swinson, Jo  
Tami, Mark  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Turner, Karl  
Twigg, Derek  
Twigg, Stephen  
Twist, Liz  
Vaz, rh Keith  
Vaz, Valerie  
Walker, Thelma  
Western, Matt  
Whitehead, Dr Alan  
Whitfield, Martin  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Williams, Hywel  
Williams, Dr Paul  
Williamson, Chris  
Wilson, Phil  
Wishart, Pete  
Woodcock, John  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Zeichner, Daniel  
**Tellers for the Ayes:  
Kirsty Blackman and  
David Linden**

**NOES**

Berry, Jake  
Blackman, Bob  
Blunt, Crispin  
Bone, Mr Peter  
Bottomley, Sir Peter  
Bowie, Andrew  
Bradley, Ben  
Bradley, rh Karen  
Brady, Mr Graham  
Brereton, Jack  
Bridgen, Andrew  
Brine, Steve  
Brokenshire, rh James  
Bruce, Fiona  
Buckland, Robert  
Burghart, Alex  
Burns, Conor  
Burt, rh Alistair  
Cairns, rh Alun

251

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

252

Cartlidge, James  
Cash, Sir William  
Caulfield, Maria

Chalk, Alex

Chishti, Rehman

Chope, Mr Christopher  
Churchill, Jo

Clark, Colin

Clark, rh Greg  
Clarke, Mr Simon  
Cleverly, James  
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey

Coffey, Dr Therese

Collins, Damian

Costa, Alberto

Courts, Robert  
Cox, Mr Geoffrey

Crabb, rh Stephen

Crouch, Tracey

Davies, Chris

Davies, David T. C.

Davies, Glyn

Davies, Mims

Davies, Philip  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Dinenage, Caroline  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan

Docherty, Leo

Dockerill, Julia  
Donelan, Michelle

Dorries, Ms Nadine  
Double, Steve

Dowden, Oliver  
Doyle-Price, Jackie

Drax, Richard  
Duddridge, James

Duguid, David  
Duncan, rh Sir Alan

Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
Dunne, Mr Philip

Ellis, Michael

Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias

Elphicke, Charlie

Eustice, George

Evans, Mr Nigel  
Evennett, rh David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
Fernandes, Suella  
Field, rh Mark

Ford, Vicky

Foster, Kevin  
Fox,rhDrLiam

Francois, rh Mr Mark  
Frazer, Lucy

Freeman, George  
Freer, Mike

Fysh, Mr Marcus

Gale, Sir Roger

Garnier, Mark  
Gauke, rh Mr David  
Ghani, Ms Nusrat

Gibb, rh Nick

Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl

Glen, John

Goldsmith, Zac  
Goodwill, Mr Robert

Gove, rh Michael

Graham, Luke

Graham, Richard

Grant, Bill

Grant, Mrs Helen

Gray, James  
Grayling, rh Chris  
Green, Chris  
Green, rh Damian  
Greening, rh Justine  
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic  
Gyimah, Mr Sam  
Hair, Kirstene  
Halfon, rh Robert  
Hall, Luke

Hammond, rh Mr Philip  
Hammond, Stephen  
Hancock, rh Matt  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harrington, Richard  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Simon  
Hayes, rh Mr John  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heappey, James  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Heaton-Jones, Peter  
Henderson, Gordon  
Herbert, rh Nick  
Hinds, Damian  
Hoare, Simon  
Hollingbery, George  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Hollobone, Mr Philip  
Holloway, Adam  
Howell, John  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Hughes, Eddie  
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy  
Hurd, Mr Nick  
Jack, Mr Alister  
James, Margot  
Javid, rh Sajid  
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
Jenrick, Robert  
Johnson, rh Boris  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Johnson, Gareth  
Johnson, Joseph  
Jones, Andrew  
Jones, rh Mr David  
Jones, Mr Marcus  
Kawczynski, Daniel  
Keegan, Gillian  
Kennedy, Seema  
Kerr, Stephen  
Knight, rh Sir Greg  
Knight, Julian  
Kwarteng, Kwasi  
Lamont, John  
Lancaster, Mark  
Latham, Mrs Pauline  
Leadsom, rh Andrea  
Lee, Dr Phillip  
Lefroy, Jeremy  
Leigh, Sir Edward  
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver  
Lewer, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Brandon  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
Lidington, rh Mr David  
Lord, Mr Jonathan  
Loughton, Tim

Mackinlay, Craig

Maclean, Rachel

Main, Mrs Anne

Mak, Alan

Malthouse, Kit

Mann, Scott

Masterton, Paul

May, rh Mrs Theresa

Maynard, Paul  
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
McPartland, Stephen

McVey, rh Ms Esther

Menzies, Mark

Mercer, Johnny

Merriman, Huw

Metcalfe, Stephen

Miller, rh Mrs Maria

Milling, Amanda

Mills, Nigel

Milton, rh Anne

Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew

Moore, Damien

Mordaunt, Penny

Morgan, rh Nicky

Morris, David

Morris, James

Morton, Wendy

Mundell, rh David

Murray, Mrs Sheryll

Murrison, Dr Andrew

Neill, Robert

Newton, Sarah

Nokes, Caroline

Norman, Jesse

O'Brien, Neil

Offord, Dr Matthew

Opperman, Guy

Parish, Neil

Patel, rh Priti

Paterson, rh Mr Owen

Pawsey, Mark

Penning, rh Mike

Penrose, John

Percy, Andrew

Perry, Claire

Philp, Chris

Pincher, Christopher

Poulter, Dr Dan

Pow, Rebecca

Prentis, Victoria

Prisk, Mr Mark

Pritchard, Mark

Pursglove, Tom

Quin, Jeremy

Quince, Will

Raab, Dominic

Redwood, rh John

Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob

Robertson, Mr Laurence

Robinson, Mary

Rosindell, Andrew

Ross, Douglas

Rowley, Lee

Rudd, rh Amber

Rutley, David

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.*

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

*Third Reading*

Sandbach, Antoinette

Scully, Paul

Seely, Mr Bob

Selous, Andrew

Shapps, rh Grant

Sharma, Alok

Shelbrooke, Alec

Simpson, rh Mr Keith

Skidmore, Chris

Smith, Chloe

Smith, Henry

Smith, Julian

Smith, Royston

Soames, rh Sir Nicholas

Soubry, rh Anna

Spelman, rh Dame Caroline  
Spencer, Mark  
Stephenson, Andrew

Stevenson, John

Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain

Streeter, Mr Gary

Stride, rh Mel

Stuart, Graham

Sturdy, Julian

Sunak, Rishi

Swayne, rh Sir Desmond

Swire, rh Sir Hugo

Syms, Mr Robert

Thomas, Derek

Thomson, Ross

Throup, Maggie

Tolhurst, Kelly

Tomlinson, Justin

Tomlinson, Michael

Tracey, Craig

Tredinnick, David  
Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie

Truss, rh Elizabeth

Tugendhat, Tom

Vaizey, rh Mr Edward

Vara, Mr Shailesh

Vickers, Martin

Villiers, rh Theresa

Walker, Mr Charles

Walker, Mr Robin

Wallace, rh Mr Ben

Warman, Matt

Watling, Giles

Whately, Helen

Wheeler, Mrs Heather

Whittaker, Craig

Whittingdale, rh Mr John

Wiggin, Bill

Williamson, rh Gavin

Wilson, Sammy

Wollaston, Dr Sarah

Wood, Mike

Wragg, Mr William

Wright, rh Jeremy

Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**

**Andrew Griffiths and**

**Stuart Andrew**

253

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

254

6.15 pm

**Mr John Hayes:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now  
read the Third time.

What a pleasure it is to move the motion for the  
Third Reading of this important Bill, and to do so in  
the knowledge that it will be considered in the spirit that  
it deserves. We have had a properly reasoned, measured  
and sensible debate about its provisions, and I am  
grateful to Members on both sides of the House for  
contributing to that process. I did think it a little unnecessary  
for us to vote once or twice earlier, but let us put that to  
one side, because I fully appreciate that the Opposition  
must do their job, if only to maintain the declining  
morale of a parliamentary party that knows it is no  
nearer to power now than it was a week, a month or a  
year ago. *[Interruption.]* But let us put that to one side.

This is an important piece of legislation, which, as we  
have said repeatedly, brings up to date and up to speed  
the arrangements under the ATOL scheme which protect  
travellers. Those arrangements have been proved to be  
effective time and again. They are necessary and desirable,  
as has been acknowledged throughout our considerations.  
Benjamin Disraeli, of whom we have heard too little  
this afternoon, said:

“Like all great travellers, I have seen more than I remember,  
and remember more than I have seen.”

What I will remember of today's considerations is that,  
as I have said, they have been conducted in the way in  
which Parliament should consider all such matters.

I am entirely confident that the Bill, as it proceeds,  
will continue to provide the necessary reassurance for  
travellers and the necessary measures for businesses,  
and that, in those terms, it will do the Government and  
the House proud. It is right for Governments to act in  
the interests of the common good, for that is enshrined  
in all that we are in my party, and I hope that other  
parties in the House will gradually, over time, learn  
from that. I entirely welcome the way in which we have  
dealt with these matters, and I look forward to further  
consideration of them once the Bill becomes law. As I  
said again today, I am committed to reviewing the position  
thoroughly, and when the regulations come before the  
House—I repeat this, because I think it important to  
emphasise and amplify it—we will review the implications  
in the way recommended by the House.

We can be proud of the Bill. I am sure that it is not  
just fit for purpose, but necessary, desirable and efficacious.

6.17 pm

**Karl Turner:** The Labour party supports the Bill, and  
we will vote in support of it. There are, however, some  
concerns about the impact of some parts of it, which we  
expressed when the clauses were first debated as part of  
the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill and again  
throughout the passage of this Bill. We hope that the  
Minister has taken on board the points raised by Labour  
and echoed by the Scottish National party, who re-tabled  
Labour's amendments to VTAB in Committee. As the  
House will know, the Prime Minister has asked the  
Opposition to help the Government by providing some  
policy suggestions. However, it seems that SNP Members  
are not even asking for help, but are simply taking  
Labour's policy ideas as their own. We should probably  
take that as a compliment.

We support the Bill because it brings ATOL up to  
date and will ensure that it is harmonised with the latest  
European Union package travel directive, extending to  
a wider range of holidays and protecting more consumers,  
as well as allowing United Kingdom travel companies  
to sell more seamlessly across Europe. While we harbour  
some real concerns over whether UK consumers will be  
sufficiently protected by EU-based companies, as they  
will no longer be subject to ATOL but to member state  
equivalents, we welcome changes that will ultimately  
help to protect more holidaymakers.

The implications for ATOL after Brexit are also a  
cause for concern. Hidden in the Bill are proposals that  
the Secretary of State should require only an affirmative  
resolution to significantly reform ATOL and the air  
travel trust fund. Labour recognises the merits of some  
reforms, but we believe that an impact assessment, full  
consultation and full scrutiny should have been required  
before any fundamental changes are made to these  
consumer protections.

These issues bring to the forefront uncertainties over  
the future of UK aviation following the decision to  
leave the EU. The Labour party has been clear that,  
whichever framework is chosen by the Government, we  
should prioritise retaining an essentially unchanged  
operating environment. They should prioritise air service  
agreements as part of exit negotiations. As is customary,  
such agreements should be negotiated separately from,  
and prior to, the UK's negotiations on trade with the  
EU. The Government must not waste the opportunity  
this Bill presents to clarify their intended future  
arrangements for our aviation industry.

The UK aviation sector is the largest in Europe and  
the third largest in the world, supporting 1 million jobs  
and bringing £9 billion into the Treasury in tax receipts.  
Over a quarter of a billion passengers were transported  
in 2015. But aviation also provides a network infrastructure  
that enables other industries to do well. Half a million  
jobs in the UK tourism industry are supported by  
aviation, and 40% of UK imports and exports by value  
go via UK airports. The EU is the UK's single biggest  
destination, accounting for 49% of passengers and 54% of  
scheduled commercial flights. Airlines that operate from  
within the UK are able to rely on the EU single aviation  
market, which allows any airline owned and controlled  
by EU nationals to operate freely in the EU without  
restrictions on capacity, frequency or pricing.

Additionally, EU carriers are able to take advantage  
of the traffic rights contained in the many air services  
agreements that the EU has negotiated on behalf of all  
member states with non-EU countries. Significantly,  
this includes the EU-US open skies agreement which  
enables airlines from the EU and the US to fly between  
the EU and the US. If Britain leaves the EU without  
retaining any form of European common aviation area  
membership, airlines will need to negotiate new rights  
to operate freely within the EU and operate transatlantic  
routes. This means that there will be no legal framework  
that allows airlines to fly to those destinations from the  
UK. So UK airlines would also lose the right to operate  
within the remaining EU27, and EU airlines might lose  
the right to fly UK domestic routes as well.

Aviation is legally unique: it is separate from trade  
agreements and does not form part of the World Trade  
Organisation system. Instead, countries negotiate bilateral  
or multilateral air services agreements to provide airlines

255

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017 Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

256

with the legal rights to fly to certain places. To ensure  
the continuity of connectivity, the UK will need to  
negotiate a new air services agreement with the EU and  
countries such as the US. If there is no such agreement  
by the time the UK leaves the EU, the UK's connectivity  
will be undermined and its ability to trade will be more  
difficult. So it is imperative that the Government prioritise  
retaining an essentially unchanged operating environment.  
That is why they should prioritise air services agreements  
as part of Brexit negotiations.

While the measures in this Bill are important and will  
provide additional security to UK holidaymakers, it is  
strange that the Government thought it necessary to  
debate the Bill in a Committee of the whole House. The  
measures in the Bill were included in VTAB, which had  
passed through its Committee stages before the Prime  
Minister decided to call the unnecessary snap general  
election. I think I am right in saying that these provisions  
in that Bill were debated in no more than 45 minutes in  
Committee.The Government havenot made changes to  
their proposals and the Opposition supported them as  
part of VTAB in the last Parliament, so we simply do  
not understand why the decision was taken for this  
small, agreeable and largely non-contentious niche Bill  
to take up time in the Chamber, other than to try to  
disguise the fact that this chaotic Government have a  
threadbare legislative programme for this Parliament.

**Mr John Hayes:** As a result of that scrutiny—which  
the hon. Gentleman should not disparage because he  
has played an important part in making it real—we  
have had a good debate on the issues of review, of  
impact assessments and of further consultation. He will  
have heard what I have said about all those things,  
which are matters close to his heart, so actually the  
debate has served a really useful purpose.

**Karl Turner:** The Minister makes a fair enough point,  
but with respect, it has been a terrible waste of time  
debating this matter in the Committee of the whole  
House when it was previously dealt with in 45 minutes  
in Committee upstairs. For the sake of appearances,  
VTAB has been broken up into its component parts and  
is now being given undue time for debate in this Chamber.

**Lady Hermon** (North Down) (Ind): It is nevera waste  
of time to discuss anything pertaining to the whole of  
the UK in this House or in a Committee of the whole  
House. This gives me the opportunity to remind the  
Minister that we have three airports in Northern Ireland.  
We are the only part of the United Kingdom that is  
physically connected to another EU member state—the  
Republic of Ireland—and it is really important, as has  
been stated in the debate, that we do not lose air traffic  
and business from Northern Ireland to airports such as  
Dublin.

**Karl Turner:** The hon. Lady makes her point on  
behalf of her constituents, and she makes it well, but I  
do not think that it requires a response from me.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con):  
This is a bit of an occasion, really, because when  
legislation is debated in this place, the Opposition  
traditionally complain that it is not given enough time,  
that the Government have tried to rush it through or  
that there has been insufficient examination of the

provisions. The shadow Minister seems to be setting a  
precedent here today, in that he seems to be complaining  
that the Bill has been given too much time. Why is that?

**Karl Turner:** If the right hon. Gentleman will allow  
me to continue, I will make the point in a moment that  
important issues were debated in VTAB that are not  
now going to be discussed or made into legislation.

As a result of breaking up VTAB, measures that were  
previously included have been dropped, and measures  
that could have been included to improve this legislation  
through new clauses and amendments can no longer be  
added because they are no longer within the scope of  
forthcoming Bills. The proposal to make the shining of  
lasers at vehicles or control towers an enforceable criminal  
offence, which was strongly supported by those on this  
side of the House and which we would still be happy to  
support, has been dropped altogether. That is clearly  
concerning. We do not want to see avoidable disasters  
brought about by the malicious use of laser pens, and  
neither does the Minister, so will he explain why he has  
dropped these crucial plans, and whether or indeed  
when he proposes to legislate to tackle this serious  
problem?

There is also nothing in the Bill on the inclusion of  
much-needed regulations on drones—a matter previously  
caught by VTAB. The Government will respond to the  
consultation on drones in the next few weeks, but they  
should have made much more progress already, including  
making decisions on whether the UK should follow  
other countries by establishing a compulsory registration  
scheme and getting systematic geo-fencing in place to  
physically prevent drones from getting near airports  
and other places where they have the potential to be so  
dangerous.

ItmakesnosensefortheGovernmenttohaveabandoned  
the Bill in which action on drones could have been  
included. These are decisions that will make aviation  
less safe than it should be. The latest figures show that  
33 such incidents were confirmed in the first five months  
of this year, and 70 last year, whereas there were 29 in  
2015 and just 10 in the preceding five years. We need  
legislation to regulate the use of drones in order to  
tackle the worrying trend of near misses with planes.  
The aviation industry has been clear that it needs the  
Government to act on these concerns now. The Opposition  
have been pressing the Government on this issue for  
many years. Without action, it is a question of when,  
rather than if, a passenger plane is involved in a drone-  
related incident, so will the Minister explain why the  
proposal has been dropped and what plans he has to  
put this right?

We are just one month into this new Parliament and  
the Government are already running out of steam,  
which is why we have been debating this Bill on the  
Floor of the House rather than upstairs in Committee.  
The Prime Minister is attempting to crowd source policy  
ideas from the Opposition, and we can assist in this  
instance. The Government need to bring forward legislation  
on the misuse of lasers and on the regulation of drones  
and to provide clarity and certainty for UK aviation  
post-Brexit. We would welcome the Government adopting  
those policies, and they will have ourfullsupportif they  
do so. Labour broadly supports the Bill, because it  
extends protections to many more holidaymakers, but  
we want clarity on how EU-based companies, which  
will no longer be subject to ATOL but rather their

257

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill 11 JULY 2017

258

*[Karl Turner]*

respective member state equivalents, will provide protection  
to UK consumers. We want the best possible framework  
to ensure that the sector flourishes, but that means  
adequately preparing ourselves for the many implications  
that Brexit will have for ATOL and our aviation sector  
as a whole.

6.30 pm

**Patricia Gibson:** I end where I began by welcoming  
and supporting the Government's measures to update  
the ATOL scheme to provide more protection for passengers  
when they go on holiday and to align it with the latest  
EU directives. I welcome the progress made in this  
evening's debate, but I was disappointed to hear the  
hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner)  
complain that today's process has taken too long. If he  
sees that as a problem, I suggest that he perhaps contributed  
to it with his extensive remarks. I am sure that we all  
enjoyed them, but he seems to have contributed to the  
problem that he identified.

**Karl Turner:** I did not complain that the process was  
taking too long; I simply made the point that time in  
this House is incredibly important. An awful lot of  
things that were discussed during the proceedings on  
the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill could have  
made this legislation, but time has been wasted. These  
matters took 45 minutes in Committee. That was my  
point.

**Patricia Gibson:** I believe that the Minister has taken  
on board the legitimate concerns expressed tonight  
about how consumers are to be protected and have their  
current rights guaranteed as we head towards a post-Brexit  
world. There must be no diminution or stagnation of  
passenger rights as society and technology advance. It  
has been heartening to see how the Bill has proceeded  
through the House, and I have been delighted to be a  
part of these debates.

6.32 pm

**Mr John Hayes:** I do not want to delay the House,  
Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
I am sure that the Minister is going to beg the leave of  
the House to address the House again.

**Mr Hayes:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do not want to detain the House unduly except to  
affirm my thanks to all Members who have contributed  
to the debate. I hear what the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull East (Karl Turner) says about the previous  
Bill. He drew attention to those elements of the Bill that  
are not being considered today. This legislation is very  
much part of that earlier Bill, but we made it clear in the  
Queen's Speech that we intend to introduce further  
transport legislation. I am happy to continue to have  
conversations about drones and lasers along the lines  
that he suggested. It has been a good debate, and it is a  
good Bill. I think we can leave it at that.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of  
Documents

6.33 pm

**The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Michael  
Ellis):** I beg to move,

That, in respect of any bill relating to High Speed 2 that is read  
the first time in Session 2017-19 and to which the standing orders  
relating to private business are found by the Examiners of Petitions  
for Private Bills to apply, it shall be sufficient compliance with:

1. any requirement under those standing orders for a document  
   to be deposited or delivered at, or sent to, an office of a government  
   department, body or person if it is deposited or delivered at, sent  
   to or otherwise made accessible at that office in electronic form;
2. any requirement under those standing orders for a document  
   to be deposited with an officer if it is deposited with or delivered,  
   sent or otherwise made accessible to that officer in electronic  
   form;
3. any requirement under those standing orders for a document  
   to be made available for inspection at a prescribed office, or to  
   permit a document to be inspected, if it is made available for  
   inspection at that office, or is permitted to be inspected, in  
   electronic form;
4. the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) or 36(3)  
   relating to private business to permit a person to make copies of a  
   document or extracts from it, if there is provided to that person,  
   on request and within a reasonable time, copies of so much of it  
   as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the  
   person so agrees, be provided in electronic form;
5. the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) relating to  
   private business for a memorial to be made on every document  
   deposited under that Standing Order, if the memorial is made on  
   a separate document;
6. any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or  
   224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available  
   for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an  
   office in London.

That this Order shall not affect any requirement under those  
standing orders to deposit any document at, or deliver any  
document to, the Private Bill Office or the Vote Office.

That any reference in those standing orders to a document  
which is deposited, lodged, delivered or sent under those standing  
orders includes a reference to a document which is so deposited,  
delivered or sent in electronic form.

That any reference to a document in this order includes a  
reference to any bill, plan, section, book of reference, ordnance  
map, environmental or other statement or estimate*.*

The Gracious Speech gave notice of the Government's  
intention to introduce a hybrid Bill to Parliament later  
this year to take forward the next phase of HS2. As a  
hybrid Bill it will be governed by the Standing Orders  
for private business. Parliament's review of those Standing  
Orders, following the passage of the High Speed Rail  
(London - West Midlands) Act 2017, has not yet concluded  
and is the first significant review since 1948. It is therefore  
necessary to move this motion to update parliamentary  
procedure to reflect developments in technology since  
1948.

I will briefly explain the changes, which replicate  
those authorised by the House in 2013 ahead of the  
introduction of the previous hybrid Bill. The House will  
be aware that, along with the HS2 hybrid Bill later this  
year, we will provide Parliament with an environmental  
statement setting out the likely significant environmental  
effects of the scheme and making proposals for alleviating  
those effects.

11 JULY 2017

259 High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of

Documents

A considerable level of detail is involved in a project  
of this magnitude. We expect the statement to be up to  
12,000 pages long. It is, of course, important that local  
communities can easily find out what the impact will be  
on their local area. However, current Standing Orders  
require us to deposit a paper copy of the document in  
every local authority area along the line of route. In this  
day and age that is inconvenient for the communities  
involved, especially for parish councils, many of which  
do not have sufficient space, so they ask us to deliver the  
document elsewhere—often to a library in a nearby  
town. That is why the motion allows for the electronic  
deposit of documentation for the HS2 hybrid Bill.

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): I seriously oppose  
the project, which runs straight through my constituency.  
Will the Minister be good enough to give an undertaking  
that written material of the kind he describes will be  
provided? I understand why it should be in electronic form.

**Michael Ellis:** It is a permissive power. It does not  
require documents to be deposited in electronic format  
only. If a deposit location wants all the documents in  
hard copy, HS2 Ltd will provide them in hard copy,  
but the motion allows for the electronic deposit of  
documentation for the HS2 hybrid Bill. Electronic  
documentation will, of course, make it easier for  
communities along the line of route to find the information  
most relevant to their area without having to work  
through an otherwise enormous document.

**Sir Nicholas Soames** (Mid Sussex) (Con): What would  
happen if, because of the cruelty of this Government,  
the libraries are closed and there is no room for the hard  
copies of the Bill documentation, even though the local  
area wanted them? How would the Minister handle  
that?

**Michael Ellis:** I do not accept my right hon. Friend's  
characterisation. On previous occasions when there have  
been storage problems, nearby community libraries have  
been asked to store the hard copies, so I anticipate  
alternative mechanisms could be put in place.

It should be noted that this is a permissive power. It  
does not require documents to be deposited only in an  
electronic format, so if a location wants all the documents  
in hard copy, HS2 Ltd will provide them in hard copy.  
In all casesHS2 Ltd will make the key documents, such  
as the Bill itself and the non-technical summary of the  
environmental statement, available in hard copy.

Further, members of the public will be able to telephone  
HS2 Ltd to ask for free hard copies of the non-technical  
summary, the local community area report and the  
local maps. If a deposit location would like documents  
in electronic form but does not have the equipment to  
make them available to the community, HS2 Ltd will  
provide that equipment at its own expense.

This is a wholly sensible modernisation of Standing  
Order requirements that were originally conceived in  
the 19th century, and it is about making it easier for  
people to engage with the hybrid Bill process, thereby  
ensuring the most effective decision making by Parliament.

**Sir William Cash:** My hon. Friend has quietly referred  
to the maps, but of course there are also the specifications  
and the limits of deviation. He knows perfectly well

High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of 260

Documents

how much all this involves. May I have an assurance  
that, if required, all those things will also be made  
available in hard copy?

**Michael Ellis:** Yes, that is a reasonable request.

This is a wholly sensible modernisation of Standing  
Order requirements, and it is about making it easier for  
peopleto engage with the hybrid Bill process. Icommend  
this motion to the House.

6.39 pm

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Deputy  
Leader of the House for his explanation of the changes  
to the Standing Orders for the purposes of this hybrid  
Bill. Hybrid Bills are a rarity in the House: a public Bill  
proposing a law that affects the private interests of a  
particular person or organisation. This Bill will affect  
the general public and specific households along the  
route of the HS2 line, phase 2. The House has agreed  
these changes in similar circumstances for phase 1 of  
the HS2 project from London to the west midlands.  
These changes relate to phase 2, which allows for the  
construction of the route from Birmingham to Crewe,  
which are approximately 50 miles apart. These changes  
to the Standing Orders allowing for electronic copies of  
documents to be made available are eminently sensible,  
but may I ask the Deputy Leader of the House to  
clarify a couple of things?

Paragraph (d) of the motion states:

“copies of so much of it as the person may reasonably require and  
such copies may, if the person so agrees, be provided in electronic  
form”.

Will the Deputy Leader of the House confirm that  
those documents will not unreasonably be withheld and  
that the requests will be complied with? I appreciate  
that people cannot ask for documents outside their  
area, where they do not have an interest, but who will  
make the decision as to whether a request is a “reasonable”  
one? Will he also confirm that households along the  
Birmingham to Crewe route, who will be directly affected,  
will be able to receive a free copy of the documents  
relating to their area? The hon. Member for Stone  
(Sir William Cash) has suggested that some rural areas  
may not have internet access and some people may not  
be proficient in IT, but these people should have those  
documents free of charge. Will the Deputy Leader of  
the House confirm that they will be free of charge? He  
mentioned a telephone number that people can call  
HS2 on. Will he confirm that that will not be at the  
premium rate and it will be free of charge? Will he say  
when we are likely to have the First Reading of the Bill?  
Will we see it before the House rises for the summer  
recess?

I am sure we could agree a general amendment to  
Standing Orders, through the Procedure Committee, so  
that we do not have to keep coming back to amend  
them to include a reference to electronic copies. However,  
Her Majesty's Opposition support these changes to the  
Standing Orders, which are in line with previous  
amendments to Standing Orders.

6.42 pm

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):  
TheHousewillnotbesurprisedthatIrisetomyfeetto  
talk about this small motion, but colleagues sitting

11 JULY 2017

261 High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of

Documents

*[Mrs Cheryl Gillan]*

alongside me may be surprised to learn that I rise to  
welcome it. Asa veteran of the hybrid Bill process,I can  
say that there is no doubt that it is arcane and has  
tremendous problems with its practices and procedures.  
My constituents, and many constituents of other hon.  
Members, certainly have been at the mercy of the hybrid  
Bill process, and I shudder when I hear a Front Bencher  
say that the environmental statement will be at least  
12,000 pages long. I have experienced something just as  
large for phase 1 of the HS2 process, and I can say that  
these are indeed very opaque documents. Will the Deputy  
Leader of the House say whether these will be sufficiently  
navigable instruments, as this is being served up to  
people electronically? I found, as did many of my  
constituents, that the documents presented by HS2 Ltd  
were very difficult to navigate and hard to find. Therefore,  
I would like assurances that some improvements have  
been made to the way in which people can move around  
these very large documents.

The Deputy Leader of the House has already given  
assurances that nothing in tonight's order will prevent  
communities from accessing paper copies. We must not  
forget that there is a digital divide. Many of the people  
affected by this project are elderly and do not access  
large documents easily on computers. It is very important  
that they have access, free of charge, to those sections of  
the documentation that relate to their properties or the  
area around that part of the route.

**Sir William Cash:** Does my right hon. Friend agree  
that when this material comes electronically and then  
has to be turned, at a person's home or office, into the  
kind of material that makes sense and that they can  
read, the complexity of the documents—the design  
specifications and all the other things—and the monumental  
volume of paper becomes very daunting indeed? To  
refer back to our previous debate on consultation, does  
she also agree that HS2 Ltd, as I said to the project  
manager the other day, had better get its act together on  
consultation and do it properly?

**Mrs Gillan:** It is clear to me and many others who are  
involved with the project that HS2 Ltd needs to improve  
not only its consultation processes but its communications  
processes, which are still appalling in many instances.

**Lady Hermon** (North Down) (Ind): I am grateful to  
the right hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene to  
make a small but important point. She just raised the  
issue of older people often not being familiar with  
technology and electronically conveyed documents. Older  
people often suffer from visual impairments; indeed,  
some of them will need a Braille copy. Will she seek  
assurances from the Government that those who are at  
a disadvantage in reading documents will have assistance?

**Mrs Gillan:** The hon. Lady makes a good point. I am  
keen to ensure that, in a process that is so inequitable,  
with the state against the citizen and the citizen receiving  
very little help, we impress on Ministers and HS2 Ltd  
that there are people who need assistance to navigate  
and understand these documents. I feel passionately  
that they need to have that assistance. Had the hon.  
Lady seen people who are going to lose their house  
having to appear alone before a Select Committee of  
this House, with a silk—a QC; an expensive, highly paid

High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of 262

Documents

barrister—set against them, she would understand why  
I implore Ministers to make sure that suitable personnel  
are available to help people to interpret and access the  
documents. The shadow Minister asked for the telephone  
line to be free; I am going to go further: I want Ministers  
to ensure that that telephone line is manned by competent  
people who actually know what they are talking about  
and can guide people through the process easily. That is  
extremely important.

I am disappointed that there is currently no provision  
that will allow petitioners to petition electronically when  
the Bill is introduced—unless Ministers tell me differently.  
I had to bring petitions from constituents into the  
House myself, and they were charged £20 for the pleasure  
of defending their own properties, so I had to collect  
money and documents and bring them in to facilitate  
the process. My constituency is not far outside London;  
the people who will be affected by the phase 2 Bill live  
much further up the country. I would have thought  
Ministers had considered how other MPs' constituents  
who are going to be affected by phase 2 will be able to  
submit their petitions this time around. I implore Ministers  
to look into that, because that is a matter of priority.  
We should wipe out the £20 fee, which is neither fish nor  
fowl; it is an insult to the people who are defending their  
properties and want their voices to be heard and it  
certainly does not cover the costs of this exercise, so I  
hope it will be cancelled.

I have another question, on paragraph (f) of the  
motion, which the Deputy Leader of the House will  
notice refers to  
“any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or 224A(8)  
relating to private business to make a document available for sale  
at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an office in  
London.”

Will he assure me that that does not mean that London  
will be the only place that such documents will be on  
sale? When the Bill is introduced, phase 2 will affect  
people from Birmingham northwards, so would it not  
be more sensible to make the documents available in,  
for example, Birmingham and Manchester? That would  
be of more assistance to the people affected by the  
project.

I would like to know when the Bill will be introduced  
and when Second Reading is anticipated. When we have  
another hybrid Bill of this size and complexity that  
affects so many people, it is important that as much  
warning as possible is given by the Government and by  
HS2 Ltd and that all the information is readily available  
well in advance and with explanation so that people can  
get their heads around it. There is no doubt that there  
will be support for the phase 2 Bill from all parts of the  
House. Once again, there will be a very small number of  
MPs opposed to it or raising questions about it, but the  
Government need not be afeared that they will not get  
their business through. However, if they are to embark  
on a project of this size and complexity, I ask them  
please to learn from the lessons and the mistakes that  
were made on phase 1, and not to put the people on  
phase 2 through the same agonies. If we do not learn  
and we do not then take action, we are failing people in  
this country.

6.50 pm

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I  
was not originally going to speak, but I will just say a  
couple of words if that is okay. As the shadow Leader

11 JULY 2017

263 High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of

Documents

of the House said, the changes are eminently sensible. It  
makes sense to move to electronic issue where possible.  
However, I gently point out that some Members who  
are exercised by this electronic issue and are worried  
about access to hard copies are quite comfortable for  
people on benefits to be forced to move to online  
activity. We need to remember that there is a disparity  
in attitudes.

I agree with much of what the right hon. Member for  
Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) said, especially  
with regard to consultation. People must be able to  
interact with experts—experts with an understanding of  
the documents should be able to explain them to people  
in an impartial way and guide them through the maps.  
Some people have difficulty reading both hard-copy  
and online maps, so it is very important that they can  
access the information and understand it. The Government  
must ensure that, with any consultation, people are able  
fully to understand the information.

Can the Deputy Leader of the House tell me whether  
any savings have been identified through this measure?  
It seems sensible that there should be savings, as we will  
not be issuing reams of paper. Equally, that is balanced  
out with a rather generous offer of giving out IT equipment.  
Has any assessment been made of how much IT equipment  
will need to be dispersed?

6.52 pm

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): I have already made  
a couple of interventions, but I wish to say that I am  
extremely grateful to my very distinguished and right  
hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham  
(Mrs Gillan) for all the work that she has done on phase  
1, which has set a pattern for what is to be done on the  
second phase, which so directly and detrimentally affects  
my own constituency. Before the Minister replies, may I  
make one suggestion? Birmingham has been mentioned.  
If we take the line between Birmingham and Crewe, the  
most central place happens to be Stafford in Staffordshire.  
Will my hon. Friend be good enough to give serious  
consideration to using the county council facilities,  
which are extremely good, for copying and all that sort  
of thing? People from my constituency, at both ends of  
the line, would be able to visit that central point with a  
minimum amount of inconvenience. That is all that I  
need to say for the time being.

6.53 pm

**Michael Ellis:** With the leave of the House, I will, in  
the limited time available, answer some of these points.  
The hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) asked  
what was meant by “reasonable”. The issue is simply  
this: a reasonable request means HS2 weighing up the  
cost of meeting a request against whether there is a  
genuine need for the information to be presented in the  
format requested. Reasonable requests for hard copies  
of maps and section drawings will be met. They could  
be requested from local authorities, which will be provided  
with hard copies for inspection, or directly from HS2.

I have been asked by a couple of hon. Members  
about when the Bill will be laid. At this point, I can only  
say soon. As I have said, all reasonable requests for hard  
copies of maps and section drawings will be met. In  
answer to a point raised by my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), we  
are proactively considering using audio, braille, and

High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of 264

Documents

easy-read versions. Given the scale of the documentation,  
it is right that that is considered with regard to accessibility  
for everyone. I noted the points made about the telephone  
line, and I shall look into the matter. I understand that  
it is a London number, to answer the question from the  
hon. Member for Walsall South about the rate, but I  
will look into that.

On the issues about London and whether documents  
could be stored elsewhere, a tiny number of people have  
requested that, but we will certainly look into those  
reasonable requests.

**Sir Nicholas Soames:** Is it planned to translate the  
documents into other languages?

**Michael Ellis:** I am not aware of any such plans. We  
are considering the issue of braille.

**Mrs Gillan:** Will the Minister tell me what the appeal  
process is if HS2 Ltd does not deem a request to be  
reasonable?

**Michael Ellis:** It is fair to say that all reasonable  
requests will be considered. It is clear and transparent  
that reasonable requests will be met. It is important that  
requests are not vexatious, and I know that my right  
hon. Friend does not want any doubt about that.  
Reasonable requests will be met, and further consideration  
can be given to that in due course. This is a sensible  
modernisation of 19th-century Standing Orders, which  
have not undergone radical reform since 1948.

**Sir William Cash:** I know that a lot of questions were  
put to the Minister, but would he respond to the question  
of whether Stafford and Staffordshire County Council  
buildings are a convenient place for people to go for  
documents?

**Michael Ellis:** My right hon. Friend the Leader of the  
House is alive to all the issues that have been raised,  
including the localities and local communities involved.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William  
Cash) asked whether Staffordshire would be considered,  
and I can tell him that it will be.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That, in respect of any bill relating to High Speed 2 that is read  
the first time in Session 2017-19 and to which the standing orders  
relating to private business are found by the Examiners of Petitions  
for Private Bills to apply, it shall be sufficient compliance with:

1. any requirement under those standing orders for a document  
   to be deposited or delivered at, or sent to, an office of a government  
   department, body or person if it is deposited or delivered at, sent  
   to or otherwise made accessible at that office in electronic form;
2. any requirement under those standing orders for a document  
   to be deposited with an officer if it is deposited with or delivered,  
   sent or otherwise made accessible to that officer in electronic  
   form;
3. any requirement under those standing orders for a document  
   to be made available for inspection at a prescribed office, or to  
   permit a document to be inspected, if it is made available for  
   inspection at that office, or is permitted to be inspected, in  
   electronic form;
4. the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) or 36(3)  
   relating to private business to permit a person to make copies of a  
   document or extracts from it, if there is provided to that person,

266

11 JULY 2017

265 High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of

Documents

*[Michael Ellis]*

on request and within a reasonable time, copies of so much of it  
as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the  
person so agrees, be provided in electronic form;

(e) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) relating to  
private business for a memorial to be made on every document  
deposited under that Standing Order, if the memorial is made on  
a separate document;

(f) any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or  
224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available  
for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an  
office in London.

That this Order shall not affect any requirement under those  
standing orders to deposit any document at, or deliver any  
document to, the Private Bill Office or the Vote Office.

That any reference in those standing orders to a document  
which is deposited, lodged, delivered or sent under those standing  
orders includes a reference to a document which is so deposited,  
delivered or sent in electronic form.

That any reference to a document in this order includes a  
reference to any bill, plan, section, book of reference, ordnance  
map, environmental or other statement or estimate*.*

Mental Health Act 1983

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

6.57 pm

**Sir Paul Beresford** (Mole Valley) (Con): I am delighted  
to see the Under-Secretary of State for the Home  
Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Truro  
and Falmouth (Sarah Newton), in the Chamber. I hope—  
she is still smiling—that she is in a benevolent and  
co-operative mood.

As the Minister will be aware, I am raising a small but  
important matter, in my opinion and that of others, by  
seeking a small change to section 136 of the Mental  
Health Act 1983. She will probably have been made  
aware that I have raised the matter twice before, for the  
first time when I presented a ten-minute rule Bill in  
2014. I did not proceed with that measure because there  
was an ongoing Government review of the whole section.  
Although that review was extensive, it did not consider  
the specific point that I am raising this evening. The  
second occasion was almost exactly a year ago, when I  
raised the matter in an Adjournment debate.

I was initially prompted to seek the change having  
seen the need for it at first hand on the streets of  
London. I was with a couple of young officers from the  
Met in a response car, and our first call was a dash to a  
flat on the 14th floor of a council residential tower  
block. The mother of the household nervously let the  
officers in, and we saw her daughter, aged 22, standing  
on the window ledge threatening to jump. We quickly  
established that the daughter had a history of genuine  
suicide attempts. As the young lady was clearly put out  
by the uniformed police officers, we were joined very  
promptly by three further officers, two of them in plain  
clothes. Fortunately, one of those officers was female.

That officer was very astute and persuasive, and  
managed to get the young woman to come down off the  
window sill, sit down on the bed and talk matters  
through. The young woman made it quite clear that she  
needed psychiatric help. Much effort was made to persuade  
her to go to a place of safety for psychiatric and medical  
aid. The young woman vehemently refused and, when  
pressed, she struggled to head for the window and jump  
yet again.

7pm

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

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

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The other four officers stood on  
tip-toes waiting to catch the young woman on each  
occasion when she looked as if she was going to dive  
through the window. Fortunately, they managed to stop  
any action. In the meantime, contact was made with  
St George's Hospital's psychiatric unit to seek urgent  
hospital psychiatric assistance. After some considerable  
time, the appropriate psychiatric individual arrived with  
an ambulance and crew. This immediately inspired further  
alarm, rejection and, ultimately, a huge struggle. In due  
course, a sad young lady was transported to the hospital  
as the designated place of safety, and we had prevented  
the suicide.

267

Mental Health Act 1983

11 JULY 2017

Mental Health Act 1983

268

The whole pantomime had occupied five officers and  
three NHS staff, and took about four hours to sort out.  
It was obvious from the very beginning that the police  
themselves could have taken care of the young lady  
quickly, as indeed they did after instruction from the  
NHS staff. Immediate action by the police would have  
taken the lady into care quickly, thus reducing the  
continuing risk over those four hours, and saving the  
police and NHS staff a large number of man hours.  
Under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, the police  
would have been able to act promptly if this pantomime  
had taken place in a public place. However, the incident  
took place at the young lady's mother's home. That was  
deemed, correctly, to be a private place, which meant  
that no direct police action was legally possible. I have  
had discussions with officers in the Met, and I have  
found that this was not an unusual case.

A more tragic case was the death of Martin Middleton  
in 2010. He was taken to a Leeds police station by  
officers who had visited him at home, having been made  
aware, and then seeing for themselves, that Mr Middleton  
was making serious preparations for committing suicide.  
The officers incorrectly believed that they could arrest  
Mr Middleton and take him from his home under  
section 136. When they arrived at the police station, the  
custody sergeant refused to detain Mr Middleton as the  
arrest had taken place in his home. The officers were  
therefore required by the custody sergeant to return  
Mr Middleton to a relative's home, hoping that that was  
some form of safety. Sadly, Mr Middleton still managed  
to hang himself there.

At the inquest, the coroner had no hesitation in  
agreeing with Professor Keith Rix, who was called to  
give expert evidence, that Mr Middleton fell into a  
category of mentally disordered persons for whom there  
is no provision under the 1983 Act. Subsequent to  
raising the issue, I have heard from many frontline  
police officers, including those who have campaigned  
on the issue, and I have also had extensive conversations  
with Professor Keith Rix, who is an academic psychiatrist  
and an expert in this area. I am reliably informed that  
the Garda in the Republic of Ireland have a clear  
operational advantage over our police because, under  
section 12 of the Irish Mental Health Act 2001, they  
can act promptly, even in a private residence.

As the all-seeing Minister will be aware, over the  
10 years between 1997 and 2007, admissions to hospital  
as a place of safety went up from 2,237 to 7,035—those  
are the latest figures that I have been able to get. The  
Minister is quick with arithmetic, so she will be able to  
note that that is a threefold increase. The difficulty  
facing the police is that the powers on which they can  
act are limited to persons found by the police in a public  
place. There is ample anecdotal—and perhaps stronger—  
evidence that the police in desperation sometimes persuade  
a person to leave their home, or contrive to remove  
them to a public place so that they can use the section 136  
powers of arrest. In fact, one London-based social  
services authority's audited figures estimated that 30% of  
section 136 arrests were recorded as having been made  
at or just outside the detainee's home. The police do  
that in sheer desperation to save the individual's life,  
which would be lost unless they acted. Put bluntly, a  
tiny adjustment to the legislation would allow the police  
to act in a private home, as they can in a public place.  
That would save an enormous amount of time and,  
potentially, a considerable number of lives.

In my discussions about this, it has been suggested  
that the police already have sufficient powers—they do  
not. The second argument is that an amendment would  
extend the right of the police to enter private properties—  
yes, it would. There are many legal reasons for the  
police to enter a private property; perhaps the most  
obvious and linked one is that if the mentally ill person  
was threatening, or in the process of murdering, somebody  
in that private place, rather than killing themselves, the  
police could act immediately.

There is a simple solution to this: amend section 136  
by simply removing the words

“in a place to which the public have access”.

When I raised this issue in the Adjournment debate  
about a year ago, the Minister's predecessor gave a clear  
indication that change was being considered. He gave  
me a commitment that if the Government could not get  
this right using the measures they were considering, an  
amendment to section 136 might be exactly what was  
required.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)  
(Con): My hon. Friend is making an important and  
thoughtful speech. Does he agree that it is possible at  
the moment for a mental health professional who wants  
to put someone under section 2 or section 3 of the  
Mental Health Act to gain entry to their house with the  
police and a locksmith? It therefore seems strange that  
the police do not have powers to deal with a very similar  
situation when they have concerns about someone's  
mental health and believe they need to exercise section 136  
powers.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I thank my hon. Friend, who is, of  
course, on his way, with a bit of luck, to being a very  
senior academic psychiatrist in a couple of years. He is  
right. In situations such as this, no one rings up  
St George's Hospital in Tooting and says, “Please could  
I have a psychiatrist?” They ring the Met police, who  
then have the difficulty of dealing with the situation,  
and who stand there holding the detainee in the private  
home while the psychiatrist is brought in from the  
hospital.

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will  
at least be prepared to meet me and Professor Rix to  
discuss how this difficulty can be sorted out. If necessary,  
I am prepared to resort, as I have in the past, to the  
ten-minute rule Bill procedure to bring about this tiny  
change.

7.7 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the  
Home Department (Sarah Newton):** I congratulate my  
hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Sir Paul  
Beresford) not only on securing the debate, but on the  
measured way he has approached it. He highlighted  
some of the really serious challenges faced by the police  
and the emergency services in dealing effectively, but  
also humanely, with those who are in a mental health  
crisis. We can all agree that this is a very important  
topic.

For far too long, the subject of mental ill health has  
not received appropriate attention. The services for  
those experiencing mental ill health are sometimes not

269

Mental Health Act 1983

11 JULY 2017

Mental Health Act 1983

270

*[Sarah Newton]*

what they should be, and people have been faced with  
long waits for the help and support they should have  
received.

However, the Government have made clear their utter  
determination to improve mental health services, and  
we have made considerable progress in recent years to  
address the serious concerns we are discussing tonight.  
In particular, the use of police cells as places of safety  
under the Mental Health Act has fallen significantly.  
Last year, it was down to as few as only 2,100 instances.  
Some forces, such as Hertfordshire and Merseyside,  
have achieved zero use of police stations, while others,  
including West Midlands, Suffolk, Nottinghamshire,  
Lancashire and Lincolnshire, have very low usage—right  
down in the single figures. We expect to see significant  
improvement when the numbers come out in October.

This has been brought about by a lot of good local  
partnership working. Only last week, I was with the  
police and mental health services in Kent, introducing  
their new strategy, which involves innovative working  
between the police and local health partners so that  
they can respond effectively and swiftly to those who  
are suffering mental ill health. It is also about bringing  
together the voluntary sector to enhance the support  
for local people. There are similar partnerships all  
over the country as part of the crisis care concordat  
partnership networks, which are driving forward really  
good improvements.

Most police forces will now have street triage schemes.  
This means that, although they are quite different in  
different parts of the country, most police officers will  
be deployed alongside mental health professionals, so if  
a call comes into the centre that somebody is experiencing  
a problem of the type we have heard about, mental  
health professionals will be sent along with the police  
officers as they respond. Alongside the reduction in the  
use of police cells, we have seen a reduction in the use of  
section 136 powers as these decisions are being made by  
health professionals to make sure that somebody in  
such a crisis can get the care that they need immediately.  
We have seen really good examples in Norfolk and in  
the west midlands, with dramatic falls in the number of  
people being sectioned. I am very happy to meet my  
hon. Friend to discuss this excellent work. In the meantime,  
I will send him examples that he could perhaps take up  
with his local police force to make sure that it is drawing  
on the best possible practice from around the country.

We have increased the availability of liaison and  
diversion schemes so that those entering the criminal  
justice system who have mental ill-health or substance  
misuse issues can be immediately identified and referred  
into suitable assessment or treatment. These schemes  
now cover about 75% of the population of England,  
and we are on track to provide national coverage by  
2021. We have provided some £15 million to 88 local  
projects to increase the provision and capacity of health-  
based places of safety, focusing on the areas with particularly  
high use of police cells and limited places of safety. We  
have announced a further £15 million of funding to  
continue this vital work.

Just as importantly, we are also bolstering our mental  
health services. We are investing record levels in mental  
health and improving access by introducing the first-ever  
waiting times standards for treatment. We have invested

£400 million to improve mental health crisis care in the  
community and £250 million to establish liaison mental  
health services in every emergency department by 2020.  
Since 2010, we have increased spending on mental health  
to a record £11.6 billion in 2016-17, and a further  
£1 billion will be invested every year by 2020-21 so that  
we can deliver the mental health services that people  
richly deserve.

In addition to this, we are making £1.4 billion available  
by 2020 for children and young people's mental health  
services.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I do, of course, applaud the  
Government's work in this field. However, I am talking  
about the particular emergency situation where someone  
is sitting in a police car, a radio call comes through, they  
tear up to the incident, and they are two miles away  
from St George's hospital and the psychiatrist who  
visits it. They need to do something on the spot.

**Sarah Newton:** I very much appreciate my hon. Friend's  
specific point. I wanted to set the scene and describe to  
him the scale of the investment to ensure that we do  
have the appropriate medical professional to accompany  
the police. I think we can all agree that we need those  
trained mental health professionals to be able to assess  
the person and to make the best judgment call on the  
best way to treat them. It is unreasonable to expect a  
police officer to have enough clinical experience to be  
able to make that call.

Like my hon. Friend, I have spent time with my local  
armed police officers. I have been out on the beat. I have  
seen the extent to which, in the course of their everyday  
working, they encounter people who have mental health  
problems, and how brilliant they are at handling the  
situation. We have heard vividly about how well they  
are able to manage it, as he has seen himself, but that is  
usually about containing it. They are not qualified to  
assess the best clinical approach for the individual in the  
way that a mental health professional is.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I completely agree. If section 136  
is used in a public place—and if it were used in a private  
place—the individual goes into care in a mental hospital  
environment and must be assessed within 72 hours.  
That is an added protection. No one expects policemen  
to be wonders on psychiatry, but the assessment follows  
very quickly.

**Sarah Newton:** My hon. Friend makes a very good  
point and he will be pleased with recent legislation that  
has reduced that timeframe from 72 to 24 hours. That is  
a big step forward. Whether an incident happens in a  
public place or in someone's home, we are working  
towards a situation where a mental health professional  
will be with the police when they attend. That means  
that there will be no delay similar to that described so  
vividly by my hon. Friend. I think that some of the  
examples he gave happened some time ago. As a result  
of investment, particularly in the work of the crisis care  
concordat, which has created the framework for police  
forces to work with mental health services in their  
community, all kinds of innovative measures have been  
introduced to ensure that resources, including mental  
health nurses routinely working with police officers on  
the beat and specialist back-up to deal with situations

271

Mental Health Act 1983

11 JULY 2017

Mental Health Act 1983

272

similar to those we have heard about this evening, are  
planned and delivered locally. That is how we want  
things to happen.

As I have said, we are putting the resources in place.  
Although these services are working in most of the  
country, additional investment is being provided where  
that is not the case. There is also support through the  
crisis care concordat to fill those gapsandto ensure that  
everyone everywhere has the same experience.

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend is making some thoughtful  
and good points about the extra resources that are  
going in to support people with a mental illness. On  
section 136 powers, the mental health professional who  
accompanies the police is often a nurse, and they do not  
have powers to section people. A section 12-approved  
doctor who accompanies the police, however, does have  
powers to section people, and the same is true under  
sections 2 and 3 of the Mental Health Act. I think that  
is where my hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley  
(Sir Paul Beresford) is coming from.

**Sarah Newton:** I thank my hon. Friend for his  
contribution. The point I was trying to make is that a  
range of health professionals are working alongside the  
police in different settings to make sure that their response  
is appropriate. Sometimes it is mental health nurses  
who will be on the beat with police officers. My hon.  
Friend the Member for Mole Valley said that the police  
were called because somebody was in a very aggravated  
and stressful situation and they might have been prepared  
to take their own life. A call handler at the emergency  
centre would triage that situation, understand its severity  
and send the appropriately qualified medical professional  
so that they can make those decisions.

I think we are largely in agreement on the progress we  
have made. I want to focus on my hon. Friend's key  
point, which is that he does not think that the police  
have sufficient powers to act quickly in relation to  
people in private homes who are mentally distressed. I  
have read through his previous contributions and I am  
sympathetictohispoint.Iappreciatehowutterlyfrustrating  
it must be for police officers who find themselves in a  
situation where they feel helpless to take action in a  
reasonable amount of time when they would have those

powers if they were in a public place. Having read  
previous debates and contributions, however, I think it  
is right that we consider somebody's home differently  
from a public place. For most people, their home is their  
refuge. It is a special place. We allow people to do all  
sorts of things in their homes that we do not allow them  
to do in a public place. We have to reflect carefully  
before taking more powers on the state to allow us to  
intervene in people's private space. We seek to strike the  
right balance so that we can intervene to keep people  
safe and ensure that they get access to services without  
violating their privacy. We have consulted quite widely  
on the matter, and we considered it when we were  
looking at a review of the legislation. There was a lot of  
discussion about it, and the view was that we had struck  
the right balance and did not need to take the extra step  
that my hon. Friend wants us to take.

New powers have been introduced, as I mentioned, in  
the Policing and Crime Act 2017, and we are monitoring  
how they are working. I reassure my hon. Friend that if  
that monitoring suggests that we can or should do  
more, we will take further action. We expect to see a lot  
more data from the police this autumn about how  
sections 135 and 136 are implemented on the ground.  
We will be analysing the results of a new annual data  
return to establish whether there are any new trends or  
patterns that need further response. We will have the  
opportunity to consider the whole issue in the round as  
we look, as promised, at the Mental Health Act.

I am happy to meet my hon. Friend and any other  
colleagues who have a close interest in this policy area,  
alongwithProfessorRixandofficialsfromtheDepartment  
of Health and the Home Office, to make sure that we  
have this absolutely right. We want to join up mental  
health professionals and police professionals appropriately  
to prevent the sorts of situations that we have heard  
about this evening. I look forward to building on the  
good progress that we have made, and I will continue to  
work well with my hon. Friend to make sure that that  
happens.

*Question put and agreed to.*

7.21 pm

*House adjourned.*

273

12 JULY 2017

274

House of Commons

*Wednesday 12 July 2017*

*The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock***PRAYERS**

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr Speaker:** I remind Members, in so far as a reminder  
is required, that the ballot for the election of Select  
Committee Chairs is taking place today until 4 pm in  
Committee Room 8. The results will be announced  
when they are available; that is a statement of the  
blindingly obvious, but it is what it says here, to which I  
add, if this is helpful, that I expect to announce the  
results of the ballots at the end of the debate on  
Grenfell Tower this evening.

Oral Answers to Questions

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*The Secretary of State was asked—***Aid Programmes: Africa**

1. **John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): What assessment  
   she has made of the effectiveness of UK aid programmes  
   in Africa. [900363]

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** UK aid plays a vital role in helping the  
world's poorest and tackling global challenges such as  
disease migration and terrorism. In Africa, since 2015,  
we have provided humanitarian assistance to 13.7 million  
people.

**John Mann:** I congratulate the Secretary of State on  
her announcement this week on population. Given  
what Mrs Gates said about the impact on migration,  
will the Secretary of State consider how the core funding  
for organisations such as the International Planned  
Parenthood Federation and Marie Stopes International  
can be reinstated to allow those organisations to deliver  
what they have been doing effectively for some years?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right;  
these are important organisations. Of course, the United  
Kingdom has led the way on the whole issue of family  
planning, as we showed yesterday through the summit  
we held. We are constantly looking at how we can work  
with important partners on that critical issue and, in  
particular, on family planning and modern methods of  
contraception. We will of course review these programmes,  
too, as all programmes are always under review.

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con):  
In welcoming the fab decision by the Prime Minister to  
appoint a joint Minister from the Department for  
International Development and the Foreign Office to

sub-Saharan Africa, will the Secretary of State confirm  
what her priorities are for driving forward Her Majesty's  
Government's priorities in Africa, rather than just DFID  
and FCO priorities?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to  
commend the fact that the two Departments are working  
together on Africa. There is a very good reason for that.  
We are, of course, one HMG—one Government—and  
our priorities are the same priorities when it comes to  
Africa: tackling the big issues of disease, migration and  
economic development, which is critical, and growing  
regions such as Africa so that they can become our  
trading partners.

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op):  
What is the Secretary of State's assessment of the  
current humanitarian and political situation in the  
Democratic Republic of the Congo? In particular, what  
are the Government doing to assist in tackling the  
humanitarian crisis there, and also to ensure that Congo  
can move to democratic elections as soon as possible?

**Priti Patel:** I thank the hon. Gentleman, the Chair of  
the Select Committee, and congratulate him on his  
reappointment to that role. He is right to stress the  
significance of what is going on in the DRC. The  
situation is very worrying; there are many humanitarian  
pressures that we know of in-country, and the current  
electoral and democratic situation is not sustainable.  
We are of course working on the ground and with our  
partners to ensure that we continue to provide the  
support that is necessary to get the country back on  
track.

14. [900376] **Luke Hall** (Thornbury and Yate) (Con): In  
recent years, UK aid has played a key role in helping  
Ethiopia to become more resilient to crises by ensuring  
that people have a safety net so that they do not starve  
when a crisis hits. Does the Secretary of State agree  
that the British public can be immensely proud of all  
the work this Government have done?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is right. I visited Ethiopia  
again recently—just a month ago—and saw UK aid in  
action. There is no doubt about the fact that UK aid is  
keeping people alive in the humanitarian situation, with  
the drought taking place there. However, at the same  
time, we are supporting the industrialisation of Ethiopia,  
with trade opportunities and British firms now creating  
jobs in the country.

**Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods** (City of Durham) (Lab):  
The Independent Commission for Aid Impact has reported  
that UK development assistance to Africa was down by  
a massive £20 million in 2016 and warned that Africa is  
losing out on aid spending as the Government divert  
money to countries in Europe and Asia. Considering  
that Africa has the highest proportion of population  
living in extreme poverty, will the Secretary of State  
update the House on what she intends to do to reverse  
the cuts and to ensure Africa does not lose out on  
funding from DFID?

**Priti Patel:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her new role  
and congratulate her on joining the Opposition Front-Bench  
team in that role.

275

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

276

We have the 0.7% commitment, of course, which we  
are proud of, and 74% of that is spent on DFID  
programming. The majority of that money goes to  
Africa programmes, but it is important to recognise a  
couple of points. There is an enormous humanitarian  
crisis in Africa right now, and we have throughout the  
year scaled up, and led the way in calling on other  
donors to put more money into Africa famine relief. We  
are also working across all Government Departments  
to ensure that Africa is a development priority.

**Humanitarian Crisis: Syria**

1. **Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP):  
   What discussions she has had with the Secretary of  
   State for Defence on ensuring that the Government's  
   operations in Syria help to alleviate the humanitarian  
   crisis in that country. [900364]

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** I have regular discussions with the Secretary  
of State for Defence and other ministerial colleagues in  
response to the conflict in Syria, and of course we are  
doing more on the humanitarian side as well.

**Carol Monaghan:** Will the Secretary of State tell us  
what measures her Department is taking to ensure that  
civilians are able to leave Raqqa safely, and what information  
it is giving them on escape routes?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Lady highlights the terrible  
situation of the mass conflict involved in the recapturing  
of Raqqa. The regional support that we are providing  
includes medical supplies, food and shelter—all the  
basics that people in the region need. She asks specifically  
about information. We are working with our partners  
on the ground, who are working in very challenging  
situations, to give them information and guidance as to  
where the safe places are for them to go.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We might not reach the question  
tabled by the hon. Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis),  
so if she wants to come in now, she can, although it is  
not obligatory.

7. [900369] **Victoria Prentis** (Banbury) (Con): How kind!  
MayIusethisopportunitytothankyou,MrSpeaker,for  
your support for Singing for Syrians? I also thank the  
Department for International Development for its support.  
As a result of all the support we have received from  
across the House, Singing for Syrians is now able to  
support not only medical aid in Syria but a school for  
disabled children. Does my right hon. Friend the Secretary  
of State agree that aid is always worth more when it is  
spent in the region, and that what the people caught up  
in this terrible conflict really want is to be able to stay as  
close to home as possible?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I  
congratulate her and everyone else who has been involved  
in Singing for Syrians. It is an incredible charity, and  
I commend her for her work. She is right to highlight  
the fact that providing support in region is what makes  
a difference in terms of changing and saving lives. We  
have led the way in this. The United Kingdom has spent

more than £2.46 billion in Syria and the region, providing  
hope and opportunity to those who have been displaced  
through conflict.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
It is quite obvious that senior Ministers in the Government  
wish to expand this conflict to target actors other than  
Daesh in Syria. Has the Secretary of State made an  
assessment of what that would mean for her Department  
on the ground, and is she being the voice of reason in  
cautioning against expanding the conflict?

**Priti Patel:** It is wrong to suggest that we are expanding  
any conflict at all. The focus of this Government,  
particularly from the humanitarian perspective, is to  
ensure that UK aid goes to the people who are suffering  
as a result of the bleak situation on the ground right  
now. Of course we are working across Government and  
with our partners in the region and our international  
partners to bring hope where there is despair and,  
importantly, to end the conflict.

13. [900375] **Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con):  
Before the conflict, about 11% of the Syrian population  
were Christians. The Government rightly have a programme  
to admit refugees from the camps on humanitarian  
grounds, but in the early stages of the programme,  
many Christians would not go to the camps because of  
intimidation. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that,  
when the Government admit refugees for very good  
reasons, a fair proportion of them will be Christians?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend makes an important  
point. We are prioritising reaching the most vulnerable  
people across Syria, including Christians, and UK funding  
is distributed on the basis of ensuring that civilians are  
not discriminated against on the basis of race, religion  
or ethnicity.

**UN Target: Aid**

1. **Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): Whether the  
   Government plan to continue to meet the UN target of  
   spending 0.7% of GDP on aid to developing countries  
   for the duration of this Parliament. [900365]

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** Meeting the 0.7% of GNI target for overseas  
aid is a manifesto commitment. It is enshrined in law,  
and the Government have been unequivocal that we will  
continue to honour that pledge.

**Matt Rodda:** As well as committing to the United  
Nations target of spending 0.7% of GDP on aid to  
developing countries, does the Secretary of State agree  
that poverty reduction must be at the heart of UK aid  
spending?

**Priti Patel:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the  
House. He is absolutely right, and that is exactly what  
our aid spending does. Importantly, poverty reduction  
is at the heart of the definition in terms of official  
development assistance spending, and that is something  
that the Government are absolutely focused on.

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): The  
0.7% is extremely valuable in alleviating poverty. Will  
the Secretary of State update the House on the important  
summit on family planning that she attended yesterday  
and tell us what it achieved?

277

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

278

**Priti Patel:** Family planning is an enormous issue for  
development and poverty alleviation. Yesterday, we  
convened a summit with our co-hosts, including the Bill  
and Melinda Gates Foundation, and many representatives  
from around the world made big pledges and commitments  
to tackle family planning. The United Kingdom has led  
the way on the issue, but we are also working with the  
private sector to put more money into this area and to  
develop new commodities.

**Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): What percentage of  
the budget will be spent on helping developing countries  
to tackle climate change? Will the Secretary of State  
follow Scotland's example and establish a climate justice  
fund, or will the Government tie themselves to Donald  
Trump's attitude to climate change, which Professor  
Stephen Hawking recently described as pushing

“the Earth over the brink, to become like Venus, with a temperature  
of 250 degrees, and raining sulphuric acid”?

**Priti Patel:** Let me be clear about this Government's  
commitment to climate change reduction. We are a  
signatory to the Paris agreement, which we are committed  
to delivering. As for the spending percentage, it is  
important to stress that we have a range of spending  
across Departments. The Department for Business, Energy  
and Industrial Strategy, which leads on climate control  
and climate change, is working with DFID, because  
climate change issues such as drought and famine have  
a massive impact and cause a great deal of harm in  
various parts of the world.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): Constituents  
from Chipping Barnet are coming to Parliament today  
to set out their concerns about Christians in Syria  
facing oppression and persecution. Will the Secretary  
of State use the aid budget to alleviate the suffering of  
Christian communities during their times of trouble?

**Priti Patel:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her  
question and commend her and her constituents for the  
work that they are doing. UK aid and funding are  
distributed to those in need, including persecuted Christians  
around the world. Importantly, we are standing up for  
them and giving them a voice in parts of the world  
where conflict is happening.

**Kate Osamor** (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): As well as  
recommitting to the UN target of spending 0.7% of  
gross national income on aid to developing countries,  
will the Secretary of State consult civil society before  
proposing any further changes to or relaxation of the  
rules on what ODA can be spent on?

**Priti Patel:** This is an important area and I have  
committed to working with all partners, particularly  
civil society. In fact, a range of NGOs and stakeholders  
spent some time with me two weeks ago, and we had a  
constructive discussion on that very issue. The dialogue  
is ongoing, and I would welcome the views of many  
other partners.

**Kate Osamor:** With the Government's new-found desire  
to reach out to other parties for new ideas, precisely  
which of the 13 policy ideas in Labour's 2017 manifesto  
does the Secretary of State now intend to implement?

**Priti Patel:** When it comes to development, it is fair  
to say that we agree on the national and global commitment  
to the 0.7% target, hence why we are having such a  
constructive exchange right now. In reference to the  
hon. Lady's previous question, we should be working  
collectively and with our international partners on ODA  
reform.

**Famine and Food Shortages: Africa**

1. **David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): What steps

her Department is taking to support people affected by  
(a) famine in South Sudan and (b) food shortages in  
Somalia and Burundi. [900366]

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** This year, we are providing a package of  
£276 million of humanitarian support to those countries,  
supplying food, shelter and water to those in desperate  
need.

**David Linden:** What is the Department doing to  
encourage the Ugandan Government to engage fully in  
diplomatic efforts to bring the warring parties in South  
Sudan around the negotiating table?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that  
issue. The conflict in South Sudan is abhorrent, and I  
saw that first hand on my visit earlier this year. I have  
been pressing the Ugandan Government and other  
neighbours in the region. They need to step up and call  
out the appalling behaviour that we have been seeing in  
South Sudan with President Salva Kiir. The United  
Kingdom is doing everything it possibly can to ensure  
that that message is being heard.

**Mr Gary Streeter** (South West Devon) (Con): I  
congratulate the Secretary of State and DFID on  
co-ordinating the aid effort in South Sudan with other  
countries. Does she agree that that is yet another example  
of where British taxpayers' money is being wisely spent  
on keeping alive men, women and children who happen  
to share the same planet as us?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. South  
Sudan is a man-made crisis that has killed thousands  
and forced almost 4 million people to flee their homes.  
UK aid is not only saving lives but making an enormous  
difference in a country dominated by war and conflict.

**Small Charities Funding**

1. **Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): What steps she is  
   taking to enable small charities in the UK to access  
   funding allocated by her Department. [900367]

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** Last week, DFID launched the small  
charities challenge fund, which is specifically for small  
UK-registered charities with an annual income of less  
than £250,000.

**Mary Robinson:** I am particularly proud of the work  
that many of my constituents in Cheadle undertake for  
small charities, which are vital to our aid programme, as  
highlighted by this funding. Does my right hon. Friend

279

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

280

agree that, by providing these funds to our local small  
charities, we can improve the connection between our  
civil society and the important work of helping countries  
overseas?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There  
is no doubt that small charities are a crucial part of the  
UK's development offer internationally. There are many  
extraordinary grassroots charities, and I urge all colleagues  
on both sides of the House to encourage their small  
charities to apply for this fund. There is a great opportunity  
to build links, both nationally and internationally, on  
these important issues.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): Will the Secretary of  
State give priority in allocating funds to areas of the  
world such as Yemen? There is a humanitarian catastrophe  
in Yemen, where 300,000 people are facing a cholera  
epidemic.

**Priti Patel:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
right, and I commend him for again raising the issue of  
Yemen, where the conflict is having a devastating impact  
and, of course, there is a cholera crisis. The Government  
are spending hundreds of millions on providing necessary  
life-saving support to the people who are engulfed by  
that awful conflict.

12. [900374] **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What assess-  
ment has my right hon. Friend made of the remarkable  
voluntary charitable contribution made alongside the  
Government's work to relieve the crisis in Syria? How  
does the Department help to facilitate that work?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is right to raise that  
point. UK aid is playing a significant part supporting  
Syria and the region—we are one of the largest donors—  
and many small charities are also involved. My hon.  
Friend the Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis) has  
spoken about how UK charities are playing their part.  
The small charities challenge fund will help to facilitate  
more UK small charities to do more on international  
crisis and conflict.

Agenda 2030

1. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What discussions  
   she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the implementation  
   of the Government's report, “Agenda 2030: Delivering  
   the Global Goals”, published in March 2017. [900368]

**The Minister of State, Department for International  
Development (Rory Stewart):** As the hon. Lady knows,  
the UK was at the forefront of drafting those goals and  
is leading a great deal of the implementation. We published  
our report on 28 March. DFID leads on international  
implementation, and the Cabinet Office is ensuring that  
the single departmental plans drive it through domestically.

**Kerry McCarthy:** The Minister will know of my  
interest in food waste, which is addressed by sustainable  
development goal 12.3. Does he agree that it is not  
enough just to have a DFID-led approach? We will not  
be able to help farmers in developing countries unless  
we also tackle the relationship with supermarkets in  
this country.

**Rory Stewart:** The hon. Lady has been a leader in this  
House on addressing food waste, which fundamentally  
needs to be driven by the Department for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs and its Secretary of State,  
monitored by the Cabinet Office through the single  
departmental plan. DFID's role is then to ensure that,  
internationally, we are consistent by showing exactly  
the kind of leadership on food waste that the hon. Lady  
has provided.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): I know that  
the commitment to implementing the sustainable  
development goals comes right from the top of  
Government. By when did my hon. Friend ask the  
Office for National Statistics to report on the UK's  
progress?

**Rory Stewart:** The Office for National Statistics is  
compiling a report for the UN, and we will be submitting  
ourselves to a voluntary assessment of the UK's  
performance on the sustainable development goals at  
home and abroad.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Briefly, Mr David Hanson.

15. [900377] **David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Does not  
President Trump's declaration on the Paris agreement  
blow a hole in the UK's objectives on the climate change  
agreement as part of the millennium development goals?

**Rory Stewart:** The UK's obligation under the sustainable  
development goals is to remain committed to our own  
performance. We are sticking with the Paris agreement,  
and we will demonstrate at home and abroad that we  
really care about clean, renewable energy and the future  
of this planet.

**Topical Questions**

T1. [900378] **Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): If  
she will make a statement on her departmental  
responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** Yesterday I hosted a fantastic family planning  
conference here in London, dealing with the population  
challenges of regions such as Africa, demonstrating  
UK leadership and UK aid in action, and helping those  
who do not have a voice on that essential issue.

**Neil Gray:** Will the Secretary of State commit to not  
changing the UK definition of international aid without  
consultation with and the approval of this House—yes  
or no?

**Priti Patel:** I have already said that I am engaging all  
parties, meaning not just political parties but stakeholders  
and international colleagues. We have very clear guidelines  
on OECD development assistance committee rules.  
We will work with all partners to make the necessary  
changes.

T2. [900379] **Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire)  
(Con): If someone's tools or land are stolen and there is  
no redress through the justice system, or if someone is

281

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

282

fearful to walk to school because they have been raped  
and no action has been taken, development is restricted  
and poverty continues. What action is the Department  
for International Development taking to make sure  
that justice systems function properly in the developing  
world?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is right to raise that  
important issue. Strengthening justice systems around  
the world, particularly in developing and poor countries,  
is an essential part not only of our fight to combat  
global poverty, but of building safer communities and  
countries. That is the focus of DFID and UK aid.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
What are the Secretary of State and her ministerial  
colleagues doing about the plight of the hundreds of  
thousands of Syrians who cannot access any UK aid  
because they are still under siege from the al-Assad  
Government?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Gentleman mentions the very  
serious situation in Syria and the besieged areas, where  
we and all other agencies are collectively struggling to  
get support and aid to people who desperately need it.  
We are working with many aid agencies on the ground  
and with the United Nations in particular, which is  
leading the way. The situation in Syria is devastating  
and we are working with everyone possible and all  
parties to see what we can do to get supplies in as and  
when windows of opportunity appear.

T3. [900380] **Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): Free trade  
is essential if poorer countries are to escape poverty.  
Will my right hon. Friend update the House on the  
steps she is taking to address that issue?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The  
UK is committed to ensuring that developing countries  
can reduce and combat poverty by focusing on free  
trade and open markets. We are at the forefront of an  
economic development strategy and are encouraging  
trade preferences with poor countries to help to trade  
their way out of poverty. DFID is absolutely focused on  
that area.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. So that the whole House can  
benefit from the mellifluous tones of the right hon.  
Lady, perhaps she would be good enough to face the  
House in answering, and then we can always have a  
richly satisfying experience.

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): School students from  
Wrexham and Leribe in Lesotho in southern Africa  
have had a tremendous relationship over 10 years as a  
result of personal contact between students in Europe  
and Africa. How are we going to enable that to continue?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Gentleman is right to raise  
those amazing partnerships between schools in Africa  
and the United Kingdom. DFID is leading the way  
with many programmes, including the connecting  
classrooms programme in schools in the constituencies  
of many right hon. and hon. Members. We are absolutely  
encouraging more of that dialogue.

T4. [900381] **Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con):  
Trade, not aid is the route out of poverty for  
developing countries. Does the Secretary of State agree  
that leaving the EU will allow this country to lower its  
tariffs, and developing countries to trade with us?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend makes a very important  
and relevant point. As someone who also campaigned  
to leave the European Union, I think he is absolutely  
right. Our trade preferences, which will be introduced  
by future legislation as we leave the EU, will enable  
many poor countries to leave poverty behind and get on  
the path to prosperity through open markets and free  
trade.

**Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): With 95%  
of its drinking water now unsafe to drink, Gaza is fast  
approaching the point of becoming uninhabitable, as  
predicted by the United Nations. What are the Government  
doing to ensure that we do not reach that point and to  
push the EU plans to fund a desalination plant there?

**The Minister of State, Department for International  
Development (Alistair Burt):** According to the UN Office  
for the Co-Ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, most  
homes in Gaza are getting water for only a few hours  
every three to five days. The availability of safe drinking  
water has become worse. The UK is urging all parties to  
find a sustainable solution to the current situation, and  
in the longer term continues to urge the Israeli authorities  
to ensure fair distribution of water across the Occupied  
Palestinian Territories.

T5. [900382] **Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): Will  
the Secretary of State assure me that her Department  
will work closely with disability-focused organisations  
so that the UK's efforts to improve access to education  
for disabled children in developing countries are  
successful?

**Priti Patel:** I welcome my hon. Friend to the House  
and thank him for his question. We are committed to  
using UK aid to focus on disability in poor countries  
and, importantly, to enable disadvantaged people in  
some of the poorest parts of the world to access some  
of the innovation and great ways of working we have in  
the United Kingdom.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan** (Tooting) (Lab): The right  
hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) and I recently  
went to Jordan, where we met people on the ground  
who are really worried about the potential instability  
resulting from Jordan's acceptance of so many Syrian  
refugees. Do the Government agree that ensuring stability  
in the host countries that are opening their doors is an  
absolute priority?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right. Like  
me, she will have seen at first hand the impact of Syrian  
conflict on Jordan and the region. As a host country,  
Jordan is being heavily supported by UK aid—the  
British taxpayer—to provide all the essentials.

T6. [900383] **Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con):  
Will the Secretary of State ensure that her Department  
works with Population Matters to make sure that more  
women in the developing world have access to advice  
and support for contraception and family planning?

283

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

284

**Priti Patel:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right  
to raise that. Yesterday, we hosted a summit on that  
very issue. We will continue to lead the way and to be at  
the forefront of standing up for women's rights in  
developing countries, as well as pioneering more work  
on and support for family planning and contraceptives.

**Joan Ryan** (Enfield North) (Lab): Does the Minister  
agree that recent proposals in Israel on the construction  
of a Gaza sea port, such as those advanced by the  
Israeli Labor Knesset Member Omer Barlev and discussed  
last month by the Israeli Cabinet, would offer a much-  
needed route to easing the situation in Gaza? Will he  
support that initiative?

**Alistair Burt:** Yes, a new sea port at Gaza could open  
up all sorts of things in Gaza and change the situation  
for the people there quite materially. It is an interesting  
proposal and I am of course interested to see how far it  
is taken.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I call David “Top Cat” Davies.

T7. [900384] **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con):

Thank you, Mr Speaker. British-funded refugee camps  
throughout Turkey have been saving lives and  
preventing illegal migration into Europe. Is it now time  
to operate a similar scheme in north Africa?

**Priti Patel:** We are of course providing a great deal of  
support and humanitarian aid to migrants and refugees  
in north Africa. We are working across the Government  
on how to deal with migration routes: we are looking at  
the flows of people so that, when we need to, we can  
send them back to their home country.

**Mr Speaker:** I do not want the hon. Member for  
Havant (Alan Mak) to feel excluded.

T8. [900385] **Alan Mak** (Havant) (Con): The British

Government are leading the response to the famine in  
east Africa. Will the Minister update the House on the  
Department's work in this area?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to  
speak about east Africa, where there is one of the four  
famines that the world faces this year. In east Africa  
specifically, we have led the way in humanitarian and  
emergency food assistance and helped more than 2.4 million  
people.

PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—***Engagements**

Q1. [900401] **Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): If she  
will list her official engagements for Wednesday 12 July  
2017.

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** I have been asked to  
reply. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in  
attendance on Her Majesty the Queen, welcoming their  
Majesties King Felipe and Queen Letizia of Spain on  
their state visit to the United Kingdom. I am sure the  
whole House wishes them well.

**CarolineFlint:**Istoday'sreportthatin2015-16National  
Grid made £3 billion of profit at the expense of households  
not further evidence that the Government are not delivering  
fair energy prices? Will the Government agree to an  
immediate rebate for overcharging, and will they now  
commit to an energy price cap for the 17 million households  
on the most expensive tariffs?

**Damian Green:** The right hon. Lady is right to identify  
the issue of energy prices, and I am sure she will  
welcome the announcement in the Queen's Speech that  
the Government will

“ensure fairer markets for consumers”  
and that

“this will include bringing forward measures to help tackle unfair  
practices in the energy market to help reduce energy bills.”

I am sure this is an issue on which we can work across  
the House together.

Q2. [900402] **Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): Mr Speaker,  
yesterday you kindly hosted two important talks on the  
future of health and social care, and their funding,  
including one by my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes  
(Dr Wollaston). My right hon. Friend the First Secretary  
knows that the NHS in Staffordshire and Stoke is  
delivering fine care, but under great financial pressure,  
in common with other parts of the country. May I  
encourage the Government to bring together people  
from across this House to make this Parliament the one  
that puts the NHS and social care on a firm and  
sustainable foundation?

**Damian Green:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
that. I know he has been campaigning vigorously on  
behalf of health services in his constituency, including  
his local hospital, and he is absolutely right to do so. I  
am sure we both welcome the fact that the Government  
have committed an extra £8 billion over this Parliament  
to the NHS, and we are also committed to having a full  
debate, across the House, and much more widely with  
people, about how we can improve our social care  
system, because this is indeed one of the big issues  
facing this country.

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury)  
(Lab): First, let me welcome the First Secretary to his  
new role. By my reckoning, in the 20 years since he first  
joined this House he is the 16th Member to represent  
his party at Prime Minister's questions, so how about I  
give him until the end of this session to be able to name  
all the others? In the meantime, I am sure he and the  
whole House will join me in congratulating Jo Konta  
and the British and Irish Lions on their historic  
achievements of recent days.

On British and Irish co-operation, the First Secretary  
has huge expertise on the practicalities of the common  
travel area, so can he tell the House: what will happen to  
the Irish land border if no deal is reached between  
Britain and Europe by the end of March 2019?

**Damian Green:** I am grateful to the right hon. Lady  
for her kind remarks; I might take her up on her offer  
and try to name all 16 in the Tea Room later, rather  
than delay the House now. There are many, many  
distinguished people, of both sexes, who have done this  
in my party, because we of course elect women leaders

285

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

286

occasionally. I also absolutely share her view about the  
British and Irish Lions, although it strikes me as a  
particularly British thing to do to celebrate a drawn  
series quite as hard as we have—nevertheless, that is the  
way we do sport. I know you, Mr Speaker, will be very  
keen on following Jo Konta's progress through Wimbledon,  
and Andy Murray's. Let us hope we have two finalists  
over the weekend.

On the substantive question the right hon. Lady  
asked about the Irish border, she will know that it is the  
aim of this Government to make sure we get the best  
deal for Britain. As the Prime Minister set out in her  
Lancaster House speech, one of the key issues that we  
want to bring forward, and have brought forward at the  
start of the negotiations, is precisely the issue of the  
Irish border, because it is extremely important that we  
get that right, not just for our own citizens in Northern  
Ireland, but for the Irish Republic. I have already had  
meetings with my opposite number, the Tanaiste, on  
this and other matters.

**Emily Thornberry:** I mentioned at the outset that the  
right hon. Gentleman is the 16th Member to represent  
his party in Prime Minister's questions since 1997. Only  
three of those have been women and the last one before  
the current Prime Minister was 16 years ago. I believe  
we have had three women Labour MPs doing this job in  
the past two years alone.

Let me return to my question. My question was not:  
what deal do we hope to get? My question was: what  
happens if we get no deal at all? This is not some  
sinister nightmare dreamt up by remainers: it was the  
Prime Minister who first floated the idea of “no deal”;  
the Foreign Secretary who said it would be “perfectly  
okay”; and the Brexit Secretary who said we would be  
prepared to “walk away”. But, since the election, the  
Chancellor has said that that would be a “very, very bad  
outcome”'; and a former Minister has told Sky News  
that “no deal is dead”. So will the First Secretary clear  
this up: are Ministers just making it up as they are going  
along or is it still the Government's clear policy that no  
deal is an option?

**Damian Green:** I recommend that the right hon. Lady  
read the Prime Minister's Lancaster House speech, as  
that is the basis on which we are negotiating. We are  
also saying that it is conceivable that we will be offered a  
kind of punishment deal that would be worse than no  
deal. That is not our intention; we want a deal and we  
want a good deal. May I also point out to her that it is  
the position of her leader and her party that, whatever  
is on offer, they will accept it? That is a terrible way to  
go into a negotiation. All that I can congratulate them  
on is their consistency. They have been consistently in  
favour of unilateral disarmament. They apply that not  
only to military matters, but to matters of negotiation  
on Britain's future prosperity.

**Emily Thornberry:** Apparently, the First Secretary of  
State did not get the Prime Minister's memo—you are  
supposed to be building consensus, man. If we ignore  
the political bluster, I think that what we heard was that  
no deal is indeed still an option. If that is the case, can  
we turn to what I might call the East India Club  
question? That was the question that the hon. Member  
for Newton Abbot (Anne Marie Morris) was trying to

ask before she suddenly turned herself into Nick Griffin.  
What does no deal actually mean for our businesses, for  
our people and for issues such as the Irish land border?  
Will the right hon. Gentleman address this question  
now: what does no deal look like in practice?

**Damian Green:** I am very happy to address the right  
hon. Lady's first point about consensus. As she knows, I  
am a moderate person who is keen on consensus. I very  
much look forward to sharing the Labour party's views  
this morning on the unemployment figures. Unemployment  
is now down to its lowest level since the early '70s. There  
are many Members of this House who were not born  
when unemployment was as low as this Government  
have made it. I would hope that, in the course of her  
questions, she can bring herself actually to welcome  
lower unemployment. On the substance of her question—as  
she knows—we are seeking a good deal for Britain that  
will enable us to trade as freely as possible with the  
European Union to protect our prosperity at the same  
time as getting trade deals with other important markets  
around the world. In the past week alone, both the  
United States and Australia have said that they would  
like to sign trade deals with Britain as fast as possible. I  
am happy to report to her that negotiations are going  
well and that her fear of no deal is probably overstated.

**Emily Thornberry:** If the First Secretary of State  
wants to talk about unemployment, let me ask him this:  
will he publish the Treasury's assessment of the impact  
that a no deal outcome would have on jobs and growth  
in Britain? Will he publish that today—I don't think so.  
Let us continue. If he will not tell the House—  
*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Lady must be  
heard, and she will be, as will the First Secretary of  
State. Members must calm themselves.

**Emily Thornberry:** If the First Secretary of State will  
not tell the House what no deal means, can he at least  
clear up the confusion over whether a plan for no deal  
actually exists? Yesterday, the Foreign Secretary told me  
that, indeed, there was no plan for no deal. Two hours  
later, No. 10 fought back and said that there was a plan.  
*[Interruption.]* The Brexit Secretary might be laughing,  
but I am turning to him next. He was so busy fighting  
with himself that, on 12 March, he said that there was a  
plan. On 17 March, he said that there was not. On  
19 May, he said that he spent half his time thinking  
about it. Yesterday, he said that he was not prepared to  
comment. Can the First Secretary of State clear up the  
confusion today: is there, or is there not, a contingency  
plan for no deal? If there is, will he undertake to publish  
it?

**Damian Green:** The right hon. Lady says that she is  
happy to talk about unemployment; I notice that she  
cannot bring herself to welcome falling unemployment  
figures. We will clearly have to try harder to establish  
consensus on what I would hope would genuinely unite  
both sides of the House.

On the issue of the report, the Office for Budget  
Responsibility is publishing its fiscal risks report tomorrow.  
If the right hon. Lady can be patient, she will see the  
report that she wants.

287

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

288

**Emily Thornberry:** So let us be clear: the First Secretary  
seems to be saying that no deal is still on the table, but  
he will not say what it means; and that there is a no deal  
contingency plan, but he is not going to publish it. This  
really is two steps forward and two steps back. After all,  
if the Government seriously want open, cross-party  
debate about the best way forward for Brexit, surely  
they have to spell out what all the options look like.

Can the First Secretary at least provide some clarity  
on one issue? Let us try to make some progress today.  
He has said repeatedly that we want to avoid a cliff edge  
Brexit, but under a no deal scenario, he knows that that  
must be impossible. The Prime Minister can hardly  
storm out of the negotiating room saying that she will  
not accept the deal, and then pop her head round the  
door again and ask can she have two more years to  
prepare. That is not how it works. Does the First  
Secretary accept that no deal also means no transitional  
arrangements?

**Damian Green:** Let me try even harder to establish  
consensus with the right hon. Lady. I think we both  
want a deal; I hope she will agree to that—that she  
wants a deal at the end of this. The reason why I am  
optimistic that, because of our negotiating stance and  
the position set out by the Prime Minister, we will get a  
deal, is that we have, for example, made a fair and  
realistic offer about citizenship to try to remove that  
problem from the equation.

That is a first indication of how we will approach  
these negotiations. We approach them in a positive  
state. We believe that it is in the interests of not just  
Great Britain but the other member states of the European  
Union to reach a deal with one of their biggest trading  
partners. It is in everyone's interests to reach this deal.  
Frankly, the right hon. Lady has so far said nothing  
constructive that might contribute to a deal, but I will  
give her another chance.

**Emily Thornberry:** I know the right hon. Gentleman  
is new to this, but the way the rules work—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I do not know whether this is  
spontaneous or orchestrated, and I do not really care  
which. But whichever it is, the idea that it is going to  
stop the right hon. Lady from asking her questions is  
for the birds. Members are wasting their vocal cords.  
We will carry on for as long as necessary to accommodate  
the Back-Bench Members whom I wish to accommodate.

**Emily Thornberry:** I know that the right hon. Gentleman  
is new to this, but the way it works is that he asks  
the—that I ask the questions—*[Interruption.]* We are  
quite happy to swap places with them. Frankly, if he  
does not want to continue under these rules, I am sure  
there are plenty of other people on the Front Bench  
there who would love the opportunity to audition as  
Prime Minister.

I do appreciate all the First Secretary's answers, but  
they just serve to illustrate what a mess the Government  
have got themselves into by threatening to walk away  
even before talks began. Is it not the truth that we have  
a no deal option on the table but the Government will  
not tell us what that means, and that they have  
contingency plans but they will not let the public see  
them? We have got a Chancellor demanding transitional

arrangements, which a no deal option makes impossible.  
We have got a Foreign Secretary making it up as he is  
going along. We have got a Brexit Secretary so used to  
overruling his colleagues that he has started overruling  
himself, and we have got a Prime Minister who is so  
bereft of ideas that she has started putting suggestion  
boxes around Parliament. But as a country we have  
20 months to go until Brexit. We absolutely have to get  
a grip. If the Conservative party has not got the strength  
for the task, then we absolutely have to get rid of them.

**Damian Green:** There may have been a question in  
there somewhere. I assure the right hon. Lady of two  
things. This Government are already in the negotiations,  
as she will have seen. We have started the negotiations,  
and they are going well. We said that the first thing we  
wanted to do was to negotiate citizens' rights, and that  
was the first item on the agenda of the first meeting. We  
want to ensure that European citizens in this country  
and—equally importantly—British citizens living in other  
European countries, have as much certainty about their  
rights as soon as possible. That is what we are negotiating,  
and that is the sign of a practical and pragmatic  
Government getting on with work in the interests of the  
British people.

I have counted that the Labour party has so far had  
nine different plans on Europe. Labour Members want  
to be both in and out of the single market, and in and  
out of the customs union. They said that they wanted to  
remain, but they voted to enact article 50. They split  
their party on that. The right hon. Lady said that she  
would prefer to be at this Dispatch Box, rather than  
that one. I remind her of the other event that happened  
recently, where the Conservative party got more votes  
and more seats than the Labour party and won the  
election.

Q3. [900403] **David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale)  
(Con): I do welcome the jobs that have been  
announced. Furthermore, after 65 years of people in  
my constituency talking about a link road, one actually  
opened on my watch. I am also trying to obtain an  
enterprise zone or business park, about which I had a  
productive meeting yesterday with the powerhouse  
Minister and the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man,  
who I believe is here today. Would my right hon. Friend  
help, in any way possible, to ensure that this business  
park becomes a reality so that we can create more jobs  
in Morecambe and Lunesdale?

**Damian Green:** I agree with my hon. Friend. He will  
be interested to know that employment in the north-west  
of England has increased by 2.5% over the past year.  
Labour Members may wish to welcome that, rather  
than to heckle. He is absolutely right to highlight the  
importance of business parks and enterprise zones as  
drivers of economic growth. I wish him well in his  
campaign, and I am sure that the Business Secretary  
will be happy to look into the matter.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I am  
sure that the whole House will join me and my colleagues  
in marking the 22nd anniversary of the sad events at  
Srebrenica. I thank those who held last night's memorial  
in London to ensure that we never forget. Will the First

289

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

290

Secretary of State confirm that the devolved  
Administrations will not face a diminution of powers as  
a result of the repeal Bill?

**Damian Green:** I join the hon. Gentleman in  
commemorating the dreadful events at Srebrenica. I am  
happy to reconfirm what the Prime Minister and others  
have said—that there will be no diminution of the  
devolved Administrations' powers under the terms of  
the Brexit deal that we will negotiate, and that we will  
look to devolve more powers as a result of the process.

**Ian Blackford:** I thank the First Secretary of State for  
that answer. Will he confirm that there will be a cast-iron  
guarantee that all powers that come back into the  
United Kingdom on devolved matters will be returned?  
Furthermore, do the United Kingdom Government  
intend to amend schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998 to  
change any aspect of the devolved competences that  
were approved in the 1997 Scottish referendum?

**Damian Green:** I can only keep repeating the assurances  
that we have already given. I am slightly surprised by  
the Scottish nationalists' approach. My understanding  
of their position is that they want the powers taken  
from London to Edinburgh so that they can give them  
back to Brussels. Perhaps their inability to explain the  
logic of that position might explain their recent general  
election result.

Q5. [900406] **Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): Earlier  
this year, the brilliant new St Luke's Hospital opened in  
my constituency, but the old cottage hospital that it  
replaced contains an important and unique war  
memorial. Does the First Secretary agree with me that,  
however the NHS redevelops that site, it is vital that the  
war memorial is preserved in a fitting way so that  
future generations can remember the sacrifices of those  
who came before us?

**Damian Green:** Perhaps particularly at the moment,  
when we are about to commemorate the centenary of  
the terrible battle at Passchendaele, it is very important  
that we consider the issue of war memorials. Memorials  
like the one my hon. Friend mentions call on us to  
remember the horrors of war and to honour the memories  
of those who died. In this case, I understand that the  
war memorial is protected by an Historic England  
grade II listing, so specific planning consent would be  
required to relocate the memorial as part of any future  
plans. I hope that will provide the protection he and his  
constituents need.

Q4. [900405] **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP):  
My constituent has serious mental ill health and  
has had over 50 separate admissions to psychiatric  
care. She requires regular monitoring to prevent her  
condition from worsening and becoming a danger to  
herself and others. She could access support under the  
disability living allowance, but she stands to lose  
£110 per week under the personal independence  
payment. As the former Secretary of State for Work  
and Pensions, will the First Secretary look urgently at  
this case and change the loophole in PIP that leaves  
very vulnerable people without the continual support  
that keeps them safe?

**Damian Green:** Obviously, the House will be concerned  
to hear about the case of the hon. Lady's constituent, as  
I am. The hon. Lady will know that one of the effects of  
the transition from DLA to PIP is that more people are  
now eligible for support—particularly those, as it happens,  
with mental health problems. The Secretary of State for  
Work and Pensions will have heard her point, and I  
have no doubt that if she contacts him, he will look into  
the case personally.

Q7. [900408] **Kit Malthouse** (North West Hampshire)  
(Con): Some of the most distressing cases that I and  
other Members see in our constituency surgeries are  
those involving domestic violence. The Queen's Speech  
has promised a Bill to help to strengthen our confrontation  
of this problem, so will the Deputy Prime Minister—sorry,  
the First Secretary—tell us when we can expect this  
legislation, urgently needed as it is, and what the  
Government are doing about this problem while we  
await it?

**Damian Green:** I agree that this is a hugely important  
issue, and my hon. Friend is right that we have committed  
in the Queen's Speech to introduce a domestic abuse Bill  
in this Session, which I hope will be a landmark in this  
important area. What we want to do in the Bill is set in  
motion a transformation not just to protect and support  
victims, but to recognise the lifelong impact domestic  
abuse can have on children and to make sure that the  
agencies respond effectively to domestic abuse. We will,  
of course, be consulting all the relevant professions and  
voluntary groups on this, but we are absolutely determined  
to press ahead with this very important legislation.

Q6. [900407] **Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): Little  
Max Johnson is nine. He is in hospital, and he is  
urgently waiting for a heart transplant. His mum, Emma,  
and his brother, Harry, join us today to support Max,  
but also the 10,000 people around the country who need  
an organ transplant. We can do more to help them.  
Wales has already moved to the opt-out system, and  
Scotland plans to do the same. Does the First Secretary  
agree with me that, in England, we should change the  
law to one of presumed consent for organ donation, to  
give Max and all those other people the best chance  
of life?

**Damian Green:** I am sure that the thoughts of Members  
across the House are with Max and his family at this  
incredibly difficult time. I agree with the hon. Gentleman  
that organ donation is clearly a hugely important part  
of our system, and I am pleased that there are now  
more than 23 million people on the organ donor register.  
Over the past year, we saw the highest ever donor and  
transplant rates in the UK, but, of course, there is more  
that can be done. As the hon. Gentleman says, the law is  
different in other territories inside the UK, and the  
Department of Health is looking at the impact of those  
changes to see if they can give rise to further improvements  
in the number of available organs.

Q8. [900409] **Mr Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale  
West) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the  
quarterly economic survey of the Greater Manchester  
chamber of commerce predicts economic growth at  
3.25% annually, which it has been, broadly, since 2013?  
Is he further aware that Manchester airport is planning

291

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

292

a £1 billion investment in the coming years? Does that  
not indicate a welcome rebalancing of the economy,  
underpinned by sound economic management? Will  
he undertake to continue that sound economic  
management, which is so necessary to our country?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend has made a number  
of important points, particularly about Manchester  
airport, which I know has been a significant driver of  
the excellent growth figures of the increasingly excellent  
economy of Manchester and the surrounding areas.  
Everything that he has said is true, and I think it is a  
tribute to the work that has been done on the northern  
powerhouse that we are now spreading that prosperity  
across the north of England.

Q9. [900410] **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton)  
(Lab): The First Secretary said the other day that we  
needed a national debate on tuition fees, and admitted  
that student debt was “a huge issue”. Given that the  
Prime Minister is touting for ideas, may I recommend  
page 43 of our manifesto, and ask the Government to  
adopt Labour's pledge to abolish tuition fees—  
*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I do not remember the contents  
of page 43, so I would quite like to hear this.

**Dr Huq:** May I suggest that the Government consult  
page 43 of our manifesto, and commit themselves to  
Labour's policy of abolishing tuition fees?

**Damian Green:** People often stand at this Dispatch  
Box and say, “I am pleased that the hon. Lady raised  
that question.” I am genuinely pleased that the hon.  
Lady raised that question, because it allows me to draw  
attention to the very slight problem with her argument,  
which is that her own party's Education spokesman has  
admitted that the tuition fees policy has a £100 billion—  
*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne  
(Angela Rayner) has admitted that there is a £100 billion  
black hole in Labour's student fees policy. That is nearly  
as much money as we spend on the NHS in a year, and  
it is equivalent to two years' worth of disability benefits.

The Labour party was particularly incredible on this  
issue at the general election, and I am astonished that  
Labour Members now want to bring it up at Prime  
Minister's Question Time. I remind them that misleading  
students and young people is a very dangerous thing to  
do. If they do not believe me, they can ask the Liberal  
Democrats.

Q10. [900411] **Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con):  
Just one in five of our public art sculptures and statues  
is of a woman. Next week, to mark 200 years since the  
death of the world-renowned novelist Jane Austen, the  
first ever sculpture of her will be unveiled in my  
constituency, the borough of her birth in the county  
that inspired her. Will my right hon. Friend join me in  
calling for more areas to do what Basingstoke has  
done, and celebrate their famous daughters?

**Damian Green:** I am delighted to echo my right hon.  
Friend's call for a welcome for the new statue of Jane  
Austen in Basingstoke. I am genuinely astonished that  
there is not a statue of Jane Austen anywhere else in the

country, given that she is one of our greatest authors  
and is still popular 200 years after her birth. I am also  
happy to echo my right hon. Friend's desire for more  
statues of Britain's greatest women to be spread around  
the country.

Q12. [900413] **Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): Politicians  
are said to be here today and gone tomorrow, but  
whatever tomorrow may bring, the Prime Minister is  
not even here today to mark the end of her first year in  
power. I also note that, for the first time since she  
became Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* Listen: you  
might like to hear this. For the first time since she  
became Prime Minister, her image has been removed  
from the front page of the Conservative party website.  
Can the First Secretary tell us why she has gone from  
being the next iron lady to “The Lady Vanishes”?

**Damian Green:** The hon. Gentleman is ingenious in  
asking very personal questions, and I commend him for  
it. Unfortunately, he has his own record on this subject.  
As recently as June last year, he said that the leader of  
the Labour party was

“not destined to become Prime Minister”,

and called on him to resign. I suggest that he might  
want to make peace with his own Front Benchers before  
starting to be rude about ours.

Q11. [900412] **Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North  
Poole) (Con): Today's jobs figures show that we have  
the highest employment rate since comparable  
records began. We have more people in full-time  
employment, and we are touching on the lowest youth  
unemployment since records began. In the light of the  
Matthew Taylor review of modern working practices,  
what more can be done to ensure that that record  
continues, and that we continue to rid the country of  
the scourge of long-term youth unemployment?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend is exactly right,  
specifically on the subject of youth unemployment. One  
of the particularly welcome figures among the consistently  
low and falling unemployment figures over which this  
Government have presided is the fact that youth  
unemployment is now at historically low levels and  
lower than in many other comparable economies. We  
will continue this in this Parliament, not just with our  
moves on more apprenticeships, but with the introduction  
of new and better technical and vocational education,  
which is key to providing long-term prosperity not just  
for the economy as a whole, but for everyone in this  
country.

Q14. [900415] **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab):  
How can the Government continue to justify not  
providing fair and equitable funding arrangements for  
West Lancashire to support water level management  
organisations, otherwise known as drainage boards, to  
help protect homes and the agriculture and horticulture  
industries critical to the local economy, instead of causing  
the Environment Agency to threaten to turn off the Alt  
Crossens pumping station?

**Damian Green:** The hon. Lady raises a reasonable  
point about the Environment Agency. It is the Environment  
Agency's duty to ensure that water supplies are good  
and safe. If she wishes to bring up this issue with my

293

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

294

right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs, I am sure he will be happy to  
talk to her about it.

Q13. [900414] **Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire)  
(Con): Zero-energy bill homes at below market prices  
are being built by British architect Bill Dunster, with  
the support of the Building Research Establishment.  
Given their potential to help people find affordable  
housing, what more can the Government do to help  
expand this type of housing as part of our  
commitment to both enterprise and social justice?

**Damian Green:** I know that my hon. Friend is an  
energetic campaigner for social justice. This is a very  
good example of how having a dynamic and flexible  
economy is not just good for the economy, but actually  
good for the whole of society. I am happy to join him in  
welcoming this type of innovation. Bill Dunster's firm  
is a good example of such innovation. I know that it has  
been supported by the Government's enterprise investment  
scheme, so the Government are doing their best to  
support this type of measure. We are stimulating the  
growth of the off-site construction sector, which enables  
more houses to be built, through our accelerated  
construction programme and the home building fund.  
This is another very important issue to make sure that  
we spread the benefits of prosperity around this country.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I  
wonder if the First Secretary of State might imagine  
what it feels like to be a parent forced to uproot their  
children from their one settled home to flee war and  
persecution, as millions of refugees around the world  
have done. Then would he imagine further how it might  
feel for those who become separated from their family  
members—with one family member making it, for instance,  
to the United Kingdom—when they are needlessly kept  
apart from their families due to cruel and unnecessary  
barriers to family reunification? Will the Government  
today endorse Baroness Hamwee's Bill in the other  
place to bring those desperate families back together?

**Damian Green:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important  
issue. He will be aware that this Government, and this  
country, have done a huge amount—particularly in the  
region, but also here at home—to help refugees from  
countries such as Syria. We have expanded the vulnerable  
persons resettlement scheme, so we make sure our doors  
continue to remain open to people who most need our  
help. In particular, we work very closely with the United  
Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to identify  
and refer the most vulnerable refugees. That is the most  
sensible humanitarian way we can help these very desperate  
people.

Since I assume this was the hon. Gentleman's last  
question, I suspect, as the leader of his party, may I  
wish him a fond farewell from that job? I am delighted  
that the Liberal Democrats have taken so seriously the  
Government's fuller working lives strategy, which is  
about providing more jobs for older workers, and that  
they are about to skip a generation in their leadership.

**Mr Shailesh Vara** (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con):  
At the recent G20 meetings, the Prime Minister had  
excellent and constructive trade discussions with the  
leaders of India, China, Japan and America, which  
collectively represent 43% of the world's population

and six times the population of the European Union.  
Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that this  
demonstrates the potential for a prosperous and positive  
future for Britain post-Brexit, and that it really is time  
for the pessimists to look at the cup being half full  
rather than half empty?

**Damian Green:** I am happy to endorse my hon.  
Friend's approach and emphasise to him and the House  
that it is really important to do both—we need a good  
trade deal with the European Union, which is still a  
hugely important trading partner for us, but we also  
need to take the opportunity to strike trade deals with  
economies around the world, not just currently advanced  
economies but those that are growing very fast. That is  
the route to future global prosperity for this country.

**Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): We have  
had two general elections where the Government have  
promised investment in the northern powerhouse, and  
yet again, within weeks, they have U-turned on the  
Trans-Pennine electrification. Is the £1 billion deal with  
the DUP to keep the Prime Minister in power being  
funded at the expense of investment in Bradford and  
the north?

**Damian Green:** No, not at all. The money that has  
gone for infrastructure in Northern Ireland is richly  
needed there. For example, we have signed city deals in  
England, Scotland and Wales, but none yet in Northern  
Ireland. The hon. Lady is right about the importance of  
the northern powerhouse, and we will continue with  
that programme, which is hugely important. As she has  
already heard, we are seeing unemployment falling  
consistently in the north of England as a sign of how  
the economy there is going as well as anywhere else in  
the country. We are determined to continue that.

**Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): I know that the  
First Secretary will be delighted to see that Parliament  
Square is now displaying the flag of every British overseas  
territory to welcome the King of Spain this week,  
including the flag of Gibraltar. Will he ask my right  
hon. Friend the Prime Minister to remind the King of  
Spain that Gibraltar is British and that its sovereignty  
will remain paramount?

**Damian Green:** I am happy to assure my hon. Friend  
that the Government's position on Gibraltar is that the  
primacy of the wishes of its inhabitants, which are  
overwhelmingly to stay British, will be respected.

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab):  
What assessment have the Government made of the  
effect on radiotherapy for cancer patients of their decision  
to withdraw from Euratom, given that the Royal College  
of Radiologists said this week that half a million scans  
a year are done using imported radioisotopes and that  
thousands of patients could be affected by this decision?

**Damian Green:** I am again genuinely happy to answer  
this question, because this is a very important issue and  
there has been some unnecessary worry caused to cancer  
patients by speculation on it. Let me set out the position.

The import or export of medical radioisotopes is not  
subject to any particular Euratom licensing requirements.  
Euratom places no restrictions on the export of medical

295

Oral Answers

12 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

296

isotopes to countries outside the EU, so after we leave  
Euratom our ability to access medical isotopes produced  
in Europe will not be affected. I hope that clears the  
matter up and reassures cancer patients around the  
country that the scaremongering that is going on is  
unnecessary.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** It is a hopeful try by the hon. Lady, but  
points of order will come after the statement.

When the hon. Members for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely)  
and for Ealing North (Stephen Pound) have resumed  
their seats—ah, I see that the latter has forged a new  
alliance with members of the Scottish National party; I  
am not sure which of them should be more afraid—we  
will proceed with the statement.

297

12 JULY 2017

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

298

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

12.44 pm

**The Secretary of State for International Development  
(Priti Patel):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I will update  
the House on my Department's continued support for  
the people of Mosul.

On Monday, Prime Minister Abadi declared Mosul  
to be liberated, three years after the city fell to Daesh.  
Victory comes after three years of unimaginable oppression  
by Daesh—three years of fear, executions, abductions,  
forced marriages and the destruction of Iraq's ancient  
heritage. It comes after nine months of heavy fighting  
by the Iraqi security forces, who faced brutal Daesh  
tactics, including the use of human shields and suicide  
bombers. My right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary  
will provide the House with a more detailed update  
tomorrow on the ongoing military campaign against  
Daesh in Iraq and Syria, and the UK's role in this  
effort.

The declaration that Mosul is once again free is a  
great victory for the people of Iraq and a great stride  
forward for global security. I am sure that the House  
will join me in commending the extraordinary bravery  
of the Iraqi security forces, who have put the protection  
of civilians at the heart of their military campaign,  
acting to reduce civilian casualties wherever they could  
and risking their lives to help to evacuate civilians  
fleeing the bullets of Daesh fighters. We should recognise  
their professionalism, courage and significant sacrifice.  
They have been backed up from the air by the international  
coalition forces, including the RAF, who have taken all  
reasonable precautions during the planning and execution  
of airstrikes to reduce the risk to civilian life.

We should also recognise the bravery of the people of  
Mosul: children who have been out of school for years  
are now back in the classroom and sitting exams; doctors  
who had to stop working under Daesh are once again  
giving life-saving treatment to their fellow citizens who  
were injured in the fighting; and volunteers are clearing  
the rubble from the streets and public buildings.

However, we must be realistic about the challenges  
ahead. Almost 50,000 homes have been destroyed and  
although 200,000 people have returned to their homes  
in eastern Mosul, over 700,000 people are still displaced  
and in need of continued humanitarian assistance. Explosive  
remnants of this war will be a problem for many months  
to come.

After winning the battle for Mosul, it is important to  
win the peace, and now starts the painstaking task of  
rebuilding and reconciling so that families can return  
home as quickly as possible, communities can live peacefully  
alongside one another once more, and citizens can start  
to rebuild their lives. Needs in and around Mosul will  
not fall immediately, even as the fighting ends.

As a global humanitarian leader, the United Kingdom  
has been at the forefront of efforts to support the  
humanitarian response and will continue to stand alongside  
the people of Iraq in the months ahead. From the very  
start of the Mosul military operations, the UK has  
provided shelter, medical care and food to those who  
have either lost their homes because of the fighting or  
been forced to flee for safety reasons.

The UK is the largest donor to the Iraq humanitarian  
pooled fund and we are providing practical, life-saving  
support, including water in camps for over 166,000 displaced

people, cash assistance to over 50,000 vulnerable people,  
and life-saving healthcare, including a trauma hospital  
to treat the victims of the fight against Daesh.

Today I am pleased to confirm that the UK will  
provide £40 million of humanitarian funding this year,  
taking our total commitment just in Iraq since 2014  
to £209 million. This funding will help to ensure that  
displaced communities and people will receive much-  
needed shelter, food and medical support, and it will  
also provide protection services for the most vulnerable,  
including minorities, women and girls. Already, £18 million  
of this funding has been allocated to partners who are  
working hard to deliver assistance around Mosul.

The United Nations has set funding requirements for  
Iraq in 2017 at $984 million. The UK is stepping up,  
and I continue to call on my colleagues in the international  
development community—the donors—to follow Britain's  
lead. The international community must continue to  
support the people of Mosul and Iraq.

As people return home to liberated areas, they will  
need support to rebuild their lives. Humanitarian and  
stabilisation partners are helping to re-establish basic  
services, including by distributing food in areas where  
markets are not yet functioning and providing cash  
assistance so that vulnerable people can buy what they  
most need.

In east Mosul, the Department for International  
Development's humanitarian funding to the International  
Organisation for Migration and UNICEF has already  
helped to reopen health facilities and provide clean  
water in liberated areas, which is essential for people to  
be able to return home. DFID will also provide £6 million  
this year for stabilisation efforts. That funding will help  
to restore basic services and infrastructure in liberated  
areas, including in Mosul. Through the United Nations  
Development Programme, UK funding has already helped  
to rehabilitate the al-Qasour water plant in eastern  
Mosul. Over 750 schools have already reopened, allowing  
300,000 children to sit exams. Our funding will also  
support local reconciliation, helping displaced people  
to reintegrate back into their communities when they  
return home. Across Iraq, over 1 million people have  
returned to their homes in areas where UK-funded  
stabilisation projects are working.

But ultimately, to win the peace in Iraq, the Government  
of Iraq will need to unite all Iraqis against extremism,  
address the grievances that led to Daesh's rise and  
persuade all Iraqi communities that they have a fair  
stake in their nation's future. The UK will continue to  
be steadfast in our support for the Government of  
Iraq's efforts to drive forward reform, reconciliation  
and stabilisation.

This week's victory against Daesh in Mosul marks an  
important moment in the campaign to defeat this terror  
group and its poisonous ideology. We join our Iraqi  
friends in celebrating the liberation of this historic city.  
The UK will continue to provide much-needed  
humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to those who  
have been affected by the conflict, and to support the  
Government of Iraq's efforts to build a stable, secure  
and prosperous Iraq. I commend this statement to  
the House.

12.51 pm

**Kate Osamor** (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome  
the Secretary of State's statement, and I particularly  
welcome the news of Mosul's liberation after three

299

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

12 JULY 2017

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

300

*[Kate Osamor]*

years of oppression. It is important to defeat Daesh's  
violent ideology wherever it emerges. I would like to pay  
tribute to the Iraqi security forces and the people of  
Mosul, who have shown remarkable courage in the face  
of Daesh's continued oppression. I pay particular tribute  
to the role of the UK Government in their important  
work to provide critical aid and emergency support.  
The UK's continued role in the coming days and weeks,  
and the significant funding commitments announced  
by the Secretary of State, which I welcome, will save  
lives and help to rebuild Mosul. This commitment also  
demonstrates the important role that UK aid plays not  
only in standing alongside the people of Iraq, but in  
contributing to long-term peace and stability.

I would like to ask the Secretary of State a series of  
questions about her announcement. First, although  
there is cause for real celebration in the liberation of  
Mosul, Amnesty International has identified countless  
human rights violations on all sides—both by Daesh  
and, possibly, by the Iraqi forces—in the fight for Mosul.  
These include the use of civilians as human shields by  
Daesh fighters and violations of children's rights. Amnesty  
International has called for a thorough investigation of  
all human rights violations and possible war crimes  
carried out during the liberation of Mosul, and the UN  
human rights chief has called for a strong culture of  
accountability now that the city has been liberated.  
Does the Secretary of State support those calls and will  
she tell us how we can help?

Secondly, while I welcome the UK Government's aid  
response to the situation in Mosul, the forced displacement  
of numerous refugees in and around Mosul as a result  
of the past two years of Daesh occupation requires  
widespread action, not only on rebuilding, but on the  
resettlement of those displaced. Will the Secretary of  
State update us on how we will be able to help all those  
who have been displaced? I thank the Secretary of State  
again for her welcome statement to the House.

**Priti Patel:** I thank the hon. Lady for her generous  
comments and support for what has been achieved in  
Mosul. I absolutely agree that we should pay tribute to  
all the forces involved, and also to the people of Mosul,  
who have suffered considerably at the hands of Daesh.

The hon. Lady is right to point to Amnesty  
International's report today, which makes allegations  
and raises concerns about the coalition—well, Iraqi—forces  
and human rights violations. It is important to stress  
that the security forces and the coalition have made  
every effort to protect civilians during operations. Now  
that we are hearing of alleged violations or abuses, it is  
quite right that they are thoroughly and transparently  
investigated, and those found responsible must be held  
to account. We also welcome the previous statement by  
Prime Minister Abadi on this and encourage reporting  
on the outcomes.

The hon. Lady raised the issue of the displacement of  
people. Hundreds of thousands of people have been  
affected by what has happened in Mosul and in Iraq  
more broadly. The focus now has to be on resettlement  
and the reunification of the country as a whole.

The hon. Lady will have heard me speak briefly about  
the stabilisation efforts which, of course, have to be the  
focus right now. UK aid, and my Department in particular,

are working with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of  
State for Defence, others across Government and the  
international community not only to support UN  
stabilisation efforts in Iraq and secure the liberated  
areas, clearing areas of explosives and making them  
habitable again, but, importantly, to provide the basics  
to people by putting in water facilities, power networks,  
clinics and schools. We also know that 1.8 million  
people have been displaced in Iraq since 2015 and have  
returned to their homes when possible, so it is important  
to focus on resettlement and stabilisation, and how we  
can bring prosperity and stability back to Mosul and  
the outlying areas of Iraq.

**Dame Caroline Spelman** (Meriden) (Con): Mosul was  
home to one of the oldest Christian communities in the  
region, but religious minorities suffered dreadfully at  
the hands of ISIS. What can DFID do to ensure that  
such minorities are able to return to their place of  
origin?

**Priti Patel:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her  
question and for once again raising the issue of minorities  
who have been persecuted and displaced in the conflict.  
We know that what has happened, particularly for  
Christian communities and others, has been absolutely  
abhorrent. We are now focused on stabilisation, and  
also on ensuring that Iraq as a whole can be rebuilt and  
reunified so that all communities can come back to  
their homes and feel that they can contribute to a new  
Iraq following the conflict.

**Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): We very much  
welcome the military defeat of Daesh in Mosul, but for  
the victory to be truly complete, it is imperative that we  
address the now critical humanitarian needs of the  
people of the city and the surrounding region. As we  
have already heard, Amnesty International has described  
the horrors that the people of Mosul have witnessed  
and the disregard for human life by all parties to the  
conflict. That must not go unpunished. Entire families  
have been wiped out, many of whom are still buried  
under the rubble today. The people of Mosul deserve to  
know that there will be justice and reparation so that  
the harrowing impact of this operation is fully addressed.

The UK Government must finally learn the lessons  
from Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. It cannot be allowed  
to happen in Mosul, as it has happened in so many  
places before, that the cost and impact of UK military  
action dwarfs the relief and reconstruction efforts that  
follow. How are the Government working with civil  
society on the ground to alleviate the suffering of those  
in the refugee camps who lack sufficient food, water  
and electricity to survive the scorching desert heat? Will  
the Government support the creation of an independent  
commission, as recommended by Amnesty International,  
to investigate the killings of civilians by all sides in the  
conflict, including by air strikes carried out by the UK?

**Priti Patel:** I reiterate the comments I made to the  
hon. Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor) about the  
Amnesty International report, the violations that may  
have taken place and the need for investigations. It is  
right and proper that all attention is given to the  
investigations and that people are brought to justice in  
the right way, but we must also recognise that there have  
been horrific attacks across the whole of Iraq because

301

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

12 JULY 2017

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

302

of the poisonous ideology of Daesh. The conduct of  
Daesh, the displacement of people and the atrocities  
that have taken place are absolutely unforgiveable and  
will no doubt scar generations to come.

It is important to stress at this time when many have  
worked to liberate Mosul, in particular coalition forces  
and the Iraqi security forces, that our priority is to  
continue the humanitarian support we provide through  
UK aid to the displaced and to support the stabilisation  
efforts. Of course that is the focus of not just the British  
Governmentbutallourinternationalpartners,including  
the United Nations. We will continue to stand up for  
those who have been displaced and work collectively to  
bring peace and stability to Iraq.

**James Gray** (North Wiltshire) (Con): I warmly welcome  
the tone of the Secretary of State's announcement, and  
in particular the extra funds the UK is giving to the  
wonderful people in Mosul. However, she will know  
that if the experience of Fallujah and elsewhere is to be  
followed in Mosul, the vicious tactics of Daesh will  
mean that every single house, street and public place  
will be booby-trapped and mined, and it will take many  
years to clear that. Will she therefore commit the  
Government to doing what we can to help on the  
technical matter of removing the explosives? Secondly,  
it is not the scorching heat of today that we should be  
worrying about; it is the cold of the Mosul winter,  
which will come in only three or four months' time, by  
which point we must have found decent accommodation  
for these people.

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I  
referred to the fact that we will spend a great deal of  
time, resources and effort in rebuilding not only Mosul  
but Iraq as a whole through the stabilisation approach  
that we will put forward. But there is no doubt that we  
will have to invest to reclaim land, and particularly to  
de-mine huge swathes of the country. The British  
Government announced earlier this year a substantial  
commitment to our de-mining efforts in countries that  
have been unstable through conflict.

My hon. Friend is also right to say that the weather  
conditions in Mosul will change in the latter part of the  
year—they will become much harsher—so all of us in  
the international community will have to not just step  
up our efforts, but focus our resources onthose who will  
be in need in the harsh winter to come. Importantly, we  
need to rebuild, put houses in and start building  
infrastructure sooner rather than later.

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op):  
I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, and  
particularly welcome the additional humanitarian assistance  
she has announced and what she has just said about  
de-mining. When the people of Mosul do return, many  
will be deeply traumatised. What will the Government  
do to ensure there is the mental healthcare and support  
for those families when they do return?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Gentleman is right to speak  
about the psychological, mental and physical trauma  
involved in recovering and rebuilding after what has  
happened across Iraq, and in Mosul in particular. I  
spoke about the fact that we will obviously need to  
rehabilitatethecountryateverysinglelevel—infrastructure,

water, schools and health centres. It is also vital that we  
work with our colleagues and counterparts internationally  
and in the health community to ensure that the medical  
assistance, support and expertise of those who can give  
the necessary help to those who need it is provided.

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): The  
people who wish to return to Mosul have been traumatised,  
as we have heard from many Members, but while the  
ones who stayed in the area want to go home, there are  
very few homes to go to. What exactly is this country  
doing to help to rebuild the infrastructure and put a  
roof over people's heads? Is the Secretary of State also  
encouraging other countries to support the people of  
the area?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend rightly highlights the  
immediate needs of the more than 1.8 million displaced  
people in Iraq who have returned to their homes. We  
are working with the Iraqi Government on stabilisation,  
as well as with UN stability programmes in the  
areas where they are working to provide necessary  
infrastructure—renovated water facilities, power networks,  
clinics, schools, and also homes. The destruction that  
has taken place is incomprehensible to us. Vast swathes  
of land and homes were deliberately destroyed by Daesh,  
and it is our responsibility through UK aid, and working  
internationally with our partners, to ensure that we  
rebuild and rehouse the many millions who have been  
displaced.

**Jo Swinson** (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I welcome  
the statement and thank the Secretary of State for  
advance sight of it. Tens of thousands of children have  
been without education in Mosul for many years, so it is  
good news that 750 schools have reopened, but what  
work is being done to assist schools to tackle the very  
particular and sensitive challenge of helping older children,  
teenagers and young adults to plug the significant gap  
in their education and prevent there being a lost generation?

**Priti Patel:** The hon.Ladyis absolutelyrightto speak  
about the lost generation. There is a high level of  
displacement, including a horrifically high number of  
displaced children, across the whole region affected by  
conflict—Syria and Iraq. Many children have lost their  
education; they have been out of school for several  
years because of the extent of the conflict. The hon.  
Lady knows that the United Kingdom is an enormous  
supporter and big funder of the Education Cannot  
Wait programme, which focuses on exactly this in areas  
of conflict, as well as host communities—Jordan and  
Lebanon, for instance. We are providing resources to  
introduce a double-shift system of education. She also  
mentioned older children, and it is important, with the  
funding we put in through the partners with which we  
work, and particularly through Governments directly,  
that organisations provide education—they are—as well  
as technical and vocational training opportunities.

**Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con) *rose—*

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Ah, a competition between cream-suited  
colleagues. I call Mr John Baron.

303

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

12 JULY 2017

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

304

**Mr Baron:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. My hon. Friend  
the Member for Elmet and Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke)  
is obviously a man of taste.

The Government have previously acknowledged that  
the cutting of the food coupon in the Syrian refugee  
camps in the summer of 2013 led to the mass exodus  
thereafter. While acknowledging the UK's proud track  
record on humanitarian aid, will my right hon. Friend  
make it clear to the House that the international community  
must step up to the plate on the funding of any temporary  
arrangements with regard to displaced people, and that  
we must learn those lessons?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is right to raise this issue.  
On lessons learned, effectively it is now about the  
implementation of a lot of the programmes for those in  
humanitarian crisis situations, in terms of food provision,  
water and other essentials. We have learned many lessons  
through the Grand Bargain work; partner organisations  
on the ground delivering services and provisions are  
working collectively, in a way that they were not in  
2013, to bring vital aid and food to those who need it.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I congratulate the  
Secretary of State on her measured and comprehensive  
statement. I have a friend in Baghdad who was an MP  
in Mosul and who was also Culture Secretary; for her,  
the devastation of this historically very important city  
will have been awful, but I am glad that the Secretary of  
State is focusing on the humanitarian needs right away,  
because as Members have said, the traumatisation,  
particularly of children, in the area needs to be addressed  
immediately.

The Secretary of State talked about the importance  
of peace. Of course, we all want to see peace in the  
region, and I congratulate the Prime Minister of Iraq  
on hopefully getting rid of Daesh, at least from Mosul,  
but Kurdistan is a very important part of the country;  
does the Secretary of State agree that it is important  
that the Parliament of Kurdistan, which has not met for  
over a year, should meet as soon as possible?

**Priti Patel:** I thank the right hon. Lady for her  
thoughtful observations on how we need to work together  
to bring peace and stability to Iraq and the region. This  
is not something that one country can do on its own;  
the international community can provide guidance, support  
and, in particular, assistance with getting the democracy  
functioning again. That would be the ultimate symbol  
of beating Daesh and the poisonous ideology that it has  
been propagating across the region. She is right to  
highlight the fact that stabilisation, peace and, ultimately,  
a functioning democracy should return all over again.  
This is a long-term objective, and we know that it will  
be difficult because of the levels of conflict, instability,  
destruction and displacement that we have seen. Our  
immediate focus is on putting people, including children,  
first and rebuilding the country in the best way we can  
through the international coalition.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I do not want the hon. Gentleman to  
feel left out: I call Mr Alec Shelbrooke.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** In all my elections, I have proudly  
stood in support of our manifesto commitment to  
spend 0.7% of GDP on international aid, although

many people have criticised it. Does my right hon.  
Friend agree that in situations such as these, such a  
commitment is not only morally right but enables us to  
invest in Iraq? A lot of the situation with Daesh in  
Mosul came about because the residents were worried  
about divisions in the Baghdad Government. It is investment  
from this country through my right hon. Friend's  
Department that allows people to be educated and  
ensures that that Government will work for the entire  
country to prevent this happening again.

**Priti Patel:** I thank my hon. Friend for re-stating the  
importance of UK aid and our commitment to the  
world's poorest through the 0.7%. We have been undertaking  
urgent humanitarian support for a number of years, but  
we are also looking ahead to the stabilisation that we  
will work to achieve collectively within the international  
development community. We can see UK aid making a  
difference to people, and bringing peace, stability and  
global influence to countries such as Iraq in the way  
that we would all expect our aid budget to do.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Following the  
comments from the Scottish nationalist spokesman,  
the hon. Member for Dundee West (Chris Law), does  
the Secretary of State agree that the crucial difference  
between the actions of the British and coalition forces  
on the one hand and Daesh on the other is that we go  
out of our way to minimise civilian casualties, while  
Daesh does exactly the opposite? At a time when one of  
our colleagues is being hideously bullied and threatened  
over her vote in favour of the action against Daesh, do  
we not need to send a clear message that this House was  
absolutely right to take the decisions to carry out military  
action against Daesh, both in Iraq and in Syria?

**Priti Patel:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
right to say that we did the right thing, and we will  
continue to do the right thing by standing up to those  
poisonous ideologies and the conduct of those awful  
groups around the world. The liberation of Mosul  
speaks volumes about the sacrifices that the people in  
that community—and those who fought against Daesh—  
have made.

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): I thank my right  
hon. Friend for her statement. Sexual violence is one of  
the consistent horrors of war, both conventional and  
unconventional. It is a deliberate act, and a recognisable  
but repugnant tactic designed to shatter the cohesion of  
oppressed people, as well as being a grotesque example  
of individual human rights abuses. Will the Secretary of  
State assure us that she will look at what DFID can do  
to mitigate this vile form of violence and to support the  
Yazidis and other fragile, damaged communities? Moreover,  
will she tell us what DIFD can do to deter would-be  
oppressors from using this form of violence in future  
conflicts?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to  
mention the abhorrent sexual violence against women  
and girls, particularly in the Yazidi community. He is  
also right to highlight the fact that Britain has been  
calling this behaviour out, and standing up for and  
giving a voice to many people who have been subjected  
to horrific abuses and attacks by Daesh. In countries of  
conflict, it is women and girls who suffer such atrocities

305

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

12 JULY 2017

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

306

and acts of violence, and we will continue to stand up  
for them through our work with the United Nations  
and with our partners in other countries. In answer to  
his question on what else we can do, we will follow  
through the prosecutions of those who are responsible  
and hold them to account.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): I visited the outskirts  
of Mosul last October during the conflict and met  
counter-terrorism personnel. I also visited six camps for  
refugees and internally displaced people and saw the  
huge humanitarian operation, which I was very impressed  
by. I note that on Radio 4's “Today” programme this  
morning, the deputy commander of the coalition forces,  
General Jones from the United Kingdom, said that  
everything had been done to protect citizens. However,  
he went on to describe Amnesty's report as “naive” and  
reckless. This is in the week in which the Amnesty  
report on Saudi Arabia arms sales—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We are all very interested in the  
contents of the Amnesty report, but there is no need for  
a verbatim regurgitation of its contents. I just point out  
that so far, progress has been lamentably slow. That is  
not just the fault of the hon. Gentleman; it applies  
much more widely. We have got through only about  
10 Back-Bench questions in 15 minutes, but I am sure  
that he is reaching his peroration, which we eagerly  
anticipate.

**Graham Jones:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was going  
to say that we need a new democratic settlement in  
Nineveh province. What are the Secretary of State's  
Department, the Foreign Office and our ambassador,  
Frank Baker, doing to ensure that we include minorities  
in that settlement?

**Priti Patel:** The Iraqi and coalition forces have made  
every effort to protect civilians. On the hon. Gentleman's  
last point, we are working with the Iraqi Government  
and with all partners on the ground on stabilisation and  
support for the rebuilding of Mosul.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I call the hon. Member for Stafford  
(Jeremy Lefroy); he can be the author of the brevity  
textbook.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I pay tribute to the  
Iraqi security forces and the British armed forces for  
their work. Will the Secretary of State update us on  
another humanitarian threat to the people of Mosul,  
namely the Mosul dam, which is in an incredibly dangerous  
condition and, being upstream of Mosul, threatens the  
city?

**Priti Patel:** That is a very serious situation and,  
again, we are working on stabilisation and are making  
every effort to provide the support required in that area.  
We will continue to do that; this is an ongoing situation.  
We are not only monitoring it but are being very active  
in the support that we can give.

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Last  
November, I raised the plight of the thousands of  
Yazidi women and children who were being held in

slavery by Daesh in Mosul. I asked the Government  
whether they would seek to provide specialist psychological  
care once the liberation of Mosul had been completed.  
Will the Minister tell me what plans the Government  
are putting in place, now that Daesh has been driven  
from the city, to tend to the specific psychological needs  
and physical wounds of one of the most wickedly  
abused communities on this planet?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Gentleman is right to point out  
the awful abuse of minorities, and of the Yazidi women  
in particular. I refer him to my earlier comment about  
the medical support we are providing. Mental and  
psychological support are absolutely essential, given the  
abhorrent nature of this conflict.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): I welcome the resources  
that the Government are making available for the relief  
of the suffering following the conflict, but will the  
Secretary of State ensure that the international community  
at no stage loses focus on the politics of the settlement  
around Mosul? We must ensure that there is no continuation  
of the institutionalised marginalisation of the complex  
number of communities around the city, and that they  
all have a stake in the future.

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is right to talk about the  
political stabilisation and about inclusivity in relation  
to the rebuilding. We will continue to work with Prime  
Minister al-Abadi and the Iraqi Government to ensure  
that this happens.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
The tributes that the Secretary of State has made were  
right, and the ambition is commendable, but the question  
is: how is this going to be achieved? People talk facilely  
about learning the lessons from Iraq, but is it not an  
example of the collective failure to reconstruct the  
country that many Sunni families saw Daesh as their  
protectors against the legitimate Government, rather  
than the marauding killers that they were? How will  
things be different, and what role will the UK Government  
play?

**Priti Patel:** The UK Government will play their part  
in every way that is necessary. There are no easy solutions  
to rebuilding a country or to making it operationally  
functional again after such an abhorrent and appalling  
conflict. We will continue to support Prime Minister  
al-Abadi and the Iraqi Government and to aid in the  
response that is required. We will also support inclusivity  
and getting the politics, security and stabilisation right.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con):  
Does my right hon. Friend agree that reconstruction  
depends on the removal of mines and booby traps? Is  
she satisfied that there is adequate capacity, and that  
enough money has been allocated to deal speedily with  
that task? Is there any timetable?

**Priti Patel:** We provide support for the vital de-mining  
and clearing up of improvised explosive devices. The  
British Government have provided specific resources,  
and we will use various Government funds and support  
the UN Mine Action Service. However, the task is not  
easy, and the level of destruction in Iraq is absolutely

307

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

12 JULY 2017

Humanitarian Situation in Mosul

308

*[Priti Patel]*

atrocious. Our work is cut out for us, but we will give all  
the necessary support to ensure that mines are cleared  
and that land is returned to its former use.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): The  
liberation of Mosul is a significant step towards the  
defeat of this evil terror, but does the Secretary of State  
agree that the rebuilding and de-radicalisation of  
communities are just as important as that defeat?

**Priti Patel:** The hon. Lady is right that de-radicalisation  
must be a feature of the stabilisation and rebuilding.  
Divided and fractured communities need to be brought  
back together. Once again, Britain will lead the way on  
this, providing all the necessary support to the Iraqi  
Government and doing our bit to bring stability and  
peace to the country.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The atrocities of  
Daesh have failed to deliver a caliph and the so-called  
caliphate. My right hon. Friend rightly recognises the  
role of the Iraqi forces, but will she join me in recognising  
the role played by the Yazidi fighters, especially the  
female fighters? What work is being done to ensure that  
their voices are heard during the reconstruction?

**Priti Patel:** Taking back control of Mosul has been a  
hard-fought battle, and all the forces and communities  
should be commended for their efforts. Stabilisation  
obviously needs to happen, but the focus must be on  
bringing together the minority groups from all the  
communities that have been divided by this atrocious  
conflict.

**Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South)  
(Lab): I join the right hon. Lady in paying tribute to our  
brave servicemen and women. I welcome her announcement  
about UK humanitarian aid, but what specific funding  
will be offered to women and girls who have been  
subject to the most unimaginable sexual violence of  
Daesh? We must do more to support them.

**Priti Patel:** I announced today that we will be providing  
the necessary humanitarian aid, but 46,000 vulnerable  
and displaced people, many of whom are women and  
girls who have been subject to such atrocities and violence,  
will also receive support through that money.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I am sure that the  
Secretary of State will agree that the liberation of  
Mosul is a vindication of those on both sides of the  
House who were prepared to vote to give our allies on  
the ground the military support that they needed, rather  
than those who only wanted to offer warm words and  
hand-wringing in response to Daesh's advance. Does  
she agree that getting people back into work is vital for  
getting things back to normal? What specific work will  
the Department be doing to bring Mosul's economy  
back to life?

**Priti Patel:** My hon. Friend is right that the liberation  
of Mosul represents a great opportunity to rebuild the  
country and put infrastructure in place. We need to  
work collectively with our partners and with the companies  
that will go in and help to create jobs, new economic  
opportunities and prosperity. That is a major feature of  
the stabilisation and rebuilding work that DFID is  
leading on with colleagues from across Government  
and with our international counterparts.

309

12 JULY 2017

Points of Order

310

Points of Order

1.23 pm

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. Have you had any notice from the  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about an  
impending statement on Her Majesty's Revenue and  
Customs' “Building our Future” programme? Today,  
the Department made the outrageous decision to move  
over 1,000 jobs from my constituency to Edinburgh,  
despite the publication of a National Audit Office report  
just before the election that damned the programme.  
Questions are being asked about the inappropriate use  
of funds during purdah, and the public and my constituents  
cannot have confidence in this Parliament and its processes  
until they get answers. What can you do to assist me and  
my constituents?

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her  
point of order. In short, I have received no indication  
from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of  
an intention to come to the House to make an oral  
statement. I think that something has been announced,  
either in the form of a written statement or some media  
communication,outwithwhatIwouldcalloraldiscourse.  
That said, the hon. Lady, in her relatively short time in  
the House, has become an adroit deployer of the various  
mechanisms available to her to pursue the interests of  
her constituents. There are some days to go before the  
House rises for the summer recess, and if she judges  
that there is an urgency attached to this matter, I am  
sure that she will have recourse to the appropriate  
mechanism, and I will look out for it. What is more, I  
rather imagine that she will be in her seat, and leaping  
up and down from it, at business questions tomorrow.

**Dawn Butler** (Brent Central) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. Many people, myself included, will  
have been disappointed to read in today's papers that  
the Prime Minister has postponed the publication of a  
report, which she ordered as part of her mission to  
tackle “burning injustices”, that audits and examines  
how people of different backgrounds are treated by  
public services. The reason for the delay is reportedly  
because it is “explosive” and “pretty bad”. Given the  
genuine and growing concern, is it in order for the Prime  
Minister to postpone a publication because she does

not like the findings and because it will look bad for her  
Government? Is there a way that Parliament can have  
sight of the report that the Prime Minister is trying to  
hide?

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Lady for her point of  
order. The short answer is that nothing disorderly has  
taken place. The timing of Government statements and  
the release of Government reports are matters for Ministers,  
not the Chair. However, if there is a completed report  
and if the hon. Lady and others are keen to know its  
contents and are not aware of any particularly compelling  
reason why it cannot be published sooner rather than  
later, it is open to the hon. Lady to seek to cajole or  
entice an appropriate Minister to come to the House in  
the remaining days before we rise for the summer recess.  
I cannot commit that that will happen, but I have this  
keen sense that the hon. Lady will return to the issue  
and probably seek some sort of adjudication from me in  
the days ahead.

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth)  
(Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. During Prime  
Minister's questions, the First Secretary of State claimed  
that people with mental health conditions are more  
likely to be supported by the personal independence  
payment than the disability living allowance. The mental  
health charity Mind has made it absolutely clear that  
55% of people with mental health conditions transferring  
from DLA to PIP have no award or a reduced award. I  
would be grateful if you could advise me on how we can  
have the record corrected.

**Mr Speaker:** It is fair to say that the hon. Lady has  
found her own salvation, in that she has put her thought  
on the record in characteristically robust, but thankfully  
pithy, form, and that will now form part of the *Official  
Report*. I am well aware—I would be failing in my duty  
if I were not—that she has strong views on this matter,  
and that those views differ markedly from those of the  
First Secretary of State. I think it is fair to say that this  
is properly a matter for debate, but we shall leave it  
there, albeit only for today.

If there are no further points of order, we come to the  
general debate on the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry, and I  
am looking to the First Secretary of State to open the  
debate at his second outing at the Dispatch Box today.

311

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

312

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

1.28 pm

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry.

I begin by expressing my deep sympathy to all those  
who lost family members and other loved ones in this  
terrible tragedy. Their suffering is beyond imagining.  
Our thoughts also go out to all those who lost their  
homes and possessions in the fire. Since that terrible  
event of 14 June—a month ago—we have all been  
deeply affected by that unprecedented tragedy, and  
words feel inadequate.

I pay tribute to the men and women of our emergency  
services, many of whom risked life and limb in their  
efforts to tackle the fire and showed extraordinary  
courage in their determination to save lives. Equally  
important, I pay tribute to the many volunteers and  
charities that have given their time and much, much  
more to help the bereaved and those who have lost their  
home.

Sir Martin Moore-Bick, the chair of the Grenfell  
Tower inquiry, is currently consulting on the scope of  
the inquiry's terms of reference, so this debate provides  
an opportunity for Parliament to express its views on  
the inquiry before the terms of reference are set. Of  
course, it is most important that the chair listens to the  
views of those most affected by the tragedy and takes  
account of those views when considering the scope of  
his inquiry's terms of reference, but I am sure Sir Martin  
will want to reflect on the views expressed in this House  
today—we should all be conscious that the survivors of  
this terrible tragedy will also be listening.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I  
am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way so  
early. Does he agree that it will be important to have an  
interim report? If there are recommendations that address  
crucial safety issues with high-rise blocks, clearly they  
need to be attended to as soon as possible.

**Damian Green:** My right hon. and learned Friend is  
correct, and he may be aware that there is an intention  
to produce an interim report as soon as is practical. I  
am conscious that one of the great wishes of many  
survivors, and of the groups representing them, is for as  
many of the questions as possible to be resolved as  
quickly as possible.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am  
sure there will be lots of comments on the scope of the  
report during this debate, and I do not want to widen it  
too far, but can the First Secretary of State assure the  
House that the scope will include private blocks and not  
be confined to social housing? In my experience as a  
city centre Member of Parliament, it is often much  
more difficult for residents of private blocks with opaque  
ownership and unresponsive managing agents than for  
residents of social blocks to have their voices heard.

**Damian Green:** The hon. Lady makes a good point. I  
cannot guarantee what the terms of reference will be,  
because that is obviously a matter for Sir Martin, but  
one of the purposes of this debate is precisely to allow

such views to be expressed. I am happy to assure her  
and the House that the testing regime for the safety of  
blocks does extend to private blocks.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Will the First  
Secretary say what has happened to the independent  
recovery taskforce, which was announced about a week  
ago by the Secretary of State for Communities and  
Local Government? We do not know who the members  
are, what they are doing or whether they have been to  
Kensington. If the taskforce has not yet been convened,  
will he reconsider sending in commissioners, particularly  
given what we heard this morning? We heard that the  
person to whom the taskforce is reporting, the new  
leader of Kensington and Chelsea London Borough  
Council, despite being a councillor for 11 years and a  
cabinet member for five years, has not seen fit to go into  
any of the tower blocks in her borough.

**Damian Green:** I reassure the hon. Gentleman that  
the taskforce is an independent body that will report to  
my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, not to  
Kensington and Chelsea Council.

**Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): Pursuant  
to that point, will the First Secretary clarify whether the  
recovery taskforce has any executive authority whatsoever,  
or is it purely advisory?

**Damian Green:** It is an advisory panel, not an executive  
one, reporting to the Secretary of State. That is the  
proper way to proceed.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): Is the  
First Secretary saying that the taskforce has no executive  
authority and that executive authority remains with the  
council? Is there a distinction between the taskforce's  
powers and the powers that would be available to a  
commissioner, if one were appointed?

**Damian Green:** The taskforce will be overseeing what  
the council does but, as I have said to other Opposition  
Members, it will report to the Secretary of State, who  
can then decide the appropriate way to proceed. The  
taskforce is independent of the council, is not reporting  
to the council and will oversee what the council is  
doing.

The Prime Minister rightly identified the immediate  
priority when she announced the inquiry: establishing  
the facts of what happened at Grenfell Tower in order  
to take the necessary action to prevent a similar tragedy  
from happening again. The inquiry will fulfil that purpose  
and will report in two phases, with an interim report  
being published as quickly as possible.

Beyond that immediate focus, it is also important  
that all the wider lessons from this catastrophe, and  
from the inspections of other buildings around the  
country that followed it, are identified and learned.  
Sir Martin has said:

“I should make it clear that I shall want to consider a broad  
range of evidence, including on the role of the relevant public  
authorities and contractors, in order to help me answer the  
important questions.”

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I am  
grateful to the Minister of State, Department for  
Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member

313

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

314

for Reading West (Alok Sharma), for answering my  
written question on the privatisation of housing functions  
in Kensington and Chelsea Council. I find it extraordinary  
that there is no central management, nor even records  
kept, of housing contracts within the housing department.  
We now have a situation where there is no accountability  
and no transparency on the nature of local authority  
contracts with the private sector involving housing, or  
on the degree to which housing contracts are subcontracted  
to other private providers. In view of this tragedy, will  
the First Secretary advise me on whether there are plans  
to revisit that policy?

**Damian Green:** There is clearly a large range of issues  
on which the inquiry may wish to make recommendations  
to the Government, and the hon. Lady has put that  
thought on the record. As I said, I imagine that Sir Martin  
will wish to take note of the views expressed in this  
debate.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): On a wider point, my right hon. Friend will  
appreciate that many survivors suffered from carbon  
monoxide poisoning. Of course, carbon monoxide is  
known as the silent killer. Will he ensure that, among  
the many other lessons that are learned, the planned  
review of carbon monoxide alarms actually goes ahead  
in October 2017?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend makes an extremely  
good point. A range of lessons need to be learnt from  
this terrible tragedy. As he knows, an expert panel with  
a range of skills and expertise across a number of areas  
will be helping the inquiry. Again, he raises an important  
issue that not only the Government but the inquiry  
itself will want to consider.

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The  
First Secretary is right that no stone should be left  
unturned in uncovering the truth behind the horror that  
was the Grenfell Tower fire. On wider lessons and  
action in the meantime, Birmingham has 231 tower  
blocks and the city council has rightly decided that it  
will retrofit sprinklers in all of them, costing £31 million  
to a council that has suffered £700 million of cuts to its  
budget. Will the Government unequivocally commit to  
funding all the necessary safety measures, pending the  
outcome of the inquiry?

**Damian Green:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of  
State has said that the necessary safety measures  
recommended by the fire service will be met by the  
Government. The inquiry is designed to ascertain the  
causes of the tragedy.

**Jack Dromey:** For clarity, the First Secretary has just  
made an important statement. Is he saying that the  
necessary safety measures to protect 10,000 households  
in 231 blocks will be funded by the Government?

**Damian Green:** For clarity, I will go all the way  
through this. If the fire service recommends that something  
needs to be done for safety reasons, the local authority  
will be the first port of call to pay for it—I am sure all  
local authorities will want to follow the fire service's  
recommendations on this. If a local authority can show  
that it cannot afford it, central Government will obviously

then step in. That is a matter for local authorities and  
the fire service in the first instance. Clearly, that is the  
sensible way to proceed.

**Lucy Powell:** Will the First Secretary give way?

**Damian Green:** I have been very generous in giving  
way and I really need to make some progress.

The inquiry will need to examine all relevant  
circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire at  
Grenfell Tower, its spread to the whole building and its  
effect on residents. That necessarily means looking at  
circumstances well beyond the design, construction and  
modification of the building itself. It will mean looking  
attheroleof relevant public authorities and the contractors,  
and the broader implications of the fire for the adequacy  
and enforcement of relevant regulations. It will also  
mean looking at the handling of concerns previously  
expressed by local residents.

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab) *rose—*

**Damian Green:** May I make some progress and then I  
will give way? I am conscious that many Members want  
to contribute to this debate. I have been extremely  
generous in giving way during my opening remarks, and  
I think the House will benefit from my making progress.

Sir Martin is highly respected, and as a recently  
retired Court of Appeal judge he brings with him many  
years of judicial experience. He and the Government  
fully agree that, for this inquiry, consulting on the terms  
of reference is an important way of involving those  
affected by the tragedy. It is clearly right that those  
affected by this terrible tragedy, and others with an  
interest, are given the opportunity to shape the terms of  
reference, which will in turn give direction and focus to  
the inquiry. Sir Martin has started that consultation  
process and is keen to give as many people as possible  
the chance to contribute to the consultation. He will  
consider all suggestions made to him when drawing up  
thetermsof reference.Hewillthenmakearecommendation  
to the Prime Minister,who under the Inquiries Act 2005  
is responsible for setting out the terms of reference.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): Will my right  
hon. Friend give way?

**Damian Green:** May I do so in a moment? I will give  
way again, but first I wish to finish this section of my  
speech.

I will quote Sir Martin at length, because this is at the  
heart of many of the issues that have arisen:

“I am determined to establish the causes of the tragedy, and  
ensure that the appropriate lessons are learnt. To do this, the  
Inquiry will need to examine all relevant circumstances leading  
up to and surrounding the fire at Grenfell Tower, in order to  
understand its causes and prevent such a tragedy ever happening  
again.

To produce a report as quickly as possible, with clear  
recommendations for action, I will listen to people and consider a  
broad range of evidence, including on the role of the relevant  
public authorities and contractors, in order to help me answer the  
important questions.

I therefore want to hear from people directly affected by the  
fire and others involved, to listen to their views on the shape  
of the Inquiry's work and the questions we should be seeking  
to answer.”

315

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

316

*[Damian Green]*

That is clearly the right approach. Sir Martin has set  
a deadline for comments of Friday 28 July, extended by  
two weeks from the inquiry's original deadline, following  
discussions between Sir Martin and survivors of the fire  
and other residents of the estate, which made it clear  
that those affected need more time to respond to the  
consultation. That extension will allow the inquiry to  
begin its work in August. I am sure we are all agreed  
that the sooner the inquiry can begin its work, the  
sooner we will have the important conclusions of its  
interim report. It is important to point out that the  
public and others with an interest will of course be able  
to feed into the inquiry throughout the course of its  
work, by writing to it or emailing the contact address  
provided on its website. The terms of reference can  
always be revised during the course of the inquiry, and  
that may be likely as the inquiry reflects on what it has  
learned at the interim report stage, before it begins  
phase 2 of its work.

**Rebecca Pow:** I thank my right hon. Friend for giving  
way. I am heartened to hear about the inclusivity of the  
inquiry, and public safety must be at its forefront. Will  
the inquiry look back historically and examine the  
effectiveness of the fire regulations and enforcement  
regime introduced in 2005 and 2006 respectively?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend raises a valid and  
important point. I assure her that the expert panel,  
which covers a range of different expertise, is already  
looking at that, and it will feed into the inquiry.

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** Following on from the question asked  
by the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca  
Pow), the building regulations should be due for review.  
In this country that usually happens every 10 years, and  
11 have now passed. The Lakanal House inquiry  
recommended in 2013 that building regulations should  
be reviewed. The Government have been saying since  
2011, including after Lakanal House, that that would  
be done by this year. We do not have to wait for a public  
inquiry to say that building regulations should be reviewed.  
When will the working party be recalled, to show that  
that work is under way?

**Damian Green:** I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman  
has huge experience and expertise in this area. I assure  
him that the expert panel is considering whether any  
advice needs to be given urgently to the Secretary of  
State to act on.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD):  
The First Secretary is right that there should be a  
consultation on the remit to try to help to rebuild the  
local community's trust in the inquiry, but is he prepared  
to go further? Should not there be an advisory panel  
made up of genuine and diverse community members?

**Damian Green:** The right hon. Gentleman may know  
that a similar group, namely Grenfell United, has already  
brought together many other groups. My right hon.  
Friend the Secretary of State and the Minister of State,  
Department for Communities and Local Government,  
my hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Alok  
Sharma), had a long and extensive meeting with the

group last night. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that  
the views of those most affected are being fed to Sir Martin  
directly, and they are also in direct communication with  
the Secretary of State.

In terms of the potential appointment of panel members,  
the priority at this stage is for consultation on the terms  
of reference, which once agreed will allow the inquiry to  
start work. The chair will then want to consider what  
other expert assistance might be required and how that  
should be provided to the inquiry, including the process  
of consultation.

I assure the House that Government work is already  
in hand to address issues highlighted by this terrible  
tragedy. The Department for Communities and Local  
Government and the Cabinet Office are working together  
across the piece and on the wider building safety  
programme, about which I know hon. Members on  
both sides of the House are concerned. DCLG has  
written to local councils and housing associations, calling  
for checks to social housing. A survey of the public  
sector estate began on 28 June, with a request for  
Government Departments and arm's length bodies to  
review all public buildings in line with provided guidance  
and to submit samples for testing from priority buildings  
with aluminium composite material cladding.

**Annaliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): Is the  
First Secretary aware that a lot of DCLG advice has  
been contradictory? It initially informed us that certain  
kinds of cladding had to be removed, but then its  
position changed and it said that certain kinds of cladding  
could still be safe as part of fire safety systems. There  
was also a lack of clarity about whether that testing  
regime was compulsory. That appeared to be the initial  
position, but now we have been informed that the  
Department was responding to landlords' concerns. Is  
the First Secretary aware that such flip-flopping is  
causing a lot of confusion and concern, including among  
tenants?

**Damian Green:** The expert panel, which I have mentioned  
on a number of occasions, includes precisely the people  
to provide advice and it continues to do so. Its advice  
has been consistently followed by the Department because  
it has that expertise. It may well discover more and  
decide that its advice needs to change, but it is all done  
on the basis of fire safety experts who are independent  
of Government.

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): I  
grew up in a two-bed flat in a council block and the  
traditional advice was always to stay put and await  
rescue. I wonder how many souls perished following  
that traditional advice. Will the advice change?

**Damian Green:** That issue may well be addressed by  
Sir Martin in the public inquiry, which is clearly the  
appropriate forum for that sort of investigation.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Even as  
we speak, and before the inquiry has begun, new tower  
blocks continue to be constructed and developed in my  
constituency and around the country. What new advice  
has been issued to planning authorities, those who  
monitor construction standards and the building industry?

317

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

318

**Damian Green:** The expert panel published new advice  
last week in a memorandum of understanding about  
what should be done about new blocks, so that issue has  
been addressed very directly over the past month.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):  
On the points that were just made, I have constituents  
with disabilities who live in tower blocks on higher  
floors who have expressed great concern about what  
they should do in the event of an emergency. Sometimes  
they have been given conflicting advice about, for example,  
whether people in wheelchairs should be using lifts,  
which is contrary to general advice. Will the First  
Secretary encourage the inquiry to consider people with  
disabilities who live on higher floors?

**Damian Green:** As the hon. Lady will know, rules are  
already in place to cover precisely that type of thing.  
The best advice is obviously that those rules should be  
obeyed. The fire safety advisers are looking at what  
happened and what should happen in future, but it will  
be the local fire safety authorities that give that advice. I  
am sure they will all have been looking carefully at the  
advice they have been giving, particularly to people in  
wheelchairs and so on, who clearly will be understandably  
concerned about whether they are getting the right  
safety advice. I advise the hon. Lady to talk to her local  
fire safety officials.

Over the past month, the Cabinet Office has established  
a cross-Government working group called the public  
estates response group, with a technical sub-group to  
ensure that all technical advice is understood and is  
being properly applied. The Government are ensuring  
full engagement and alignment with activity in the  
devolved Administrations—I am conscious that they  
will be concerned as well. As I said, DCLG has formed  
an expert advisory panel made up of a range of building  
and fire safety experts to advise the Government on any  
immediate action required to ensure that buildings are  
safe. The Cabinet Office is working with DCLG's expert  
panel and others to establish a remediation plan and the  
next steps towards the review of building regulations  
that several Members have asked for. All that work is  
under way outside the inquiry's timetable, so its completion  
will not be dependent on the publication of the inquiry's  
report.

Some of those affected by this terrible event are  
concerned that an inquest would be more appropriate  
than an inquiry, and that the inquiry might delay the  
identification of those who died. I can reassure them  
that there will be an inquest: the coroner, Dr Fiona  
Wilcox, is already investigating the deaths—that is a  
statutory duty. Once the identification of each of the  
deceased has been completed, I understand that the  
coroner will open the inquest into each individual death  
and then adjourn proceedings pending the outcome of  
other investigations, including the inquiry. The coroner  
will consider the inquiry's recommendations to determine  
whether to resume the inquests. The process will not  
delay the formal identification of victims.

I can reassure those who want a criminal investigation  
into this terrible tragedy that that is in hand. The  
Metropolitan police announced the investigation on  
16 June. It is one of the largest and most complex  
investigations ever undertaken by the Metropolitan police,  
with around 250 specialist investigators currently engaged.

I hope that Members will be reassured by the clear  
statements about the investigation from the Metropolitan  
police. Detective Superintendent Fiona McCormack  
said on 23 June that the investigation would

“identify and investigate any criminal offence and, of course,  
given the deaths of so many people, we are considering manslaughter,  
as well as criminal offences and breaches of legislation and  
regulations”.

That point was reinforced on Monday by Assistant  
Commissioner Martin Hewitt, who said:

“The investigation we are conducting is a criminal investigation  
that quite obviously is starting from the potential that there was  
something that effectively amounts to the manslaughter of those  
people.”

It is clear that it will be a rigorous, detailed investigation;  
the police are determined that, if wrongdoing has occurred,  
the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

The Grenfell Tower inquiry's task is of the  
utmost importance to establish the facts and make  
recommendations about the action needed to prevent a  
similar tragedy from happening again. The Government  
will provide the inquiry with all the resources it needs to  
complete its work thoroughly and rapidly. This was a  
terrible tragedy; we must learn the lessons to ensure  
nothing like it can happen again.

1.54 pm

**John Healey** (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): It is  
four weeks to the day since the truly dreadful Grenfell  
Tower fire—the worst fire and greatest loss of life in this  
country since at least the London blitz. One hundred  
and fifty-eight families have lost their homes, and many  
others have lost loved ones. All are struggling with the  
horror and trauma of losing family members, of their  
own escape, and of being left with absolutely nothing.  
This is the time when they should feel that they can look  
to their council and their Government for help, as well  
as to the overwhelming solidarity and support of their  
local community. But so many do not, and so many feel  
that they simply cannot trust those in authority to listen  
to them and do what they promise. This is a very strong  
message to Ministers, Kensington and Chelsea Council  
and the chair of the Prime Minister's public inquiry.

Today is one week on from the Prime Minister's  
deadline for everyone affected to have been found a  
home nearby, yet just four of the 158 families from  
Grenfell Tower have moved into a fresh home—and  
those are only temporary. Today is 24 days on from the  
start of the Government's testing programme; the Prime  
Minister said that we could test more than 100 buildings  
a day, yet only 224 tests have been done, almost all on  
one type of filler in one type of cladding. Today is four  
years and four months since two official coroners' reports  
following other fatal tower-block fires, yet the Government  
have still failed to act on their recommendations. And  
today is almost three weeks since the Prime Minister  
said that

“we simply have not given enough attention to social housing”—  
[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 169.]

Yet, in her speech yesterday crying out for ideas—any  
ideas for a domestic policy programme—there was no  
mention of housing and no mention of the words  
“social housing”.

This is the measure of the Government's response to  
the Grenfell Tower tragedy: too slow to act; too slow to  
grasp the gravity and complexity of the problems; and

319

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

320

*[John Healey]*

one step off the pace at every stage. Let me spell out to  
the First Secretary and his colleagues the pledge that  
the Labour party makes, as the official Opposition, to,  
above all, the survivors and the relatives of the families  
from Grenfell Tower: we will not rest until all those who  
need help and a new home have it; until all those  
culpable have been brought fully to account; and until  
all measures needed to make sure that this can never,  
ever happen again are fully in place.

We welcome the Prime Minister's public inquiry and  
what the First Secretary said about this debate helping  
to inform the terms of reference and the way the inquiry  
will be conducted. We will make a submission to the  
Prime Minister on the terms of reference and recommend  
an approach like that of the Macpherson inquiry, with  
the appointment of panel members with deep experience  
in community relations to help to overcome the serious  
gulf in trust that many in the north Kensington community  
feel.

Let me turn to housing and the help for the survivors.  
The pledges that the Government have made to the  
families and the survivors—no-strings financial assistance,  
open access to trauma counselling, guaranteed school  
places, no legal action on immigration status or sub-letting,  
and rehousing—are all welcome and important. But  
there is still a big gap between what Ministers are saying  
to us in the House and what the residents and the  
community in north Kensington are saying is happening  
to them.

On housing, how is it, one week after the Prime  
Minister's deadline, that only four families have moved  
into a fresh home and 13 others have been offered  
somewhere they feel they can say yes to? Who is finding,  
checking and offering this temporary accommodation?  
Who is providing the reassurance needed for the families?  
Who is in charge?

**Rebecca Pow:** The right hon. Gentleman is making a  
good point, and of course these people, their homes  
and rehousing them is of the utmost importance, but to  
politicise the figures and to argue*—[Interruption.]* Ido  
not know where he is getting his figures from. I was led  
to believe that 139 people had received offers of  
accommodation and many families have agreed not yet  
to engage, because they are not quite ready—we cannot  
force them to either. I am not sure where the statistics  
are coming from or whether all the scaremongering  
about statistics is helping to solve the actual problem,  
which this Government are getting on with doing.

**John Healey:** The First Secretary's speech to this  
House was fact and figure free. If I am wrong about the  
fact that only four of these families, after nearly one  
month, have moved into a fresh home—a temporary  
home—and the rest are still in hotels, he can get up and  
correct me, but he is not doing so. The hon. Lady talks  
about scaremongering and political point scoring, but it  
is precisely the decisions and policies of those in power  
that the Grenfell Tower residents want challenged. And  
it is precisely the questions of policy, ideology and  
responsibility in government that lie at the heart of the deep  
changes needed to fix the housing crisis in this country,  
and her own Prime Minister has recognised that.

**Damian Green:** Just to clear up any confusion in the  
right hon. Gentleman's mind, 159 families have been  
offered accommodation, as my hon. Friend the Member  
for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) rightly said. Some of  
those have said—I heard the leader of Kensington's  
council say this this morning—that they do not wish yet  
to make the move into the housing they have been  
offered. Of course everyone across the House will recognise  
that we need to meet those wishes. These people have to  
decide how they can try to cope with this, but I can  
assure the right hon. Gentleman and the House that  
159 of the families identified have been offered  
accommodation—some of them have been offered more  
than one type of accommodation. That commitment  
has been met.

**John Healey:** I think the Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government may want to set  
the record entirely straight when he winds up this  
debate. I take the First Secretary at his word for now,  
but last week we were told that 158 families lost their  
homes in Grenfell Tower, and 139 had been offered  
accommodation by the Prime Minister's deadline. Last  
week, only three had moved out. This week—today—four  
weeks on, four had moved out and only a further  
13 have actually been given offers that they feel they can  
accept. There is a huge gap between what Ministers are  
saying here and what residents are saying there. That is  
the problem, and the question to the First Secretary and  
the Secretary of State is: who is sorting this out? Who is  
in charge? Who is responsible for this continuing failure  
to provide the homes and the start again that people  
need? I am sure the First Secretary would accept that a  
hotel room is no home and that temporary accommodation  
is no place in which to try to rebuild a shattered life. So  
the top and the urgent priority must be for Ministers to  
find the permanent homes that are needed.

We welcome the 68 homes in Kensington Row that  
now will be available, as social housing, for the residents  
of Grenfell Tower. The rest could be done straightforwardly  
by doing a deal with local housing associations to make  
new homes available; by leasing or buying vacant private  
properties in the area; and by funding the council to  
build or acquire the new homes needed. The Government  
might even force Kensington and Chelsea Council to  
use some its reported £274 million in reserves to take  
this urgent priority action.

**Andy Slaughter:** Most of the residents who have been  
decanted are in budget hotels—I know that as I have  
visited a number who were unceremoniously dumped in  
my borough by Kensington and Chelsea Council, without  
money, a change of clothes or anything of that kind—and  
have been there for four weeks. None of those people  
are there because they want to be there; they are there  
because they have not been made appropriate offers.  
Does my right hon. Friend therefore agree that the  
Government should stop this sophistry and get on with  
offering decent, permanent homes to people who have  
suffered extraordinary trauma?

**John Healey:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend  
about that. He speaks with a special authority, as a  
neighbouring MP who has spent a great deal of the past  
four weeks in the North Kensington community, working

321

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

322

alongside my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington  
(Emma Dent Coad) to try to support and give voice to  
the concerns of survivors.

Let me move on to the issue of safety testing. It is  
totally unacceptable, four weeks on from the Grenfell  
Tower fire, that Ministers still do not know and cannot  
say how many of the country's other tower blocks are  
unsafe. The Government's testing programme is too  
slow, too narrow and too confused. This is a testing  
programme in chaos. Only 224 tests have been done, yet  
an estimated 530 tower blocks have the same cladding  
and we have a total of 4,000 tower blocks across the  
country. That means that 24 days after the start of this  
testing programme, which we were told could test  
100 buildings a day, we find that tests have been done on  
only half the highest-risk blocks and on fewer than one  
in 20 of the total number of tower blocks around the  
country.

**Ms Buck:** Last week, the Secretary of State said that  
there was “no backlog” in testing and that tests would  
be processed within a matter of “hours”. Given the  
continuing shortfall in the number of high-rise buildings  
that have been subject to testing, does my right hon.  
Friend share my bafflement that the Government do  
not appear to know where any of this material actually  
is?

**John Healey:** Yes, I share my hon. Friend's bafflement  
entirely. I also hear of councils and housing associations  
that want to test their buildings, which may not have the  
same type of cladding, but simply cannot get the tests. I  
note, again, that the First Secretary's speech was entirely  
free of any facts or figures that can update the House  
on the chaos of this testing programme.

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): My  
right hon. Friend will be aware that Camden Council  
has done the testing in my constituency and, as a result,  
has evacuated more than 3,000 people from the Chalcots  
estate. The council is spending its own money to try to  
ensure that the buildings are fit for purpose before the  
residents are placed in them again. Does he agree that  
the Government should be giving financial support to  
councils such as Camden after cutting their budgets for  
years on end?

**John Healey:** The short answer is yes; the longer  
answer is that I pay tribute to Camden Council for  
taking the tough decision that it had to make in those  
circumstances. My fear is that other housing associations,  
councils and landlords of high-rise blocks around the  
country will hold back or perhaps cut corners because  
they know they cannot afford to do the works required—  
either to remove and replace cladding, or to make the  
inside safe and fully fire-safety compliant—and that  
they will do so only because they cannot get a straight  
answer from this Government on a clear commitment  
to up-front funding where it is needed to make sure that  
this essential work is done. The situation leaves hundreds  
of thousands of residents in tower blocks around the  
country still uncertain as to whether their block is safe.

I hope that Ministers will stay to hear the debate  
because a number of colleagues from around the country  
will set out concerns about the testing system, including  
the problem that landlords and residents are confused.

The testing system does not meet the needs of those  
residents or landlords. We know from the Lakanal  
House fire that cladding is not the whole problem—nor,  
I suspect, was it in Grenfell—yet only one component  
of one type of cladding had been tested until very  
recently. We are therefore talking about no tests on  
cladding systems, on insulation materials, on the interaction  
between cladding and insulation, on installation, and  
on the fire breaks between floors. I can tell the First  
Secretary of State and the Secretary of State that housing  
associations across the country, such as Bradford-based  
Incommunities, cannot get their type of cladding tested,  
so they cannot reassure their residents that their tower  
blocks are safe. Councils such as Salford have stopped  
stripping off cladding from their high-rise flats because  
they have no guidance from Government on what to  
replace it with.

**Seema Malhotra:** I wish to comment on that point in  
relation to Hounslow Council. I commend it for the  
speed with which it was able to de-clad a block in my  
constituency, but it has hit some of these concerns  
about what to replace that cladding with. Given the  
amount of re-cladding that might take place across the  
country, I am worried that the producers of that cladding  
could jack up the prices, thus making the replacement  
even more expensive.

**John Healey:** My hon. Friend is right. Her council,  
like Oxford, is in the dark on this—it simply does not  
know what the Government's guidance and advice will  
be. If it takes off the cladding, what does it replace that  
with, because the council must be certain that it is safe?

The First Secretary of State rightly made great play  
of the panel of independent experts in his speech. The  
panel is there to advise Ministers on the urgent lessons  
that need to be learned and the action that needs to be  
taken, and that is very welcome. I hope that the panel  
can help the Government to get back on track and deal  
with some of the following concerns, which Ministers  
will hear about from colleagues right across the country.  
What advice will the Government give to landlords—and  
what reassurance will they give to residents—if cladding  
systems pass the new second round of tests despite the  
fact that they failed the narrow first test? If cladding  
fails the Government's tests, must it be taken off tower  
blocks in all circumstances, and will the Government  
cover the costs of taking it down and replacing it?  
When will councils and housing associations be able to  
get other cladding or insulation tested? How will the  
Government make sure that all internal fire safety works  
that are now being carried out inside tower blocks meet  
the highest safety standards? Will the Government launch  
an immediate review into the approved inspectors  
responsible for building control checks, as well as who  
hires them, who pays them and who approves their  
qualifications, starting with all those responsible for  
signing off the systems that are being failed by the  
Government's tests?

Four weeks on, Ministers must widen their testing  
programme and reassure all high-rise tenants that their  
buildings are safe, or commit to fund the urgent work  
necessary to make them safe. The clearest warnings that  
the system of fire safety checks and building controls  
was failing came more than four years ago following the  
inquest into fatal tower block fires at Lakanal House

323

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

324

*[John Healey]*

and Shirley Towers. Both coroners wrote formal rule 43  
letters to Ministers with recommendations to improve  
fire safety in high-rise buildings. Such letters are written  
by coroners only when the Government can prevent  
further loss of life—that is their importance. Some of  
the recommendations were simply rejected, such as  
making internal cable supports fire resistant and providing  
onsite information about a tower block to firefighters  
arriving to fight a blaze.

Ministers said that they would act on other  
recommendations, but they have not. The Government  
passed all responsibility for retrofitting sprinkler systems  
on to landlords. In 2014, one Minister even said:

“We believe that it is the responsibility of the fire industry,  
rather than the Government.”

On overhauling building regulations, the Government  
promised a review but it did not happen. The Minister  
of State, Department for Communities and Local  
Government, the hon. Member for Reading West (Alok  
Sharma), has just told me that

“this work will now need to be informed by any recommendations  
that the independent inquiry into Grenfell Tower fire makes.”  
Rather than waiting months or years to start this work,  
Ministers must put this right now. They must start  
installing sprinkler systems in the highest-risk high-rise  
blocks and start the overhaul of building regulations,  
into which any findings from the fire investigations or  
the public inquiry can be incorporated.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): Has  
my right hon. Friend picked up on the rumour about  
the review of building regulations in the Department  
for Communities and Local Government? I have heard  
that the review was paused because the civil servants  
who were leading on it were put on to other work  
related to Brexit. If that is true, how many other pieces  
of essential, urgent and safety-related work are on  
pause in government right now?

**John Healey:** I had not heard that rumour—I prefer  
to deal with the facts in front of us—but my hon.  
Friend is dead right that there is a serious question of  
capacity in DCLG. There is an even greater question  
over leadership, which I shall come on to in a moment.

Finally, I want to turn to the “fundamental issues”,  
as the Prime Minister described them, that were raised  
by the Grenfell Tower fire. When a country as decent  
and well-off as ours fails to provide something as basic  
as a safe home for its citizens, things must change. Let  
me mention two areas, the first of which is regulation.  
Surely Members in all parts of the House would agree  
that all markets, organisations and consumers require  
regulation to guarantee quality and safety, to ensure  
fair practice and to stop abuse, yet that is not the  
current Government's mindset. Never again can we  
have a Government Minister who, when challenged on  
fire safety measures after the fire in Camberwell, said  
that they were not the Government's responsibility,  
justifying that with the “one in, two out” approach to  
regulation. If the Prime Minister and First Secretary of  
State are serious about change, they should start by  
confirming that that approach came to an end with the  
Cameron-Osborne era of Conservative government.

**Sir Edward Davey:** The right hon. Gentleman makes  
a very important point. He and the House might like to  
knowthatwhenIwasajuniorBusinessMinister,people  
from No. 10 and the Cabinet Office asked me whether  
we should get rid of fire safety regulations for girls' and  
ladies' nightdresses and furniture. I said no. We did not  
get rid of them, nor should we have done. He is absolutely  
right that we have to change the culture.

**John Healey:** I am grateful for that unexpected support  
from the Liberal Democrat Benches. The right hon.  
Gentleman's very important and specific point supports  
my general argument.

The second area is social housing. For decades after  
the second world war, there was a national cross-party  
consensus about the value of social housing to help to  
meet the housing needs and aspirations of many ordinary  
families. There is a recognition that there has been only  
one year since the second world war in which this  
country has built more than 200,000 new homes without  
the public sector doing at least a third of them. This is  
the first Government since the second world war to  
provide no funding to help to build new social-rented  
housing, and they have also ended all funding through  
the Homes and Communities Agency programme for  
decent homes, which is investment to bring social housing  
up to scratch. If the First Secretary of State and the  
Prime Minister were serious about social housing, they  
would lift the cap on councils borrowing to build and  
maintain their homes, restore central Government  
investment to help to build new social housing, guarantee  
“first dibs” on new homes for local people, and strengthen  
thehandofcouncilsto get better deals frombig developers  
for their residents.

Finally, we hear that the Prime Minister wants us to  
“contribute” rather than just “criticise”. I have to ask  
this: has she asked her Cabinet to contribute? What  
does the Secretary of State have to contribute to solving  
the country's housing crisis; to doing more on social  
housing; to reversing the plunging rate of home ownership,  
especially for young people; to giving 11 million private  
renters basic consumer rights; and to preventing the  
rapidly rising numbers of homeless people sleeping on  
our streets? Where is the plan? Where is the hope?  
Where is the leadership? If the Prime Minister wants a  
domestic policy programme, and if she wants to find  
common cause and to make fundamental changes to  
Government policy, we stand ready to contribute—we  
offer our Labour housing manifesto, published last  
month, as a starter.

If the Government want our support for a plan to  
tackle the country's housing crisis, they must raise their  
sights. If Ministers want our support for their recovery  
programme post-Grenfell, they must raise their game.

2.20 pm

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I  
agree with the right hon. Member for Wentworth and  
Dearne (John Healey) on one aspect: this accident  
should not have happened in a country such as ours. He  
is also right to argue for a national and clear approach  
that does not just concentrate on one issue but considers  
all the issues involved.

Slightly uncharacteristically, the right hon. Gentleman  
was not prepared to accept—at least he seemed not  
to—that, over the years, both main parties have made  
mistakes in this area when in government. If he thinks

325

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

326

back to 2005-06, when the enforcement regime was  
weakened and the building regulations changed, he  
might wonder whether that tackled the problem. The  
previous Labour Government also had a deplorable  
record on building houses. I do not think that the right  
hon. Gentleman can be holier than thou in this debate,  
as he was tempted to be.

I should like to pay tribute to the local community for  
all it has done at the Westway centre. People were  
generous and warm-hearted; they put their arms around  
the victims' families. Our thoughts are, correctly, with  
the victims and families, but I pay tribute to the communities  
of Latimer Road and the Westway, who come out of  
this very strongly.

It is time that fires that claim lives in high-rise buildings  
were a thing of the past. In February 2005, there was a  
fire in Stevenage in my constituency, at Harrow Court,  
a high-rise, 17-storey block of flats. Two firemen lost  
their lives, including my constituent Jeff Wornham; a  
member of the public died as well. Jeff came from a  
family who are very committed to public service. He  
was extremely brave in the fire and saved lives. His loss  
was felt in my constituency and by his family, friends  
and the fire service in Hertfordshire more widely.

The incident led to a fire investigation by Hertfordshire  
fire and rescue service—a very good service with a lot of  
experience of dealing with hazardous materials. It fought  
the Buncefield fire as well as that could have been  
fought. It is generally a highly respected fire and rescue  
service, and one of its recommendations was that the  
UK fire service should explore options for high-rise  
buildings to have provision for sprinklers. I felt at the  
time that that was an important matter, and we had a  
Westminster Hall debate about Hertfordshire firefighters'  
safety. The then fire Minister, Sadiq Khan, met Jeff 's  
father, Robert Wornham, and fire safety experts to  
discuss the case for sprinklers being retrofitted to all  
high-rise blocks; sprinkler experts also went to the  
meeting. That retrofitting has not happened, but Robert  
Wornham still believes that it is an important way of  
helping to ensure fire safety in such blocks. He contacted  
me recently to say that he hoped that the issue can get  
back on the agenda.

After 2007, the rules were changed for new buildings  
more than 30 metres high, which are now required to be  
fitted with sprinkler systems. Some local authorities  
have gone ahead and retrofitted sprinklers to some of  
their blocks. As the right hon. Member for Wentworth  
and Dearne mentioned, coroners have recommended  
retrofitting sprinklers on two occasions. But that has  
not been the general rule. We need a national approach—  
something clear.

The British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association  
estimates that the cost of fitting a system in Grenfell  
Tower would have been about £200,000. We need to  
establish the truth of what happened in Grenfell Tower  
and make sure it does not happen again. I hope that the  
retrofitting of sprinkler systems can be firmly and urgently  
considered, because that may be long overdue.

I turn to the investigations that have been ordered.  
There is a police investigation, which will look at criminal  
wrongdoing, but it is good that a judicial public inquiry  
has been announced by the Prime Minister. The two  
types of investigation have different purposes. Public  
inquiries investigate issues of serious public concern,  
scrutinising decisions and events. The Inquiries Act 2005

ensures that witnesses can be compelled and documents  
brought forward without any difficulties—something  
that did not happen with other forms of inquiry.

Public inquiries are different from criminal investigations,  
but the parallel criminal investigation into the fire that  
is being carried out by the Metropolitan police will be  
informed by the public inquiry. Facts are given and  
recommendations made in a public inquiry, and if the  
inquiry comes across criminal activity during its  
investigation, it will obviously pass that information to  
the police. That is its duty.

There has been some discussion nationally about the  
choice of chair for the public inquiry. People from all  
over the world come to our country to have their legal  
issues resolved. They come here because we have  
independent-minded judges who do not mind telling  
the Government where to get off when they are wrong.  
Our judges are of the highest quality and there is a  
transparent system that people trust. That is why the  
English legal system has been copied all over the world,  
and why people respect it so much. Our common-law  
system is excellent.

The choice of chair for the public inquiry is a senior  
judge. Think of the Hillsborough case, over which a  
senior judge presided. Nobody would argue that such  
judges are not capable of dealing with a complex case  
and getting right to the heart of the issues. The Lord  
Chancellor asked the Lord Chief Justice for a  
recommendation of a judge who would be best suited to  
leading a public inquiry of this sort. The Lord Chief  
Justice recommended Sir Martin Moore-Bick. Sir Martin  
is one of our most respected judges, with extensive  
experience of trying complex cases, including the  
investigation of disasters. He was vice-president of the  
civil division of the Court of Appeal—one of our most  
senior judges—until he retired in December. He will be  
thorough and get to the heart of the issues.

Members in all parts of the House are determined  
that there will be justice for victims of the tragedy and  
for their families. I believe that the combination of a  
judge-led inquiry and a police investigation will achieve  
that. We can judge how well a judge will run an inquiry  
by how speedily he gets on with the matter in hand. By  
immediately consulting—he opened the consultation  
on 5 July—to establish the terms of reference, Sir Martin  
has shown that he is seeking a wide range of views. That  
bodes well for the inquiry. He wants to hear from those  
directly affected by the fire and from others who have a  
contribution to make. He is having a series of meetings  
to listen to victims' families, survivors and others affected,  
and to take their views.

It is welcome that the chair has been so open to ideas,  
and that he said he wants to establish the terms of  
reference as soon as possible, so that the inquiry can  
begin making sure that we know what happened and  
how to stop it from ever happening again. I am personally  
a strong supporter of a judge-led inquiry, and I hope it  
will be possible to have a relatively early interim report  
that will deal with some of the key issues, such as  
sprinkler systems and cladding, so that we have the  
national, clear approach mentioned by the right hon.  
Member for Wentworth and Dearne. I am a strong  
supporter of the inquiry, and I would like sprinklers to  
be strongly on the agenda.

327

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

328

2.29 pm

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The  
Scottish National party welcomes the Government's  
announcement of a full public inquiry into this terrible  
tragedy. But we are clear that, as others have already  
said, no stone should be left unturned in ascertaining  
not just the immediate cause of the fire but the wider  
causes of what happened and what went wrong in order  
to ensure that the appropriate lessons are learned and to  
get justice for those affected.

Our thoughts and sympathies are very much with  
those affected by this terrible tragedy, and it goes without  
sayingthatwepaytributetothebraveryandprofessionalism  
of the first responders and the emergency services who  
dealt with the matter. I want to address, though, the  
scope and nature of the inquiry. I am glad to say that  
the days when inquiries in the United Kingdom were  
establishment whitewashes are long over. Our modern  
society could not tolerate the sort of cover-up we saw in  
the now notorious Widgery tribunal after the Bloody  
Sunday massacre, or the delay that occurred before the  
Hillsborough families found justice. However, weshould  
always be mindful that the history of inquiries has seen  
many examples of justice being delayed and being denied  
altogether.

It seems that this most often happens when those  
affected by death and disaster come from among the  
ranks of those who do not have wealth, power or  
influence in our society. I am thinking about the fleeing  
unarmed Catholic civilians who were shot dead by the  
Army on Bloody Sunday while protesting for their basic  
civil rights, and the innocent Liverpool football fans  
who were unlawfully killed at Hillsborough while going  
about their lawful business and then wrongfully blamed  
for so many years for being the cause of their own  
deaths. Those two incidents are very different from the  
Grenfell Tower inquiry, but I was struck by the words of  
one Grenfell survivor that were recently brought to my  
attention by the Scottish journalist and commentator  
Lesley Riddoch. The man's name was Mehed Egal, and  
he told the BBC:

“We are not poor people, we are working-class people. We are  
leaseholders. We are homeowners. We pay tax. We pay council  
tax. We make the economy turn while the rich put us in hazardous  
positions. I'm not going to hold back—we have been neglected  
from the get-go and we are neglected still.”

Those words may be uncomfortable for some to hear,  
but they cannot and should not be ignored as they come  
from a survivor and someone who lived in the tower  
block.

Underlying this tragedy is the stark contrast in our  
society between those who have wealth, power and  
influence, and those who do not. What I mean by that is  
that it seems unthinkable—to me, at least—that those  
with power, wealth and influence would have been  
condemned to live in accommodation that seems to  
have been such a death trap. The tragedy raises real  
questions about the inequalities in our society and the  
inadequate provision of social housing in cities such as  
London. There is real issue as to whether the inquiry  
will be of adequate scope to address not just the immediate  
causes of the fire and its rapid spread, but systemic  
issues underlying the tragedy. The terms of reference  
are vital. It is also vital that the participants have  
confidence in the chair, and that all participants have  
adequate funding to ensure representation and equality  
of arms. I will take each of those issues in turn.

The Stephen Lawrence inquiry is often considered an  
exemplar of what an inquiry should do. It is worth  
remembering that that inquiry's terms of reference were  
simply,

“matters arising from the death of Stephen Lawrence.”

In the Grenfell case, the survivors are concerned  
about some comments made by the judge chosen to  
chair the inquiry that suggested, at an earlier stage,  
that the inquiry will be restricted to issues relating to  
how the fire started, rather than examining wider  
issues about Grenfell Tower, the council, central  
Government, and the management and funding of social  
housing.

I note that the Communities Secretary last week told  
the House that the Government expect the inquiry to be  
as broad and wide-ranging as possible, and the First  
Secretary has today addressed the way in which there  
can be input into the framing of the terms of reference.  
What is not clear is whether this House will be able to  
scrutinise or have any input into the final framing of  
those terms of reference. In my view, a way should be  
found to enable that to happen because the Grenfell fire  
raises issues that concern the public and our constituents  
all across the UK.

Constituents have written to me, concerned about the  
extent of the death toll and its composition, which  
seems to include the poor, immigrants, the elderly,  
disabled people and undocumented people—people who  
are sometimes forgotten in society. Members of the  
public are concerned that the fact seems to be that a  
refurbishment budget for the block was spent with an  
emphasis on cladding that was pleasing to the eye,  
rather than fire-safe, and about the suggestion that not  
enough was spent on fire safety measures. They are also  
concerned about the adequacy of the response to the  
fire. People have asked, “Where was the publicly funded  
infrastructure dealing with relief ? Where was the plan  
for the aftermath?” We need to ensure that the inquiry's  
terms of reference encompass those matters, while ensuring  
that the interim report deals with the immediate fire  
safety issues.

We should never forget that the decades of failure to  
investigate properly what happened at Hillsborough  
began with the controversial decision by the coroner in  
the inquest to close off certain questions from proper  
investigation, so we must be very careful not to close off  
from proper investigation certain questions arising from  
how the fire came about.

Turning to the chair, the problems with the historical  
child abuse inquiry show that it is vital to have a chair  
who commands the confidence of the victims. As a  
lawyer, I will not cast any aspersions on Sir Martin  
Moore-Bick's ability to chair the inquiry, but the residents'  
concerns about his ability must be respected and listened  
to. Doubt surrounding public confidence in his suitability  
cannot be ignored because it will undermine the efficacy  
of the inquiry.

**Sir Oliver Heald:** The hon. and learned Lady knows  
as well as I do that we are talking about a judge who has  
dealt with the most complex matters and disasters. How  
can she say that somebody of that sort of ability, who  
has been hand-picked to do the job by the Lord Chief  
Justice, is not the right sort of person to run a judicial  
inquiry?

329

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

330

**Joanna Cherry:** That is not a decision for me. I am  
bringing to the House's attention the perfectly valid  
concern of local people about the judge's ability to  
chair the inquiry. I was careful to preface that—  
*[Interruption.]* Will the right hon. and learned Member  
for North East Hertfordshire (Sir Oliver Heald) let me  
develop my point?

The right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton  
(Sir Edward Davey), who is no longer in his place, said  
that a properly diverse expert panel is required to sit  
alongside the inquiry judge to advise on a variety of  
issues. A local organisation, BME Lawyers 4 Grenfell,  
has made a number of demands, including that there  
should be such a properly diverse panel to advise on  
issues including housing need, and fire and safety  
construction. I respectfully suggest that doubts about  
the ability of the judge may be allayed if that suggestion  
is followed. *[Interruption.]* Whether Conservative Members  
like it or not, it is vital that the people affected by the  
disaster have confidence in the ability of the constitution  
of the inquiry to bring about a just result. We do not  
need to look far back in British history to see many  
examples where that has not happened, and which  
shame us.

**Sir Oliver Heald:** Will the hon. and learned Lady give  
way?

**Joanna Cherry:** I am going to develop my point. I will  
give way in a moment.

All that I and others are asking is that the Minister  
gives serious consideration to the demand that, in addition  
to the judge, there should be a properly diverse expert  
panel that has the proper expertise to advise on issues  
concerning housing need, and fire and safety construction.  
We lawyers are not necessarily experts on housing need.  
The point is that we may need a bit of assistance from  
somebody who is.

**Sir Oliver Heald:** People take cases against the  
Government to our courts the whole time. Judges are  
keen to do the cases properly, and they kick back at the  
Government on numerous occasions, as everybody in  
the House knows. Is the hon. and learned Lady really  
saying that one of the most senior judges in our country  
will not be able to do an independent and objective job  
of the highest quality? *[Interruption.]*

**Joanna Cherry:** As has been said by a colleague from  
a sedentary position, that was not what I said. This is  
not litigation; it is a public inquiry. All I am saying is  
that the Government have already accepted that a panel  
of advisers is required. The point I am making is  
actually quite simple: the panel of advisers should be of  
suitable expertise and diversity to inspire confidence.

Another thing we need to do to ensure justice is done  
is to make sure that not only victims but tenants' groups  
are given public funding for independent and separate  
legal representation sufficient to enable them to have a  
voice equal to that of local and national Government  
and the private management company. This is a simple  
matter of human rights and equality of arms, and I was  
pleased that, when I asked the Prime Minister about  
this on 22 June, she said that, although the way in which  
the inquiry is conducted is ultimately a matter for the  
chair, for

“those who require legal representation, that will be funded by the  
Government”

and that she was not going to

“set any limits in relation to the types of body or the individuals  
for whom”—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 186-87]—  
funding would be available. I welcome what she said,  
because although funding and proper representation  
are matters for the inquiry, the inquiry can work well  
only within the constraints imposed on it by the Treasury.  
If the tenants' groups are not represented in this inquiry,  
I fear that justice will not be seen to be done.

Finally, before I say something about the position of  
the devolved Administrations, which the Minister alluded  
to, I want to turn briefly to question of the inquiry's  
recommendations being properly implemented. It is  
vital that this House is empowered to make sure that  
the recommendations are implemented promptly,  
because important recommendations are not always  
implemented promptly. We have already heard about  
the recommendations after the Lakanal House fire.  
After a tower block fire in Irvine, in Scotland, in 1999—just  
before devolution—a Select Committee of this House  
recommended that all cladding on high-rise dwellings  
should be non-combustible. Subsequent to devolution,  
that report was taken seriously by Scottish housing  
authorities, and building regulations in Scotland were  
duly amended in 2005. All new high-rise domestic buildings  
in Scotland are therefore fitted with non-combustible  
cladding, or a cladding system that meets stringent fire  
tests, and with sprinklers. The same recommendation  
was seen as optional south of the border, and it appears  
now that that has had tragic consequences. So it is vital  
that this House finds a way to make sure that the  
inquiry's recommendations are properly implemented.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I join the  
tributes that have been paid to the victims and the first  
responders. Many people in Scotland, including in my  
constituency, still live in tower blocks. Despite the  
reassurances my hon. and learned Friend has provided,  
they will nevertheless be looking to the recommendations  
that come from the inquiry's report. Does she agree that  
there will be lessons to be learned across the UK and  
that it is important that assurances are provided not just  
to the constituents she mentioned earlier but particularly  
to people who continue to live in tower blocks?

**Joanna Cherry:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.  
I have many tower blocks in my constituency, and I was  
pleased that the City of Edinburgh Council, in very  
early course, had all elected representatives in to tell us  
what investigative steps it was taking to make sure these  
high-rise blocks were safe.

As I have indicated, Scottish building standards are  
devolved, and the Scottish Government have already set  
up a ministerial working group to make sure that our  
buildings are up to scratch and that the Scottish Fire  
and Rescue Service is satisfied with the standards in all  
local buildings. I am pleased to say that all 32 local  
authorities in Scotland have been able to confirm that  
none of the high-rise domestic properties they own use  
the type of cladding we understand was used on Grenfell  
Tower. However, the Scottish Government are not being  
complacent, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
will continue to carry out additional operational assurance  
visits to high-rise buildings. The Scottish Government  
will continue to monitor the situation in Scotland,  
gathering information from local authorities and taking

331

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

332

*[Joanna Cherry]*

a proactive and safety-first approach to this issue while  
we await information from the investigation into the fire  
in London.

The point I have sought to make in my contribution  
is that the way this inquiry is set up—the framing of the  
terms of reference, and the way in which the expert  
panel that will advise the chair is made up—and the  
funding that is made available to all relevant participants  
are vital for justice to be seen to be done, and we cannot  
cut corners on any of those things. There is widespread  
concern across the United Kingdom about the  
circumstances surrounding this fire, and all our constituents,  
but particularly the people local to this fire, need to be  
satisfied that justice is done and seen to be done.

2.44 pm

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): The House  
struggles on occasions such as this to get the tone of the  
debate right. When Members of this place awoke on  
14 June, we were all horrified by what we witnessed.  
How on earth the residents are coping with this tragedy,  
I just do not know.

I pay immediate tribute to the local Member of  
Parliament, the hon. Member for Kensington (Emma  
Dent Coad). She has not been here very long, but in no  
time at all she has done her very best to support local  
residents. So I congratulate her, and I think that the  
House will come together at least on that point.

There are no words that are adequate to describe our  
feelings about this horror. The fire started on the fourth  
floor at one in the morning, when most of the residents  
were asleep. Within half an hour, a towering inferno  
took place. It was truly shocking to turn on our TV  
screens in the morning and see what had happened.  
This was just a month ago.

This House has a huge responsibility in terms of how  
we deal with this matter in the debate, and the tone  
must be moderate. Recently, an article was written by  
Nick Ross. He is not someone I know personally, but he  
appears on TV as a commentator. He said:

“no one has a right to a monopoly on anger, or grief...For  
15 years I have been campaigning to update building regulations  
in England to improve fire safety and to have sprinklers fitted  
routinely to council and other social housing, and I can't recall a  
single Government minister or Opposition frontbencher—Labour,  
Conservative or Lib Dem—who ever campaigned with us. Three  
times I've addressed the Local Government Association. pointing  
outhowtherisksaredisproportionateinsubsidisedhousing—‘It's  
the poor wot gets the flame'—as three times they applauded and  
did nothing.”

Now, I come to my hon. Iriend the Minister. Mr Ross  
continues:

“Ministers are mostly here today, gone tomorrow”,  
although I hope my hon. Iriend will be around for a  
little time,

“and few would claim to be expert in their briefs. Except for those  
who know it all because they are gripped by rigid ideology, most  
ministers do listen to their advisers. If there is any group whose  
actions allowed the catastrophe to happen it was these advisers”,  
and Ministers took their advice.

Iinally, Mr Ross says:

“Sprinklers are not invincible. They can't function if the water  
supply fails. But—and this is the truth that makes me so angry—no  
one ever dies from fire when a home is protected by automatic  
sprinklers. That's why in the U.S. they're installing 40 million a  
year.

But let's not be persuaded that the risk is only in high-rise  
towers. There are 300-400 fire deaths a year and most victims live  
in low-rise properties.

We need sprinklers in all social housing, care homes, and  
multi-occupation premises including schools—and let's not forget  
our hospitals. There is a terrible anger after Grenfell. Instead of  
trading political insults we must put it to good use.”

We politicians are often criticised—we take the blame  
for most things that happen—and we have been criticised  
for not acting on this issue. However, that cannot be  
said of the all-party group on fire safety rescue, and I  
am delighted that a number of its very active members  
are present. Unfortunately, we lost one or two members  
in the last election, but the group has been going for a  
long time. I do not know whether colleagues here today  
are experts, although we found out this morning that  
one newly elected Scottish Conservative Member is a  
former firefighter, and he will no doubt bring his expertise  
to this. Most of us are not experts, however, and since  
1986 the APPG has depended on two marvellous secretaries.  
Iirst we had Douglas Smith, and then, in 2013, Ronnie  
King took over. Time after time—as was mentioned  
earlier by the group's vice-chairman, the hon. Member  
for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Iitzpatrick)—we asked  
Ministers to look at the Lakanal House recommendation  
about the retrofitting of sprinklers, and we asked for the  
building regulations to be reviewed after 11 years.

The Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government, my hon. Iriend the Member  
for Reading West (Alok Sharma), who I think will be  
replying to the debate, has already met members of the  
all-party parliamentary group, and this morning it was  
agreed that I should put a number of points to him,  
which I hope he will consider. They are as follows.

“Without prejudice to the public inquiry or the police criminal  
investigation, the all-party group. want to respond to the Secretary  
of State's invitation to submit measures which can be put in place  
immediately to keep people safe”.

I entirely accept the frustration felt by Opposition Members  
who feel that something needs to be done now, and that  
we need not wait until the outcome of the public  
inquiry for that to happen. I hope my hon. Iriend the  
Minister will reflect on that.

The APPG said:

“One such measure is to commence the long promised review  
of Approved Document ‘B' to the Building Regulations, forthwith,  
and in particular to seek an immediate reinstatement of the  
provisions of Section 20 of the London Building Acts insofar as  
they are required a one hour fire resistance to outside walls of  
blocks of flats”.

It is crazy that we no longer have those regulations. The  
Minister will face a test: he will be given advice on the  
matter, and I hope that, unless it is in the affirmative, he  
will make his own decision and will agree with the  
recommendation from the all-party parliamentary group.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): My hon. Iriend  
obviously understands these things better than I do, but  
one thing has really worried me about this tragedy. If  
there had been sprinklers inside the building, and the  
outside of the building had caught fire, would people  
have survived although the outside of the building was  
aflame? That worries me. I do not know whether there  
is an answer, but it seems to me that they might have  
survived.

333

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

334

**Sir David Amess:** That is an interesting point. All I  
will say is that people do not lose their lives when  
sprinklers have been fitted. That is the point.

**Sir Oliver Heald:** Does it not speak volumes that in  
2007 we said that every new building should have a  
sprinkler system?

**Sir David Amess:** I will come to that point, but I also  
want the Minister to hear this, because it is not the  
responsibility of his Department. It is crazy that it is  
not mandatory for all new school buildings to have  
sprinklers fitted. We must address that, as a matter of  
urgency. Again, I hope that, if the Minister is not given  
the advice that I certainly want him to be given, he will  
make a contrary decision and recommend that all new  
school buildings have sprinklers fitted.

**Chris Williamson** (Derby North) (Lab): I am grateful  
for what the hon. Gentleman has said about sprinkler  
systems in schools, but does he agree that it is also  
imperative for the regulations to be changed to cover  
student accommodation? I understand that tower blocks  
more than 30 metres high will now be fitted with  
sprinklers, but that student accommodation more than  
30 metres high will not qualify. I hope my hon. Friend  
agrees that that cannot be right.

**Sir David Amess:** I certainly do agree. The Minister  
has heard what has been said. I understood that every  
building more than 30 metres high would have to have  
sprinklers fitted. I hope that at some stage when the  
Minister is winding up a note will be passed to determine  
whether or not the hon. Gentleman—he was at our  
meeting this morning— is right, but as far as I understand,  
that cannot be the position.

The APPG also agreed on the following:

“without prejudice to the public inquiry or the police criminal  
investigation, the all-party group... wish to support the  
recommendation of the coroners at Southwark and Southampton  
arising from the Lakanal House and Shirley Towers tower block”  
—which was mentioned by the right hon. Member for  
Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey)—

“whereby both coroners recommended in a letter to the Secretary  
ofStatethattheDepartmentforCommunities&LocalGovernment,  
encourages providers of housing in high risk residential buildings  
containing multiple domestic premises to consider the retrofitting  
of sprinkler systems”.

I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that  
as well.

The APPG said:

“a letter to the then CLG Minister, dated 1st May 2014. drew the  
Minister's attention to”

Ronnie King's

“personal involvement with the Lakanal House Coroner's Inquest,  
where clarification was given from the Department that the  
current Building Regulations allowed the composite panels under  
the external wall window sets of such tower blocks not to have  
any fire resistance”

—that is absolutely crazy—

“and that this weakness in the Regulations remains uncorrected  
today; despite the upward spread of fire which occurred, resulting  
in the deaths of six people.

(Under the current Building Regulations guidance Approved  
Document B, the external walls of Tower Blocks need only have a  
classification “O” Surface spread of Flame, with no fire resistance)”.

The House would not expect the Minister to be an  
expert on all these matters, and he will have to take  
advice from somewhere, but I hope he understands the  
frustration that has been caused by the ignoring of the  
APPG's recommendations. This fire should never have  
happened, and it would not have happened if notice  
had been taken of our recommendations.

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service —who  
is not in the Chamber at present—said:

“we are maybe looking at a system failure, built up over many  
years, which we now have to address urgently. over many years  
and perhaps against the backdrop of, as data shows, a reduced  
risk in terms of fire, in terms of number of incidents and  
deaths. maybe as a system some complacency has crept in.”  
Well, it certainly has not “crept in” as far as the APPG  
is concerned.

**Ms Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): I understand that the  
Fire Brigades Union has talked a great deal about the  
cuts in services and about deregulation, and the hon.  
Gentleman has talked a great deal about sprinklers  
today. Does he agree that the cuts and what has happened  
to the fire regulations cannot have failed to have an  
impact, and that they happened on the Conservatives'  
watch? Let me add that I am a bit disappointed to see  
how many Conservatives are missing from this debate.  
It is a crucial debate, and Conservative Members should  
be here.

**Sir David Amess:** I know the general secretary of the  
Fire Brigades Union, and I shall be meeting him shortly  
to hear in more detail precisely what his criticisms are. I  
can assure the hon. Lady that the APPG will raise any  
issues that the union mentions to us. As for attendance  
on the Conservative Benches, in time the hon. Lady will  
have a view on attendance in the House. A long time  
ago, all the Benches were packed. I can only say that I  
regret that that is not the case on this occasion. Given  
that the general public can see our proceedings on the  
parliamentary channel, it is always disappointing when  
the Chamber is not packed, but I am afraid that, in  
recent years, that has been the trend.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I refer the House  
to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial  
Interests. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Fire  
Brigades Union should have core participant status in  
the inquiry?

**Sir David Amess:** The Minister will have heard what  
the hon. Lady has said. I cannot believe that there will  
not be very close involvement. I do not want to trip  
myself up if there has already been a discussion about  
the matter, but I certainly do not see why there cannot  
be real participation in the inquiry. Perhaps the Minister  
will take up the point when he responds.

Finally, I want to highlight three points to my hon.  
Friend the Minister. The first is that building regulations  
no longer include a requirement for one-hour fire resistance  
for outside walls, as was the case under the London  
Building Acts. That has got to be corrected. Firefighters  
were horrified by the way this disaster took place. The  
second point relates to the testing of cladding. It costs  
£10,000 to fire-test a 30-metre cladded wall. Most testing  
is done on the desktop, which does not take into account  
materials used underneath or between cladding, such as

335

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

336

*[Sir David Amess]*

wood. I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will look at  
that point. The last point is about the retrofitting of  
sprinklers over the past year: in 100% of cases where  
sprinklers have been activated, they have controlled or  
extinguished the fire. I welcome the fact that there is a  
public inquiry, but I again ask my hon. Friend the  
Minister not only to listen to the recommendations of  
the all-party group, but to act on them.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
We have plenty of time for this debate. A lot of people  
wish to take part in it, and I should tell the House that I  
have had notifications from several new Members wishing  
to make their maiden speeches. I would like to manage  
without a formal time limit; especially for the benefit of  
those making their maiden speech, it is much better not  
to have a time limit. We can manage that if people,  
showing some self-restraint and some thought for their  
fellow Members, speak for about nine minutes. That  
means calculating on the basis of 10 minutes and then  
stopping a bit earlier. It is amazing how difficult people  
find it to do the arithmetic once they are on their feet,  
but I will try to help them. If we keep to about nine  
minutes, everyone will have an opportunity to speak  
without a formal time limit, and I know that I can rely  
on Mr Clive Betts to do this perfectly.

3.2 pm

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): This is  
the most appalling tragedy. I am sure that our hearts go  
out to the friends and families of everyone who lost  
their lives, to everyone who has been traumatised by this  
appalling event, and to everyone who has been displaced  
and is now homeless. The only good that can come out  
of this is that we learn lessons quickly about what  
happened and make sure it never happens again.

On the practicalities, I first want to address the issue  
of funding to put right the tower blocks up and down  
the country that are now deemed to be failures and in  
non-safe situations. I was worried by the conditions that  
the First Secretary of State put on the funding that  
might be available. When challenged, he initially said  
that of course the Government would fund any safety  
work that the local fire authority deemed necessary, but  
he then withdrew that statement and said that the  
Government would fund such work when the local  
authority could not afford to do it, which is a very  
important condition. Will the Minister explain precisely  
what that means, what criteria will lead to Government  
funding, and if local authorities will be asked to find  
funding for themselves?

We must see this in the context of local authority  
finances as a whole—not merely in relation to the cuts  
to local authority budgets, but in the light of the fact  
that this work on social housing will come out of not  
the general fund, but the housing revenue account. In  
2010, funding for social housing was cut by more than  
any other form of expenditure—by 60%. There is not a  
penny of Government money in the current spending  
round for new social housing, decent homes work or  
any remedial work on social housing. Local authorities  
have been asked to find the money all by themselves.

**Ms Buck:** Is it my hon. Friend's understanding that  
any works at the local level will, in effect, be paid for by  
tenants out of their rents and by leaseholder contributions?  
Does he agree that the basic repairs and maintenance  
budgets for local authority social housing have already  
been cut by 20% since 2010?

**Mr Betts:** Absolutely—that is precisely the point I  
was coming on to make. The money will come out of  
the housing revenue account, which is, of course, funded  
from rents. In the 2015 Budget, the Government decided  
that rents would not rise by CPI plus 1%, but would  
actually fall by 1% per year. It is estimated that that will  
have a massive effect, with many billions of pounds  
less—about £40 billion over 30 years—coming into  
housing revenue accounts. Councils can, of course, borrow  
money, but the amount is capped by the Government.

When the Government cap rents and borrowing,  
where can local authorities go to find the money to  
show, in the Minister's terms, that they can afford to do  
this work? All they can do is to cut other planned  
expenditure for the maintenance of social housing.  
Solving one problem will simply lead to other problems  
unless the Government are prepared to find the  
money. It is as simple as that, and I hope the Minister  
will reflect on this very seriously. Local authorities  
should not have to show either that they will not build  
a few social houses that they were going to build, or  
that they will cut maintenance programmes so that  
they can prove that they can afford to provide extra  
money for the necessary work on tower blocks. Instead,  
the Government should say that all the necessary work  
approved by local fire authorities to make tower blocks  
safe will be eligible for extra Government money. It is a  
very simple request, and if the Minister could say yes,  
he would resolve an awful lot of concerns and difficulties  
in this debate.

In a slightly wider context, we simply must start to  
view social housing differently. There has been a tendency  
in the past few years to see social housing as poor  
housing for poor people, and to think that anything will  
do for the people who live there. I have to tell Ministers  
that that is somewhat reflected in the pay to stay scheme.  
Fortunately, the Government have recently made the  
scheme voluntary for social housing landlords, not  
compulsory. In other words, there is a view that those  
who can afford it—slightly better-off tenants—should  
not be in social housing. I disagree: social housing  
should be there for those who need it.

Such thinking is also reflected in the proposal to sell  
high-value council assets. In other words, there is a view  
that if council housing is good and decent, it should not  
be council housing any longer. That is wrong as well.  
The proposal to fund the right to buy for housing  
association tenants seems to have been put on the back  
burner. Again, the Minister could address that by saying  
that we will have good-quality social housing in the  
future that will remain as social housing for those who  
need it.

**Andy Slaughter:** My hon. Friend is making an  
extraordinarily good case and I hope that the Minister  
will respond to his points. May I add an additional  
point? When social affordable housing is used for  
tenants who have been decanted—in the case of Grenfell  
or, indeed, of other examples—such housing also  
needs to be replaced, because otherwise we will again be  
looking at a net loss of social housing.

337

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

338

**Mr Betts:** My hon. Friend makes an extremely powerful  
point. Not merely should the Government fund the  
remedial work on tower blocks but, in the Grenfell case,  
they should fund the replacement of social housing to  
make sure people do not lose out.

There has been a call for an immediate review of the  
fire regulations, and the Minister could announce today  
that the Government will get on with that. I hope that  
whoever is elected as Chair of the Communities and  
Local Government Committee today will take a lead,  
with its new elected members, by getting the Select  
Committee involved, just as we were in relation to  
regulations for gas and electrical safety in the home.

Getting Ministers to agree to new regulations has, at  
times, been a bit like drawing teeth. I draw attention to  
the Select Committee hearing in 2013 at which Peter  
Holland, the new chief fire and rescue adviser, and the  
then Minister were questioned very strongly about the  
mandatory retrofitting of sprinklers. The then Minister  
said no to that, and one of the reasons given—it was  
also given in a Westminster Hall debate—was that we  
could not have a new regulation unless two old ones  
were taken off the statute book. What a nonsensical  
position! Regulations are either necessary or they are  
not. If regulations are necessary to keep people  
safe, they should be implemented without having to  
wait for two others to be cancelled. I hope Ministers  
will act rapidly, and I am pleased that my local authority  
in Sheffield has decided to retrofit sprinklers to all its  
tower blocks in advance of any Government statement.

Colleagues have made the point that cladding should  
not be fire-tested in isolation. The insulation, the firestops,  
the fire doors and all other aspects of tower blocks' fire  
safety systems must be tested. Sheffield, working with  
the fire service, has so far found only one block where  
the cladding has failed—the Hanover tower block in the  
constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield  
Central (Paul Blomfield). However, the fire service has  
said that because of everything else that is in place in  
that block, it still believes its fire systems make it safe  
for people to live there.

Sheffield City Council has done very well. It has  
written to the fire authority and all the tenants. It has  
held meetings with them and said that if anyone wants  
to move temporarily because they feel unsafe, they can  
do so. It has also put a 24-hour fire watch in the block.  
But in the end, the fire authority believes that the block  
is safe because of how the cladding works with the  
insulation, the firestops and everything else. I hope that  
Ministers will now look at extending the tests beyond  
cladding to whole fire prevention systems in blocks, and  
encouraging local authorities to do the same.

Finally, will the Minister explain why there is to be a  
taskforce in Kensington and Chelsea and not  
commissioners? As I said the other day, I believe, as a  
localist, that commissioners should be used only in  
extremis, but this is an extreme example of a failure of  
governance.

**Mike Kane:** This point has not been raised so far in  
the debate. I am a Greater Manchester MP, and there  
was a first-class contingencies response after the Ariana  
Grande incident in Manchester. What does my hon.  
Friend think of the council's civil contingencies response  
after the Grenfell Tower incident?

**Mr Betts:** I think that the council itself and the  
Government have admitted that the response was not  
adequate.

I ask the Minister why there are not to be commissioners.  
The explanation has been that the taskforce will report  
to the Secretary of State, but it will not have executive  
powers. I say to him that this is a recipe for another  
disaster. When there are mixed lines of accountability  
and no one is sure who has executive power, that is  
exactly when things go wrong, because no one is sure  
who is responsible, everyone leaves things to everyone  
else and, when something happens, everyone blames  
everyone else. I ask that we please learn the lessons. Can  
we have an explanation of why commissioners have not  
been put in place? It seems to me that the Minister  
could have acted quickly, but now we have confusion  
rather than clarity.

3.12 pm

**Royston Smith** (Southampton, Itchen) (Con): I assure  
the hon. Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts)  
that if he wins the chairmanship of the Communities  
and Local Government Committee by one vote, it will  
have been mine, and he is welcome to it.

On a more serious note, I would like to declare an  
interest. As is set out in the Register of Members'  
Financial Interests, I am an unremunerated director of  
3SFire Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hampshire  
fire and rescue authority and a local authority trading  
company created to help to fill the gap left by the  
shrinking Government grant for the Hampshire fire and  
rescue service. 3SFire returns all profits to the fire and  
rescue authority, and all the directors are unremunerated.

On 6 April 2010, a fire broke out on the ninth floor of  
Shirley Towers in Southampton. I attended as chairman  
of the Hampshire fire and rescue authority as crews  
battled the fire. That fire was brought under control and  
100 people were rescued on the night, but at a great  
cost. Two firefighters who entered the tower block to  
rescue residents died after becoming entangled in falling  
electricity cables. They lost their lives while trying to  
save others. Those two firefighters, Alan Bannon and  
Jim Shears, demonstrated the very best of our emergency  
services, and they are still very much missed by everyone  
who knew them.

The fire in Shirley Towers happened in 2010. The  
inquest concluded in 2012, and the coroner issued his  
letter in April 2013. In that letter he recommended—some  
of this has been said, but I will repeat it, because I think  
it is important—

“Social housing providers should be encouraged to consider  
the retro-fitting of sprinklers in all existing high rise buildings in  
excess of 30 metres in height, particularly those identified by Fire  
and Rescue Services as having complex designs that make fire-fighting  
more hazardous and/or difficult.”

After the coroner made his recommendations, Southampton  
City Council committed to retrofit sprinklers in three  
high-rise tower blocks. However, as the weeks and months  
passed, there was no move to carry out the work. I  
asked the council about it over and over again, and was  
always given assurances that a report was about to be  
written or that funds were being made available, but  
nothing actually happened. Months and years passed,  
but then finally, in February 2015, Southampton City  
Council approved a cabinet report saying that it would  
commit £1 million of housing revenue account money

339

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

340

*[Royston Smith]*

to retrofit three blocks: Shirley Towers, where the fire  
happened; Sturminster House; and Albion Towers in  
my constituency.

Two and a half years after the council agreed that  
report and allocated the funds, those sprinklers are still  
not installed. Coincidentally—the Labour cabinet member  
with responsibility for housing in Southampton has  
assured me that it is a coincidence—the sprinklers that  
the city promised more than two years ago for some of  
the most vulnerable blocks will soon be fitted. That is,  
at least, what I have been told.

The Leader of the Opposition will be visiting  
Southampton on Saturday. I hope that while he is there,  
he will ask the leader of the Labour-controlled council,  
who was also the Labour candidate in the general  
election, why he has not acted on the coroner's  
recommendations and carried out the retrofitting of  
sprinklers in the city's high-rise flats. I hope that the  
Leader of the Opposition will also explain to residents  
of those towers why he and his shadow Chancellor  
have sought to politicise the tragedy of Grenfell  
Tower, but have remained silent about Labour-  
controlled Southampton's failure to act on the coroner's  
recommendations, despite its promise to residents that  
it would do so. I am confident—or, more likely, hopeful—  
that seven years after the Shirley Towers fire, Southampton  
City Council will retrofit sprinklers in our tower blocks.

I recount these events not for political point scoring—  
*[Interruption.]* Labour Members may laugh, but that is  
what they have done from the day of the tragic event at  
Grenfell Tower. I have not tried to score political points  
in the way that Labour has sought to do, but for a really  
important reason. When the inquiry into the Grenfell  
tragedy has concluded and we know what happened,  
and how and why it happened, the recommendations  
flowing from that inquiry must be accepted. The  
Government must act on those recommendations and  
not allow the situation to drift for year after year in the  
way that has been allowed to happen in Southampton.  
In the years since Shirley Towers there have been dozens  
of fires in Southampton's tower blocks, and if one of  
those had turned out like Grenfell or Shirley Towers,  
there would have been no excuse and nowhere for the  
local authority to hide.

**Andy Slaughter:** The hon. Gentleman's case might be  
more convincing if he did not see everything from one  
particular vantage point. He says that there must be  
action after the public inquiry, but does he not agree  
that action should have been taken in the light of what  
happened at Lakanal House? Can he perhaps explain  
why Ministers did not make recommendations about  
retrofitting sprinklers after that, despite what the coroner  
said in his letter? [HON. MEMBERS: “We did.”] No, you  
did not.

**Royston Smith:** As I understand it, and as I said,  
there was a recommendation that the use of sprinklers  
should be encouraged. The difference between  
Southampton and the local authority in the Lakanal  
case is that Southampton committed to that retrofitting  
but did not do it.

As I said, if one of the dozens of fires in tower blocks  
in Southampton since Shirley Towers had turned out  
like that fire or Grenfell, there would have been nowhere

to hide. If the Government fail to act on the findings of  
the Grenfell Tower inquiry, we will have nowhere to  
hide either, and the public will never forgive us.

3.19 pm

**Ellie Reeves** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): Madam  
Deputy Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to  
address the House and make my maiden speech, and as  
a London MP I am grateful for the chance to speak in  
the debate about the tragedy of Grenfell Tower.

It is an honour and a privilege to be elected to  
represent Lewisham West and Penge, the area that I  
love. I was raised and went to primary school in Sydenham,  
and I went to secondary school in Penge. I am now  
raising my own family there and I am proud to call it  
home.

Growing up, if anyone had told me that I would  
go on to become the Member of Parliament for my  
area, I would have laughed. Society never seemed to  
have much aspiration for girls from Cator Park School,  
and all too often we were written off, but I am here,  
and my sister, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds  
West (Rachel Reeves), is here, so as my former English  
teacher said during the general election campaign, Cator  
Park now has almost as many alumni in this place as  
Eton.

Our constituency is a collection of strong south-east  
London communities around Forest Hill, Bellingham,  
Perry Vale and Sydenham, within Lewisham. Since  
2010, it has taken in the bustle of Penge High Street, the  
suburban calm of Clock House and the splendour of  
Crystal Palace park, including its legendary dinosaurs.

I am the 12th Member to serve either Lewisham West  
and Penge or Lewisham West, as it was before 2010. I  
feel privileged to be the first woman to represent it,  
99 years after it was created, in the same year as the  
Representation of the People Act and the first election  
in which women could vote. My predecessor Jim Dowd  
represented the constituency for 25 years and devoted  
more than 40 years of his life to public service, both in  
this House and on Lewisham Council. A lifelong resident  
of SE23, Jim stood up for our local services and good  
jobs, and he represented his constituents with conviction  
on national issues. He held a range of positions both in  
government and opposition, and effectively used his  
position to further causes that were important to him,  
especially animals, which he loved, and their welfare.  
Even his general election literature from 2015 included  
a picture of him shaking hands with a giant cat.

Previously a bellwether seat, Jim and those who  
helped to run the local party have helped to turn Lewisham  
West and Penge into a strong Labour seat, while never  
taking anything for granted. It is in part thanks to them  
and their hard work that I am able to stand here now as  
their representative in Parliament. Jim has been a good  
friend to me and my family. His support has been  
immeasurable, and I know that he will be greatly missed  
in this place.

The enormous loss of life at Grenfell Tower and the  
preventable tragedy of what happened there have cast a  
shadow over the first few weeks of this Parliament.  
Hearing stories of the events that night, it was hard  
to hold back tears. The unimaginable horror of a  
mother throwing a baby from a 10th-floor window still  
haunts me.

341

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

342

The inquiry must now happen quickly, transparently  
and with the full inclusion of the victims, but what  
seems clear to me is that what happened at Grenfell  
Tower and then in the aftermath are symptomatic of a  
system that is broken; a system that neglects the poor  
and vulnerable; a system in which cost-effectiveness  
seems to have been put before health and safety; and a  
system that I have come to this place to change.

Around the time that Jim was making his maiden  
speech, I was at secondary school in the constituency.  
Growing up in the '80s and '90s, we had lessons in huts,  
class sizes of 35, and not enough books to go around.  
As the daughter of two teachers, I knew that teachers  
were undervalued and underpaid. My parents are here  
today, and I am thankful for the values and the support  
that they have given me.

It was my experiences, growing up, that made me  
want to stand up and fight to end inequality, and to  
make sure that every child gets the best chance in life, no  
matter what their wealth or background. I am saddened  
to say that all schools in my constituency face funding  
cuts, and our wonderful boys' comprehensive, Forest  
Hill School, is £1.3 million in deficit. I made a promise  
to my constituents that I would fight hard for our  
schools and our young people, and that is exactly what I  
will do.

Another issue that I want to fight for in this place is  
defending workplace rights. Before entering Parliament,  
I was an employment rights lawyer for more than a  
decade, representing working people day in, day out. I  
know at first hand how many of our employment rights  
come from Europe, such as paid holiday, limits on  
working time and many of our discrimination laws. I  
will fight tooth and nail to prevent any compromise of  
those rights as we negotiate Britain's exit from the  
European Union, but we need to go further than that  
and create a secure workplace and decent wages by  
banning zero-hours contracts and raising the national  
minimum wage. I was at a food bank in my constituency  
on Friday, and it is an absolute travesty that people are  
having to choose between feeding their children and  
feeding themselves.

An issue close to my heart is maternity discrimination.  
After the birth of my son, I set up a business to provide  
advice on pregnancy discrimination and flexible working  
to mums and families. I want to work to ensure that all  
jobs are flexible by default, and that all parents can take  
parental leave without fearing discrimination or the loss  
of their job.

I believe that a first-rate education, excellent healthcare,  
decent housing and proper employment rights are essential  
to the prosperity of us all. Rather than condemn our  
constituents to a race to the bottom, we must offer them  
hope and collectively ensure that our country is able to  
thrive, advance and progress, while no one is left behind.

3.26 pm

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): May I begin by  
congratulating the hon. Member for Lewisham West  
and Penge (Ellie Reeves) on such a powerful and articulate  
maiden speech? It is clear that she will be a forceful and  
effective advocate for her constituents. Her sister, the  
hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), who is  
sitting behind her, her parents, who are sitting in the  
Public Gallery, and her constituents, who are watching  
on TV, can all be proud.

I will say a few words about the public inquiry into  
this dreadful tragedy. At the risk of stating the obvious,  
it is of course vital that the inquiry is carried out with  
absolute impartiality and without fear or favour, and is  
motivated by a dogged determination to get to the  
truth, wherever it may lie and however convenient or  
inconvenient it may be. It is precisely because of those  
fundamental principles that I think Sir Martin Moore-Bick  
is the right man for the job, notwithstanding comments  
that have been made.

Let me be clear: I do not know Sir Martin from  
Adam. I have never met him, but I know the Court of  
Appeal, where he served with great distinction, and I  
have appeared there as an advocate on more occasions  
than I care to remember, and I can say with my hand on  
my heart that it is a jewel of the British constitution. In  
that body reside some of the most brilliant brains to be  
found anywhere in our country, and perhaps more  
importantly, that academic distinction is allied with  
absolute and ferocious independence. I am sorry to say  
that I have lost there far more times than I have won,  
but the most powerful tribute that I can pay to the  
Court of Appeal is that I have always left it understanding  
the judges' reasons and acknowledging the consummate  
fairness and integrity that they have brought to the  
process.

That is why I want to address a troubling insinuation  
that may be being made: that as an educated man with a  
title, Sir Martin is somehow ineligible for this job. Let  
me be clear that in our system of law, no one gets to his  
position by being nice to the Government. They get to  
it, more often than not, by being a nuisance—by holding  
the Government back when they overreach themselves,  
and by holding them fiercely to account—because the  
legal culture in this country is that the greatest accolade  
that can be paid to a judge is that he or she is fair. The  
Court of Appeal has that in spades; Sir Martin has that  
in spades. We owe it to the victims to let him get on with  
the job.

3.29 pm

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): May I begin by paying  
tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham  
West and Penge (Ellie Reeves)? She made an eloquent  
speech and is clearly going to fill the shoes of her  
predecessor. He was one of the more outstanding Members  
on the Labour Back Benches and will be remembered  
for many reasons, not all them to do with his approach  
to parliamentary debate, which we will all remember  
with affection. He was a forthright advocate on behalf  
of his constituents, and I can remember with a great  
deal of affection when he was my Whip too—we finished  
on good terms.

I associate myself with all the comments made about  
the first responders and the emergency services, about  
the officers of Kensington and Chelsea Council who  
went above and beyond the call of duty to try to  
respond to the needs of local people—it is sometimes  
overlooked that there were individuals who did an  
enormous amount of work; we need to recognise that—and,  
of course, about those affected by the tragedy.

The response exposed a complete failure on the part  
of Government, right the way to local government. It  
also exposed the fact that when local authorities reduce  
their manpower resources and the services they provide,  
and when they are so thin that they cannot respond in

343

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

344

*[Clive Efford]*

such circumstances, it is clear that we are going too far  
with reductions in investment in what is needed to  
support local communities. There is more to a council  
than a posh town hall; it is what is in it that counts.  
When a council prides itself on being able to give a  
£100 council tax rebate in the run-up to local elections,  
it leaves itself with few resources with which to respond  
in such circumstances. When that council takes what  
has to be described as a minimalist approach to providing  
and backing up those services and when it prides itself,  
first and foremost, on how little it spends, it is no  
wonder that there is no resilience when such a tragedy  
happens.

This is a tragedy that would have overwhelmed any  
local authority. The demand on local resources was  
huge, and any council would have needed the assistance  
of other local authorities to step in and support them,  
so one of the questions for the inquiry has to be: why,  
when those offers of help were made in the first 24 hours,  
did Kensington and Chelsea Council not respond to  
them? My local authority has been dealing with the  
concerns of local residents living in tower blocks, who  
want to know that they are safe, and using its  
communications and its housing officers and councillors  
to go out and talk to residents to reassure them, and to  
carry out the fire safety checks and everything else. At  
the same time it has been providing support to Kensington  
and Chelsea. It is quite clear from the response to those  
offers of help that there was something fundamentally  
wrong at the heart of Kensington and Chelsea. I pay  
tribute to those in the local community who spontaneously  
got together and responded to the needs of local people.

There are some lessons that we could have learned  
along the way, as the chair of the all-party group on fire  
safety rescue mentioned, and not just from Lakanal  
House. There have been incidents in other countries  
where exactly the same type of aluminium cladding  
caused the rapid spread of fires. The photographs of  
one that took place in 2014 in Melbourne, Australia—they  
are on the internet and were in the media at the time—look  
almost identical to those of the fire that took place at  
Grenfell Tower. What is surprising is that it is clear from  
talking to experts in the field—fire safety officers and  
others—that they knew the significance of that fire and  
the lessons that should have been learned about this  
type of cladding at the time. It is remarkable that there  
seems to have been no knowledge of that on the part of  
the Government or any review of the materials used for  
tower blocks at that time, because other countries did  
takeaction.Theytookstepstobanthistypeofcladding  
from being used on tower blocks.

There are questions to be asked. In the Lacrosse  
tower case in Melbourne, there was a sprinkler system  
in place, and some 500 people were evacuated from that  
block. No one died; they got out safely because a  
sprinkler system was in place. In some areas in that  
building the sprinkler system was overcome by the fire,  
but it was still sufficient to keep the fire from spreading  
within the building, thereby enabling people to leave.  
This question has to be asked: why have the Government  
not been learning these lessons along the way, not just  
from Lakanal, but from other fires that are clearly  
sending a message about the types of materials we use  
on these tower blocks? I want the inquiry to look into  
that.

Some countries take steps to limit the number of  
people who can live at height above a certain floor in  
tower blocks of specific designs. I also ask the inquiry  
to look into that. Do we need to have regulations in  
place to try to limit the number of people who live in  
tower blocks at height? This, again, was an issue in the  
Melbourne fire; because of shortages of housing and  
housing costs, so many people were crammed into the  
units in that tower block. Do we need to have a fire  
regulation on this? I ask the inquiry to look into that,  
too.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): When I met  
Sheffield local authority, it expressed concerns about  
thesafetyofnotonlytowerblockresidentsbutindividuals  
living in flats above takeaways and other commercial  
premises, which often share the same staircase, bathroom  
and kitchen as the commercial premises and often are  
very overcrowded—for example, with illegal immigrants  
sharing beds. Does my hon. Friend agree that we need  
to look into the possibility of having regulations in this  
area?

**Clive Efford:** I entirely agree. We need to look at that,  
as in another situation the numbers of people in a block  
could become an issue—and we do not know that that  
was not an issue in this instance as well.

The inquiry must also look at the issue raised by the  
Chair of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts), about  
building control. There are a number of issues about  
enforcement and making regular checks on the work  
done when refurbishments take place. Are the fire blocks  
being put in place between the floors, for instance? The  
advice to me from a constituent of mine who is an  
expert and who has been in the media speaking about  
this case, and about this issue for many years, is that we  
are very lax about the enforcement of the fire blocks  
between the floors and around windows, and we need to  
ensure that there is proper enforcement of this. The  
inquiry must look into that, too.

Responsibility for appointing the building control  
must lie with the local authority. There must be clear  
lines of responsibility for maintaining these standards,  
and we must stop local authorities being side-lined over  
ensuring that safety standards are considered of the  
utmost importance when these schemes go ahead.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op):  
Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a scandal that no  
minimum qualifications are required to become a building  
control practitioner, and does he agree that we need  
urgent action on this?

**Clive Efford:** Yes, an incident such as this one shows  
that there must be a basic knowledge of fire safety  
regulations, and there are many other issues that building  
control has to cover, so of course there must be a  
minimum qualification requirement.

The current position on sprinklers makes no sense.  
New blocks built to new building standards over 30 metres  
high are required to have a sprinkler system installed.  
However, older buildings built to an older standard of  
building control are not required to retrofit. That is  
completelyandutterlyillogical.TheGovernment—outside  
of the inquiry and everything else—must fund the  
retrofitting of sprinklers in those blocks of flats where

345

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

346

that has been recommended by fire safety officers. There  
can be no equivocating on that. This fire shows that that  
is essential, and the Government should just accept that  
we cannot hold back on it any longer.

We are told that there was a plan to put fireproof  
cladding on to Grenfell Tower but that it was £2 per  
square metre more expensive than the cheaper version  
that was actually put on. If that is correct, the inquiry  
will obviously have something to say about it. There are  
some questions here. As I have said, this cheaper type of  
cladding was already on other blocks where similar fires  
had taken place. Why was it allowed to be used on this  
block? Is it true that the contractors who were erecting  
the cladding raised concerns about whether they should  
be putting that cladding on that block at that height? If  
it is true, action must obviously be taken against the  
people who made that decision.

**Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman  
give way?

**Clive Efford:** I will not, because I am taking up some  
time and I want to sit down. I have had the nod from the  
Deputy Speaker, and if I do not sit down quite soon, I  
will not get called again.

My final question for the Minister is about the Building  
Regulations Advisory Committee. We were told that, in  
the light of the Lakanal report, that committee would  
meet to oversee fire regulations, but that meeting did  
not take place. The Minister said that that work would  
be completed by the end of this year, but the committee  
has not yet met. We need to hear from the Minister why,  
in the light of the report on Lakanal, that committee  
did not meet to review the fire regulations. In my  
opinion, this shows that the Government were asleep on  
the job. I hope that we will learn the lessons from this,  
once and for all, when the inquiry reports. Lakanal  
should have shown us the steps we needed to take to  
prevent this. Fires that have happened in other countries  
since Lakanal have pointed the way to the action that  
we should have taken. We have to learn the lessons once  
and for all to ensure that this type of tragedy never  
happens again.

3.43 pm

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): I should  
like to extend my congratulations to the new hon.  
Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves).  
It feels a bit strange to be welcoming you to the House  
when I have only just arrived here myself, but you made  
a wonderful speech and I look forward to working with  
you—I mean “her”; I am still learning the conventions  
myself.

I greatly enjoyed making my maiden speech, but it  
gives me no pleasure to stand before the House today to  
talk about this tragedy that has befallen our country. I  
am afraid that it will be one of those disasters that mark  
this period in our history and that we will remember for  
a long time to come. The Prime Minister has responded  
to it entirely appropriately by calling for a judge-led  
inquiry, and I was pleased that the shadow Secretary of  
State did not question the basis on which we intend to  
proceed. The Prime Minister went to the Lord Chief  
Justice and asked for a senior judge to be appointed and  
to proceed with an inquiry that will look into the  
immediate causes of the fire as well as the wider issues.  
As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for

North East Hertfordshire (Sir Oliver Heald) said earlier,  
that will give the inquiry the opportunity to report in  
two or more stages, so that local residents can hear the  
issues that have immediately affected them while the  
inquiry goes on to consider the broader questions that  
affect communities and councils in many areas across  
the country.

It is with reference to those wider issues that I want to  
make some remarks, and I declare a sort of interest in  
that for a while I was on the board of Yarlington  
Housing Group, a housing association in the west of  
England.

The first thing that struck me came from a BBC  
“Newsnight” investigation which suggested that developers  
may have used only desk-based research to persuade  
inspectors that the cladding was safe to use. If that is  
the case, serious questions must be answered following  
the tragedy, and we would want to know where else  
in the country that has happened.

The second thing is tenant feedback. If the reports  
are true that tenants had complained to the tenant  
management organisation about safety in the building  
and if those calls were not listened to, we need to know  
why. We need to know why the TMO was not picking  
up on the important feedback that only someone who  
lives in a building can give. I am not saying that had that  
feedback been listened to the fire would have been  
prevented, but without that feedback we can be certain  
that people in other buildings are being put at risk.

That brings me on to my next point: illegal sub-letting.  
It is a delicate, sensitive subject, and the Government  
have been absolutely right to announce an amnesty to  
encourage everyone to seek help and to come forward.  
Illegal sub-letting in our tower blocks and social housing  
discourages people from coming forward and reporting  
their concerns—it breaks that feedback. We all have to  
think of ways to ensure that people living in social  
housing can come forward and have their concerns  
heard.

My fourth point relates to something that I said in  
the House the other day, and it has been picked up on  
by a couple of other Members. What happened in  
Kensington and Chelsea prompts some serious questions  
about emergency and contingency planning in our  
local authorities. Just as some other authorities have  
used the cladding that seems to have been a major  
contributor to the fire, so other authorities may have  
emergency planning that leaves a lot to be desired.  
However, I was reassured by the Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government that the Cabinet  
Office is already looking into that, and I am keen that  
that work is taken forward.

Before I sit down, I would like to reflect on something  
said by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham  
(Alex Chalk). I am glad that we seem to be in agreement  
that we should have a judge-led inquiry. I was pleased  
that the shadow Secretary of State did not criticise  
Sir Martin, and I presume that he backs him in his role.  
Sir Martin is a highly respected judge and has achieved  
great things in his profession, dealing with extremely  
complex areas of law that will be relevant to this inquiry.  
That is an asset to the investigation, and we should all  
welcome that. His ability to do that work is not hampered  
by the colour of his skin or his social class. His skills  
have got him to where he is, and it is his skills that we  
should back. The inquiry will require some cool-headed  
thinking. It will not be helped by hot remarks that

347

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

348

*[Alex Burghart]*

suggest to the families that the victims were intentionally  
killed by people in government. It will not be helped by  
remarks that suggest that someone's impartiality is  
undermined by their social class. While we can debate  
its particulars, we all have a duty to get behind the  
inquiry and to encourage people who live in the area  
and in other tower blocks to come forward and be part  
of it.

3.49 pm

**Stephanie Peacock** (Barnsley East) (Lab): I congratulate  
you on your election, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It is a privilege to make my maiden speech, but it is  
sobering to do so in this debate on Grenfell, which  
reminds us all of the seriousness of our duties as  
Members of this House. I am pleased to follow my hon.  
Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge  
(Ellie Reeves), who also made her maiden speech today.

I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Michael  
Dugher. The son of a railwayman, he has been true to  
his working class roots and a strong campaigner for  
Barnsley East on issues such as community pharmacies,  
Orgreave and brass bands. For all his achievements, he  
has been awarded the rare accolade of featuring on the  
wall of Strangers Bar—better the wall than the floor.  
Music is his passion, and now it is his job, as chief  
executive of UK Music. I know that family is important  
to him, and I wish him and Jo well in their new adventure.  
His predecessor, Jeff Ennis, has served as leader of  
Barnsley council and MP for Barnsley East, and is now  
mayor of Barnsley—a unique achievement.

Like Jeff, I was a teacher before entering this place.  
Working in education, I saw the profound power of  
learning, and I have learned myself that it is incumbent  
on all of us to support the next generation. I am  
particularly proud to be the first female MP for Barnsley  
East, but I would not be here without the help and  
encouragement of a former female Member, Sylvia  
Heal, who sat in your Chair for many years, Madam  
Deputy Speaker, as you will remember. I am delighted  
that she is here today, along with my parents. I am the  
daughter of a midwife and a care worker, and I owe  
them huge thanks for all their support.

For the past four years, I have been proud to fight for  
working people as an officer of the GMB trade union.  
As a Member of this House, I will continue that fight  
for working people, not least for the many trapped in  
jobs that are more precarious than ever before. Today's  
debate reminds us of what we have fought for over so  
many years, of how the lessons of the past are still as  
relevant today, and of how, even now, not all communities  
are equal and the protection of human life requires our  
action in this House.

Many people will know about Barnsley's history, and  
there is so much to be proud of, but still I have constituents  
waiting for justice for what happened to them at Orgreave  
in 1984. We must ensure that the Grenfell victims do  
not wait as long.

In Barnsley East, our industrial and cultural heritage  
runs alongside our history of working-class struggle. It  
is appropriate that the town is home to both the National  
Union of Mineworkers and the famous Grimethorpe  
Colliery band. Our communities were built on heavy  
industry—glass, steel and coal. Mining was a way of life

for entire communities. Some 30,000 people worked  
down the pits, and the impact of their loss is still felt  
today.

Many of my hon. Friends will know my constituency  
from the film “Brassed Off ”, which showed so powerfully  
the character, grit, humour, solidarity and struggle faced  
by honest, decent, hard-working people. No one who  
has seen the film can forget Danny's powerful speech  
when he says that nothing matters like people matter. It  
is traditional for Members to talk about the great  
history of their constituencies in a maiden speech, and I  
am very proud to do so, but nothing matters like people  
matter.

It is above all the people of Barnsley East who make  
the constituency what it is. People like the teaching  
assistant, her pay falling but her bills rising. She looks  
after our children; we should look after her. People like  
the insecure worker at a warehouse, labouring on the  
minimum wage. She works hard for her family; we  
should work just as hard for her. People like the veteran  
who served his country, yet is now homeless and jobless.  
He fought for us; we should fight for him. In Barnsley  
East we can be proud of our industry and our history.  
All of it matters, but none of it matters like people  
matter.

The NUM in Barnsley has a banner embroidered  
with the words, “The past we inherit, the future we  
build.” I have spoken about our proud past, but the  
people of Barnsley East did not send me here to honour  
our history. They sent me here to build our future, and  
that is what I intend to do.

3.54 pm

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): This is only the  
second opportunity I have had to make a speech in this  
Chamber, so when I look at those making their maiden  
speeches today, I think, “That was only me last week.”  
The Labour party has so far not had the presence of  
mind to elect a female leader, yet having listened to the  
speeches of the hon. Members for Lewisham West and  
Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for Barnsley East (Stephanie  
Peacock), I think it cannot be long until it does so.  
There is such an amazing proliferation of female talent  
in that party that I just cannot understand why they  
have not taken it over and occupied all the Front-Bench  
positions, with the greatest of respect to those men who  
occupy them at the moment. While it is an honour to  
follow both hon. Members, it is also unfortunate, because  
that will only demean my own performance.

I feel not only that I should declare some interests—I  
refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members'  
Financial Interests—but that I should present my CV. I  
am still the chair of the board of a housing association  
that has 20,000 homes in Walsall. I am also notionally,  
at least until the end of this month—it is not paying me  
at the moment, but I am still trying to help out—the  
assistant chief exec of YMCA in Birmingham, which  
has 300 units of accommodation for formerly homeless  
young people. I am also a member of the Chartered  
Institute of Building and a civil engineer by degree.  
That is relevant because of the points I feel that I need  
to make.

I have sat in a number of meetings as chair of the  
board of Walsall Housing Group, an association that is  
currently on site or in contract to build approximately  
800 properties, some of which will be for shared ownership.

349

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

350

The need for that type of property across the UK is  
understood. Some of the properties will be available  
under the slightly more innovative rent to buy scheme,  
so there will be opportunities for different tenures of  
housing, funded by this Government. Perhaps the part  
of that Government funding I am most proud of is  
Homelessness Change funding, which is received by the  
YMCA and will allow us to provide much-needed  
modernisation for a 72-bed hostel in Northfield. This  
Government are investing in housing of various tenures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and  
Ongar (Alex Burghart) said that we will talk about the  
Grenfell tragedy for many years to come. It was a  
significant and tragic event. Next year will mark the  
50th anniversary of theRonanPointdisaster.IvyHodge  
lit a match to make a cup of tea, and the ensuing  
explosion, which was caused by gas leaking from a pipe  
to her cooker, blew her across the room and, more  
importantly, knocked out some supporting walls in her  
flat, which was on the fifth floor from the top. Not only  
did the explosion take out the supporting walls and  
damage all the flats above, but it led to catastrophic  
failure for all flats below, resulting in four people dying  
and devastation to the building.

Tests were subsequently done, and new structural  
supports were put in and the building was reoccupied.  
However, the consideration of the design criteria went  
on for years, with many people challenging complex  
issues such as wind loading, which was affected by  
whether or not the windows were open, and the building  
was taken down about 18 years later.

The point I am trying to make is that it is sometimes  
not easy to understand what has gone wrong. Speaking  
as somebody who has supervised the construction of  
these buildings and has been involved in their design, I  
know that designers invariably err on the side of caution.

**Adam Afriyie:** My hon. Friend is making a powerful  
speech and I very much value his experience in the  
building sector. Does he agree that often the devil is in  
the detail of the legislation, which uses terms such as  
“limited combustibility”? A definition of a precise standard  
for fire retardancy might be more useful. Perhaps there  
will be an opportunity for the inquiry to provide some  
recommendations along those lines so that everybody  
knows the exact standards that need to be met.

**Eddie Hughes:** My hon. Friend is right. Any opportunity  
for interpretation means that people have the chance to  
err either on the side of caution or, as some might  
suggest, on the side of cutting costs. The inclusion of  
that explicit detail would prevent such an opportunity  
for interpretation.

We will never be able to mitigate all risk, so it is  
incredibly important that we work with the fire service  
to minimise risk. I am grateful to Lee Sketchley from  
West Midlands fire service who came to see us at the  
YMCA. He inspected the hostel and we are acting on  
some of the recommendations for improvement that he  
made. That is relevant because of the stay-put policy,  
which has been mentioned. Its concept is built on the  
idea of compartmentalisation: if the whole fabric of the  
flat allows two hours' exposure to fire before it penetrates,  
people can reasonably stay in that flat for a period, safe  
in the knowledge that somebody should be able to come  
and rescue them during that time. However, we will have

all seen—we will have seen it in this building during the  
warm weather—fire doors propped open, sometimes  
with fire extinguishers, ironically, but that renders the  
door useless in the event of a fire. Similarly, we will have  
seen fire doors that have been painted: the intumescent  
smoke-seal strip on the edge of the door will be affected  
by the paint, which will prevent it from serving its  
purpose if there is a fire.

I say to Members on both sides of the Chamber that  
we all have a responsibility. It is up to us to go back to  
the big housing providers in our constituencies and seek  
reassurances from them, individually, that they are sticking  
to the legislation that is already in place. Before we go  
looking for too much new legislation, let us at least  
make absolutely sure about that.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): Does the hon.  
Gentleman agree that we also have a responsibility to  
provide adequate resources to our fire services? Let us  
also deal with staff morale, as the pay cap that has been  
imposed on our emergency services, including the fire  
service, is not helping matters at all.

**Eddie Hughes:** I am not sure that I can totally agree  
with the latter half of the hon. Gentleman's point. I  
think the fire service's response to the Grenfell tragedy  
was absolutely fantastic, as was that to the bombing of  
the Ariana Grande concert. The service that I personally  
have had from Lee Sketchley at West Midlands fire  
service has been absolutely fantastic. The fire service is  
clearly managing to deliver a first-class service with its  
current resources.

I end by simply saying: let us make absolutely sure  
that we understand that fire safety is everybody's  
responsibility.

**JimMcMahon**(OldhamWestandRoyton)(Lab/Co-op):  
I know that the hon. Gentleman is just about to finish  
his speech but, notwithstanding all his points about  
personal responsibility, and not painting fire doors or  
propping them open with fire extinguishers, people  
must be forgiven for leaving their windows open on a  
hot summer's night only for flames to engulf their flats  
from the outside in.

**Eddie Hughes:** I could not agree more. We need to be  
certain that the design criteria we apply to these buildings  
mitigates that sort of circumstance.

4.3 pm

**Emma Dent Coad** (Kensington) (Lab): At times of  
national disaster, poets laureate are often called on to  
commemorate and reflect on events. In north Kensington,  
we have our own Ben Jonsons and Alfred, LordTennysons.  
Our poets laureate are Akala, AJ Tracey, Lowkey and  
Peaky. We have Stormzy, and Potent Whisper calling  
out what he calls “Grenfell Britain” in gut-wrenching  
prose. We have poets and artists aplenty, but the Philistine  
council does not recognise their talent and would rather  
spend £30 million over 20 years on opera for a minority  
in Holland Park.

Why is all that relevant to this debate? Because for  
many years Kensington and Chelsea Council has misspent  
Government and council tax payers' funds on countless  
vanity projects and handouts, as we have heard, while  
underfunding essential services such as nurseries, play  
centres, lunch clubs, homework clubs, youth centres,

351

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

352

*[Emma Dent Coad]*

advice centres, skills training and of course, as so tragically  
demonstrated, council housing. That is not to mention  
the recent controversial projects to hand our beautiful  
North Kensington library and neighbouring youth centre  
over to two private schools, at a cost to the council of  
£11 million, without even consulting the public, whose  
money is being used to fund private education. This is  
an £11 million gift to the private sector, while the  
council cannot find the money for sprinklers, decent  
cladding or fire alarms. Where is the accountability? To  
whom does Britain's favourite council report? Clearly, it  
is not to the taskforce.

As we have seen, and as has now been acknowledged,  
the council's response in the early hours and days after  
the fire was shockingly inadequate, and possibly even  
criminally neglectful; we shall see. So in the past four  
weeks, has it improved? Has the council learned from its  
mistakes? It has not. It has removed a chief executive  
and senior councillors have resigned, but who are replacing  
them? Where fundamental change is so desperately and  
clearly needed, we have had no change at all and a  
consolidation of the leadership that failed.

Survivors and volunteers are asking: where is the  
money so generously donated by the public? Where are  
the millions? Who is deciding where this money should  
go? Why is the council not using some of its reserves—near  
a third of a billion pounds—to purchase properties and  
support those whom it has so disgracefully failed? Has  
no one demanded that, after years of underspending  
revenue, money that has been shuffled into capital  
reserves for vanity projects be returned, quite properly,  
to those who need it? No one has. What is needed in the  
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council is  
fundamental change, and I can see that we are not  
going to get it without further outside intervention and  
the support of people who can be trusted. The longer  
the situation prevails, the worse it will get. I am asking  
for intervention.

I get daily updates from people on the ground. Where  
is the wrap-around support for bereaved and desperate  
people who are still staying in hotels, as the much  
trumpeted “high-quality” temporary accommodation  
has been unsuitable or has not materialised at all? Why  
offer a survivor a high-rise flat? That happened this  
week. Why offer a disabled woman a home reachable  
only by stairs, where there is no lift? That happened this  
week. Why offer a flat in Pimlico, which is too far away  
for people to reach survivors' networks? Where is the  
offer of temporary accommodation—

**Adam Afriyie:** I am listening carefully to the hon.  
Lady. Does she not accept that it should be for the  
people who are offered accommodation to choose whether  
to take it?

**Emma Dent Coad:** They have been offered one choice,  
so they have had no choice. It is that choice or the hotel.  
Normally, when someone is offered temporary  
accommodation, they have a choice of three or four  
places, and after that, they may be threatened with  
voluntary homelessness. On this occasion, they have  
been offered one each, so they have had no choice at all.  
All that happened this week, and I have direct  
communication with the people it happened to. Still no  
one is accountable.

More specifically on housing, can we please acknowledge  
that this process continues for many to be chaotic,  
daily? Why is a tenant management organisation that is  
under criminal investigation still in control of housing?  
The updates I get from survivors, members of voluntary  
groups and others directly involved in this project talk  
about a lack of cultural awareness among some social  
workers, and a lack of continuity of care. The issue of  
whether or not there is an amnesty where there are  
concerns about someone's immigration status continues.  
I know what the situation is, but those involved certainly  
do not, as the communication is very poor.

Issues relating to the walks or finger blocks continue.  
Are these things safe? What about the fire exits? The  
issues about communication from the TMO, the confusion  
about the payment of rent, and the threatened eviction  
of people who have not paid may have been dealt with,  
but the legacy is still there. Does everyone know where  
they stand? It seems not. Some near neighbours in  
blocks are too scared to return, saying that they hear  
ghosts and screaming. As far as we can ascertain,  
survivors are given one choice of accommodation. Why  
only one? There should be a choice. One person turned  
down a flat with mould. Another turned down a flat  
scheduled for demolition. Is there no centralised list of  
decent available housing? There seems to be no  
co-ordination here. Somebody this week had offered  
three impeccably refurbished flats to the council, only  
to be told that everyone had been housed in high-quality  
homes, which we know is not true.

Frankly, this continuing disaster and lack of care and  
respect for survivors is unacceptable. It comes from a  
culture at Kensington and Chelsea Council that needs  
to be addressed—soon. The longer this goes on, the  
worse it is for survivors. Will the Government continue  
to let the council fail its survivors in so many ways? This  
is Potent Whisper's Grenfell Britain.

Let me turn briefly to mental health. Many survivors  
are still in shock and cannot begin to recover until they  
can bury their loved ones. Many will have to wait a very  
long time for that. Many are fragile, and I have huge  
concerns for their mental health. I know people who are  
still in shock and not on any path to recovery. One was  
on the phone to her terrified best friend for over an  
hour, debating whether she should stay in the flat or try  
to leave. Then the phone went dead. The surviving  
friend calls and texts her friend every day, even though  
she knows that she is dead. Who is looking after her?

I am particularly concerned about those who may  
have mental health crises. There has already been one  
threatened suicide and one attempted suicide, and there  
may be more. We can be sure that many affected people  
will need urgent and intensive treatment at some point.

For many years, the minority party councillors in  
Kensington and Chelsea have been asking for an increase  
in the number of places of safety for people suffering  
crises. This followed a series of incidents in which  
people with mental health issues in sheltered housing  
had had crises and then ended up in a police cell  
overnight because there was nowhere else for them to  
go. Meanwhile, we hear that an entire ward at a London  
hospital is locked because there is not enough cash to  
keep it open. Patients are offloaded to private mental  
healthcare facilities at a cost of nearly £600 a day.  
Where is the logic in that, and who should be held  
accountable for it?

353

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

354

After four weeks, we are still witnessing a process that  
is reactive, not proactive. The council and the Government  
are one step behind. We need a sensible plan in place.  
We need to review that closed ward and allocate funds  
to staff it. Please can we have a proper strategic plan for  
housing and all the other issues? We are just reacting  
daily.

A lot of people and groups are beginning to plan for  
the future. Many come to me—many are well-meaning—  
and want me to tell them where they went wrong  
and how they can improve their approach or better  
serve their people. With my background in architecture  
and planning, I have lots of ideas, some of which I  
have been working on for years, but at a time when  
people feel so utterly betrayed and distrustful, I cannot  
possibly support any kind of top-down, outside  
intervention, however expert or well-meaning it is. At  
any time, but particularly at a time like this, good  
planning starts with the people whose lives will be  
changed by it. It starts with a blank sheet of paper,  
and should end in improving the lives of the people who  
live in the area, but often that does not happen. The  
estate development proposed by the council—and  
developments proposed by many councils of all political  
hues—is not for the benefit of existing tenants. We need  
a completely fresh approach. Overarching this is a  
genuine, often misplaced and sometimes insulting attitude  
that those in positions of power and influence know  
better than the “little people”, as some see them. I have  
never believed that, and perhaps that is why I was  
elected.

Members will have heard about our volunteer groups  
and organisations; they did not spring up from nowhere.  
They have always been there—always unappreciated  
and undervalued. They are amazing and self-organising.  
We need to learn lessons from them and bring them into  
the future.

What was so cruelly taken from our Grenfell people  
must be returned. They do not wish to be penalised  
financially forever for an act that they were not responsible  
for. They want their dignity back, and somewhere decent  
to mend and recover. We cannot return their deceased  
to life, but their families do want to bury something.  
They want the choice of where to bury their dead, and  
that has not always been offered.

This horrific event must be a game-changer. We need  
a thorough review of approaches to estate development  
and of the funding of social housing. We need to listen  
to the people affected and their warnings, and act on  
their concerns and priorities with the transparency and  
honesty that has so clearly been missing. Grenfell people  
do not want our pity or charity. They want their dues,  
they want justice, and they want change. Our poets and  
artists will continue to shame us all with their insight  
and intelligence until we recognise that, and accept their  
collaboration on the fundamental change that is so  
desperately needed.

4.14 pm

**Clive Lewis** (Norwich South) (Lab): I welcome you to  
your place, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is humbling to  
follow my hon. Iriend the Member for Kensington  
(Emma Dent Coad) and her powerful words. What a  
difference it makes having a Labour MP in that constituency  
to speak up for the voiceless and those without power  
following this tragic incident.

Many of us still find ourselves unable to comprehend  
the shocking fire at Grenfell Tower—the tragedy that  
so perfectly captures our deep national, political and  
social crisis. The Grenfell fire is also a symbol of the  
systematic running down of institutions that we all  
need. Inevitably, as those systems begin to break down,  
the poor and vulnerable are the first in line to experience  
that failure.

We need high-quality journalism and a properly funded  
legal aid system that allows ordinary people their rightful  
protection under the law. We need properly paid public  
sector workers, and local government with the resources  
and power to do what is needed—not just act as a  
rubber stamp for Westminster. Of course, it is critical  
that today we focus on the detail of what went wrong at  
Grenfell, but I would also like to make two short points  
that argue for wider action—the kind of action that  
never ends.

The institutions that have a critical role in preventing  
disasters and clearing up the mess when things go  
wrong do not exist by accident. If they are run down,  
we reach the point where we—the lawmakers in this  
place—are daily exposing families and communities to  
unacceptable risks. When that happens, as it has for too  
long, we are culpable because we have pushed systems  
and people to the limit. I stand here today with friends  
on the Opposition side of the House to say that we will  
fight hard to end the relentless running down of multiple  
civic functions. No longer will that be done in our name.  
It looks to me as though the country is with us in that  
endeavour.

It is clear that both local authorities and the fire  
service were heavily relied on, both before the Grenfell  
tragedy and in dealing with the aftermath as it unfolded.  
So far there are only a few buildings of concern in  
Norwich, but a small and diminishing army of public  
sector and housing association workers doing their  
jobs day in, day out, with diminishing resources and  
morale, have had to deal with the fallout from  
Grenfell. Too often, those workers have too little power  
and too few resources to regulate the private sector in  
the public interest. Of the six blocks being tested for  
flammable cladding in Norwich, five are in the private  
sector.

What, for example, is being done to check privately  
owned student halls of residence? Will the Minister  
address the fact that many are now privately owned  
and managed? How can the Government and the  
universities ensure that such residences are checked  
for flammable cladding and that the highest safety  
standards apply? Can they confirm that student halls  
are classed as “other residential buildings” and are  
therefore subject to weaker requirements for sprinklers?  
If so, will the Government consider closing that loophole?

On a similar note, parents rely on their children being  
safe in our schools. The Government had been planning  
to change the regulations on fire safety in schools,  
removing the expectation that most new school buildings  
would be fitted with sprinklers, on the basis that school  
buildings do not need to be sprinkler-protected to achieve  
“a reasonable standard of life safety”—

the Government's own words. Since the Grenfell fire,  
Ministers have hinted that those plans will rightly be  
abandoned. Can they make their position absolutely  
clear to the House?

355

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

356

*[Clive Lewis]*

Schools in Norwich are suffering particularly badly  
from Government cuts and are threatened with the  
worst settlement in Norfolk under the proposed funding  
formula, although we are waiting to find out whether  
and how that will ever be implemented. Can the Minister  
tell us whether any central funding will be made available  
for essential safety work, so that those schools do not  
face yet more unfunded costs from the Government?

I turn back to the local authorities, which have been  
subject to 1,000 unnatural shocks in funding and changes  
to their ways of working. To name but one, there is the  
Government's mandatory 1% rent reduction, which, at  
a stroke, reduces Norwich City Council's ability to  
repair and improve its ageing housing stock by an  
average of £7.4 million a year. What is the reality of that  
mandatory rent reduction? There is less investment in  
our council housing stock, and council activities such as  
the daily safety checks carried out on our high-rise  
blocks are put at risk. In Norwich, we are fortunate  
enough to have a Labour-run city council that makes  
sure that those safety checks happen, but like many  
other local authorities, my council is coming up against  
the physical limits of what it can do with its resources,  
which have been cut year after year by this Government.

It is not just our local authority that is struggling to  
maintain safe standards. Our fire services—the men and  
women whom we are rightly so quick to applaud for  
their bravery—also have concerns. Whole-time firefighters  
earn less than £30,000 a year, so the Labour party  
welcomes the fact that the 1% cap was not imposed on  
their new pay offer. But there is a catch. Given that  
there has been no confirmation of how this will be  
funded, firefighters are concerned that the money will  
come from the service itself. Borrowing from Peter to  
pay Paul will not improve anyone's safety. The Government  
must understand that the ongoing funding cuts to our  
institutions and to those who work so hard for them are  
critical parts of the Grenfell story. Reversing them is  
essential to prevent another tragedy.

4.20 pm

**Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): I am pleased  
to be making my maiden speech in such an important  
debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members  
for Barnsley East (Stephanie Peacock), for Lewisham  
West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for Kensington  
(Emma Dent Coad) on their contributions today.

I am deeply proud to have been elected as the first  
ever woman MP in Croydon. I pay tribute to my  
predecessor, Gavin Barwell, who served our town for  
seven years. Among the many good things he did was  
his work to introduce Lillian's law, following the tragic  
death of 14-year-old Lillian Groves in 2010. The law  
means that drivers can now be prosecuted if they are  
caught exceeding new drug limits. Since it was passed,  
there have been more than 13,000 convictions.

Gavin is also an acclaimed author. I understand that  
his book, “How to Win a Marginal Seat”, was much  
read among Conservative Members. I cannot wait for  
the sequel. I should also record my gratitude to the  
Prime Minister for giving me an early replay after my  
narrow defeat in 2015. I am so glad that I was able to  
repay the favour by helping her with her own staffing  
problems.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for  
Swansea West (Geraint Davies), who was the MP for  
Croydon Central for eight years, and the hon. Member  
for Mole Valley (Sir Paul Beresford), who was the MP  
for the constituency for six years. I am delighted to be  
here with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon  
North (Mr Reed), who is already a great champion of  
our town. I hope that two on the Opposition Benches  
will be better than one, and that we can truly stand up  
for Croydon.

I am privileged to have worked for two former Members  
of this House: the late Mo Mowlam, when she was a  
trailblazing shadow Northern Ireland Secretary; and as  
a civil servant for Tessa Jowell, when she was in charge  
of delivering the 2012 Olympics. They were both truly  
inspirational in completely different ways, and I am  
grateful to Tessa for the help she gave me during my  
recent campaign.

I am so proud to be part of a record number of  
women in this House, and particularly to be part of the  
women's parliamentary Labour party, which makes up  
45% of Labour MPs. Just one more heave and we will  
be there. With the growing number of women and men  
from ethnic minorities, we are getting closer to looking  
like the country we represent. That is really significant  
for our democracy.

Croydon is deeply special to me. I have lived there all  
my life. Generations of my family were born and have  
died there. Most recently, my father died on 11 June this  
year, three days after the general election. He lived just  
long enough to see his daughter fulfil her goal, and to  
be proved right about my right hon. Friend the Member  
for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn). My father was a  
big fan of the Leader of the Opposition, so there is a  
good lesson for us all—listen to your dad.

Croydon is exceptional. The greenest and the largest  
of all the London boroughs, its diversity is its strength,  
from the woodlands of Shirley to the tower blocks of  
the town centre, and from the strong community of  
New Addington surrounded by fields to the Victorian  
terraces of South Norwood. Most agree that the name  
of our town derives from “crocus valley”, where, during  
the Roman period, crocuses were grown to make saffron  
to be sold as medicine on the streets of London. In the  
very heart of Croydon, we are growing crocuses again  
to make saffron. Our great theatre, Fairfield Halls, is  
being reborn through a multimillion pound makeover,  
and our art and culture are at the cutting edge, with  
artists from across the world literally painting our town  
with new art work. Our tech scene is the fastest growing  
in London, and we have the highest number of young  
people in London with nearly 100,000 in the whole  
borough. We are ambitious for Croydon, and I know  
that we will thrive.

But there are two sides to every tale. Seven years of  
austerity have ripped through our community: low pay,  
the horror that is the implementation of universal credit,  
cuts to disability benefits, high housing costs, rocketing  
homelessness, crippling cuts to local government, increasing  
knife crime, cuts to school funding, and young people  
starting out on their lives with debt.

We are letting people down if we do not, as a House,  
acknowledge the reality of the lives of those we are here  
to serve. I think many in this House are in complete  
denial about the scale of the problems we face. We are  
letting people down still more if we do not, with the

357

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

358

greatest energy and hunger for change, act in every way  
we can to make the lives of those we represent better,  
richer and more secure.

The Grenfell Tower fire showed just how extraordinarily  
our emergency services can respond at a time of great  
crisis, but it also shows how badly we get things wrong.  
On the Saturday after this disaster, I met a Croydon  
fireman who had been called to fight the Grenfell blaze  
just days earlier. There were tears in our eyes as he told  
me about the terrible things he had seen. He made me  
promise not to rest until we saw justice done. Today, as a  
House, I hope we can make a reality of that promise. It  
is clear that we failed too many people for too long. The  
victims were speaking, but we were not listening. We  
cannot make the same mistake again.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth  
and Dearne (John Healey) has suggested that we set up  
an advisory panel to help to build confidence and  
relations with local residents and survivors. That sounds  
very sensible. Shelter has said that it is not acceptable to  
expect residents to rely on written submissions only,  
and residents have clearly stated that the current timeline  
for submissions on the terms of reference is too short.  
That also seems sensible. But I wonder whether we also  
need to be brave enough to say, “We don't have all the  
answers.” The whole point of listening is to listen and  
then to act. I would like us to be strong enough to  
commit to do that with the survivors and the local  
residents.

I am proud that Labour Croydon Council was the  
first council to commit to retrofitting all our high tower  
blocks with sprinklers. I call on the Government to  
clarify whether they will fund this, and all the other  
changes we need to make, and reverse the shocking cuts  
we have seen to local government. We cannot afford not  
to do this.

We must also view Grenfell in the wider context  
of a national housing crisis. Three figures tell the story. Right  
now, 76,000 families live in temporary accommodation—  
that is the best part of 120,000 children. Some 20% of  
our homes do not meet the Government's decent homes  
standard—that includes fire safety. We also need to  
build 75,000 social rented homes a year; last year, we  
built fewer than 7,000.

I spoke to thousands of people on the doorstep in the  
election. Of course, there was nothing like on the scale  
of the horrors of Grenfell, but there were many experiences  
that led people to believe they had no voice. Having a  
voice is not about being able to speak out; it is about  
knowing you will be listened to and about being sure  
that action will be taken that makes a difference. Nowhere  
is that more important than in our response to the  
Grenfell Tower fire.

I said it was my goal to be the MP for Croydon  
Central. My ambition is not to be something, but to do  
something—to make a difference to the lives of the  
people I now represent. I do not underestimate the scale  
of that responsibility.

Many young people voted for me, just as young  
people voted in many other constituencies. There  
were many others who were voting for the very first  
time. They had perhaps never voted before because  
they felt politicians had nothing to offer. Now that  
they have put their faith in democracy—in us—for the  
first time, we must not fail them. If the election has

taught us anything, it is that we cannot take anyone for  
granted. As Croydon's Stormzy put it so well in one of  
his songs,

“You're never too big for the boot”.

When I am campaigning again in five years' time—or  
even sooner— the true test for me will be that people  
tell me that I listened, I heard what they said, and I did  
my best to make a difference to their lives. I think that  
has to be the test for all of us on both sides of the  
House.

4.28 pm

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): It is a particular honour  
to follow three maiden speeches, all made by three new  
female Members. I made my maiden speech two weeks  
ago, so I am now speaking as a very experienced old  
timer. What particularly resonated with me was what  
the hon. Member for Barnsley East (Stephanie Peacock)  
said: people matter. That is very relevant to our debate  
today.

One month on from this tragedy, there is no less pain  
for the victims and their families, no less fear, and no  
less anger over the failings of the political system. The  
disaster at Grenfell Tower has left a huge scar, not just  
in the local community of Kensington, but across Britain.  
It has moved people deeply, whether they have local  
connections or not, and that has been reflected in the  
generosity shown by public donations. It has also exposed  
deep divisions and inequalities in our society which we  
have ignored for far too long. This disaster should have  
been avoided. How is it possible that, in a very wealthy  
borough like Kensington and Chelsea, dozens of people  
can burn to death in their own homes?

We now need to find out from the public inquiry  
exactly what happened and what mistakes were made,  
but reports that unsafe building materials were used,  
that the need to cut costs was put above tenants' safety,  
and that concerns raised by the residents were repeatedly  
ignored paint a picture that goes much deeper than this  
disaster. It goes to the heart of our political system and  
its failures. Trust between our local communities and  
the political system has been seriously eroded, and must  
be restored.

Trust is a very precious thing which takes a long time  
to build. It is an essential part of a healthy democracy  
and a functioning society. It is vital that, in the work to  
restore lives affected by the Grenfell Tower fire, everything  
possible is done to rebuild that trust, which means  
genuinely listening to victims' families and the local  
community, involving residents in the decisions that  
affect their lives and their future, and taking all possible  
action to put things right. That action must include an  
urgent increase in social housing provision throughout  
our country. The Grenfell Tower disaster was the result  
of a long-term failure of successive Governments to  
invest in social housing, in terms of both the quality  
and the number of homes. Leaving house building to  
the private sector has utterly failed. It has led to a  
housing crisis that has driven vast inequality and pushed  
many families into poverty and homelessness, and until  
we take radical action that crisis will continue to spiral  
out of control.

Furthermore, we need widespread reform of systems  
and structures. We need an immediate review of the  
building regulations to ensure that they are up to date  
and appropriate. We cannot wait for the results of the

359

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

360

*[Wera Hobhouse]*

public inquiry. We cannot have a repeat of what happened  
after the Lakanal House fire, when a review of regulations  
was promised but never delivered. This time, lessons  
must be learned and implemented fast.

Given that the fire started in a fridge, there must also  
be reform of electrical safety. My colleagues in both  
Houses have been fighting for a long time for the  
introduction of compulsory electrical safety checks in  
rented homes. So far the Government have seen that as  
an unnecessary regulation, but now it is surely inexcusable  
not to make a simple change that has the potential to  
save lives.

All residents in Britain, whatever type of housing  
they live in, have the right to live in homes that are safe,  
warm, and set in well-run, safe, green and clean  
neighbourhoods. This disaster has exposed huge weaknesses  
in the housing provision of our country, and has  
undermined people's trust. We all have a responsibility  
to rebuild trust between the public and their elected  
representatives, but the Government have the power to  
take radical steps to fix the system, and they must do  
that now.

4.33 pm

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I  
congratulate you on your election, Madam Deputy  
Speaker.

I am grateful for the opportunity to make my first  
contribution to this honourable House by participating  
in today's debate, following the witty and on-point  
maiden speech made by my hon. Friend the Member  
for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) and the contributions  
from my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham West  
and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for Barnsley East (Stephanie  
Peacock). Before I do so, however, I want to speak  
briefly about my constituency. As anyone who has  
visited it could tell you, it is a place that defies easy  
description. Other Members have previously claimed to  
have the most varied constituency, but I want to stake a  
claim myself.

My constituency starts in inner-city Hyde Park, where  
we have a vibrant cultural and music scene including  
the legendary Brudenell Social Club, where only a few  
weeks ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington  
North (Jeremy Corbyn) gave a speech to 5,000 people—  
people who climbed trees and stood on rooftops to feel  
part of our movement. We then move on to Headlingley,  
with its world-renowned sporting pedigree. The legendary  
stadium and cricket ground, home of Yorkshire county  
cricket club, is to this day the most successful county  
championship team, and it is also a place where I have  
spent many happy afternoons since my days as a student.

Weetwood ward, where I make my home, has a fine  
literary tradition. Once the home of Tolkien—in a  
towered residence in West Park reminiscent of Minas  
Tirith—it is now home to many other creative figures,  
including the award-winning television writer Kay Mellor.  
Across the ring road, Adel is the setting for the grade I  
listed church of St John the Baptist, one of the best and  
most complete Norman churches in the country. My  
constituency also boasts Yorkshire's international airport  
in Yeadon, and Otley, with its amazing breadth of  
events hosting hundreds every year—from the fabulous  
Otley show to the authentic Victorian fayre. Between

the market towns of Yeadon and Otley lies the beautiful  
upland Chevin, from which the foundation stones of  
this very House were hewn, so Leeds North West provides  
the very foundation of our parliamentary democracy.

My first experience of this place was 20 years ago,  
when I came here as an executive officer of Leeds  
University union to lobby Leeds MPs about the retention  
of student grants and opposing the introduction of  
tuition fees, an issue I intend to pursue in this Parliament.  
I met Harold Best, the only other Labour MP to represent  
Leeds North West, who not only agreed with me on the  
issues of fees, but spent the afternoon showing me the  
Palace of Westminster. That reflected his great generosity  
of spirit, a generosity of spirit which he and his family  
continue to show me to this day, and one, having a  
family of my own, that I now wish to replicate in this  
place.

My immediate predecessor served in this place for  
12 years. During that time, he became champion of a  
number of causes, not the least of which was his support  
for rugby league and his role as chair of the all-party  
rugby league group, championing a sport which is of  
great importance to our local area. Greg Mulholland  
was also a strong advocate for pubs, not just locally, but  
across the country, and for local breweries, serving as  
chair of the all-party save the pub group and as an  
executive member of the all-party beer group. Greg was  
a hard-working local MP, fulfilling the intentions made  
in his own maiden speech to this House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North West  
(Darren Jones), my namesake seat, rightfully claimed to  
be the first Darren in this place. I can with great  
certainty say I am the first Sobel to be elected to  
Parliament. My own parents arrived in this country in  
1972, and could not imagine that their son, born at the  
Leeds Maternity Hospital, would one day enter the  
mother of Parliaments.

My own history in Leeds North West started, like  
that of so many of my fellow constituents, as a student  
in one of the city's fine universities. It was at university  
that my interest in fighting for justice and equality  
began, as staff-student representative for the School of  
Computing at the University of Leeds, first advocating  
for my fellow students, before going on to campaign on  
issues such as student funding and against racism on  
campus. I am still an elected member of Leeds City  
Council, and prior to my election here, I was the lead  
for climate change and chair of the affordable warmth  
partnership—two topics that are close to my heart and  
to which I will return shortly.

I turn now to the substantive issue of the debate. In  
doing so, I first want to echo the words of hon. Friends  
and other hon. Members who have already spoken on  
this devastating event in expressing my heartfelt condolences  
and sincere sympathies to the victims of the Grenfell  
fire, their families and the people of Kensington. I pay  
tribute to the emergency services who responded so  
rapidly and bravely, and to my hon. Friend the Member  
for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad) and all the volunteers  
who supported families in the aftermath of the fire.  
That so many lives should have been lost was a tragedy  
that defies description.

On the Sunday following the fire, I visited the only  
tower block in my constituency and ensured that tenants  
felt safe in their homes. Leeds City Council has confirmed  
to me that no aluminium composite material cladding

361

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

362

has been used on council-owned blocks of flats in  
Leeds. However, I have been approached by constituents  
who live or work in other types of clad buildings. I hope  
the Minister will be taking action to ensure that testing  
is done on all cladding in this country—working with  
and compelling the sector representative bodies and  
building owners to undertake the testing—and that the  
testing of cladding is fully addressed in the inquiry.

I am sure that all Members of the House agree with  
me on the need for urgent action on safety, but I would  
like to address the use of cladding as part of our wider  
aims to reduce carbon emissions and to reduce fuel  
bills, tackling fuel poverty. In my constituency, a wholesale  
programme of external wall insulation started, but then  
stalled due to cuts in energy company obligation funding,  
leaving one side of the road with clad buildings and the  
other side without. External wall insulation—whether  
using mineral wool, phenolic resin or other materials  
that meet building regulations and have a U-value of  
0.3—contributes to eradicating fuel poverty and to  
meeting our obligations under the Paris climate change  
agreement. We must ensure that this work is completed,  
alongside other measures not just in housing but in  
transport, energy and manufacturing, to ensure that  
runaway climate change does not occur. The safety of  
our citizens is paramount, so we must also ensure that  
our standards and inspection regimes are among the  
best in the world.

In the words of President Obama:

“No challenge poses a greater threat to future generations than  
climate change.”

This Chamber is a stage where the world can hear our  
voice. It is incumbent on me to use that voice to ensure  
that while I sit on these Benches, I will speak truth to  
power and be an advocate for this one issue, which will  
define and shape our future more than any other. Action  
to combat climate change will give us the best possible  
chance to save this planet, because it is the only home  
that we have got. If we do not ensure that we take every  
step towards a carbon-free future, we will be judged as  
having failed future generations, and I am sure nobody  
came into this House to be a failure.

There will be many other local and national issues  
that I will raise in the House, concerning our market  
towns, universities, sporting and cultural institutions,  
transport links and technology, but for today, I thank  
you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make  
my maiden speech. I pledge to my constituents and to  
hon. Members to be a strong voice in this House as well  
as a powerful advocate for my constituency.

4.40 pm

**Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): It is a  
pleasure to see you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
and it is delightful to follow the excellent maiden speech  
of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North West  
(Alex Sobel). We have also heard three other superb  
maiden speeches today, from my hon. Friends the Members  
for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), for Lewisham West  
and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for Barnsley East (Stephanie  
Peacock). This House is renewing itself with huge talent,  
youth, energy and diversity on all sides, and all Members  
can be proud to see that.

The Grenfell Tower fire was the worst residential fire  
in modern history and the worst disaster of any kind in  
this country for 30 years. The truth is that residential

fire is not an equal opportunities killer. I know from the  
history in my constituency and in Kensington that we in  
north-west London had a spate of the worst fires in  
modern history before Grenfell. We had the Clanricarde  
Gardens fire, in which eight people died and 100 were  
made homeless. The year before that, in 1980, nine  
people died in a fire at a hostel for homeless women in  
Kilburn, and shortly before that, seven people died in a  
fire in an interconnected multiple-occupied property in  
Maida Vale.

All those large-scale residential fires had something  
in common: they affected the lowest-income people in  
the worst kind of housing. We cannot and should not  
prejudge the results of the inquiry into exactly how the  
Grenfell fire started and how it spread so quickly, but  
the conclusion that we can draw is that it is substandard  
housing that is at risk, and it is the poorest people who  
live in substandard housing. They need to be protected.  
There is an issue of power here, and that needs to be  
addressed now rather than waiting until the inquiry's  
findings are known. There is much that can be legislated  
for immediately through the issuing of building regulations  
and guidance, much of which we have heard about  
today. That includes the lessons that were learned from  
the Lakanal House fire, but we can also legislate immediately  
to redress the imbalance of power between landlord  
and tenant by giving tenants statutory powers of  
consultation on major works and hearing their voice in  
a way that, tragically, the voices of Grenfell Tower  
residents were not heard. We can strengthen the power  
of redress of tenants in substandard accommodation,  
both in social and private housing.

Reference has been made to legal aid. It is absolutely  
right that we should look again at tenants' capacity to  
draw on legal aid so that they can represent their case  
when they are in accommodation that is substandard or  
in disrepair. Will the Minister commit today to reviewing  
the whole scope for legislation, both through fire safety  
regulations and building regulations, and through residents'  
rights of redress and consultation? None of that would  
prejudge the Grenfell Tower inquiry, and progress can  
be made immediately on all of it.

Homelessness and housing need are also not equal-  
opportunities impactors; they disproportionately affect  
the poorest people in this country. In the last week,  
there have been some increasingly harsh judgments in  
parts of the media about what has happened to Grenfell  
residents and how their housing needs are being met.  
Their housing needs do not exist in a vacuum. They  
exist in the context of a London that is yet again seeing  
a rising homelessness crisis, where the number of families  
accepted as homeless has increased by more than half  
and where the number of children living in temporary  
accommodation is on a scale that has not been seen  
since the early part of the last decade.

I asked the housing Minister a question before and I  
would like to know whether he can answer it today—how  
many of the occupants of Grenfell Tower had already  
been through the homelessness system? We know that  
there were residents who were already living in temporary  
accommodation in that building; we know that many of  
those residents and their families will already have been  
through the horrific experience of homelessness; and  
we know that many of their relatives, friends and neighbours  
will also have been through it.

363

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

364

*[Ms Karen Buck]*

Those people will already know what this House  
needs to be reminded of, which is that Kensington  
already has one of the worst homelessness situations in  
the country, because of the pressure on local housing  
stock. We know that it has the worst record in the  
country of moving homeless households away from the  
borough and that families in temporary accommodation  
will find that the word “temporary” does not mean  
what we understand it to mean; instead, it means that  
people will live for many years, and sometimes for a  
decade or more, in “temporary” accommodation, often  
moving from one home to another. Those people will  
do anything to avoid that experience yet again. Families  
should not be expected to move more than once and  
they have an absolute right to know that their housing  
needs will be met, not only swiftly but fairly and decently.

Also, because this situation does not exist in a vacuum,  
their housing needs should not be met at the expense of  
other vulnerable homeless households. It is already the  
case that in neighbouring boroughs the allocations process  
has slowed and in some cases stopped—hopefully, only  
temporarily—while precedence is rightly given at the  
moment to Grenfell survivors. However, that cannot be  
allowed to stand over the medium term. We have to  
know—we must have a categorical assurance from the  
Minister—that families in other boroughs, and indeed  
in Kensington, who are also homeless and in housing  
need will not be pushed to the back of the queue and  
see their needs go unmet because the council and the  
Government are not working together to meet the needs  
of all local families.

We also know that the story of investment in local  
services is not a fair or equal-opportunities one. We  
know that urban authorities have been the hardest hit  
by the Government's cuts in local authority expenditure  
since 2010. We also know that, based on present trends,  
by the end of this decade funding for local Government  
will have fallen by 70%, which must be seen in the  
context of the fire safety measures that local authorities  
want to take to reassure their residents in other high-rise  
blocks.

It was simply not satisfactory for the Minister to tell  
us in his opening remarks that only local authorities  
that demonstrate they cannot afford fire safety work  
will have the money reimbursed. What message does  
that send to anxious residents who want to know that  
their safety will be absolutely paramount? What clarity  
can he give about what fire brigade fire safety  
recommendations will meet the criteria for Government  
funding? Will he confirm that he understands that any  
expenditure that will be met by local authorities will  
come from tenants and leaseholders, and that such  
expenditure will certainly be in competition with the  
resources needed to fund repairs and maintenance elsewhere  
in the system? I have already said that expenditure on  
basic repair and maintenance of social housing is 9.7% lower  
this year than last year and 22% lower than it was in  
2010.

Finally, we hear of the great work being done in the  
borough by health services, including mental health  
services. They are working with survivors and other  
local residents. That work is much needed. Will those  
services also be fully funded and reimbursed by central  
Government, so that the mental health services and

other healthcare services for Kensington and for  
surrounding boroughs will not be put at risk or  
compromised in any way because those crucial public  
services have stepped up to the plate now?

My absolutely final point is this. We also heard from  
the Minister in his opening remarks that there was a  
fundamental lack of clarity about what the taskforce  
being sent into Kensington was going to do and what its  
duties would be—that it will not be an authority with  
any executive function whatsoever. The Minister needs  
to be absolutely clear with us what this means. It means  
that when the Gold operation finishes, the functions of  
service will be handed back to the already deeply discredited  
Kensington and Chelsea Council, where trust has totally  
collapsed. Does the Minister think that is acceptable? I  
doubt that the people of Kensington will, as my hon.  
Friend the Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad)  
has set out so powerfully. I do not believe they have  
trust in the taskforce; I think they want to see the  
Government demonstrating that there will be a radically  
different approach to meeting their needs. We have not  
heard that yet. The Minister has a chance to put that  
right later.

4.50 pm

**Jo Platt** (Leigh) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you, Madam  
Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden  
speech in this important debate, following my hon.  
Friend the Member for Westminster North (Ms Buck).

The tragedy of Grenfell was felt all over the nation. I  
am sure that I speak for all in my constituency, who  
send their thoughts and prayers to all those affected,  
and similarly want a swift and timely response from the  
investigation into the events of that terrible night. The  
community surrounding Grenfell wants answers, and if  
we have learnt anything from past tragedies, it is that  
the voice of the community must be given paramount  
attention.

I would like first to pay tribute to the people of Leigh  
for placing their trust in me to stand here as their first  
female Member of Parliament. This is all the more  
important as we fast approach 100 years of unbroken  
Labour representation for the people of Leigh. I would  
also like to place on record my thanks to my family for  
all their support—to my mother, my father and my  
sisters, but especially to my two children, who are the  
drivers of my political ambition. As a single mother  
from a working-class background, wanting what is best  
for them is wanting what is best for the future of  
everyone in our country. Without them, I would not be  
standing here today.

Leigh has always benefited from the strong Labour  
voices that it elects to this House. With that in mind, I  
would like to pay tribute to my predecessors Harold  
Boardman, Lawrence Cunliffe and, of course, my most  
recent predecessor, Andy Burnham. Andy served this  
House with commitment for 16 years. His work on the  
Hillsborough disaster and, more recently, the contaminated  
blood scandal, as well as his strength and passion for  
truth and justice, will forever be his legacy. This is  
something that I can only aspire to emulate.

But it was not just this House that benefited from  
Andy's work. Andy was a formidable constituency MP,  
forging great relationships within our communities and  
fighting tirelessly for those who did not have a voice. He  
constantly pushed for the regeneration of the constituency,

365

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

366

driving projects such as the creation of Leigh sports  
village, the home of the best rugby league team in the  
country, Leigh Centurions. I am sure that the House  
will want to wish Andy Burnham every success in his  
role as Greater Manchester Mayor. I have no doubt that  
Andy will use his position to ensure that devolution  
enhances the lives of everyone in Greater Manchester.

Leigh and its people have always had a sense of social  
justice, from the towns that lie within, such as Tyldesley,  
Golborne and Atherton, to smaller villages such as  
Astley, Mosley Common, Lowton and Atherleigh, each  
with a historic story to tell. From our early focus on  
agriculture and the uncontroversial creation of the spinning  
jenny by Thomas Highs—I am giving him that one—Leigh,  
like most places in the north, gave way to the might of  
the industrial revolution, in particular the coal and  
cotton industries, all linked by its canal networks. The  
legacy of Leigh's industrial past can still be seen in the  
remaining red-brick mills and the iconic mining headgear  
at Astley, which is sadly the last one remaining in the  
whole of Lancashire. Fortunately, however, the good  
people of Leigh want to keep this legacy alive, and I  
look forward to the heritage project linking coal at  
Astley, via the canal, with the great cotton mill of Leigh  
Spinners.

Like most post-industrial areas, however, we have  
seen years of decline: our manufacturing industry gone  
and not replaced; infrastructure, such as our rail link,  
taken away; and town centres declining. That common  
story is shared by many constituencies.

Social mobility is a huge problem for young people in  
Leigh, with many unable to get support to go to college  
or university. A lack of post-16 education leaves our  
young people only able to access low-paid, low-skilled  
jobs. We must ensure that new industries and skills are  
at the forefront of regeneration in Leigh.

I have spent the last six years as an elected councillor  
in local government and watched this Government's  
austerity measures chip away at our essential public  
services. Cuts to adult social care and children's services  
are nothing but an attack on the most vulnerable in our  
society. But I have also seen our local authorities and  
communities fight back, supporting and empowering  
the very people they serve. I am proud to have been a  
part of the innovative way our services have dealt with  
such measures, helping communities to do what they  
have always done in times of crisis: supporting each  
other, just as they did in the 1980s miners' strike and  
just as they are doing now, in homeless shelters and  
food banks, as well as with countless volunteers who  
work to keep our heritage alive. That is what is called a  
social movement—communities who work tirelessly to  
ensure each other are supported. Today, I would like to  
pay tribute to those who give their time to do such  
work.

My own experience of education in the 1980s was not  
good. Of course there were many success stories in my  
school, but many people struggled without adequate  
support, and were not equipped to face the challenges  
of a changing economic landscape. Many left school  
without qualifications, ambitions and hope. Today our  
children and young people face the same challenges,  
from cuts to early years to cuts to early-intervention  
grants and, of course, cuts to our schools—the very  
resource that gives our children and young people the  
support that they need to do well. We cannot afford to

see our children suffer because of ignorance of the  
challenges faced by our more deprived communities,  
and I will do all that I can to ensure that all aspects of  
our children's lives are adequately supported.

I am proud to stand among Labour colleagues, men  
and women, and in particular the new intake, all sporting  
their individual regional accents—how refreshing! I am  
proud of my working-class roots and of those who built  
the very area I now represent. When we talk about  
standing on the shoulders of giants, these are the giants  
I wish to attribute myself to. Let us not forget that there  
are giants now who are also making history. I stand side  
by side with them: our WASPI women; our miners still  
fighting for their lost pensions; our veterans, who are  
still not receiving the support they are owed once they  
leave service; our disabled and sick, who are being  
unfairly treated by our systems; and our public services—the  
police, the fire service, the NHS and schools. These are  
the backbone of our communities, and we as representatives  
must continue to stand up for them.

There is no good reason for people in Leigh, or  
anywhere, to endure the insecurities they now face. It is  
a choice—a choice to defend our communities and  
public services that I have been sent here to fight for, on  
behalf of the people of Leigh.

4.58 pm

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): I am not sure if this  
has been planned or not but, as the regional Whip for  
my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Jo Platt), it is  
nice to have this opportunity to congratulate her on a  
wonderful speech. She obviously has big shoes to fill,  
but it is clear that she will be more than able to fill them.  
I know that she will be a real credit to this House and  
the people of Leigh.

First, I want to add my thanks to the emergency  
services for their bravery in the Grenfell Tower fire. I  
also offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to those  
who lost their lives, their families and their homes.

I want to focus on an issue that I firmly believe has  
not received enough attention in the aftermath of last  
month's fire. Since then, the media, we in this House  
and the wider public have sought answers for what  
caused the disaster. So far, cladding, individuals and the  
local authority have taken much of the blame, but I rise  
in today's debate to highlight the role that insulation  
could have played in the hope that the House and the  
inquiry will consider the consequences of using flammable  
insulation, rather than a non-flammable alternative.

For those who are not aware, Grenfell Tower was  
insulated with a foam product named Celotex RS5000,  
also known as PIR. The first issue is that PIR is  
flammable. In small-scale tests the material's combustibility  
appears to be limited, but under genuine fire conditions  
it is nothing short of combustible. The second issue is  
that when it is ignited, PIR releases toxic, deadly fumes,  
the most notorious of which is hydrogen cyanide, the  
effects of which a number of Grenfell survivors were  
treated for.

In the vast insulation market, there are many alternatives  
to PIR. The key point is that insulation has been  
developed that is simply not combustible. For example,  
the use of insulation engineered from stone wool could  
have saved lives in Grenfell, as it has done in previous  
fires. The key problems with foam insulation such as  
PIR are completely avoided with stone wool. It is not

367

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

368

*[Chris Elmore]*

combustible, so it does not encourage or spread fire. As  
a result, it does not create the problem of toxic product  
inhalation.

Constructors are well aware of the dangers of using  
foam or fibreglass, but cannot or will not find the funds  
to use non-combustible stone wool. I am not suggesting  
for a moment that private developers should be legally  
bound to develop private housing estates or other  
developments using a particular type of insulation.  
Those are commercial decisions for businesses and  
developers, but I hope that those businesses would put  
public safety at the heart of whatever they are constructing  
in the private sector. Social housing, however, is there to  
protect our most vulnerable, and it should be the  
responsibility of the Government to legislate to ensure  
that the insulation used in our social housing is non-  
combustible.

This week I have put written questions to the Department  
for Communities and Local Government to ask what it  
will do to test similar insulation for combustibility. The  
reply from Ministers, in short, is that they are doing  
nothing. They are offering no testing, and they have no  
plans to do so. Today I have written to Sir Martin  
Moore-Bick asking him to confirm the extent to which  
his inquiry will consider the role of insulation in the fire,  
given that the Government have thus far treated the  
matter as an afterthought.

5.3 pm

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): It is almost a  
month since the horrific tragedy at Grenfell Tower in  
Kensington. I would like to take this opportunity to  
offer my sympathies to the individuals and families for  
the horrendous ordeal that they endured, and for the  
loss and uncertainty they have encountered since. As  
colleagues have said, this has had an impact far beyond  
Kensington and far beyond London. In my constituency  
of Redditch, there have been outpourings of sympathy  
and offers of practical help, as residents have rallied  
round and organised donations of much-needed items  
for the victims.

I welcome the actions that the Government and the  
local authority have taken so far, including the emergency  
funding that has been made available and the rehousing  
of surviving residents. I call on the Minister to confirm  
that everything is indeed being done to help those poor  
families who have suffered and lost so much, and that  
he is taking into account the needs of each family to  
ensure that they have a home that is right for them, so  
that they can rebuild their lives. I also welcome the  
deployment of experienced civil servants. We recognise  
that they are dealing with a complex situation as they  
support the council in its response.

I welcome the additional £1.5 million to assist in  
delivering mental health support to victims. We can  
only imagine how devastating it must be for them to  
endure that mental trauma and that post-traumatic  
stress syndrome as they seek to rebuild their lives. I also  
welcome the funding to ensure that residents are represented  
during the inquiry. Does the Minister agree that it is in  
the interests of Grenfell residents, their friends and  
families and those who died that we allow Sir Martin to  
start the inquiry and get on with the job of establishing  
the facts of the case, instead of speculating further? It is

right that an inquiry is launched, so that we may learn  
from this terrible incident, better understand the events  
that led to the disaster, and prevent a similar tragedy.  
Redditch Borough Council is doing that, and I congratulate  
it on reviewing and launching an emergency disaster  
response. Even though we do not have tower blocks, we  
recognise the impact on other public buildings, including  
schools and hospitals.

As the Secretary of State recognised, the national  
and local response was not good enough in the aftermath  
of the fire, and processes must be rectified to support  
victims better in future. What steps is the Department  
taking to review our emergency planning procedures to  
ensure that future responses are rapid, effective and give  
proper support to victims? I am pleased to see that  
precautions are being taken and checks are being made,  
and that the Department for Communities and Local  
Government, alongside the Government Property Unit,  
is overseeing building regulations and wider checks on  
public sector buildings.

I was deeply shocked and concerned by the incident  
at Grenfell Tower, and that led me to seek assurances  
from Redditch Borough Council regarding the condition  
and safety of council-owned housing. I know that colleagues  
on both sides of the House are doing the same in their  
constituencies. I was pleased to learn that all properties  
within the borough contain cladding and insulation  
that is certified and installed to stringent nationally  
recognised standards. However, I finish by calling on  
the Secretary of State to consider reviewing building  
regulations and fire safety procedures in the light of the  
results of the Grenfell Tower inquiry; that will help us  
to ensure that regulations are up to date and take into  
account all the learnings from this tragedy. Every effort  
should be made around the country to give people who  
live in tower blocks, or who spend their education or  
leisure time in public buildings such as leisure centres,  
community centres, hospitals and schools, confidence  
that they are safe.

5.7 pm

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I am glad  
to be able to contribute to this debate, and I congratulate  
my hon. Friends who have made maiden speeches this  
afternoon. It has been a real pleasure to hear them,  
particularly that of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Leigh (Jo Platt), who is my neighbour in Greater  
Manchester.

Like other Members, I repeat my deep condolences  
to every victim of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, which is  
an unimaginable horror for those affected. When we  
first learned of it just after the general election, it  
seemed that everyone around the House, especially  
Ministers, were absolutely horrified by the scale of what  
had occurred. There was a real sense of determination  
right across the House and Government to act to ensure  
that nothing like this could happen ever again in our  
country. I do not question Ministers' continuing deep  
sense of responsibility and desire to make things different,  
but the reality is that we seem to have already lost that  
sense of impetus. We seem to be down in the mire of  
uncertainty about who is responsible, what is to be  
done, and when we are going to have clarity about what  
will keep people safe in their homes. That is playing out  
every day among tenants, leaseholders and homeowners  
in my constituency.

369

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

370

Of the high-rise blocks in Stretford and Urmston,  
eight are owned by social landlords, seven by Trafford  
Housing Trust, and one by Irwell Valley. The remainder  
are owned by a range of private companies, the  
names of which are meaningless to me; I have no idea  
who these companies are, who owns them, or who  
governs them. There is a major housing development in  
my constituency, with more in train; new privately  
owned high-rise blocks are being constructed. I do not  
believe that there is no place in our housing mix for  
good-quality high-rise housing, but if those new buildings  
are not constructed to the very highest standards, as we  
should expect in the light of Grenfell, and if we are not  
yet sure what those highest standards look like, those  
developments need to be paused until we can be confident  
about it.

The other day, when I asked one of my social landlords  
how things felt now, he said, “Well, it's continuing to get  
worse,” by which he meant that there is increasing  
uncertainty, because the actions that need to be taken  
are becoming increasingly unclear. I recognise that there  
is an inordinately complex mix of factors to be considered,  
but that is of no use to landlords and tenants who are  
trying to make decisions about how to act in response  
to safety concerns. I urge Ministers to do everything  
they can to give clarity and certainty, at the highest  
common denominator, as soon as possible.

A small number of blocks in Trafford are partially  
clad, and all that cladding, as across the country, has  
failed the flammability tests. The intention is to remove  
the cladding, but the work has not yet begun because the  
property owners cannot be sure that, in removing  
the cladding, they will not make the buildings even less  
safe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris  
Elmore) rightly alluded to concerns about insulation.  
Our landlords intend to have that insulation tested, but  
can Ministers say why the testing of insulation is not  
being mandated and put on the same footing, with the  
same resources, as the testing of cladding? I find that  
inexplicable. Are Ministers aware of how many buildings  
have had their insulation tested? What has been the  
result of that testing?

There is a clear view on both sides of the House that  
sprinklers should now be retrofitted. Do Ministers have  
a view on whether, in some cases, it may be appropriate  
to install sprinkler systems on the outside of buildings,  
as well as the inside? As to whether sprinklers are  
installed in homes or only in common areas, that will  
vary from building to building, but an indication of  
Ministers' attitudes to those questions would be helpful.

Similarly, do Ministers have a view on whether planning  
legislation could accommodate the possibility that  
additional external fire escapes may now be needed on  
some buildings? Will advice be given on alarm systems  
and on the level of safety checks that landlords should  
carry out? Will there be new advice on whether people  
should stay put in their flat or flee in the event of a  
reported fire? What assessment has been made of whether  
any remedial activity may expose new dangers, such as  
those relating to asbestos? Have Ministers reminded  
those who own high-rise buildings of their particular  
obligation to work safely with asbestos?

I am not clear, and landlords in my constituency are  
not clear, about the precise responsibilities of the fire  
service and landlords. Is the fire service giving advice

that landlords have to weigh up and interpret when  
deciding how to act, or is the advice mandatory? I hope  
that the Minister can give us clarity.

The assurances we have received from Ministers on  
who will meet the costs have been opaque. Saying that  
Ministers and the Government will work with landlords  
and councils that are not able the meet the costs tells us  
nothing. We cannot have tenants bearing the costs, and  
we cannot expect leaseholders to bear the costs, because  
they cannot afford them. Social landlords and councils  
willrunoutof money as they put the different rectification  
measures in place. Ministers need to say clearly that, at  
a minimum, they will underwrite the costs, and that  
rather than the Government working with landlords to  
fund the measures, the costs will be met by central  
Government.

I want to mention a few other risks that have been  
identified and the questions that landlords in particular  
are asking me. Cladding is beginning to be removed  
from properties across Greater Manchester and the rest  
of the country. That is happening during the summer  
months, when the warmth provided by the cladding,  
and its protective effects on the decency standards of  
those homes, is perhaps not a major issue. Come winter,  
however, if that cladding has not been replaced by new  
means of keeping those homes warm and dry, there will  
likely be a rise in cold and damp homes, respiratory  
illness and all the other associated problems that we  
always hear about in our constituency surgeries. It will  
also result in extra costs for householders, who will  
spend this winter turning up their heating. Many of  
them are on relatively low incomes. It would be helpful  
if Ministers could indicate that, where it has not been  
possible to make those homes warm and dry again in  
time for winter, there will be help for tenants in meeting  
heating bills. They need that assurance; otherwise the  
poorest and elderly tenants will simply turn off their  
heating, at great risk to their health and wellbeing.

That brings me to my final point: the position of  
vulnerable tenants in these buildings, particularly those  
in sheltered accommodation. In some parts of Greater  
Manchester—thankfully not in my constituency—there  
are high-rise blocks that provide sheltered housing.  
Moreover, even low-rise sheltered housing is, as one of  
my social landlords put it to me, basically a tower block  
turned on its side. There are many vulnerable tenants in  
large sheltered housing accommodation. We need the  
Government to work with landlords on strategies to  
protect vulnerable tenants in particular, whether or not  
they are in dedicated sheltered accommodation.

Will Ministers give particular consideration to the  
contentious issue of data sharing? In the immediate  
aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, as my social  
landlords began to try to take action to make premises  
safe and offer assurances to tenants, I was told that they  
did not necessarily know who was in every flat, or the  
particular vulnerabilities that those tenants might have.  
So far as is possible, information is being shared across  
social services, schools, NHS commissioners and others,  
but obviously there are real difficulties and sensitivities.  
The Government envisage introducing a data protection  
Bill this Parliament, so that is an opportunity to think  
carefully and constructively about achieving a balance  
that respects individual privacy and data, but allows for  
appropriate access when that is important for health,

371

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

372

*[Kate Green]*

safety and the preservation of life. I hope that that  
will be fed into the proposed legislation as Ministers  
develop it.

There is potential for some good to come from this  
appalling atrocity, but only if Ministers retain the  
determination and resolve that we saw in the immediate  
aftermath of the tragedy. I tell them, for the sake of  
those who have died, those who have lost family members  
and those who live in tower blocks today and will do so  
in future: you must take on that responsibility.

5.18 pm

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I  
congratulate hon. Members who have made such powerful  
maiden speeches today, including in particular my  
constituency neighbours, my hon. Friends the Members  
for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for  
Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), with whom I look  
forward to working on the issues that affect all of our  
constituents in south London.

The Grenfell Tower fire was an unspeakable horror  
that became an unimaginable tragedy for hundreds of  
people who lost parents, sisters, brothers, children, friends  
and the fabric of their lives, the basis of their security  
and community. My thoughts are with everyone affected  
by such devastating loss. Indeed, it has often been hard  
to think about anything else over the past month.

The fire has had a profound impact not only on all  
those who were directly affected by it, but on the wider  
community in Kensington and London, and on the  
country as a whole. The first priority must of course be  
help and support for survivors of the fire to access new  
homes within their existing community that meet their  
needs and are genuinely affordable, and the support  
they need to rebuild their lives.

The Government must also recognise that for residents  
throughout the country one consequence of the Grenfell  
Tower fire has been a colossal loss of confidence and  
trust, because somewhere along the line the systems,  
regulations, standards, inspections and emergency  
procedures that were put in place to keep people safe  
failed to do so. Since the Grenfell Tower fire, there have  
been two fires in tower blocks in my constituency; on  
one of those occasions, I was on site as the fire broke  
out. The level of anxiety and fear that residents in tower  
blocks feel at the moment cannot be overstated. In  
working to ensure that such a tragedy can never happen  
again, the Government must focus on how confidence  
and trust can be rebuilt so that residents of tower blocks  
throughout the country can rest easy again, without  
any shadow of a doubt that the framework of governance,  
regulation and inspection that is supposed to keep them  
safe will do so.

I was elected as a councillor in the London Borough  
of Southwark in 2010, the year after the Lakanal House  
fire, as part of a new council administration picking up  
the pieces following that devastating tragedy in which  
six people lost their lives. Fire safety was the council's  
top priority. Every block was subject to a rigorous  
fire-risk assessment, starting with the tallest blocks and  
working down, and the council spent more than £60 million  
on fire safety works. Fire safety is an ongoing responsibility  
and must be monitored and assessed constantly, so I am  
not suggesting there is any room for complacency in

Southwark or that there is not more to do, but the level  
of commitment to ensuring that Lakanal could not  
happen again was crystal clear.

Lakanal House should have been the wake-up call  
not just for a single borough, but for the country as a  
whole. The fact that it was not is down to the lack of  
political will and commitment from a Government who  
are ideologically committed to deregulation at all costs  
and the reduction of public expenditure, and down to  
seven years of deep cuts to local and central Government  
and to our emergency services.

The obsession with deregulation was illustrated in  
2014 when the then Housing Minister said, following  
advice from the Lakanal House coroner that the  
Government should consider progressing the installation  
of sprinkler systems in all tower blocks:

“We believe that it is the responsibility of the fire industry,  
rather than the Government, to market fire sprinkler systems  
effectively and to encourage their wider installation.”—[*Official  
Report,* 6 February 2014; Vol. 575, c. 188WH.]  
What utter nonsense. It is the responsibility of the  
Government to keep people safe, and that requires a  
framework of regulation and funding, not a private  
marketing campaign for sprinklers. That same ideologically  
driven approach to deregulation has resulted in the  
review of building regulations that the Lakanal House  
coroner also called for being left in the long grass for  
four years.

Multiple problems with the regulatory framework  
need to be addressed. Fire risk assessments can be  
undertaken by anyone—there is no requirement for  
any minimum level of qualifications, expertise or  
registration, and no requirement for independence. There  
is no minimum requirement for the number of building  
control inspections that have to be undertaken during  
construction works, allowing defects to be built in and  
covered up between inspections. The all-party group for  
excellence in the built environment, of which I am  
vice-chair, published a report a year ago that highlighted  
this issue. It said:

“We are concerned that competition in building control might  
be fuelling a race to the bottom and we are therefore recommending  
there should be a defined minimum number of inspections”.  
There has been no Government action on the issue.

Building control inspections can be self-procured from  
private providers, thereby setting up a contractual  
relationship between construction contractors and building  
control inspectors that lacks independence and can  
therefore be compromised. The Government cannot  
pretend that austerity is not part of the problem. There  
has been a huge loss of local authority capacity because  
of cuts to council budgets. Planning and building control  
is the second most severely cut area of expenditure  
across local authority services. There has also been a  
huge loss of capacity in the Department for Communities  
and Local Government and among the emergency services.

Even without the conclusions of a public inquiry, it is  
clear that there are actions that the Government can  
and must take now to rebuild the trust of residents  
living in tower blocks. They must act on advice that has  
already been received and information that is already  
known. There must be a complete overhaul of the fire  
safety inspection regime: responsibility must be restored  
to the fire service on a completely independent and  
statutory footing and cuts to the fire service must be  
reversed to enable it to fulfil that role. There must be a

373

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

374

complete overhaul of building regulations, as called for  
by the Lakanal House coroner four years ago, and its  
recommendations must apply to existing buildings as  
well as new builds. Residents must be given a voice in  
this process. The Government must provide urgent clarity  
on the safety of cladding products of all types, not just  
aluminium composite cladding and insulation, including  
advice on safe replacements for panels that need to be  
removed and specifications for new buildings. Importantly,  
there must be new rights for residents in high-rise  
blocks who have concerns about fire safety to trigger an  
independent inspection, the outcome of which has statutory  
weight.

Finally, the Government must stop playing semantic  
games on the funding for fire safety works arising as a  
consequence of the Grenfell Tower fire. In response to a  
written question I submitted last week on this matter,  
the relevant Minister wrote:

“Where work is necessary to ensure the fire safety of social  
housing, we will ensure that lack of financial resources will not  
prevent it going ahead.”

What does that mean? Does it mean that the Government  
will decide whether they believe that councils have the  
resources or not? What will be the process? Who will  
make the decision? The Grenfell Tower fire came out of  
the blue, and the steps to put it right cannot be at the  
expense of planned maintenance or major works, or of  
the delivery of urgently needed new homes. The  
Government must make a firm commitment to fund  
fire safety works, sprinkler systems and the replacement  
of cladding required in response to Grenfell Tower, and  
they must make this commitment as a matter of urgency.  
So I call on them to begin the process of addressing the  
fears that communities across the country have because  
of Grenfell Tower, and of restoring trust and confidence  
in the systems that are there to protect people. The  
memory of those who lost their lives must be respected  
and honoured by making absolutely certain that such a  
tragedy can never happen again.

5.26 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am  
pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for  
Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) and her  
typically thoughtful contribution in this important debate.  
I am also pleased to have had the chance to listen to  
maiden speeches from my hon. Friends the Members  
for Leigh (Jo Platt), for Leeds North West (Alex Sobel),  
for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), for Barnsley East  
(Stephanie Peacock) and for Lewisham West and Penge  
(Ellie Reeves). I was trying to think what the collective  
noun must be for maiden speeches and I decided on this  
occasion that it is a feast—we had a feast of maiden  
speeches. Their constituents must be proud of them  
already, and I know that they will work very hard in the  
months and years ahead to repay the confidence that  
their constituents showed in them.

The First Secretary, in opening the debate, referred to  
the fire guidance and Approved Document B, which is  
an essential element of the building regulations. He said  
that the expert panel will be advising the Secretary of  
State for Communities and Local Government, and it is  
that issue that I wish to ask about. My right hon. Friend  
the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey),  
speaking for Her Majesty's Opposition, also commented  
on that aspect of matters relevant to Grenfell, saying  
that the Government can start the overhaul of building

regulations now and feed into the public inquiry  
recommendations afterwards. In my view, that is the  
right approach to take.

I raised the issue of the terms of reference for the  
public inquiry in my Adjournment debate two weeks  
ago, when I said:

“It would be very helpful if the Minister gave the House any  
details of when more might be known about the inquiry, which  
will face many questions on many issues. They include: the source  
of the fire; the rapidity of the spread of the fire; the catastrophic  
failure of all the fire protection features that the building should  
have contained; the building's refurbishment, including the original  
specifications and the materials actually used, as well as the  
quality of the work and the finish; the monitoring of building  
control; the inspection of the completed job by the council, the  
designated responsible person and the fire service”.—[*Official  
Report*, 30 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 430.]

I went on to raise the question of the outstanding  
review of the building regulations guidance on fire, as  
contained in Approved Document B, and the  
recommendation for urgent review by the Lakanal House  
coroner in 2013. There is no statutory timetable laid  
down for a periodic review of the guidance, as I said at  
the time and as I mentioned in my earlier question to  
the First Secretary when he was opening this debate. In  
my Adjournment debate, I asked about the building  
regulations, and in response the Minister said that after  
Lakanal House:

“The Government took action in a number of areas following  
that fire. In particular, DCLG provided funding to enable the  
Local Government Association, in partnership with the housing  
sector and enforcement authorities, to publish new fire safety  
guidance for purpose-built flat blocks in 2011. That guidance is  
still current”.—[*Official Report*, 26 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 436.]

That raises the key issue. If the guidance is still  
current and it failed at Grenfell, one of two things must  
be true: either the guidance is not up to the job and  
needs reviewing; or the guidance is adequate but was  
ignored. That is the fundamental question that should  
be addressed by the independent expert advisory panel,  
which was announced by the Secretary of State and  
which contains a number of distinguished members. As  
I understand it, it can also second additional members  
for specific tasks. When he responds, will the Minister  
tell us whether the panel has identified the guidance in  
Approved Document B of the fire regulations as a  
priority piece of work that needs addressing? As has  
been mentioned several times today, it was last revised  
in 2006, so its review is overdue.

If the Government await the outcome of the public  
inquiry and then start the review—given that it will then  
take time for any working party to do its job properly—the  
gap between the last revision and an updated Approved  
Document B will be at least 14 years and probably a lot  
longer. Historically, the reviews in the UK are usually  
about 10 years apart—in some other countries it is less.  
Does the Minister agree that that is too long a gap and  
that there should be a statutory responsibility to review  
the guidelines in a set period of time rather than having  
a periodic review? Has the expert panel commented on  
that? If it has not, will the Minister ask them that  
question?

On 3 July, in response to the above questions, the  
Secretary of State said to me:

“The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about building  
regulations and the guidance on them. It is already clear to us that  
there will need to changes, and that we need to look carefully at

375

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

376

*[Jim Fitzpatrick]*

the causes and at the fact that so many buildings are failing the  
guidance test. The expert panel has a wide remit, which is broadly  
to recommend to the Government immediately any action it  
thinks we should take that will improve public safety.”—[*Official  
Report*,3July2017;Vol.626,c.920.]

That validates my question about whether the expert  
panel has recommended an immediate urgent review. If  
the answer is no, will the Minister ask it why it has  
arrived at that conclusion?

It is not just me who is asking these questions. The  
all-party fire safety and rescue group has been pressing  
them for some time. The Royal Institute of British  
Architects wrote to colleagues yesterday, saying:

“Ahead of any inquiry conclusions, the RIBA has called on the  
Government to carry out the following:

Commence immediately the delayed formal review of Approved  
Document B, which was first proposed by the Secretary of State  
for Communities and Local Government in 2013 in response to  
the Coroner's rule 43 letter following the inquest into the deaths  
resulting from the 2009 fire at Lakanal House.

The RIBA believes that the review of Approved Document B  
must be a comprehensive, transparent and fundamental reappraisal,  
rather than an amendment or clarification, and should begin  
without delay to remove uncertainty, provide clarity and protect  
public safety.”

It also goes on to raise the issues of Building Bulletin  
100 and school sprinkler systems, which I also highlighted  
in my debate and which has been mentioned by several  
colleagues today.

The Iire Sector Iederation president, former London  
Iire Commissioner Mr Brian Robinson, writes a more  
qualified view of Approved Document B, which none  
the less supports the idea of a review. He said:

“We would also part recommend and suggest increased provisions  
for protection, including sprinklers, in line with the latest thinking  
in fire safety. But an update of AD B is only one part of the  
greater whole. That isn't, by any means, the complete solution to  
the weaknesses exposed by the Grenfell fire.”

In support of that key point, the Association of British  
Insurers was even more direct. It said:

“A comprehensive review is urgently needed of ‘Approved  
Document B', the regulations in England covering fire safety  
matters within and around buildings. The ABI has been calling  
for a comprehensive review of Approved Document B since 2009,  
and most recently in May 2017 in our response to the Government's  
Housing White Paper.”

My final source is the London Iire Brigade itself. In  
the briefing for this debate supplied by Helen Newton  
on behalf of the London Iire and Emergency Planning  
Authority, it says of Approved Document B:

“This document has not been reviewed for some time, which  
means that it has not kept up with British standards and new and  
innovative methods of construction or allowed debate of the  
sprinklers and other suppression systems especially around specialised  
housing.

We have been calling for Approved Document B to be reviewed  
and renew that call now as a matter of urgency.”

The Lakanal coroner, the Royal Institute of British  
Architects, the Association of British Insurers, the Iire  
Sector Iederation, fire authorities, the all-party group  
and others, including the Iire Protection Association,  
which I have not had time to quote, all agree on the  
urgency of reviewing Approved Document B. It is not  
the full solution, but it needs to be done, and it needs to  
be done now—not in three or five years' time. If the

work does not start until after the public inquiry, it  
could be as long as five years before Approved Document B  
is renewed. The “Government building safety  
programme—explanatory note” says:

“We have set up an expert panel to advise us on other urgent  
steps we should take to improve fire safety”.

I would be grateful if the Minister addressed my  
specific points about the review of Approved Document  
B. Ior the avoidance of doubt, I should say that there  
are three questions. Has the expert panel advised on an  
immediate review of Approved Document B? If not,  
will the Secretary of State ask the panel whether it  
considers such an immediate review to be appropriate?  
Will the Secretary of State deposit the answer to those  
two questions in the Library?

It has been said many times today that the majority  
of those who die in fires are the poor, the old, the young  
and the sick, as well as people with substance abuse  
issues and the rest of it. The Grenfell Tower fire  
demonstrated that—writ large. We need regulations to  
protect people in our buildings. Approved Document B  
is the foundation stone on which all buildings safety is  
constructed. If it is not operating as it should, we are  
exposing people to more danger.

5.36 pm

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): It is a pleasure  
to follow my hon. Iriend the Member for Poplar and  
Limehouse (Jim Iitzpatrick). I do not pretend to match  
his expertise, but I hope that the Minister has listened to  
his absolutely vital points about the key element of  
safety and the passion with which he made them.

My constituency neighbours Kensington; many of  
my constituents have strong community and family ties  
with the victims of Grenfell Tower. We are now host to  
between 50 and 100 of those victims in hotel  
accommodation in the borough. Just yesterday, I found  
out that Kensington Aldridge Academy, at the foot of  
Grenfell Tower, will now be housed for about a year in  
portakabins built on Wormwood Scrubs. I use that as  
an example of the ramifications of this terrible national  
disaster, which will affect many people—not just in  
Kensington and the rest of London, but across the  
country. They will last a long time.

I wish to put a number of questions to the Minister.  
The first is, who is in charge? We have heard statements  
from at least five Ministers; four were present at the  
beginning of this debate, but only for the opening  
speeches. Although I value the contribution of the  
Prime Minister and others and the ordering of a full  
public inquiry at an early stage, I am afraid to say that,  
since that happened, there has been confusion and a  
degree of inaction. I do not say that with any pleasure.

Who is the Minister at central Government level who  
takes overall responsibility? Should there be a specifically  
designated Minister to deal with this tragedy? After all,  
Ministers are often appointed to deal with natural  
disasters; this is a man-made disaster with just as many—if  
not more—ramifications, and over more time. If the  
position is confusing at national level, it is even more  
confusing in Kensington and Chelsea. I am afraid  
that what has happened in that benighted borough  
since these terrible events has been appalling—almost  
tragicomic.

377

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

378

First, there was the chief executive, clearly not up to  
the job, who was thrown under a bus to protect his  
political masters—he went reluctantly. Then there was a  
leader who should have gone as soon as it was clear that  
the disaster relief was a disaster in itself, but who said  
that he was leaving because of “purported” failures. A  
new leader has now been installed. From what I have  
seen of her, I do not think she is up to the job either. I  
found it highly embarrassing to hear her on the radio  
this morning saying that she had not been into high-rise  
council blocks before. She has been a cabinet member  
for at least five years and a councillor for the borough  
for at least 11. I have visited all sorts of accommodation  
around the borough hundreds if not thousands of times,  
for all sorts of reasons. In all honesty, how can someone  
who works for an inner London borough not have been  
into the flats? She later clarified by saying, “I might  
have been canvassing there, but I've never been into a  
flat there.” I do not want to personalise the matter, but  
it is clear that she is simply out of touch with the people  
she is trying to represent, and honestly cannot represent  
the people of north Kensington in particular. That is  
why a ready solution was available in the form of  
commissioners.

None of us, particularly those of us with a local  
government background, want to see commissioners go  
in, but they had been put in previously during less  
extreme cases. There is a suspicion that politics is preventing  
that from happening. An obvious course of action is to  
put commissioners in to manage the situation. We have  
London elections next May, so what is the problem? Instead,  
there is a hybrid solution with a taskforce, which, as the  
Secretary of State clarified earlier, is advisory, but which  
does not report to the people in charge, who are still the  
same old bosses in Kensington and Chelsea. How is  
that a recipe in any way for clarity, firm judgment and  
decision making in Kensington and Chelsea?

Who is on the taskforce? It was announced by the  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
a week ago, but we do not know who these people are or  
their terms of reference. We do not know whether any  
of them have been appointed or whether they have  
visited the borough over this period of time. I am afraid  
that this all smacks of the continuing delay and  
prevarication that has become the hallmark of dealing  
with the aftermath of Grenfell. Is the Minister able to  
clarify those points? If he is the Minister who is going  
to take responsibility, I am sure that we will all support  
him, but let us have that clarity.

It is true that it took about a week—too late—to  
realise what a disaster the Kensington management  
team were and to put in the new Gold team under John  
Barradell. Things did start to improve because there  
were more competent people in place, but they only  
started to improve and we are still not entirely there. I  
remember that my chief executive in Hammersmith was  
on the phone at 6 o'clock in the morning offering help,  
and that was true of many other London boroughs.  
Accommodation, offices and assistance were offered,  
but calls simply were not returned. It was not that the  
offers were rejected or accepted; there was simply no  
co-ordination of services. Even when the new Gold  
team came in, what appeared to be a better solution to  
the situation was not quite all it seemed.

Let me give an example that I mentioned in an  
intervention. I went to speak to a group of Grenfell  
survivors who are now in a hotel in Fulham, and they

told me differing stories. That is not surprising because  
every single family has a different story and different  
needs. Some had not been made housing offers and  
some had. Some had initially been told that they would  
not get a housing offer at all because they were lodgers  
and not tenants. That was then revised. Some were  
given keyworkers, albeit somewhat belatedly. Some only  
had keyworkers in the sense that people would occasionally  
ring them from hidden numbers, so they could not get  
back in touch and that person would not answer many  
of their questions. Others said they had a good relationship  
with the keyworkers. Some had been given money and  
some had not. Some had been given money on one day,  
but then another family member was refused money the  
next day.

It seemed an entirely arbitrary system, which was  
extraordinarily confusing to people who, let us not  
forget, were already living without any of their possessions,  
having suffered, at best, the severe trauma of the evacuation,  
and who were often in a state of bereavement after  
losing family members, neighbours and friends in the  
fire. They have now been stuck in hotels for four weeks  
or more. I am proud of the staff and management of  
the hotel I visited. They made people welcome and  
looked after them, but the truth is that people cannot  
live in a small room in a budget hotel. Many of these  
people had no change of clothes and no money when  
they were first sent to hotels. Whole families were put in  
one room, and Kensington and Chelsea Council had no  
further contact with them. In several cases, they were  
picked up by local residents in Hammersmith, who got  
them food, put them in touch with people and got local  
businesses to give them food, cleaning facilities and  
clothes for free. Hammersmith Council then intervened  
and gave them money, vouchers and things of that kind.  
But this was all on an ad hoc basis. How on earth can  
this be happening in our capital city in the 21st century?  
Yes, things are getting better, but they are getting better  
only slowly.

Let me put to bed the myth of the offers of  
accommodation. These offers of accommodation included  
people being asked to go to places substantial travelling  
distances from their children's school or their place  
of work. As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for  
Kensington (Emma Dent Coad), offers of accommodation  
were made to disabled people when there was no disabled  
access. One elderly lady I spoke to could not get into the  
toilet at the place she was offered. Is it reasonable to  
refuse an offer of accommodation like that? I think it  
probably is.

But it goes further than that. I ask the Minister to  
imagine that his house burned down, even without all  
the trauma associated with Grenfell Tower. I think he  
would expect the insurance company to put him up in  
like-for-like accommodation in a similar area, ensure  
that he could continue his life as best as he could, and  
then restore the property and move him back in or give  
him an equivalent alternative property. I do not see why  
the residents of Grenfell Tower should get any less, even  
if the assistance has to come from the state, rather than  
an insurance company.

So let us not pretend that we are doing people favours  
and offering them permanent accommodation or like-  
for-like accommodation. Some of the accommodation  
around Grenfell is excellent quality social housing, and  
we should be proud of the fact that it was built in the

379

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

380

*[Andy Slaughter]*

1960s and 1970s. It has good space standards, and it is  
light and airy, with plenty of room. Why should these  
people be given anything less than that as an alternative  
when they have suffered so much already?

That brings me to the wider issue of housing. There  
was an interesting piece on the “Today” programme last  
week looking at the options for the long-term rehousing  
of the people from Grenfell Tower. It went through half  
a dozen, and they are quite revealing. First, people  
could be put at the top of the housing waiting list in  
Kensington. The problem with that, apparently, is that  
only about eight units come up per week, and most of  
those are small, one-bedroom flats. Nobody mentioned  
the fact that taking that option would displace everybody  
who had been on the housing waiting list for years and  
years. However, that option was ruled out because of  
the small number of units.

What about the private rented sector? The Residential  
Landlords Association said, quite rightly, that private  
rented accommodation is a completely different form of  
tenure: there is no real security, and mortgage lenders  
often attach conditions that mean that tenants on benefits  
or tenants who want longer tenancies are not eligible to  
take that accommodation, so that option goes out as  
well.

What about redeveloping? What about estate  
regeneration, which councils such as Kensington often  
use to reduce the quantum of social housing? It was  
said that most estates in inner London are already at  
high density, and only a limited number of additional  
units can be put into them.

One novel suggestion was to use the big development  
sites at White City and Old Oak in my constituency to  
temporarily house people. That is an interesting  
development. I would absolutely welcome new social  
housing being built on the big development sites in my  
constituency, and I am sure that, as part of that, we  
would absolutely welcome people displaced from Grenfell,  
as well as our own residents. But that is not what was  
being offered; what was being suggested was temporary  
accommodation on a building site for three to five years  
until people could be moved on and luxury housing  
could be built, as originally planned.

The 68 units in Kensington Row have been mentioned  
a number of times. Initially, there was a rather inflammatory  
article in *The Guardian*, in which the other residents of  
this large luxury development on Kensington High  
Street said they did not want people like the Grenfell  
tenants living cheek by jowl with them. Whatever  
misinformation led to that story, the Kensington Row  
flats on offer are not luxury flats—they are not the  
£1 million one-bedroom flats that characterise the rest  
of that development. They are existing affordable housing  
units which would have been used for people who  
cannot afford market rents. In most cases, Grenfell  
Tower tenants will be offered existing social housing.  
That means that social housing tenants generally—people  
in existing council and housing association accommodation,  
and people on the waiting list, which, in west London,  
is a very long waiting list—will be subsidising the relief  
effort for Grenfell Tower.

The sixth option was this: why not buy some units of  
accommodation? That was ruled out, because a unit of  
accommodation—a two-bedroom flat in Kensington—costs

about £600,000. As we heard from my hon. Friend the  
Member for Kensington, Kensington and Chelsea has a  
balance of nearly £300 million which it has been stashing  
away. Moreover, if anyone thinks it is controversial to  
change units between the social and market housing  
sectors, let me point out that when the Conservatives  
were running Hammersmith Council it was selling off  
its social housing on the open market as it became  
empty, for nearly half a million pounds per unit. What  
is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander: if you can  
sell it off, you can buy it.

I want the Minister to give a clear instruction to  
Kensington Council. I suggest that he should go away  
and listen to the interview with its leader, which was, I  
may say, a superb example of interviewing skill. At the  
fourth or fifth time of asking, having tried to dodge the  
question on every possible occasion, she said yes, the  
council would buy some units. I hope the Minister will  
listen to that interview, and I hope he will hold the  
council leader to her promise so that we can start to  
provide permanent, decent, adequate housing for the  
people who suffered in Grenfell Tower, and do so sooner  
rather than later.

This also shines a light on the wider crisis in social  
housing. If we cannot find social housing units for the  
200 to 300 families who have been displaced from  
Grenfell Tower and the blocks around it, how can we  
come near to resolving the overall housing crisis, especially  
in high-value areas? The other story that has been doing  
the rounds in inner London concerns what is happening  
at Battersea power station, where there is a development  
consisting of 4,200 properties. The developer has persuaded  
Wandsworth Council to reduce the number of affordable  
homes by 40%, from 686 to 386, and they now represent  
9% of the development. That is the truth of Conservative  
policy on affordable housing in London. The Minister  
has an opportunity to say, when he winds up the debate,  
that that will no longer happen, in the case of Grenfell  
Tower and in the wider context as well.

Let me raise one final issue. I will not speak about it  
for long, because others with more expertise, including  
my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse,  
have already spoken about it. The issue of safety, in the  
widest sense, must be resolved, and it cannot be resolved  
over the timescale of the public inquiry. Earlier action  
must be taken.

Both the chair and the secretary of the all-party  
parliamentary fire safety and rescue group—the hon.  
Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) and my  
hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse—  
mentioned the group's expert adviser and secretary,  
former chief fire officer Ronnie King. Has made a  
number of very clear points which he wishes us to put  
to the Minister, and we are happy to do so. The first  
relates to Approved Document B—it has been dealt  
with extensively—and the fact that it needs to be revised,  
and that we need clarity in relation to the whole issue of  
construction and external cladding.

We are not talking only about the type of cladding  
that has been tested; we are talking about all forms of  
cladding. We are talking—as other Members have said—  
about insulation, and about how it is fitted. In particular,  
we are asking, “What is the effect of fire?” We are not  
talking about what can be done on a desktop computer  
or on a small piece of cladding, but about what happens  
when a real building burns when it has cladding of that  
kind, or some similar external modification. The London

381

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

382

Building Acts—which, I believe, were repealed in 1986  
and replaced by a much weaker form of legislation—  
specified an hour's retardation of fire on external structures.  
Why can we not go back to those standards and have  
that clarity? A huge amount of testing needs to be done;  
this is not just about testing the minority of types of  
cladding that the Minister has spoken about so far.

Cladding is only one issue, because there is also the  
issue of sprinklers. I wish the Minister and his colleagues  
would stop saying that they have done exactly what the  
Lakanal House coroner said. The coroner recommended  
that this matter should be looked at, and all the Government  
did was to pass it on to local authorities.

**Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): Does my  
hon. Friend agree that this Government should seek to  
introduce the legislation on the installation of sprinklers  
that we already have in Labour-run Wales?

**Andy Slaughter:** I absolutely agree that we can learn  
from the devolved Administrations on this issue. It is  
weasel words for the Minister to say that the coroner  
did not insist that we follow that recommendation. A  
coroner cannot insist on such matters. The coroner gave  
a clear indication, and the Government dodged the  
issue. I think that it should be revisited.

Another issue that should be revisited is who carries  
out inspections of tower blocks. That is not just about  
cladding, but about fire alarms, means of escape,  
maintenance and access for emergency vehicles. In the  
course of the public inquiry, we may find out that all of  
those were factors at Grenfell Tower. We must not wait  
for the inquiry, because my constituents who live in  
tower blocks will not be able to sleep easily in their beds  
at night until they know that they are living, as they  
always thought they were, in entirely safe buildings and  
until they know what they are supposed to do in the  
case of a fire. The Minister therefore has quite a long  
agenda to tackle.

Let me make one final point. It is a matter for the  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
rather than for the Minister's Department, but I know  
he is taking an interest in it. The cause of the fire was  
once again a white good manufactured by one of the  
Whirlpool companies. There was an electrical fire in a  
fridge-freezer, just as one of the known fire risk white  
goods—an Indesit tumble dryer—caught fire causing a  
substantial tower block fire in my constituency last  
year. When are the Government going to start tackling  
these issues?

The issues involve the registration of white goods, the  
collection of data on which are safe and which are  
unsafe, the recall of products when they are shown to be  
dangerous and the release of the risk assessments that  
currently—and scandalously—are not revealed on grounds  
of commercial confidentiality for the companies that  
manufacture the goods. It is another whole area of  
investigation that is long overdue. Although much of  
the attention on Grenfell concentrates on the external  
spread of the fire, the fire would never have got outside  
the tower block had it not started in a fridge-freezer. We  
still do not know—because the Government have not  
said—whether the tests have been completed, whether it  
was due to a design fault or whether the construction of  
that model allowed the fire to take hold.

I hope that the points I have made are all relevant and  
are all matters for the public inquiry to consider, but  
some of them cannot wait until then. Certainly, the  
relief and rehousing of the people who have been  
displaced by the Grenfell fire cannot wait any longer.  
We are about to enter the summer recess, and I hope we  
do not come back in September or October to find that  
nothing has changed. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend  
the Member for Kensington, because she has been  
thrown in at the deep end in no uncertain fashion and  
she has absolutely risen to the challenge. She is a strong  
and powerful advocate for her community, but she  
cannot do it all on her own; this is a job, both locally  
and nationally, for the Government to take hold of. We  
must not forget this terrible tragedy, which has blighted  
our country, because if we do not learn lessons from it,  
it will recur again.

5.59 pm

**Chris Williamson** (Derby North) (Lab): May I say  
what an honour and pleasure it is to be back on the  
green Benches speaking on behalf of my constituents  
after a two-year enforced sabbatical? Before I speak  
about the subject of today's debate, I should say just a  
few words about my predecessor Amanda Solloway,  
who took my seat off me by 41 votes in 2015. She was in  
some ways an unusual and unlikely Conservative party  
candidate, coming from fairly humble origins and having  
herself experienced homelessness in an earlier part of  
her life. She made it her business to highlight the plight  
of homeless people and to draw attention to that really  
important issue, which scars our country, the fifth richest  
nation on the planet. Another big issue on which she  
fought hard was making mental health care more of a  
priority for the Government and ensuring that resources  
were made available for it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse  
(Jim Fitzpatrick) sought a collective noun for the excellent  
maiden speeches that have been made today—he referred  
to a “feast” of maiden speeches. I agree with that  
description of the excellent contributions made by my  
hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham West and  
Penge (Ellie Reeves), for Barnsley East (Stephanie Peacock),  
for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), for Leeds North  
West (Alex Sobel) and for Leigh (Jo Platt). I am sure  
that they will go on to make a big contribution in this  
place for as long as they are here.

The origins of the catastrophic fire that occurred at  
Grenfell can be traced back to the neoliberal doctrine  
that was inflicted on our country back in 1979 and has  
disfigured our public services over the intervening four  
decades. A big feature of that approach has been  
deregulation, privatisation and cuts, which led to  
combustible materials being perfectly legitimately used  
on Grenfell Tower and, as we know, many other tower  
blocks around the country. How can that possibly be?  
Added into the mix is the move towards compulsory  
competitive tendering, which was brought into the public  
realm almost 40 years ago and meant that the cheapest  
price was all that was looked at when services were  
externalised. How could the maintenance of our public  
realm and housing stock be put out to the private  
sector?

Of course, if the work had been done properly and  
there were firestops on every floor of Grenfell Tower, as  
there are supposed to be, even if there had been a fire, it

383

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

384

*[Chris Williamson]*

would have been contained on the floor where it started.  
The combination of compulsory competitive tendering  
and the business-friendly inspection regime has culminated  
in this appalling, catastrophic fire in which so many  
people lost their lives.

We can also look at the cuts that have been imposed  
and see the number of fire safety inspectors who have  
been taken out of the system—between 60% and 75%  
depending on which fire authority we are talking about.  
So now the fire and rescue authorities cannot undertake  
the safety checks that they used to be able to carry out  
as a matter of course. The slapdash, corner-cutting  
approach that we have seen over the past few decades  
has ultimately led to this appalling, catastrophic fire.

There was an exchange earlier in the debate about the  
laissez-faire approach to student accommodation.  
Legislation requires new residential tower blocks over  
30 metres high to have sprinklers installed in them.  
However, nurse and student accommodation is deemed  
to be “other accommodation”, so there is no requirement  
for sprinklers to be installed there. It is as if nurses and  
students are expendable—that cannot be right.

I mentioned the fire safety inspectors who have been  
taken out of the system, and while we are talking about  
cuts, it is important to remember that fire station after  
fire station in this capital and right across the country  
has been closed. Since 2010, 11,000 firefighters have lost  
their jobs, which I think means that one in five firefighters  
have effectively been removed from the system since  
then.

That creates its own problem. I spoke to Fire Brigades  
Union representatives, who talked about such things as  
the use of breathing apparatus. The fact is that reducing  
the number of firefighters available to deal with emergencies  
means that when we have a catastrophic fire, such as the  
one at Grenfell Tower, firefighters repeatedly have to go  
into the building to rescue people. The problem with  
that is that when firefighters use breathing apparatus,  
their blood thickens, putting them at greater risk of a  
coronary attack. We know from eyewitness accounts  
that some firefighters were entering Grenfell Tower to  
rescue people up to three times each. They should not  
have been in that situation.

When the Prime Minister was interviewed about that,  
she said that London fire brigade had the resources it  
needed and implied that the fact that it was able to  
respond to the fire was proof of that. But the truth is  
that London fire brigade did not have the resources it  
needed, because if it did have them, individual firefighters  
would not have had to enter Grenfell Tower time after  
time to rescue people, as there would have been enough  
firefighters to ensure that they each had to enter the  
building only once.

If we are seriously going to learn any lesson—we  
hear rhetoric about the importance of learning lessons  
from catastrophic events, but often it is just for the  
birds—from this dreadful fire that should never, ever  
have happened, surely it must be that we need a different  
approach to the neoliberal agenda that has influenced  
and informed the way in which public services have  
been delivered in our country. Surely we have to reverse  
the deregulation agenda to which we have been subjected  
and abandon the privatisation of our public services.

We have heard from hon. Members on both sides of  
the Chamber about the importance of installing sprinklers.  
It is an unanswerable argument. If Grenfell Tower had  
been fitted with sprinklers, we might have lost the  
building, but we would not have lost human life. I do  
not think that there is a building anywhere in the world  
that has been fitted with sprinklers in which people have  
died in a fire—there have been very few deaths, if any.  
Surely we must learn that lesson.

We should also listen very carefully to the survivors,  
the community and the residents who have been so  
affected by this appalling episode. When I spoke to  
somebody from the Justice4Grenfell group just yesterday,  
she said that they had a number of demands, including  
two that I hope the Minister will agree with and deliver.  
First, the survivors want to ensure that everybody affected  
is housed within the borough in decent, good-quality  
accommodation. My hon. Friend the Member for  
Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) made the point that  
there is empty accommodation in the borough that  
could be acquired. The local authority in Kensington  
has the resources within its reserves to acquire those  
properties, but it seems to me that the Government are  
responsible and they should ensure that those resources  
are available.

The second thing that the survivors want is help in  
their present situation. The person from the Justice4Grenfell  
group said that she had spoken to one survivor who had  
been put into a hotel and just left to fend for themselves.  
They did not know where to go to get food or a change  
of clothes, so more needs to be done. There needs to  
be more immediate help for the survivors and, in  
what should be the shorter term, we should make  
accommodation available. I hope that the Minister will  
make it clear that that will happen.

When I attended a meeting of the Local Government  
Association Labour group fire services commission earlier  
this week, I was shown a paper that had been put to the  
fire services management committee, which included a  
number of recommendations. I would be interested in  
the Minister's response to them. The paper said:

“Government should agree to have Sprinkler Systems fitted in  
All High Rise Flats in the Country”,  
and that

“Any Cladding fitted to High Rise Flats should be of high  
quality Fire Resistant Material approved by the Fire Service to a  
Uniformed National Standard.”  
The paper also proposes:

“The Fire Service should have overall responsibility for Fire  
Safety for High Rise Flats, which includes the Flats, corridors,  
public spaces, fire alarms, safety advice to tenants, and the Fire  
Service should provide Fire Safety Assurance for Residential  
High Rise Flats. All High Rise Blocks should be inspected by the  
Fire Service once every 2 years, and inspected after a major  
refurbishment.”  
The paper goes on to say:

“New High Rise Flats should be regulated to ensure they are  
built to include all of the above, and in addition they should be  
built with two Stair Wells within the building”,  
and that

“Government urgently review the fire regulation order and  
fully fund the Fire Service to re-enable planning and building  
control applications to be review by Fire Safety issues on a risk  
assessed basis.”

Finally, the paper says:

“Government will need to recognise that extra Government  
financial resources will need to be made available to Fire and  
Rescue Services to enable them to provide for the necessary  
workload that this will require.”

385

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

386

That seems to me to be a list of common-sense  
requests. We should remember that it came from a  
cross-party group, so there are people from the Conservative  
party, the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats in  
the Local Government Association saying this, as well  
as independents. I therefore hope that the Minister will  
take into account what that cross-party group has said,  
take into account the very sensible suggestions made on  
both sides of the House today and, most importantly,  
listen to the survivors and the community and respond  
appropriately, because this is a stain on the very character  
of Great Britain. We need to learn lessons to make sure  
that we mean it when we say that this will never, ever  
happen again.

6.13 pm

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): It is a  
great pleasure to have sat through the whole of this  
debate and listened to the excellent maiden speeches of  
my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds North West  
(Alex Sobel), for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), for  
Barnsley East (Stephanie Peacock), for Lewisham West  
and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for Leigh (Jo Platt)—I  
hope I have got them all. This has been an excellent  
debate, with very many important points raised and  
questions asked of Ministers on issues that the Government  
must address. I will not take up Members' time by  
repeating many of them.

The Grenfell fire was an appalling and, very likely,  
preventable tragedy, exacerbated by what seemed to me,  
as somebody with a bit of experience of this, the frankly  
dysfunctional response from Kensington and Chelsea  
Council in the hours, days and weeks following that  
terrible fire—and even now. I share all Members' concerns  
for the families of those who lost their lives, and those  
who lost their homes. I share the concerns of the  
emergency and frontline service workers who have had  
to deal with the trauma. I hope that there will be  
adequate long-term post-trauma support for them all,  
of the kind that the Government put in place immediately  
after the 7/7 bombings; somebody I know well is benefiting  
now from the support he received immediately after  
that.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** London fire brigade has  
reduced the number of its counsellors from over 10 to  
under five in the last seven years. Does my hon. Friend  
agree that that should immediately be addressed, so that  
we offer adequate support and counselling to our service  
personnel?

**Ruth Cadbury:** That is an excellent point. Clearly fire  
service officers and other workers are on the frontline  
when it comes to experiencing trauma; we heard about  
that in many reports on the Lakanal fire. For such an  
essential service, which employs people who will experience  
that trauma, to be cutting specialist counselling services  
by half is yet another example of the impact of cuts and  
austerity on public services that are there for us all.  
Everybody should have a right to post-trauma counselling  
and support, whether we are talking about an employer  
providing it to frontline workers, or whether we are  
talking about members of the public who are nearby or  
just passing, charity workers helping out at a rescue  
station, or those who live in similar blocks, because as  
my friend has told me, it makes a real difference to  
people's long-term ability to function.

I have constituents, as I am sure many other Members  
do, who live in older council-owned tower blocks, such  
as Brentford Towers and the Ivybridge estate. Many  
have contacted me because they are frightened. They  
and their children cannot sleep at night. They do not  
want to carry on living there. They need reassurance.  
For some of them, the trauma is so bad that they are  
asking to be rehoused. This is a major issue.

I had the benefit of being briefed by London Borough  
of Hounslow officers and council members in the week  
immediately after the Grenfell fire. I have been reassured  
that none of the blocks in my constituency have cladding  
that fails the Government tests. I was also pleased to  
hear that on the day after the Grenfell fire, the council's  
programme to reclad the six towers of Brentford Towers,  
which people can see from the elevated section of the  
M4, has been put on hold while it reviews the specifics  
of the programme. That cladding programme is urgently  
needed for reasons relating to the safety of the existing  
external cladding and for thermal insulation, but given  
what has happened, it is absolutely right that the specifics  
of that programme be reviewed.

The leader and councillors of the London Borough  
of Hounslow are meeting all residents of tower blocks  
to hear their concerns—to listen and to respond. That is  
the right thing to do. The London Borough of Hounslow  
is also responding to requests and offering help to  
Kensington and Chelsea on a range of services. The  
council is preparing estate fire safety and improvement  
plans, to ensure that issues such as prevention and  
tackling fire safety inside and outside all tower blocks  
are addressed. It is also reviewing all the fire risk  
assessments in all blocks.

I have considerable experience as a councillor: I was  
lead member for housing and had lead responsibility  
for contingency planning. I have seen at first hand how  
proper fire safety mechanisms and management by  
residents and landlord alike can work. There was a fire  
at Fraser House, and sadly a resident died, but the fire  
did not spread through the block because the appropriate  
fire doors were shut and the appropriate venting was  
open. The fire was therefore drawn away from the other  
flats and out of the vents on that floor.

I understand how buildings are designed for fire  
safety, and how we must be careful when revising the  
structure, cladding and other aspects of buildings. I also  
understand why working with the management and the  
residents is so important. The reason why the fire doors  
at Fraser House were shut was that residents and the  
council worked together after the Lakanal House report  
was published to learn the lessons from that fire. I am  
regularly in and out of the Brentford Towers blocks—  
talking to residents, canvassing at elections and so  
on—and I know that on hot summer days it is tempting  
to prop open the fire doors. That stopped happening  
after the Lakanal report, however. The fire doors were  
regularly closed. Good management and good  
communication will work.

I have been the lead member for contingency planning,  
but thankfully I never had to deal with an emergency. I  
was, however, briefed to know what an emergency looked  
and felt like, what my role and that of senior officers  
would be, and how the communications links with  
other authorities would work, up and down the line.  
The way of managing in a crisis is completely different  
from day-to-day managing.

387

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

388

*[Ruth Cadbury]*

When I woke up that morning and started following  
the Twitter feed and listening to and watching the news,  
I was shocked at the poverty of the response from  
Kensington and Chelsea. To me, it smacked of inadequate  
preparation for an emergency. I accept that the Grenfell  
fire was of a different order; as others have said, it was  
the biggest fire in this country since wartime. Nevertheless,  
one of the things I would look for as an outsider is a  
person who is regularly in front of the cameras, listening  
and speaking. I would expect to see that person meeting  
the affected residents, the frontline workers and the  
charity workers. I would expect the charities and others  
to be responding to requests for help from the local  
authority, rather than having to be the sole providers of  
support in the hours and days after the event. But what  
did we see? Community centres, mosques and churches  
dealing with things on their own, and receiving massive  
amounts of good will and items that they perhaps did  
not need at that time; for example, there was an over-supply  
of blankets. They were working on their own, and they  
did not know what to say to all those offers of help.

I was also concerned to hear that when other local  
authorities, particularly those close to Kensington and  
Chelsea, offered that week's allocation of social rented  
housing to Kensington and Chelsea to use as temporary  
or permanent homes for those affected, there was no  
adequate response. Other local authorities also offered  
specialised, experienced trauma counsellors to Kensington  
and Chelsea, but there was no response. At a time when  
people were willing and able to go the extra mile to  
share with colleagues in an extreme crisis, there was  
nowhere for people to turn. I hope that the inquiry will  
look at the response of the local authority and at what  
it should have been. We have already heard how this can  
work, following reports of what happened after the  
terrorist attack at the Manchester concert hall. Members  
from Manchester have said that there was a good response  
from the local authority there.

The residents of Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk  
and their families deserve justice. All residents of tower  
blocks deserve reassurance, so that they can live and  
sleep in peace. Poor communities and those in housing  
need require a Government who no longer ignore them,  
cut vital services, and ignore the conclusions of public  
inquiries, and a Government who invest in adequate,  
good-quality, truly affordable housing.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Before I call  
the Front-Bench spokesmen, I ask them to split the  
remaining time.

6.24 pm

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The  
Opposition welcome today's debate, and I begin by  
thanking colleagues who have contributed, particularly  
my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield South East  
(Mr Betts), for Eltham (Clive Efford), for Kensington  
(Emma Dent Coad), who speaks with so much knowledge  
and first-hand experience of the dreadful tragedy and  
its aftermath, for Norwich South (Clive Lewis), for  
Westminster North (Ms Buck), for Ogmore (Chris Elmore),  
for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green), for Dulwich  
and West Norwood (Helen Hayes), for Poplar and  
Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), for Hammersmith (Andy  
Slaughter), for Derby North (Chris Williamson), and  
for Brentford and Isleworth (Ruth Cadbury).

We heard brilliant and powerful maiden speeches  
from my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham West  
and Penge (Ellie Reeves), for Barnsley East (Stephanie  
Peacock), for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), for Leeds  
North West (Alex Sobel), and for Leigh (Jo Platt). All  
of them showed passion and dedication. They will be  
doughty champions for their constituents and their  
constituencies in this place, and I welcome each and  
every one of them.

From other parts of the House, we heard from the  
right hon. and learned Member for North East  
Hertfordshire (Sir Oliver Heald) and the hon. Members  
for Southend West (Sir David Amess), for Southampton,  
Itchen (Royston Smith), for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk),  
for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart), for Walsall  
North (Eddie Hughes), for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), and  
for Redditch (Rachel Maclean).

There can be little dispute that the shock that we all  
felt following this tragedy has not subsided in the weeks  
that followed it. While the need for immediate answers  
is clear, we welcome the Grenfell inquiry's decision  
yesterday to extend the consultation period by two  
weeks to provide those affected with more time to  
respond. It is understandable that the immediate focus  
of the response to this tragedy has been on meeting the  
needs of the bereaved and the survivors, but may I urge  
the Government for action with regard to the neighbours  
and community members around Grenfell tower? We  
have been speaking to some of the volunteers, and they  
have expressed concern at the lack of access to support  
for the many nearby residents. These people saw the  
disaster develop close at hand, but some have not  
accessed support, either because they have not been  
directly approached, or because of a reluctance to do so  
when local services are so overwhelmed.

I pay tribute to the fire service, the police, and the  
community, who pulled together to assist when statutory  
authorities frankly failed. That is why I ask the Government  
to ensure that support is available to those who are  
volunteering after this disaster. Some volunteers are  
now doing a job as part of the disaster victim identification  
team that many of us could not imagine.

As the tragedy unfolded on 14 June, I watched an  
interview on one of the news channels with a resident  
whose property overlooked the tower. He spoke about  
seeing the building on fire from his kitchen, and seeing  
children calling for help from the windows. So many  
have been affected by this tragedy. We need to make  
sure that adequate support is in place for residents,  
those living in the area, those dealing with the aftermath,  
and the children who survived and saw things that no  
child should ever have to see. I want an assurance from  
the Government that they will ensure that those people  
are given every support that they need.

Similarly, residents in tower blocks throughout the  
UK need assurances that their homes are safe. My right  
hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne  
(John Healey) was clear about where the Government  
need to improve. Four weeks on from this tragedy, we  
still need the Government to show some leadership,  
because concerns run deep, and run beyond the  
neighbourhood surrounding Grenfell. We heard today  
that Members across this House have been contacted by  
concerned constituents living in the 4,000 other tower  
blocks across the country. Ministers still cannot say  
how many of these tower blocks they consider to be

389

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

390

safe. In the last update given by Ministers, of the  
530 tower blocks covered in aluminium composite material  
that have been the focus of the testing process, only  
200 had actually had material tested.

We have heard that housing associations whose residents  
have sought assurances that their non-ACM clad buildings  
are safe—I have three such buildings in my constituency—  
have been told that the Government are refusing to  
check their cladding due to the current narrow focus of  
the testing. That is just not good enough.

Where buildings have failed safety tests, including in  
Salford, local authorities are unclear on how to  
proceed, because guidance issued by the Department  
for Communities and Local Government is unclear on  
whether cladding that fails combustibility tests requires  
removal, and on whether, if it does fail those tests,  
leaving a building unclad and open to the elements  
is actually a worse fire situation than leaving the cladding on.

On 3 July, the Secretary of State told the House that  
the panels that failed recent testing

“are ‘unlikely to be compliant' with the limited combustibility  
requirement of the building regulations”.—[*Official Report*,3July  
2017; Vol. 626, c. 913.]

However, as per the explanatory note referenced by the  
Secretary of State, it may be possible for individual  
materials that do not meet limited combustibility definitions  
to be used where they form part of a system that does  
meet the requirements.

There are two ways to meet that requirement. One is  
to ensure that each individual component of a wall  
meets the criteria for limited combustibility, which is  
the test currently used by the Department, and the  
other is to ensure that the faQade system meets the  
acceptance criteria of BR 135, following the method in  
BS 8414. But under the current regulatory system, even  
cladding that fails tests for limited combustibility can  
be used in developments as long as the criteria in  
BR 135 are met. Despite the Chancellor's misinformed  
comments, the cladding used in the project at Grenfell  
Tower was not banned in the UK. If we are to prevent  
such a tragedy from happening again, it is important  
that we get these things right.

The fire service was among the first at the scene at  
Grenfell. The least we can do is ensure that it plays an  
important role in the forthcoming inquiry, and that its  
expertise is not just valued but taken on board and  
acted on. Following the Grenfell Tower fire, many local  
authorities have been undertaking safety checks and  
installing fire prevention systems. Many councils have  
gone beyond just the tower blocks by looking at public  
buildings such as schools and hospitals.

Somelocalauthoritiesbeganremovingcladdingfrom  
their buildings after it failed the recent tests, but as I  
have explained, the building regulations do not necessarily  
reflect the documentation issued by the Department.  
Some housing providers have since stopped removing  
cladding because of that lack of direction; they do not  
know how, and with what materials, the cladding should  
be replaced. Residents are worried that inaction is leaving  
them vulnerable, yet without guidance, local authorities  
are unsure how best to act. Leadership on this issue has  
not been forthcoming from the Secretary of State, who  
has instead passed the buck to landlords, in conjunction  
with fire services, so that they take decisions on building  
safety.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth  
and Dearne, the shadow Secretary of State for Housing,  
noted in his opening remarks, this is not the first time  
that the Government have failed to take responsibility  
forsafety.HereferredtothewordsoftheformerHousing  
Minister, the right hon. Member for Great Yarmouth  
(Brandon Lewis), who said it was the responsibility of  
the fire industry, rather than the Government, to encourage  
the installation of sprinkler systems.

Members on both sides of the House, including the  
right hon. and learned Member for North East  
Hertfordshire and the hon. Member for Southend West,  
have called for the retrofitting of sprinklers. I urge the  
Minister to consult the all-party parliamentary fire  
safety rescue group on that, because there is an urgent  
need to ensure that all buildings—public buildings and  
housing—are fire-safe.

I commend Labour-led Stockport Metropolitan Borough  
Council, one of two councils covering my constituency,  
on agreeing to retrofit sprinklers in all Stockport Homes  
tower blocks. That is down to the work of Councillor  
Sheila Bailey in particular. Similar commitments have  
been made by other local authorities of all political  
persuasions.

Ministers need to clarify an important matter. They  
have not given any real commitment to local authorities.  
The First Secretary of State has announced that the  
Government are prepared to fund these measures only  
in certain circumstances. That basically means that  
already cash-strapped local authorities will have to either  
find more money that they just do not have or cut  
services elsewhere. Unless the Government explain how  
they will make resources available to local authorities to  
do those works, and what “stepping in”means in practical  
terms, that is a bit of an empty promise.

**Mr Betts:** I raised that issue in the debate. I asked the  
Secretary of State in a written question to set out the  
criteria against which applications for additional funding  
will be assessed. The answer I got was

“that it will not be possible to answer this question within the  
usual time period.”

That is a rather empty answer, is it not, to a very  
pressing problem?

**Andrew Gwynne:** Absolutely, and I am afraid it speaks  
volumes. Unless the Minister, in summing up, can explain  
how local authorities are going to get that resource, the  
fact is that councils in my hon. Friend's constituency  
and many others across this country will not have the  
financial means to address the issue. They need certainty  
that they will receive some recompense from central  
Government.

I want to turn quickly to governance. We heard today  
that the taskforce sent in to advise Kensington and  
ChelseaCouncillackedthepowersnecessarytoco-ordinate  
what needed to be done following this disaster, and  
about the deficit in local leadership. As the First Secretary  
of State has said, the taskforce can advise, but it cannot  
act. Surely that is an issue of real concern, because  
Kensington and Chelsea Council just was not up to the  
job of dealing with a disaster of this magnitude. The  
way in which it responded was, quite frankly, not acceptable  
in any sense of the term. There is very real concern  
about not only how the local authority handled the  
immediate aftermath of the tragedy, but its shortcomings  
over the following days and weeks.

391

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

392

*[Andrew Gwynne]*

Having spoken to those offering support to survivors,  
I understand that there are very real concerns that the  
uptakeof financialsupportisstillnotwhatitshouldbe.  
I appreciate that Ministers have given assurances that  
benefits will not be affected, but the lack of trust that  
some continue to have in their elected representatives  
locally has led to a number refusing support. That  
needs to be addressed at a local level.

On the council's ability to deal with this type of  
emergency, it has emerged that there are serious  
shortcomings in its contingency planning and management,  
yet the Government have not been good enough at the  
job of intervening. People are still in need of support  
services and rehousing. It appears that the Government  
have acknowledged the council's serious failings, because  
they sent in a taskforce, but at this crucial time, they  
have left in charge those who failed the residents in the  
first place. Today, we heard the new leader of the  
council state that she has never before been inside a  
high-rise council block. What a farce!

On 1 July, Labour called for commissioners to be  
sent in to take control of the situation, warning that  
trust among the local community will not be rebuilt by  
a leader, deputy leader or other politicians unless  
there is a major shake-up in governance. I repeat the  
call that we made on 1 July: local people want to know  
that the Government are taking control; that there will  
be a shake-up in the management and governance of  
Kensington and Chelsea Council; and that the situation  
will be closely monitored and managed directly by  
commissioners who are answerable to the Secretary of  
State and to Parliament, until the local authority has  
the necessary capacity, is fit for purpose, and is fit to  
govern in the interests of all the residents of Kensington  
and Chelsea.

Until we can guarantee that all those who lost their  
homes are in secure accommodation, until support is  
available for all who need it, and until the public are  
again able to trust the elected representatives in Kensington  
and Chelsea Council, we will repeat our call for  
commissioners to take over the running of the council.  
Changes need to be made to laws, to regulations and in  
the governance of the council, and they must be made  
based on the evidence we have now, as well as on the  
additional evidence from the inquiry. We urge the  
Government to make this happen swiftly; if they do,  
they will have our support.

6.41 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government (Alok Sharma):** We have had a  
detailed and wide-ranging debate on the Grenfell Tower  
public inquiry, but I start by congratulating all the  
Members who made their maiden speeches today: the  
hon. Members for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie  
Reeves), for Barnsley East (Stephanie Peacock), for  
Leeds North West (Alex Sobel), for Leigh (Jo Platt) and  
for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones).

We heard some incredibly powerful speeches from my  
hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen  
(Royston Smith), for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), for  
Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart) and for Redditch  
(Rachel Maclean), and we of course heard from the  
hon. Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad), who

has been very involved in dealing with the residents and  
has been part of the response.

We also heard from various members of the all-party  
group on fire safety: my hon. Friend the Member for  
SouthendWest(SirDavidAmess)andthehon.Members  
for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) and for  
Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter). I can tell the shadow  
Minister, the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish  
(Andrew Gwynne), that I met them recently to hear  
their views. They will be writing to me in some detail to  
set out what they want to see happen in the inquiry.

Colleagues have had an opportunity to express a  
range of views—someobviouslydifferentfromothers—but  
the House is today united in the view that ultimately the  
people who matter the most are those who have been  
affected directly by this terrible tragedy. They must have  
their questions answered, and that is precisely what the  
inquiry will do.

In his opening remarks, the shadow Secretary of  
State,therighthon.MemberforWentworthandDearne  
(John Healey), said that he will not rest until the residents  
have the help they need, until we get to the bottom of  
what happened, and until we make sure that this never  
happens again. I assure him that I, too, will not rest until  
all three of those conditions are met, and nor will the  
Secretary of State or, indeed, any colleague in this House.

I again put on record my deepest condolences to all  
those who have suffered such great loss as a result of  
this fire, which we all agree should never have happened.  
Colleagues from all parties have paid tribute to the  
victims, their families and the heroism of the emergency  
services, and I know that such heart-felt views will be  
heard and echoed throughout the country. This debate  
has provided an opportunity to reflect on the scale and  
human cost of this tragedy, but it has also given us a  
valuable chance to start to look ahead to what comes  
next—principally, the public inquiry that will establish  
precisely what went wrong, why and who is responsible.

Colleagues have raised a range of issues, and before I  
continue with my speech I shall take a few minutes to  
respond to some of them. On the help available to those  
who are directly affected, Members will know that we  
have made first offers to all those who are ready to have  
such offers made to them. A large number of second  
offers have been made, and 19 of the families have now  
accepted an offer. I just point out that, as I know  
Opposition Members have acknowledged, we need to  
go at the pace that the families want us to go at. That is  
incredibly important. I know that some of them will  
want to move into permanent homes rather than into  
temporary homes, and we accept that. We have had a  
discussion about Kensington Row, and I hope we will  
soon be in a position where we can start viewings of the  
flats there. We are also looking to secure similar  
accommodation so that we have net additions to the  
social housing, rather than take up homes that others  
might have occupied. The key thing is that nobody is  
going to be forced into a home that they do not want to  
go to.

On funding, I can report that 120 of the households  
have received a grant of £5,000, and many others have  
also received the £500 cash payment. In total, almost  
£4 million has been paid out from the discretionary  
fund. Colleagues have raised issues relating to trauma  
support, which of course is being made available to  
those who need it. Given the exceptional nature of the

393

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

394

incident, we have agreed that MOPAC—Mayor's Office  
for Policing And Crime—funding will be used for this,  
even though no crime as such has been committed that  
we are aware of.

We heard a discussion on the Government's response  
and the testing regime that we have put in place. The  
Secretary of State has led right from the start on that. I  
have been by his side, so I can tell Members that he has  
led on it. I ask hon. Members to look on the Government  
website because it will tell them about all the letters we  
have written to local authorities and housing associations,  
and all the tests that we have suggested are done. Yes,  
211 tests have come back as positive—or negative; it  
depends on how one looks at it—but I just say that we  
are working with the Local Government Association  
and others to encourage housing associations, local  
councils and private landlords to send in the cladding  
for testing. What I say to every Member here, as they  
can help with this, is that I know they will be in touch  
with their local authorities and housing associations, so  
please help us. They should ask their local—

**Ms Buck:** For clarity, will the Minister confirm that  
half or more of all the high-rise towers identified at the  
earlier point in this discussion have not submitted materials  
to be tested? That is the clear implication of what he  
was saying.

**Alok Sharma:** I am saying that we want to get this  
testing done as quickly as possible. We have the resources  
available for that. Let me just say that there are some  
cases where local authorities will have sent in one piece  
of cladding for testing from a building and may have  
had a number of buildings that were re-clad at a similar  
time, so we are hoping to establish whether that is the  
case or not. An awful lot of work is going on, and I just  
recommend to right hon. and hon. Members that they  
look on the website as it will tell them, in great detail,  
what the expert advisory panel is doing and it will tell  
them about all the tests that have been carried out.

Members have also talked about insulation, and of  
course when we wrote to local authorities on 22 June we  
asked them also to look at that. On 6 July, the independent  
expert panel announced that it would be recommending  
wider systems checks of cladding, and that it would be  
testing a combination of ACM panels with two of the  
most commonly used insulation materials as well.

We had a discussion about building regulations, and I  
respectfully point out that they were put together in  
2006, not when the current Government were in place,  
so this idea that somehow deregulation has played a  
part is unfair. Let me also make reference to the Lakanal  
House fire and what the coroner wanted to happen. The  
coroner recommended simplifying the fire safety guidance  
under the building regulations, not a change in the  
standards. I accept that that has not happened as yet,  
but clearly in the light of this tragedy we need to reflect  
on the previous plans for consulting. Clearly, if anything  
emerges from the investigation where we need to take  
immediate action, we will do that.

The expert advisory panel, which my right hon. Friend  
the Secretary of State has appointed, is considering a  
range of matters, particularly whether there are any  
immediate additional actions that need to be taken to  
ensure the safety of existing high-rise buildings.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I am very grateful to  
the Minister for his comments about high-rise buildings.  
Will he clarify whether the testing and the regulation-  
reviewing that the Government are undertaking also  
extend to other buildings that may be affected, such as  
schools and hospitals?

**Alok Sharma:** Yes, I can. That work is ongoing.

There was a discussion about the independent recovery  
taskforce, which was appointed by the Secretary of  
State. Let me point out that if we had gone down the  
road of appointing commissioners, that would have  
been a statutory intervention, which would have taken  
longer. Our view is that we need to get people in there  
now and to focus particularly on housing regeneration  
and community engagement. People from that taskforce  
will report directly to the Secretary of State.

**Andy Slaughter:** Will the Minister enlighten us on  
who they are and where they are?

**Alok Sharma:** That information will be published  
very shortly.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith talked about  
product safety. The Government have a working group  
on product recalls and safety, which has been asked, as  
a matter of urgency, to review its final report in the light  
of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Finally, on social housing, I know that we will have  
opportunities to debate these matters in the months and  
possibly years ahead, but may I just point out to the  
shadow Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for  
Wentworth and Dearne, that, during the period of 1997  
to 2010, the number of social rented homes fell by  
420,000. Since 2010, we have delivered 333,000 new  
affordable homes. *[Interruption.]* Thatisadebatefor  
another day. May I just return to the public inquiry?

**Mr Betts:** The Minister did say “finally”, but he has  
not yet come back to the issue of what funding will be  
available to other local authorities carrying out this  
essential work and what criteria will be used to assess  
any funding applications.

**Alok Sharma:** The Secretary of State and other Ministers  
have been absolutely clear: we do not want local authorities  
and housing associations to stop doing anything that is  
necessary to keep people safe. If they do not have the  
funding, we will work with them on the funding process.

**Clive Efford** *rose—*

**Alok Sharma:** No, I will not give way as I really must  
get on.

A range of views have been expressed about the cause  
of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. What is vital is that we  
have a full independent public inquiry with a remit that  
goes way beyond the design, construction and modification  
of the building itself. An effective and prompt inquiry  
will necessarily have to follow defined terms of reference,  
and setting those is obviously crucial. The terms will be  
set formally by the Prime Minister, but she will do so  
following recommendations from the chair of the public  
inquiry, Sir Martin Moore-Bick. Sir Martin was appointed  
to head up the inquiry on 29 June and on that very day  
he visited the site and spoke with some of those who  
had been affected by the tragedy. Sir Martin has been  
absolutely clear in his desire to consult the affected

395

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

12 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry

396

*[Alok Sharma]*

residents about what the terms of the reference should  
be. I know that he has been meeting them to hear their  
views. He has also said that he welcomes the views from  
the wider community. Those are the actions of a person  
who wants proactively to engage with those directly  
affected right from the start. I urge hon. Members who  
have concerns or ideas about the terms of the inquiry to  
raise them with the team. The details are available on  
the inquiry website: grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk.

During today's debate, some concern has been expressed  
about Sir Martin's suitability for the role, but as the  
Iirst Secretary of State has said, he is independently  
appointed, extremely well qualified and totally impartial.  
Sir Martin is a hugely experienced former Court of  
Appeal judge. Judges decide cases solely on the evidence  
presented in court and in accordance with the law. As a  
senior judge, Sir Martin has worked across a range of  
cases. There have been cases where Sir Martin has been  
praised by civil liberties lawyers and cases where he has  
found in favour of housing association tenants, but in  
each case he will have made decisions based on the law  
and the evidence—nothing more, and nothing less.

Opposition Members may be aware that from December  
2005 to December 2009, Sir Martin was chair of the  
legal services consultative panel, which advises successive  
Lord Chancellors on the regulation and training of  
lawyers, legal services and other related matters. The  
Lord Chancellors whom he served were Lord Ialconer  
and Jack Straw. I have previously noted in this House  
that it is vital for Government, central and local, to  
work hard to win the trust of those people directly  
affected by this tragedy. I have no doubt that Sir Martin  
is similarly aware that he needs to foster that trust. I am  
sure that, as his dialogue with the local community  
continues, they will note that his only motivation is to  
get to the bottom of what happened.

I assure hon. Members that the Government will  
co-operate fully with the inquiry, and I hope that the  
same will be true of the local authority and any other  
individual or body whose work falls within the inquiry's  
remit. It is absolutely vital that no stone is left unturned  
and that anyone who has done wrong has nowhere to  
hide. To help get to the truth, survivors of the fire and  
the families of the victims will receive funding for legal  
representation at the inquiry. Details of how they access  
that legal funding will follow once the inquiry is up and  
running.

Some concern has been raised about the lack of a  
coroner's inquest into the deaths at Grenfell. Let me  
assure colleagues that there will be an inquest. The  
coroner is already investigating the deaths; that is a  
statutory duty. The police-led investigation is already  
under way in conjunction with the London Iire Brigade  
and the Health and Safety Executive. The police  
investigation will consider potential criminal liability.  
The police have been very clear: arrests will follow if  
any evidence of criminal wrongdoing is found. Unlike a  
coroner's inquest, a full, judge-led public inquiry will  
allow us to look at the broader circumstances leading  
up to and surrounding the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower.

It will also allow us to take any action necessary as  
quickly as possible to prevent a similar tragedy from  
happening again.

A number of colleagues have expressed concerns  
about timing. Of course, we want the inquiry to be  
completed as quickly as possible and the main priority  
will be to establish the facts of what action is needed to  
prevent such a tragedy from happening again. It will be  
for Sir Martin to determine the timescale for the inquiry,  
but I am certain that he will be aware of the universal  
desire for an interim report to be published at the  
earliest opportunity.

In cases of some past disasters, such as Hillsborough  
and the sinking of the Marchioness, it took far too long  
for the whole story of what happened to emerge. We do  
not want that to be the case with Grenfell Tower. That  
was why the Prime Minister ordered a full public inquiry  
as soon as the scale of the tragedy became apparent.  
Regardless of politics or ideology and of what we think  
is the best course of action, all of us here want one  
thing: the truth. It might prove uncomfortable for some  
and it might not fit the preconception of others, but the  
truth must come out. I am confident that Sir Martin  
Moore-Bick will see that the truth does come out. The  
survivors of the Grenfell fire and the families of those  
who were lost deserve no less.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry.

**Mr Speaker:** We will soon come to the matter for  
which a good many Members are probably waiting—I  
rather imagine they are; if they are not, they should be.  
They could be awaiting the Adjournment debate with  
eager anticipation, bated breath and beads of sweat  
upon their brows, but quite a lot are probably waiting  
for the announcement of the results of the elections for  
Chairs of Select Committees. Before we come to those, I  
will take a point of order from Jenny Chapman.

**Jenny Chapman** (Darlington) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. The House is aware that the repeal  
Bill is to be published tomorrow morning. Disconcertingly,  
the Labour party has received reports that the press is  
to be briefed on its contents this evening. Mr Speaker,  
have you received any notice from the Government that  
a Minister intends to come to this House at the earliest  
opportunity to make a statement as to the contents of  
the Bill? If not, could you please advise me on how we  
might be able to bring the contents of the Bill to the  
attention of the House before 21 July?

**Mr Speaker:** The short answer is that I have received  
no indication of any intention on the part of a Minister  
to make a statement on the matter tomorrow. However,  
it is perfectly open to the hon. Lady and her colleagues  
to ensure that they have a default position so that if no  
ministerial statement is proffered, they could at least  
give themselves the chance of an urgent question. I  
cannot offer any guarantee as to whether such a question  
would be selected, but it can be selected, by definition,  
only if it is submitted. In so far as the hon. Lady seeks  
my advice, that is my advice without prejudice.

397

Speaker's Statement: Select Committee  
Chairs

7pm

12 JULY 2017

**Mr Speaker:** We come now to the announcement of  
the results for the election of Chairs of Select Committees.  
Nominations for the 27 elected Select Committee Chairs  
and the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee  
closed on Friday 7 July, and elections were held by secret  
ballot today. No ballot was necessary for 17 Committees  
for which a single nomination had been received, as  
follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Committee* | *Elected* |
| Culture, Media and Sport | Damian Collins |
| Environmental Audit | Mary Creagh |
| Exiting the European Union | Hilary Benn |
| Health | Dr Sarah Wollaston |
| Home Affairs | Yvette Cooper |
| International Development | Stephen Twigg |
| International Trade | Angus Brendan MacNeil |
| Justice | Robert Neill |
| Petitions | Helen Jones |
| Procedure | Mr Charles Walker |
| Public Accounts | Meg Hillier |
| Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs | Mr Bernard Jenkin |
| Scottish Affairs | Pete Wishart |
| Standards | Sir Kevin Barron |
| Welsh Affairs | David T.C. Davies |
| Women and Equalities | Mrs Maria Miller |
| Work and Pensions | Frank Field |

I say what I am about to say principally for the  
benefit of people attending to our proceedings outwith

*Speaker's Statement: Select* 398

*Committee Chairs*

the Chamber. What I have just said means that those  
named individuals have been elected or—I think in every  
case—re-elected as Chairs of those Select Committees.  
In the contested elections, a total of 587 ballot papers  
were submitted, the ballots being counted under the  
alternative vote system. The following candidates were  
elected:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Committee* | *Elected* |
| Backbench Business | Ian Mearns |
| Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy | Rachel Reeves |
| Communities and Local Government | Clive Betts |
| Defence | Dr Julian Lewis |
| Education | Robert Halfon |
| Environment, Food and Rural Affairs | Neil Parish |
| Foreign Affairs | Tom Tugendhat |
| Northern Ireland Affairs | Dr Andrew Murrison |
| Science and Technology | Norman Lamb |
| Transport | Lilian Greenwood |
| Treasury | Nicky Morgan |

The full breakdown of voting in each contest, indicating  
the votes attributable to each candidate after each  
redistribution of the votes of eliminated candidates is  
set out in a paper, shortly available on the Parliament  
website, and from the Vote Office. The Members so  
elected take up their positions formally when their  
Committee has been nominated by the House. I  
congratulate all right hon. and hon. Members concerned.  
May I, with the concurrence of the House, thank all  
those candidates who took part in the elections? If I  
may say so, this is the somewhat more democratic  
House of Commons in 2017 by comparison with an  
earlier era.

399

12 JULY 2017

Redundancy Modification Orders

400

Redundancy Modification Orders

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

7.4 pm

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)  
*rose—[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am saddened by the speedy  
exit—

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** But not surprised.

**Mr Speaker:** But not surprised, says the First Secretary  
of State. I am saddened by the speedy exit of large  
numbers of Members. If there are so many Members  
who wish to leave and who do not wish to hear the  
oration of the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East  
Falkirk (Martyn Day) on the subject of redundancy  
modification orders—a quite unaccountable departure  
on their part—I hope that they will leave the Chamber  
quickly and quietly so that the rest of us can listen to  
the oration of the hon. Gentleman.

**Martyn Day:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am grateful  
to you for allowing me this opportunity to raise the  
issue of redundancy modification orders—or, to use the  
full Sunday name, the Redundancy Payments (Continuity  
of Employment in Local Government, etc.) (Modification)  
Order 1999.

As the name implies, the order acts to preserve continuity  
of employment where an employee moves between certain  
local government, and indeed some other identified,  
positions. Pretty much every type of job that once  
belonged to the local government family is covered by  
the RMO, with a wide range of bodies listed. To illustrate  
that, the list already includes bodies in my constituency,  
such as West Lothian Leisure Ltd, and others including  
the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish  
Water, the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of  
Care and the Scottish Social Services Council, to name  
just a few.

I refer Members to the order's explanatory notes,  
which describe its effect quite clearly:

“The Order modifies certain provisions of the Employment  
RightsAct1996concerningredundancypayments,intheirapplication  
to persons employed by certain local government employers or  
other employers in related sectors. The modifications have the  
effect that the employment of such a person by more than one  
such employer may be treated as if it were continuous for the  
purposes of those provisions; and re-engagement of such a person,  
or an offer of re-engagement made to such a person, by any such  
employer is treated as if it were re-engagement, or as if the offer  
had been made, by that person's employer.”

In ordinary language, that means that the order deems  
certain successive employments as continuous, and the  
provisions of the Employment Rights Act 1996 would  
apply as if the individual had been employed by the  
same employer throughout the entire period.

If an employee under notice of redundancy receives a  
job offer from another listed body on the modification  
order and starts the new role within four weeks of the  
end of their old job, they are considered to have continuity  
of employment. If an employee decides during the first  
four weeks not to continue with the new job, they will  
be able to terminate the contract, and they would be

entitled to receive any redundancy payments from the  
old employer. However, no continuous service accrued  
under the redundancy modification order applies to  
anything other than the redundancy payment. Such  
continuous service fails to entitle employees to any  
additional annual leave or other benefit over and above  
that of their contractual entitlements.

While the order treats certain types of successive  
employments as continuous, it does not preserve continuity  
if there is a break in service. The order has been  
amended a number of times to include new employments,  
with the last amendment being in 2015.

The crux of the issue, and the reason for this debate,  
is the lack of progress made on updating the order, and  
the impacts of this on employees' rights and continuous  
service benefits—benefits such as pension and annual  
leave entitlement, as well as the calculation of redundancy  
payments. Many terms and conditions of local government  
employment are linked to continuous service, so the  
impact of changing employers extends far beyond  
redundancy rights, affecting other entitlements, such as  
sickness allowance and maternity pay.

The lack of an update to the order means that a  
number of organisations across the UK have yet to be  
included in the order, despite applying for inclusion—in  
some cases, several years ago. One such organisation is  
the Falkirk Community Trust, which applied for inclusion  
shortly after its establishment in 2011. Its application  
has been considered, and the trust has been approved  
for inclusion in the schedule of bodies in the order. To  
date, this inclusion has not taken place and has been  
beset with delays.

The Government stated in 2015 that the order would  
be updated in due course. As the House will be aware,  
the Department for Communities and Local Government  
administers the local government redundancy modification  
order on behalf of the UK Government and the devolved  
Administrations in Scotland and Wales. I have been  
told in answer to parliamentary questions that the  
Department is

“actively looking at options on taking forward the Redundancy  
Modification Order and will update relevant organisations in due  
course.”

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and  
Strathspey) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making a powerful  
speech about this important issue for employees. Has he  
had any indication from the Government of why this is  
taking so long and when it will be resolved?

**Martyn Day:** That is indeed a question that I shall be  
coming to, and one that I have asked by way of written  
questions and in letters to Ministers. I hope that this  
Minister will answer it tonight.

In November last year, I wrote to Ministers in the  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
asking them to set a firm timescale for updating the  
order. The response that I received was completely  
unsatisfactory: it gave no explanation for the delays,  
and made no firm commitment to updating the order  
within any definitive timescale. It is now 2017 and no  
updates have been made, which leaves many employees  
throughout the country in a kind of limbo, not knowing  
whether their continuous service will be recognised.  
Indeed, literally thousands of local government workers  
may be unaware that they could be affected by this lack  
of action if they were to move posts.

401

Redundancy Modification Orders

12 JULY 2017

Redundancy Modification Orders

402

One such person is my constituent Jill Kernan, who  
first made me aware of this issue—and I am grateful to  
her for doing so. Jill has worked in local government for  
more than 20 years, and because she has transferred  
between employers on occasion, her case very much  
highlights the problem. In 2013 her employer at the  
time, North Lanarkshire Council, formed an arm's-length  
company called North Lanarkshire Properties LLP.  
The small number of staff, and Unison, which was  
representing staff in the TUPE process, were assured  
that addition to the order was a formality, and would  
happen imminently. Given how relatively straightforward  
the process should be, that assurance did not seem  
unreasonable. Life, however, is seldom as straightforward  
as we would expect, and when Jill took up a new post  
with Falkirk Council early last year, she discovered that  
the arm's-length company—and, indeed, many others—had  
still not been informed of the decision on addition to  
the order. Consequently, Jill has lost continuation of  
service. She and others like her need to know when a  
decision will be made, and whether it will be retrospective.

The right not to be unfairly dismissed and the right to  
a redundancy payment require two years' continuous  
service, and workers affected by these delays in updating  
the order clearly risk losing those rights. While I hope  
that the situation can be resolved retrospectively, I am  
left wondering what happens to anyone who is made  
redundant during this limbo period. The redundancy  
modification order has undoubtedly had a huge impact  
on Jill's continuous-service benefits, including pension  
and annual leave entitlement as well as other service-related  
conditions. Quite simply, that is not good enough: our  
public sector staff deserve to be treated better. There are  
more than enough challenges in the local government  
and public sector environment without managers and  
staff having to investigate and try to sort out staff  
conditions and benefits when people are changing jobs  
in such circumstances.

In recent years, local government has had to come up  
with many innovative and effective ways of making  
efficiency savings and streamlining the delivery of public  
services, and the creation of arm's-length companies  
has been a regular feature of that process the length and  
breadth of the UK. Many Members will have, for  
example, culture or leisure trusts in their constituencies  
which have been set up in the last few years. I wonder  
how many of those are included in the current RMO,  
and how many are—as in my own local experience—still  
awaiting inclusion. The number of new companies of  
that kind, and consequently the number of affected  
workers, are likely to continue to increase.

The frequency of updates of the order to include new  
employments is simply not keeping pace with the reality  
of life in the public sector, and those affected are very  
frustrated by that. I share their frustration with the  
Government in this regard, and I have a number of  
questions to ask. Why is the process taking so long?  
When will it be resolved? What will be done to sort the  
problem out retrospectively so that hard-working  
constituents who have been affected by the delays do  
not potentially lose out? In particular, how can we  
ensure that those affected can reclaim any lost benefits  
when the RMO finally catches up with the new  
employments?

The redundancy modification order is a key instrument  
in protecting the terms and conditions of local government  
workers, and its timeous updating should be given a

higher priority than it has been given by this Government.  
I also think that Ministers should consider the preservation  
of other length-of-service benefits such as annual leave  
and sick pay entitlements, and not just that of redundancy  
pay.

As I mentioned earlier, the Department for Communities  
and Local Government administers the order on behalf  
of the devolved Administrations. I therefore suggest  
that, given that legislative competency over local government  
is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, it might make  
sense to devolve the administration of the redundancy  
modification order to Scotland as well. I should like to  
hear the Minister's opinion of that suggestion.

I look forward to the Minister's response, and to his  
answers to my questions.

7.14 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):** I thank the  
hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn  
Day) for raising this issue and for giving me the opportunity  
to respond. The redundancy modification order for  
local government is a statutory instrument that allows  
local government employees to carry over their employment  
service when they move between employers within the  
local government family. The order covers England,  
Scotland and Wales.

The redundancy modification order lists those bodies  
that provide local authority functions as associated  
employers for the purposes of statutory redundancy  
payments. For an individual working in local government,  
this means that their employment service with any body  
listed in the order can be used to calculate their redundancy  
payment, if the individual is made redundant. The  
order brings local government in line with arrangements  
for other associated employers under the Employment  
Rights Act 1996—for example the civil service, which  
the hon. Gentleman mentioned in his speech.

Employment matters under the Employment Rights  
Act would usually be administered by the Department  
for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. However,  
given that the redundancy modification order's focus is  
on local government, it was decided in 2009 that the  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
would be best placed to take the lead on this matter.  
That is why I am responding to the House this evening.

The redundancy modification order generally enjoys  
broad support in the local government sector. It is part  
of the local government employment rights framework,  
and when seeking to outsource services and other  
operations, local authorities will often apply for the new  
body to be covered by the order.

The redundancy modification order has been in place  
since 1983, and it was last consolidated into one piece of  
legislation in 1999. Since then, a number of separate  
orders have added new bodies to the list of associated  
bodies. It is fair to say that over that time the order has  
become a rather untidy piece of legislation. It is unwieldy,  
and it is often difficult for people both in local and  
central Government to navigate or administer.

It is also clear that more could be done to ensure that  
the current criteria and processes used by the Government  
to add new bodies to the redundancy modification  
order are far more open and transparent. For those  
reasons, the order is under review. Any review must  
ensure that the redundancy modification order is not

403

Redundancy Modification Orders

12 JULY 2017

Redundancy Modification Orders

404

*[Mr Marcus Jones]*over-burdensome in processes or future costs. I would  
like to ensure that the order is focused on core local  
government services and functions, and that it delivers  
good value for money for taxpayers.

There are a number of outstanding applications for  
bodies that are waiting to be added to the redundancy  
modification order, including several Scottish bodies, as  
the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Many of those bodies  
have been waiting some time to know whether they will  
be added and therefore become an associated employer.  
I offer my apologies to those bodies for the delay in  
providing them with an answer. As I have already  
stated, however, the redundancy modification order is  
currently under review.

The hon. Gentleman described the effect on his  
constituent of the redundancy modification order and  
the review that is currently taking place. I would be  
grateful if he would write to me with more information  
about that case as I am very interested to hear more  
about it.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Government  
intend to devolve some of the redundancy modification  
order's functions to the Scottish Government. As I am  
sure he will know, the Scottish Government have  
approached DCLG Ministers with a proposal that the  
functions be transferred under section 63 of the Scotland  
Act 1998. That would effectively remove the need for  
my Department's officials to consider applications for  
inclusion in the order and also remove Ministers in my  
Department from the decision making.

I am alert to the fact that the Scottish Government  
have good reasons for proposing that change, and I  
understand that a number of other wide-ranging public  
sector reforms have been made in Scotland recently,  
such as the introduction of integrated health and social  
care partnership arrangements across Scotland. That is  
one of the Scottish Government's flagship public sector  
reform policies, so I am sure they are keen to ensure that  
the transition to the new arrangements is implemented  
as smoothly as possible. However, Her Majesty's  
Government have a clear position on employment  
matters—they are reserved. As such, the DCLG has no  
plans to devolve any functions of the redundancy  
modification order to the Scottish Government. That  
decision was communicated to the Secretary of State

for Scotland just before the general election, and I am  
happy to write directly to Scottish Government Ministers  
to confirm it.

**Martyn Day:** I thank the Minister for those answers,  
although obviously I am disappointed with the position  
on devolution. Will he address my point about how  
timeously the order can be updated? A wait of more  
than six years for some Scottish organisations is utterly  
unacceptable.

**Mr Jones:** I will respond to the hon. Gentleman's  
point in a moment, but first I would like to finish my  
point about the Scottish Government's request for the  
matter to be devolved. I am keen to work with them to  
explore the matter further, and particularly to identify  
whether any other options are available to achieve a  
successful outcome for all parties. I therefore propose  
that, in the first instance, my officials and their counterparts  
from the Scotland Office and the Scottish Government  
meet as soon as possible so that officials can better  
understand the Scottish Government's concerns.

Finally, I will respond to a couple of the hon. Gentleman's  
points about the review. As I said, the order is still under  
review. I understand his frustration with that, but it is  
important that we get it right. He is right that the matter  
could have come before the House sooner, but we have  
just had a general election, and as a consequence my  
Department is dealing with a number of policies. In  
particular, we heard in the previous debate about some  
of the challenges that it has had as a consequence of the  
awful Grenfell fire. We are in the process of looking at  
the order, but we have to prioritise certain things.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the updating of  
the redundancy modification order could be retrospective.  
That question will have to be answered through the  
review.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for taking the time to  
raise this important matter, and I would be grateful if  
he provided me with further details of the constituent  
he mentioned. As I have said, we will take forward the  
review in due course.

*Question put and agreed to.*

7.24 pm

*House adjourned.*

405

13 JULY 2017

406

House of Commons

*Thursday 13 July 2017*

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

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

Local Transport Projects: Funding

1. **Luke Hall** (Thornbury and Yate) (Con): What  
steps he is taking to provide funding for large local  
major transport projects. [900451]

11. **Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): What steps he is taking to provide funding for  
large local major transport projects. [900461]

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**Before I start, may I welcome the new members of the  
Labour Front-Bench team to their positions? I also  
congratulate the new Chair of the Select Committee on  
Transport, the hon. Member for Nottingham South  
(Lilian Greenwood), on her success in the election  
yesterday.

Under the large local majors programme, the Department  
has already given two schemes the go-ahead. We are  
currently looking at the case to approve up to four more  
and are funding development of a further 13 schemes  
that will be considered in the near future. Last week, we  
announced the creation of a major road network that  
will enable an even greater number of local road  
improvement projects to come forward. The details of  
that scheme will be consulted on later this year.

**Luke Hall:** The road to nowhere in Yate was built in  
the 1970s and was abandoned. It is now used as a film  
set. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the road  
should be reopened? What financial assistance is his  
Department making available for projects such as that,  
which would dramatically reduce congestion in Yate?

**Chris Grayling:** Having walked the road to nowhere  
with my hon. Friend, I rather agree that it would be  
better if it had genuine motorists on it, rather than ones  
in soap operas. I hope that he will continue to encourage  
his local enterprise partnership and others to bring  
forward proposals for that road. Through the growth  
fund, we provide support for schemes such as that. The  
scheme may also be eligible for consideration as part of  
the major road network, depending on the connectivity

at either end, but I commend him for his work on the  
issue. I rather agree that it would be better if the road  
were open for motorists.

**Michael Tomlinson:** As you know, Mr Speaker, Dorset  
is a wonderful place to live, work and visit, but Dorset's  
roads, including the A350, north-south, and the A31,  
east-west, do become congested, especially in the summer  
months. What assurances can the Secretary of State  
give me and my constituents that major infrastructure  
projects in Dorset are a priority for the Government?

**Chris Grayling:** There are two ways in which I hope  
we can deliver support for my hon. Friend and his  
constituents. For those parts of the strategic road network  
that run through Dorset, Highways England is currently  
reviewing needs and looking at what the next generation  
of projects should be. There is also the creation of the  
major road network and the opportunity to develop far  
more bypasses. I think that will play an important role  
in places such as Dorset, where many towns suffer  
intensive through traffic and are not suited to such  
traffic.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): Tyne and Wear Metro  
customers are affected daily by failing trains; it has the  
lowest performance level of any equivalent system in  
the UK; that includes the oldest rolling stock on the  
London underground. That is largely due to the fact  
that the metro is well past the 35 years for which it was  
designed. Is the Secretary of State aware of the situation?  
When will he provide the funds to replace the fleet?

**Chris Grayling:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman  
on his re-election as Chair of the Backbench Business  
Committee. I am well aware of the issue that he has  
raised. I recognise the importance of the metro to  
Newcastle and the Newcastle area. I am pleased that, in  
the last few years, we have put several hundred million  
pounds of investment into the network. My Department  
is looking very carefully at what the best options are. I  
understand the need to make changes, so that the metro  
can carry on serving people in the way it has in the past.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Will the Secretary  
of State commit to supporting the Welsh Government's  
plans by providing a comprehensive funding package  
for the South Wales Metro?

**Chris Grayling:** Of course, central Government are  
providing a substantial contribution to the South Wales  
Metro. I have also extended an offer to the Welsh  
Government to enable them to take over that infrastructure,  
so that they can run a truly integrated service on that  
route. I am waiting with interest to see what plans they  
bring forward to make that vision a reality.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): It is 30 years  
since Crossrail and the Thameslink upgrade project  
were first proposed. Does my right hon. Friend welcome  
the fact that it is a Conservative Government who have  
seen those projects make such progress towards completion  
in a few months?

**Chris Grayling:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. I am very excited by Crossrail, not only because  
of what it will deliver for London but because it is the

407

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

408

biggest engineering project of its kind in Europe. I hope  
that we will be able to build on that expertise, and that  
UK plc will take advantage of what has been done by  
winning contracts internationally. When it opens next  
year, Thameslink will make a real difference to passengers  
to the north and south. I am proud of what we are  
achieving.

**Laura Pidcock** (North West Durham) (Lab): I thank  
the Secretary of State for coming to my constituency  
during the general election campaign. What does he  
intend to do about the terrible transport infrastructure  
investment and the inequality that exists between London  
and the north-east, resulting in £1,943 per person being  
spent in London and just £220 per person being spent in  
the north-east? I do not begrudge London that investment,  
but people in North West Durham are as important.

**Chris Grayling:** I have never doubted that. Of course,  
the balance between regions will depend on what projects  
are happening at the time. The hon. lady will have seen  
in our manifesto the commitment to the northern  
powerhouse rail programme, which will mean a significant  
change in the balance. I am waiting for Transport for  
the North to come forward with its recommendations  
on the form that should take. There are other benefits  
for her constituency. It will see the arrival in the very  
near future of a new generation of express trains on the  
east coast main line, which will be vastly better than her  
constituents have at the moment.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The Gibb report  
put forward a solid business case for the electrification  
of the Uckfield line, which runs through my constituency  
of Wealden. Will the Secretary of State meet me and  
local campaigners to get this project on track?

**Chris Grayling:** I am very happy to meet my hon.  
Friend, and I absolutely recognise the issue. The other  
part of deliberations around the Uckfield line is the  
private-sector proposal, which I have said we will happily  
look at, to create BML2—the Brighton main line 2. We  
should look at all these things in the round and ask  
what is the best future for that route, but I am very  
happy to meet my hon. Friend.

**Mr Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover) (Lab): Why does not  
the Secretary of State for Transport tell his friends that  
some of these so-called projects are pie in the sky from a  
Government who are already committed to spending  
more than £80 billion on High Speed 2, under which  
there are going to be two tracks through Derbyshire—not  
one, but two: one a slow track and one a fast track?  
Why does he not get real and understand that there  
should be a reassessment of HS2? He only has a tiny  
majority, and believe me, a lot of Members on both  
sides of this House are fed up with the idea of spending  
money in the far distant future on HS2 when there are  
all these projects on today's Order Paper on which they  
want action.

**Chris Grayling:** I am very surprised that the hon.  
Gentleman is opposing a scheme that will deliver capacity  
improvements and journey improvements between the  
great cities of the north, and link Birmingham to  
Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds, and that  
will make a real difference economically to the areas he  
represents. It is a project that is overwhelmingly supported  
by those who represent those communities in the north.

Airports/Ports: Effect of Leaving EU

2. **David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): What recent  
discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the  
potential effect on passenger capacity at airports and  
ports of the UK leaving the EU. [900452]

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**My Department is working closely with a number of  
other Departments, including the Home Office, to ensure  
that ports, airports and other transport operators are  
fully prepared for when we leave the EU. I am committed  
to putting passengers at the heart of our transport  
policy, and that will certainly apply to the arrangements  
that exist when we leave the EU.

**David Linden:** Brexit will present profound challenges  
for immigration at our ports and airports, but the  
Tourism Industry Council forecasts that there should  
be a 200% increase in resources for the UK Border  
Force while in effect there has been a 15% cut, despite  
an 11% increase in passenger numbers. How does the  
Secretary of State square that circle, and how can we  
ensure that we will have passenger safety after Brexit?

**Chris Grayling:** Our ambition after Brexit is to have  
borders that function as closely as possible to the way  
they currently do. We do not want to deter tourists or  
businesspeople from coming to the country. Having a  
managed migration system does not mean that we  
suddenly have to create barriers to tourists, and that is  
not our intention.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The  
Secretary of State did not provide any substance in that  
answer on the discussions he is having. Some 23 million  
inbound passengers from the EU pass through UK  
airports each year, and they are processed quickly using  
special lanes and scanning. What funding has the Secretary  
of State identified is required for infrastructure and  
resources to avoid queues for those coming here? He  
might also be aware that the EU is planning an ESTA-type  
visa system for non-EU citizens, so has he had discussions  
about the impact of that when the UK leaves the EU?

**Chris Grayling:** Of course, we have discussions all the  
time across the Government about post-EU exit  
arrangements—we had a Committee meeting to that  
effect yesterday—but as I said to the hon. Member for  
Glasgow East (David Linden), it is not our intention or  
desire to erect barriers at the borders, for tourists arriving,  
for example. Indeed, we are investing in things like  
automated gates to speed the flow through our borders,  
and we will carry on doing things like that.

**Alan Brown:** Another potential impact on passenger  
capacity is the negative impact if the UK does not  
remain part of the open skies agreement. That is very  
important for regional airports such as Prestwick, adjacent  
to my constituency. The Prime Minister said this week  
that she had discussions with President Trump on open  
skies, but can the Secretary of State provide an assurance  
that the UK will remain part of open skies and the  
single aviation market?

**Chris Grayling:** I can give the hon. Gentleman an  
assurance that I am absolutely confident that after we  
have left the EU there will be an open skies agreement

409

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

410

with the United States. I have had discussions with my  
US counterpart; there is an absolute desire on both  
sides of the Atlantic to make sure that the aviation  
arrangements remain as they are at the moment.

**Karl Turner** (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): Can  
the Minister clarify that on leaving the EU we will  
remain members of the European Aviation Safety Agency,  
so as to maintain and grow our passenger capacity in  
accordance with our economic needs?

**Chris Grayling:** Obviously the details will come out in  
the negotiations, but we want to continue to collaborate  
with our European partners on air safety issues, just as  
we do with other organisations around the world, such  
as the US Federal Aviation Administration, and I see  
nothing to suggest that that will change after we leave.

**Karl Turner:** But have we not already seen this  
Government's shocking acceptance of departing from  
EASA safety standards by condoning the wet-leasing of  
Qatar Airways services to replace the poverty-paid British  
Airways mixed-fleet crews, in which the substitute crews'  
hours will not be subject to the safety standards prescribed  
by EASA?

**Chris Grayling:** I am sure that all the international  
airlines that operate into and out of the United Kingdom  
maintain proper safety standards. They are subject to  
regulation at European and international levels, and  
they would not be able to use UK airports if we were  
not confident that they were safe airlines to fly with.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Lloyd Russell-Moyle. Not here. I  
wish he were here. I hope the fellow is all right. Anyway,  
we move on. I call Rachel Maclean.

**Cycling and Walking**

1. **Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): What measures  
   his Department is taking to encourage cycling and  
   walking. [900454]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman):** The Government very much seek to  
make cycling and walking the natural choices for short  
journeys, or as part of a longer journey. In April this  
year we published the first-ever statutory cycling and  
walking investment strategy for England. The strategy  
details our plans for increasing cycling and walking and  
identifies £1.2 billion of funding, which may be invested  
until 2021.

**Rachel Maclean:** I very much thank my hon. Friend  
for his response. My constituency has many footpaths,  
cut-throughs and small tracks that link our green spaces  
together. These are extremely pleasant for residents to  
make use of in their leisure time. However, they are not  
always visible on mapping platforms such as Google  
Maps. We would like to encourage their use to promote  
health and wellbeing in the constituency, so will the  
Minister tell me what discussions he has had with those  
technology platforms to make those paths more accessible  
to local residents?

**Jesse Norman:** I thank my hon. Friend for her question  
and share her delight in these informal paths, of which  
we have an enormous number in Herefordshire, as she  
might imagine. Local authorities are best placed, in the  
first instance, to use their knowledge and understanding  
of local networks, as are tourism agencies and local

map providers. From my point of view, there have not  
yet been any discussions with the electronic mapping  
services, but I very much take my hon. Friend's point  
and I have already made plans to meet some of them in  
order to take forward this agenda.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The Minister will  
know that many cyclists are killed and injured on the  
roads every year. Just on the edge of my constituency,  
one person was killed and two were injured this week.  
We need to look at improving cycling, and we must have  
discussions with the Health Department. What discussions  
has the Minister had with the Health Department to  
ensure that people get more exercise but are also kept  
safe on the roads?

**Jesse Norman:** I absolutely recognise the problem  
that the hon. Gentleman raises. I have not yet personally  
had any discussions of that kind, but the Government  
are making significant investments in improving safety  
for cyclists. That includes training and improved cycling  
facilities such as cycle lanes. That will continue to be  
part of our programme over the next few years.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): Can the Minister  
assure me that he is having regular discussions with the  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
about promoting cycling and walking networks in new  
developments? We have a massive opportunity in Taunton  
Deane now that we have garden town status. In particular,  
I know that constituents would love to link up Bishop's  
Lydeard, Cotford St Luke and Norton Fitzwarren with  
a cycleway. Will the Minister agree to meet me to  
discuss providing help with some pots of money to  
unlock that?

**Mr Speaker:** Possibly even on the prospective cycleway.

**Jesse Norman:** As a keen cyclist, I look forward to  
meeting my hon. Friend and discussing that matter.  
There are plenty of existing pots of money that are  
potentially available for applications, and we as a  
Department work closely with the DCLG, notably on  
the local growth fund.

**Rail Electrification: South Wales**

1. **Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): What steps he is  
   taking to electrify the rail network to Swansea and  
   further west. [900455]

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**I congratulate the hon. Lady on her election to this  
House. Electrification work is continuing on the Great  
Western main line, but the good news for her constituents  
and others in south Wales is that the new generation of  
electric trains will arrive in Cardiff and Swansea this  
autumn, providing more seats and better journey  
experiences. That is good news for rail users in south  
Wales and the west country.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** It has been reported that the Secretary  
of State is preparing to announce yet further delays to  
the Great Western main line electrification programme,  
and my constituents in Gower are fed up with the  
contempt that the Government continue to show them  
on investment. The Secretary of State has said that the

411

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

412

programme will happen, but will he promise that it will  
not be delayed any further? We need to make Swansea  
the gateway to west Wales.

**Chris Grayling:** I appreciate the importance of transport  
to Swansea, and that is precisely why I am doing what  
the hon. Lady's constituents will want, which is to  
deliver them a better journey experience not in several  
years' time but this autumn. They will have a new  
generation of trains that will provide much better journeys  
to London, which is exactly the kind of service they  
want. When the first new train comes to Swansea, I  
hope that she will be there to see it and will realise what  
a difference it will make to herconstituents'railjourneys  
in south Wales and elsewhere.

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):  
I congratulate the Secretary of State on moving ahead  
with the electrification of the rail line into south Wales  
and through Swansea. I remind him that the electrification  
of the railway as far as Swansea was announced by a  
Conservative Secretary of State, and that the Labour  
Government did not electrify a single inch of the rail  
lines in Wales to improve the Welsh economy.

**Chris Grayling:** If I remember rightly, the Labour  
Government electrified only 10 miles in 13 years. My  
righthon.Friendwillunderstandthat wehave to ensure  
first and foremost that we are delivering better journeys  
for passengers, and I am pleased that this autumn's  
changes and the new trains arriving in Swansea and  
other parts of south Wales will lead to an immediate  
improvement in passengers' journeys. That is what they  
really want.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): In order to make the most of the benefits of  
electrification in south Wales, we need new stations to  
take advantage of capacity on the line. The proposals  
for St Mellon's parkway in the east of Cardiff are good,  
and they are backed by the private sector, the Welsh  
Government and Cardiff Council and have cross-party  
support. When can we expect a decision about money  
from the new stations fund?

**Chris Grayling:** I also think that that is an interesting  
proposal, and it does not actually need quite the same  
mechanism of approval as a station built with public  
funding. I am happy to see the project go ahead. The  
real issue is ensuring that it can work with the timetables,  
so that trains can stop and the service can work. As a  
private sector-funded project, if it is practical, I can see  
no reason why any of us would do anything other than  
support it.

**Transport Infrastructure Investment**

1. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
   What steps he is taking to balance the distribution of  
   transport infrastructure investment between London  
   and other regions. [900456]

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** It is always a delight to perform under your  
benevolent gaze, Mr Speaker. The industrial strategy  
Green Paper set out the Government's commitment to  
take account of the balance of spending per head on

infrastructure between different regions. The hon. Lady  
will be familiar with the transport investment strategy—  
published just last week—which sets out the Government's  
priorities for transport investment, supporting growth  
right across the country. I assure her that how projects  
contribute to creating a more balanced economy will in  
future be weighed, measured and valued in a way that it  
has never been before.

**DianaJohnson:**Butwe know thatLondongets10times  
the investment that Yorkshire and the Humber does.  
While Crossrail 2 has already been earmarked for  
£27 billion, the rail electrification to Hull has been  
scrapped by Transport Ministers, the A63 upgrade has  
been delayed, and the Hull chamber of commerce is  
concerned about the downgrading of TransPennine  
services. In Hull, we pay our taxes and we pay higher  
fares, so when are we going to get a fair deal on  
transport investment?

**MrHayes:**Thehon.Ladyisbeinguntypicallychurlish—  
*[Interruption.]* No, untypically churlish. The Government  
have committed to build the infrastructure to support  
regional growth. She knows that that is why we are  
increasing Government infrastructure investment by  
50% over the next four years, supporting growth and  
jobs right across the country. That includes the £15 billion  
we committed to the first road investment strategy,  
which she will know involves schemes right across the  
country—south, east, west and north. But let me find  
common ground with her; she is right that her part of  
the country deserves its place in the sun, which is why  
we must rebalance our investment to reflect local needs  
such as hers.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Bradford is one of the  
biggest cities in the country and, in the last Parliament,  
the Government were very supportive of it being a stop  
on Northern Powerhouse Rail. Is it the Government's  
position that they will make sure that the investment is  
provided to ensure that Bradford is a stop on Northern  
Powerhouse Rail?

**Mr Hayes:** My hon. Friend has made that point  
previously to champion the cause and interests of people  
in Bradford. We are waiting for proposals fromTransport  
forthe North.Ihave no doubt that hewilllobby for and  
so contribute to those proposals, and that he will make  
his case to Transport for the North. We will consider  
the proposals when we get them, but I fully understand  
the strength of his argument.

22. [900475] **Heidi Alexander** (Lewisham East) (Lab):  
While I do not dispute the need for investment in  
transport infrastructure across the country, the fact  
remains that promised investment in London, such as  
for additional carriages on Southeastern services, has  
yet to materialise. The rail Minister, the hon. Member  
for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard),  
said on 30 March that it will be happening “very soon”.  
Can we have an update?

**Mr Hayes:** The rail Minister has made it a priority,  
and when he makes things a priority, they get done.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): The Minister  
spoke about places in the sun a minute ago, and I am  
sure he was thinking of Cleethorpes. As he knows from  
his recent visit to my constituency, one of the urgent

413

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

414

priorities is the resurfacing of the A180 to remove the  
concrete surfaces. Does the Department have any plans  
that will help that project? As he was unable to answer  
Question 3, perhaps he could develop the role of apprentices  
in major schemes.

**Mr Hayes:** I am always willing to do that, as you  
know, Mr Speaker.

I was pleased to visit the Cleethorpes constituency to  
unveil the new road we built as part of our road  
investment strategy. My hon. Friend is right, however,  
that there is a challenge associated with the nearby road  
surface. I considered that at the time, and the Secretary  
of State has asked us to look at these things in greater  
detail. I can assure my hon. Friend that ensuring roads  
are fit for purpose, as well as investing in new roads, is at  
the heart of all we do.

**Mr Speaker:** We are very grateful to the right hon.  
Gentleman, I am sure.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The  
east coast main line between London and the north is in  
urgent need of infrastructure investment to end the  
disruption caused by failures of the antique overhead  
power lines. How much does the Minister expect Virgin  
Trains East Coast to contribute to that?

**Mr Hayes:** The east coast main line is the line I use  
regularly, and I am extremely familiar with the quality  
of that service. The hon. Lady will know that the new  
express trains we will be using on that main line by the  
end of 2018 will offer greater capacity, reduced journey  
times and more reliable services.

**Rachael Maskell:** So not only does the Minister not  
answer my question but he does not know the amount  
the operator has to contribute, yet he is about to dig  
into the back pockets of taxpayers to bail out the  
Stagecoach-Virgin consortium when, just two years ago,  
the Government took East Coast out of public ownership  
after returning £1 billion—£1 billion!—to the Treasury.  
How much will the Virgin Trains East Coast contract  
retrofit cost the taxpayer? Does he not draw the same  
conclusion as the Labour party that, as we pay for  
private and make savings from public rail, only a publicly  
owned rail franchise can operate in the public interest?

**Mr Hayes:** My goodness, Mr Speaker. This is like a  
journey to a past that never happened. I remember one  
of British Rail's last, and perhaps most poignant, slogans:  
“We're getting there”. Well, getting there is a pretty  
fundamental requirement of any journey. Could there  
be a less ambitious objective than merely getting there?  
That is what nationalised railways were like—we all  
remember them. They were a disaster. The cost of  
renationalising the railways in the way the hon. Lady  
recommends would be at least £19 billion, which is  
£19 billion that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner)  
and others want to spend on all these other schemes.

**Mr Speaker:** Our only surprise is that neither Yeats  
nor Samuel Taylor Coleridge featured in the answer  
provided by the right hon. Gentleman.

Roads: Mid Sussex

7. **Sir Nicholas Soames** (Mid Sussex) (Con): What  
plans he has to improve the road network in Mid Sussex  
constituency. [900457]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman):** I will also attempt to keep Keats and  
Coleridge out of this answer.

Mid Sussex will benefit from the investment of over  
£100 million on local road maintenance and small-scale  
transport schemes in West Sussex County Council up to  
2021. In addition, the county benefits from access to  
£304 million-worth of local growth funding over the  
same period which has been secured by the Coast to  
Capital local enterprise partnership.

**Sir Nicholas Soames:** Mid Sussex is greatly looking  
forward to the Secretary of State's visit in early September  
to see the serious problems we have on the roads. Does  
the Minister agree that it is cardinally bad, rotten  
government to go on pushing housing into constituencies  
such as mine without investing in the infrastructure  
there in the first place? It is not a matter for West Sussex  
County Council; it is a matter for Mid Sussex District  
Council, which cannot go on accepting this volume of  
house building without a significant investment in dealing  
with these major bottlenecks on the roads.

**Jesse Norman:** My right hon. Friend has made his  
point eloquently. All I would say is that the major roads  
network that we announced last week, along with the  
bypass fund, is specifically designed to be part of a  
wider strategy whose purpose is to provide the infrastructure  
that new housing development requires. That should be  
part of the solution for any of these schemes.

**John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. This question has been narrowly  
confined to Mid Sussex, from which the right hon.  
Gentleman's Warley constituency is a considerable distance  
away. If he is going to focus his question exclusively on  
Mid Sussex, not “and elsewhere” or “and other places”,  
we will hear him.

**John Spellar:** Will the Minister accept that the  
improvements to the road system to East Sussex—

**Sir Nicholas Soames:** Mid Sussex.

**John Spellar:** Mid Sussex. Does the Minister accept  
that the road system to Mid Sussex would be considerably  
improved if money was diverted from the ever-deepening,  
bottomless pit of HS2, thus enabling those projects to  
move forward much more quickly? May I join my hon.  
Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner) in calling  
for a reassessment of this increasingly troubled scheme?

**Jesse Norman:** Mr Speaker, it is a mark of your grace  
that you were able to allow the right hon. Gentleman to  
proceed with a question so evidently unrelated to the  
issue, so much so that he was not able to make it to the  
actual name of the constituency or the area concerned,  
although that came in the first 10 seconds of his question.

415

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

416

The answer to his question, if I may dignify it with an  
answer, is that there will be plenty of investment in both  
sides of that equation.

**Mr Speaker:** Certainly I was generous, but generosity  
is my middle name.

**Ticketing Information**

8. **Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): What steps his  
Department is taking to improve ticketing information  
for rail passengers. [900458]

1. **James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East)  
   (Con): What steps his Department is taking to simplify  
   ticketing information for rail passengers. [900464]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Paul Maynard):** Passengers are frustrated by the lack  
of information they get when choosing their ticket. The  
problems can be deep-rooted, but when I started as rail  
Minister I wanted to make rapid progress. I have been  
working with industry, the regulator and consumer  
groups, having launched an action plan on fares and  
ticketing. We are getting on with the job of delivering  
the many, many proposals contained therein.

**Damien Moore:** Does the Minister agree that if rail  
franchises do not adopt a more transparent ticket price  
system voluntarily, the Government should step in to  
ensure that rail passengers are offered the best value for  
money?

**Paul Maynard:** We certainly recognise that fares revenue  
is crucial to funding the day-to-day operation of the  
railway. I agree that all franchises should listen to  
passengers, and ensure that their fare structures are  
both fair and logical, as well as keenly priced, to support  
the many passengers who rely upon them.

**James Duddridge:** Southend has two train lines and  
multiple stations within the Southend boundary. Would  
it not be simpler if the same ticket could be used on  
both lines, which would be good for residents and  
visitors alike? It would clear things up for visitors,  
allowing them to do journeys into Southend and then  
pop in somewhere else on the way back to London.

**Paul Maynard:** I agree that Southend's beauties merit  
a journey by all passengers, wherever possible. We are  
seeing rapid technological change on the railway. The  
growth in smart ticketing and the various ticket media  
within a relatively short period will enhance the possibility  
for passengers to experience the flexibility to which my  
hon. Friend refers. I am looking forward to working  
with the industry on driving that technological change  
to make that vision a reality.

**MrSpeaker:**IcalltheChairof the TransportCommittee,  
Lilian Greenwood.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): The  
ticketing information in which passengers are most  
interested is the price. Since 2014, commuter rail fare  
increases have been capped to the retail prices index,  
but in an answer to me yesterday, the rail Minister said  
that that fares policy is “under review”. Next month's

inflation figures will determine the cap for January 2018.  
If the Department reverts to the old formula, fares  
could rise by 5% or more, pricing many off the railways.  
Next week, when the Secretary of State announces his  
investment plans for control period 6, will he pledge  
that the improvements that passengers need will come  
at a price they can afford?

**Paul Maynard:** I suppose thatI should start bywelcoming  
the hon. Lady to her new position, although she has  
started to prognosticate already about what may or may  
not occur in the future. We have no intention of seeking  
to raise fares in the way that she describes, and it is not  
an appropriate path to go down. We always seek to put  
passengers first. We are continuing to maintain the cap  
at the moment, but we keep policies under review at all  
times. She should not read more into that than is  
actually there.

**Kettering Rail Bridge**

1. **Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): If he will  
   ensure that work to strengthen the Kettering rail bridge  
   (a) starts and (b) is completed to schedule. [900459]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Paul Maynard):** Network Rail has announced that the  
A6013 Northampton Road, from Northfield Avenue  
mini roundabout to LakeAvenue, will be closed between  
24 July 2017 and 4 Sep 2017. Network Rail is confident  
that the work will begin and finish as scheduled, and we  
are in regular contact with Network Rail in regard to  
this work.

**Mr Hollobone:** The Northampton Road railway bridge  
is located right next to the busiest road junction in  
Kettering town centre. The junction will be closed for  
six weeks and will cause major disruption to the town.  
The frustration of local residents will at least be partly  
assuaged if the Minister could reassure all of us who  
live in Kettering that he is at least actively considering  
proposals to reinstate the half-hourly mainline train  
service north from Kettering, which will go over the  
repaired bridge in the new franchise.

**Paul Maynard:** I recognise why my hon. Friend's  
constituents would have concerns, having seen a similar  
closure in my own constituency and the issues and  
problems that that has caused. I have also heard his  
observations and views on the extra services that he  
wishes to see from Kettering. We will shortly be launching  
a consultation on the new east midlands franchise and I  
am sure that his request will figure prominently in our  
thinking on what we do next on that franchise.

**Liquefied Natural Gas**

1. **Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland

West) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to  
promote the use of liquefied natural gas as an alternative  
to diesel fuel. [900460]

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** The low carbon truck trial, which ran to 2016,  
provided over £11 million to support industry-led trials  
of alternative fuels in the road freight sector, the majority  
of which involved liquefied natural gas.

417

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

418

**Mrs Hodgson:** I thank the Minister for his answer.  
Statebourne Cryogenics, based in my constituency, produces  
a world-first portable LNG refuelling station, which  
eliminates the release of methane into the atmosphere  
with significant cost reductions to the process. This is  
seen as an alternative to diesel for large HGVs, especially  
in the light of discussions around diesel pollution. Will  
the Minister commit to meeting me, Statebourne  
Cryogenics, and other partners in this project such as  
BOC and Calor Gas to discuss this matter further?

**Mr Hayes:** Well, the short answer is yes, but I do not  
want to give a short answer. Let me say this: the hon.  
Lady's constituency is a beacon for low emission vehicles  
of all kinds. I have visited the Nissan plant in her  
constituency, which builds the Nissan Leaf, but I feel  
that my visits to her constituency have been too few, so I  
will meet not only her, but representatives of the businesses  
that she describes to find out what more we can do.

**Mr Speaker:** It is obvious that the hon. Lady is in a  
state of quite overwhelming excitement at the prospect,  
as I am sure will be the people of her constituency—  
particularly those of them who know the right hon.  
Gentleman—when they realise that they are to be privileged  
with such a visit.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman):** Especially if there is an unveiling to go  
with it.

**Towed Trailers**

12. **Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): What steps he  
is taking to improve the safety of towed trailers on  
roads. [900462]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman):** I salute the hon. Lady for the work that  
she has done to raise the issue of towed trailer safety  
with my predecessor following the tragic death of Freddie  
Hussey. I very much look forward to meeting her to  
discuss this matter further on 19 July. As she will know,  
in November 2016, the Driver and Vehicle Standards  
Agency led a campaign about safety checks when towing  
trailers with the #TowSafe4Freddie. DVSA and  
stakeholders plan to relaunch the campaign this summer.  
The Government have also consulted about the law  
relating to causing death by careless and dangerous  
driving. I look forward to discussing all those issues  
when I meet her.

**Karin Smyth:** I welcome the Minister's comments and  
look forward to our meeting. I am grateful for the work  
of his predecessor, as are my constituents Scott and  
Donna Hussey, whose three-year-old son, Freddie, was  
killed by a loose trailer in 2014. Will the Minister offer  
his support to a new road safety initiative from the  
National Trailer and Towing Association that will see  
member organisations across the country offer free  
towing safety checks to members of the public?

**Jesse Norman:** I am absolutely delighted that the  
hon. Lady has mentioned this important initiative in  
the House and that the National Trailer and Towing  
Association has established the scheme. People can go  
to one of their participating service centres and get a

visual inspection or report on their trailers. This should  
make a difference in helping trailer owners to identify  
any defects and have them rectified. Not only do I  
welcome the initiative, but I welcome the fact that the  
association and other organisations are working closely  
with Government to improve the safety of towed vehicles.

**Railways: Cheshire**

13. **Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Whether he  
plans to expand the rail network in Cheshire. [900463]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Paul Maynard):** We are investing more than £1 billion  
in the great north rail project to transform rail travel for  
passengers across the north of England. In addition, we  
are supporting local enterprise partnerships and Transport  
for the North in progressing their priorities for investment  
in new stations and upgraded infrastructure.

**Ms McVey:** I am grateful to the Minister for his reply,  
and I want to impress on him the urgency of getting the  
mid-Cheshire rail link and the Manchester airport western  
link. Our population is expanding, businesses are increasing  
in size and the local plans will mean tens of thousands  
of new homes in the area. This cannot be catered for on  
the local roads and High Speed 2 will not be an answer.  
Will the Minister commit to support these schemes and  
come to meet me and the Mid Cheshire Rail Users  
Association?

**Paul Maynard:** First, let me welcome my right hon.  
Friend back to her place in this House. It is good to see  
her here again. As a regular commuter to school on the  
mid-Cheshire rail line, from Cuddington to Hale, I am  
all too aware of the attractions of reopening the line to  
Middlewich. I am more than happy to meet her and  
local campaigners, and it is really important that all  
local transport authorities and local enterprise partnerships  
are supportive of such projects. I am sure that in her  
early days as the Member for Tatton she will work with  
those groups to make this a reality.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): The Mersey-Dee Alliance,  
which includes the Cheshire West and Chester local  
authority, has a growth deal bid that includes rail  
improvements and the Chancellor indicated in his Budget  
that that might get some support. Can the Minister say  
whether any money has been given to the Department  
for Transport, in particular to improve the links between  
Crewe and Chester and on to north Wales?

**Paul Maynard:** We certainly recognise that our decision  
to take HS2 to Crewe by 2027 opened up a range of  
possibilities for improving connectivity into north Wales,  
considering the potential outcomes that passengers might  
want in terms of improved capacity, improved service  
frequency and so on. We are looking forward to doing  
more work on the Crewe hub and seeing what potential  
is unlocked by development at Crewe. Hopefully that  
will benefit not just Cheshire but north Wales.

**Bill Esterson** (Sefton Central) (Lab): One pound is  
spent per person on transport infrastructure in Cheshire  
and the north-west for every £7 spent per person in  
London and the south-east. Can we have our extra  
£6 per person, please, to spend on things such as rail  
and road links to the port of Liverpool, which will help  
jobs and growth across the north-west?

419

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

420

**Paul Maynard:** We are always looking to ensure that  
we balance our investment across the country over time.  
I know that during my time on the Select Committee on  
Transport we looked very carefully at the relevant regional  
transport spending figures and what they do and do not  
tell us. We could have a very lengthy answer to this  
question, but that would displease you, Mr Speaker, so  
I point out once again the £1 billion investment across  
the north to improve rail infrastructure, including in the  
hon. Gentleman's area.

A27 Upgrade: Lancing to Worthing

1. **Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham)  
   (Con): When he plans to publish his proposals for the  
   upgrade of the Lancing to Worthing section of the A27.  
   [900466]

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** Departmental officials are in discussion with  
Nexus and the Tyne and Wear Metro regarding their  
proposals for new rolling stock.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman who asked  
the question is a dedicated Member, but he represents a  
constituency in Sussex.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman)** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Well done. I call Minister Jesse Norman.

**Jesse Norman:** We got there, Mr Speaker. The £15 billion  
road investment strategy, published in December 2014,  
announced a scheme to improve the Lancing to Worthing  
section of the A27. Highways England has developed  
proposals and a public consultation will run from 19 July  
to 12 September 2017. Irom 19 July, Highways England's  
website for the scheme will have key information about  
the proposals, including the brochure, online questionnaire,  
frequently asked questions, background reports and  
supporting information.

**Tim Loughton:** I am sorry to see that the Minister  
took the wrong turning, and I am pleased to see that,  
since I posed the question, we now have a timetable. The  
Minister knows how vital upgrading the A27 is to the  
whole of West Sussex, but there are serious concerns  
that the £80 million allocated to the Worthing-Lancing  
section—Worthing being a town of 100,000 people—will  
be inadequate compared with the £250 million to bypass  
Arundel, which has just 5,000 people. If the consultation  
shows that this is not satisfactory, will he, in order to  
come up with some really meaningful solutions, seriously  
consider looking at the more expensive options?

**Jesse Norman:** I am sure that my hon. Iriend understands  
that we recognise the A27 as a strategically important  
corridor across the south coast, and we will look very  
closely at any further proposals that he wishes to make.

Topical Questions

T1. [900476] **Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Numero  
uno, Senor Presidents: if he will make a statement on  
his departmental responsibilities.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Just because the King of Spain  
visited yesterday and the hon. Gentleman felt it necessary  
to show off his language skills on that occasion, there  
was no need for him to do so again, but he obviously  
felt the need, and we have all seen what an edifying  
spectacle it was.

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**All three of us have taken part in business questions, so  
I am sure that you were not totally surprised by that  
contribution, Mr Speaker.

On a serious note, I pay great tribute to the officers of  
the British Transport police and the staff of Northern  
Rail for the way in which they responded to the bomb  
attack in Manchester. The rail staff in particular, whose  
job description that was in no way part of, responded  
heroically, and they deserve our thanks.

**Chris Bryant:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thought you  
might have picked something up from the Queen of  
Spain yesterday—*[Interruption.]* Some Spanish. Iwholly  
concur with what the Secretary of State said about the  
staff in Manchester.

When the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness is  
upon us, may I urge the Secretary of State to come to  
the Rhondda to visit the Rhondda tunnel between  
Blaencwm and Blaengwynfi? That would be a magnificent  
tunnel if it were open for the public and cyclists to go  
through. It would be a great tourist attraction if only  
his Department would hand the project over to the local  
charity, and give it £250,000 as well.

**Chris Grayling:** I know that relations between the  
hon. Gentleman and the Labour party in south Wales  
can sometimes be slightly strained, butIamsurethathe  
will use his influence on the Welsh Government, to  
whom we have offered to give the tunnel. They have not  
responded—I am waiting for their response—but it is  
there for them. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could  
encourage them to give us a response.

T3. [900478] **Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): May I ask  
the Secretary of State to sit down with the West  
Yorkshire combined authority to ensure that the  
Shipley eastern bypass, which is badly needed by my  
constituents and the local economy, is actually  
delivered, and that neither can blame the other for a  
lack of progress on it?

**Chris Grayling:** I regularly meet the combined authority,  
so I will happily discuss that issue with it. The creation  
of the major roads network and its bypass fund will, I  
hope, mean that in future we can unlock some of these  
schemes that will make such a difference to towns like  
Shipley around the country.

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): Two weeks  
ago today, the High Court gave the Secretary of State  
14daysto make a decision over Southern rail's claims  
that its appalling service was not its fault, but was all  
down to industrial action. With the record fine that has  
been imposed today, such nonsense has been totally  
blown out of the water. After months and months of  
the Secretary of State and his Ministers coming to the  
Dispatch Box and blaming the unions, they have had to  
come clean and accept that Southern rail is simply not

421

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

422

fit for purpose. Does the Secretary of State now accept  
that continuing to tolerate such ineptitude—expecting a  
rail service to rely on workers' overtime, and compromising  
safety and accessibility—simply will not wash any longer,  
and that he has to call time on Govia Thameslink  
Railway?

**Chris Grayling:** The hon. Gentleman clearly still has  
not read the judgment from two weeks ago in this  
case—a case that we actually won. Let us be clear about  
what is being done today. For months I have said that  
the problems on this railway are not purely down to  
industrial action; there are other reasons. I am very  
clear, and so is Chris Gibb's report, that the prime  
responsibility for the trouble on that network in the past  
few months lies with trade unions fighting the battles of  
30 years ago, and still they get support from the Labour  
party. The reality is that the Labour party and the  
unions are colluding to bring trouble to passengers, and  
it should stop.

Andy McDonald *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Before we proceed, may I say to  
the hon. Gentleman that his second question must be  
shorter? The right of Front Benchers to come in on  
topical questions is not sacrosanct. I have to cater to  
Back-Bench Members, and if Front Benchers take too  
long, I might reconsider the entitlement of Front Benchers  
to come in, trespassing on Back-Bench time. Please, a  
sentence. Be brief.

**Andy McDonald:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We are missing appendix 9 from the Gibb report. Can  
we see it, and will the Secretary of State tell us which  
claims he accepts and which he rejects?

**Chris Grayling:** Today's penalty has been for partial  
non-performance of contracts. The House and the country  
would expect me to impose penalties where they are  
needed and I have not sought to do anything otherwise.  
The reality is that, this afternoon, we expect the result  
of a ballot for yet further strike action for a 23.8% pay  
rise and a deal that has already been accepted by the  
ASLEF union on the same routes for the same company.  
This politically motivated set of threats of action should  
stop, and the Labour party should stop supporting it.

T5. [900480] **Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North  
Poole) (Con): For the first time in 45 years, there is a  
commercial rail service between Swanage and Wareham  
in my constituency, thanks to the dedication and hard  
work of the volunteers and members of Swanage Railway.  
What assurances can the rail Minister give that he will  
support our rail heritage and ensure that this trial  
becomes a permanent success?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Paul Maynard):** I am pleased to hear what is happening  
on Swanage Railway. I have met the all-party group on  
heritage rail, and it is always good to hear examples of  
where heritage rail can work with main line operators,  
although I agree that that has to be done safely. We are  
looking to build on more franchise agreements when  
there are sensible schemes that we can support.

T2. [900477] **Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and  
Sunderland West) (Lab): Last year, Nexus published its  
ambitious plans to expand the Tyne and Wear Metro,  
which included a welcome reference to extending  
the metro to Washington in my constituency. Will the  
Minister assure me and my constituents that the  
Government will act to upgrade this crumbling  
37-year-old network, and to ensure that the proposed  
extensions, such as that to Washington, go ahead?

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** The hon. Lady knows that the Government  
invest a great deal in the metro, and it is right that we  
should. Part of that is about improving the existing  
stations, ticketing and rolling stock. I understand her  
point about the extension of the metro. Perhaps she can  
articulate that, among the other things that we shall  
doubtless discuss, when I visit her constituency.

T6. [900481] **Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Queuing  
traffic and air pollution are the public health concerns  
for those living and working in my constituency. The  
local economy continues to grow and thrive under this  
Government, but air pollution affects the maritime  
industry, especially at Hamble Lane, where queueing is  
a real problem. Will the Minister outline the  
commitment to fund bypasses in my constituency in  
order to tackle air pollution?

**Mr Hayes:** Was it not Hegel, Mr Speaker, who said  
that nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without passion?  
My hon. Friend is certainly a passionate advocate for  
this scheme, which is important to her constituents. It is  
also important to the port, which she champions as  
well. We will look at these matters closely because port  
connectivity is vital if we are to make our maritime  
future as glorious as our maritime past.

T4. [900479] **Mary Glindon** (North Tyneside) (Lab):  
Will the Minster say whether the new rolling stock for  
Merseytravel, HS2 and Crossrail will be procured using  
private or public finance, and why that is the case?

**Chris Grayling:** There has been a long tradition,  
under Governments of both parties, of a railway where  
we lease trains from the private sector. There have  
equally been occasions, as in the procurement of railway  
carriages for the east coast main line and the great  
western main line, when the Government have stepped  
in and taken that decision. We will have to look at which  
packages are available for those individual schemes. In  
the case of Merseytravel, the hon. Lady will have to talk  
to the Labour-controlled Merseyside councils.

**Mr Speaker:** It is very good of the new Chair of the  
Select Committee on Education to drop in on us; we are  
obliged to him.

T7. [900482] **James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend  
East) (Con): With Southend airport booming, there are  
great opportunities for associated business parks and  
businesses around that expanding airport. Will the Secretary  
of State agree to look at how we can expand business  
around successful regional airports?

**Chris Grayling:** It is really important that we make  
sure that our regional airports are successful. My hon.  
Friend and I visited Southend airport a few years ago. I  
was very impressed by what it has achieved and the way

423

Oral Answers

13 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

424

in which it can be a driver of growth in the surrounding  
area. That applies across the whole country. It is one  
reason why the expansion of Heathrow is so important  
for regional airports further afield, and it is also why I  
hope that we will work together in a smart way to  
ensure that airports such as Southend flourish.

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab):  
We have had many flowery words from the Government  
about understanding the experience of our constituents  
in the north-east who are forced to use crumbling  
rolling stock on Tyne and Wear Metro, but flowery  
words will not get our constituents to work on time  
unless they are matched by investment. Will the Minister  
now commit to investing in our rolling stock from the  
public purse?

**Mr John Hayes:** The hon. Lady should know that  
investment is central to what we want to achieve. We are  
investing £370 million through an 11-year asset renewal  
programme. We are undertaking a major programme of  
track and infrastructure renewals. We are refurbishing  
most of the 90 vehicles, modernising 45 stations and  
introducing new smart ticketing. What is not to like  
about that?

T8. [900483] **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con):  
Chelmsford is one of the busiest commuter stations  
in the country, but Chelmsford commuters have  
experienced frequent and significant delays. Will the  
Minister please provide an update on what actions are  
being taken to counter these delays?

**Paul Maynard:** I am sorry to hear of the delays that  
are being experienced by my hon. Friend's constituents.  
Clearly we have had a period of very hot weather, which  
does impact on rail reliability, and speed restrictions do  
help to protect overhead line equipment. I met the  
industry forums just this week to discuss what lessons  
can be learned about repeated periods of hot weather  
and how we can best protect critical infrastructure, and  
I hope the decisions they now move on to take can start  
to improve reliability.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): When the  
Chancellor came to Bristol in May, he refused to confirm  
whether electrification of the Great Western line into  
the city centre would go ahead. Will the Transport  
Secretary confirm whether it has been deferred, as we  
were told last year, or has it really been ditched?

**Chris Grayling:** As I said earlier, we are focused on  
delivering service improvements right now. The  
electrification process is continuing—there is no secret  
about the fact that this project has not gone as well as  
expected—but the key thing for the hon. Lady's constituents  
is that, from this autumn, there will be brand-new  
trains, more capacity, a better service and six trains an  
hour from Bristol to London. This is really good news  
for her constituents.

T9. [900484] **Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): A

number of my constituents are deeply concerned about  
the impact of High Speed 2—particularly residents in  
Ashley, who came to see me in a surgery last week. I am

sure that you, Mr Speaker, will be pleased that I am not  
going to go through every point they raised with me,  
but could the Minister meet me to go through every  
concern they had?

**Paul Maynard:** At the same time as we meet to  
discuss the mid-Cheshire line, I will be more than happy  
also to discuss some of the issues with the HS2 phase 2b  
route, which goes through my right hon. Friend's  
constituency.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): When the  
Conservative manifesto was published, there was no  
mention of Crossrail 2. Will the Minister tell us whether  
that was by accident or design? When does he plan to  
make a decision on the business case?

**Chris Grayling:** First, I absolutely support the need  
for the capacity improvements that Crossrail 2 will  
bring to London—indeed, not just to London, but to  
areas outside. We are working our way through the  
business case. I do not think it is any secret that the  
Transport for London funding package has not quite  
lived up to initial promises, but I want this to work. I am  
seeing the Mayor next week, and we will do everything  
we can to make it work.

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): Does  
my right hon. Friend agree that Belper, in my constituency,  
which is part of the world heritage site, is a great place  
to live, apart from the traffic? The A6 is far too clogged.  
Could we look at a bypass for Belper and at a new  
cycleway right up the Derwent valley?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman):** Not only can we look at it, but we  
would be delighted to receive an application for a  
bypass. I look forward very much to cycling that section  
of the Derwent valley when I come to visit it on a future  
occasion.

**Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Transport Secretary is due to outline his plans for rail  
investment in the coming days. There is real concern  
that the promised electrification of the midland main  
line, which has the best business case, will be delayed  
again or dropped completely. Keeping promises is  
important. Will Ministers be keeping theirs?

**Chris Grayling:** The promise I will be keeping is on  
the services that people want. We will be delivering, by  
around 2020, the faster journey times to Sheffield and  
the capacity improvements that are needed to make this  
route fit for purpose for the next century.

**Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): Will  
the Minister join me in congratulating Michelle and  
Mark Williams, who run the C&C taxi firm in St  
Austell? They have recently replaced all 14 of their  
diesel vehicles with electric vehicles. Theirs has been  
hailed as the greenest taxi firm in the country. Does he  
agree that more taxi firms should follow their example?

**Mr John Hayes:** Indeed. I have visited the new factory  
in Coventry that is building electric London cabs and  
the future is certainly for low-emission vehicles. That  
applies to vehicles that we might own, as well as to  
private hire vehicles and taxis. I certainly support what  
my hon. Friend suggests.

425

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

426

Business of the House

10.30 am

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Will the Leader of  
the House please give us the forthcoming business?

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):**The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 17 JULY—Motion to approve a statutory  
instrument relating to international immunities and  
privileges, followed by general debate on the abuse and  
intimidation of candidates and the public during the  
general election campaign.

TUESDAY 18 JULY—General debate on drugs policy.

WEDNESDAY 19 JULY—General debate on exiting the  
European Union and sanctions.

THURSDAY 20 JULY—Motion relating to the appointment  
of a new Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards,  
followed by general debate on matters to be raised  
before the forthcoming Adjournment.

FRIDAY 21 JULY—The House will not be sitting.

Colleagues will also wish to be aware that, subject to  
the progress of business, the House will rise at the close  
of business on Tuesday 7 November and return on  
Monday 13 November; and for the Christmas recess,  
the House will rise at the end of business on Thursday  
21 December and return on Monday 8 January 2018.

Finally, colleagues will also be pleased to know that  
the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will be presented  
to the House today. As the Brexit Secretary has said,  
this is one of the most significant pieces of legislation  
that has ever passed through Parliament, and it is a  
major milestone in the process of our withdrawal. It  
means we will be able to exit the European Union with  
maximum certainty, continuity and control. That is  
what the British people voted for, and it is exactly what  
we will do.

**Valerie Vaz:** I thank the Leader of the House for  
giving us the—oh, do I call it business? I am not quite  
sure. Quite frankly, I and other Opposition Members  
are appalled, saddened and bewildered in equal measure.  
We have asked the good citizens of this country to vote  
for us, and they have. As we are in a parliamentary  
democracy, they have given their consent to be governed,  
to enable MPs to form a Government, pass legislation,  
and hold Ministers to account. We have not been allowed  
to do that. This is not the end of term where we have no  
lessons and a light timetable, or where we are spending  
our time singing or whistling; it is a time of critical  
importance to this country, and the clock is ticking. We  
have been back for 31 days and in that time we have had  
only seven votes. Calling it a “zombie Parliament”  
makes it sound amusing, but this is serious. It is a threat  
to our parliamentary democracy.

Why does it take a Standing Order No. 24 application,  
as we had on contaminated blood, before a debate is  
scheduled, and then a concession by the Government,  
immediately before the debate, on an inquiry? Statutory  
instruments on tuition fees and personal independence

payments were prayed against, and no debate was granted.  
Again last week, I raised the statutory instrument that  
enacts a 6.1% interest rate on university student loans,  
and asked for a debate. The Leader of the House said to  
one of her hon. Friends that

“the mood of many colleagues has been heard, and I am quite  
sure that the Department for Education is considering this matter.”—  
[*Official Report*, 6 July 2017; Vol. 626, c. 1346.]

Will she confirm when and how the Government will be  
considering the matter, and make a statement on these  
regulations, or at least give us time to debate it so that  
the Minister can come and explain why the most punitive  
interest rate is being applied to students?

To make matters worse, last week the same debate  
was scheduled on the Gibb report on two successive  
days until that was pointed out to the Government.  
This week, we also see two debates on the same subject—one  
in Westminster Hall yesterday, and then another on  
Monday, on the abuse and intimidation of candidates.  
While this is an important topic in the week that Viscount  
St Davids will be sentenced—we will hear today—on  
his abuse of Gina Miller, will the same debate be going  
ahead, or is it a mistake? Could we have an Opposition  
day on Monday instead?

The Leader of the House gave me no answer about  
whether there will be a summer Finance Bill. I do not  
know whether the Finance Bill will be in the autumn  
and the Budget will then be in the spring. Who knows,  
but it sounds to me like chaos, so can we have an  
answer?

Why has the Leader of the House not responded to  
requests for an Opposition day? The last one was on  
23 February, granted to the Democratic Unionist party,  
but the official Opposition have not been granted one  
since January—to be precise, 25 January. Why no  
Opposition day? Why not let us debate and vote on an  
issue that is relevant to our constituents, who only a  
month ago told us what they thought? I thought the  
Leader of the House believed in sovereignty—that is  
what she campaigned on. The Opposition do, so let  
Parliament be sovereign and let us have a debate on a  
votable motion.

The Leader of the House said in June that the elongated  
Session would provide space to consider

“a domestic agenda which aims to tackle the social injustices in  
our country.”

So why has she allocated private Members' Bill days for  
only one year of a two-year Session—13 dates? When  
will she say when the Opposition days will be for the  
first year of the Session, and when will we have the  
dates for the second year of the Session? Will she tell us  
her definition of what a Session is? If it is two years, we  
are therefore entitled to double the number of Opposition  
days.

On Tuesday, following the Taylor review, the Prime  
Minister said:

“We may not agree on everything, but through debate and  
discussion—the hallmarks of our Parliamentary democracy—ideas  
can be clarified and improved and a better way forward found.”  
The Opposition agree, so why does the Prime Minister  
say that we need debate while Government representatives  
do everything they can to stifle debate? Is she an outsourced

427

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

428

*[Valerie Vaz]*

Prime Minister, completely detached from what is going  
on here? She can be heard in No. 10 singing the song  
“Heartbreaker”:

“Why do you have to be a heartbreaker,

When I was bein' what you want me to be?

Suddenly everything I ever wanted has passed me by”.

I should have sung it rather than spoken it.

Finally, will you and the Leader of the House join  
me, Mr Deputy Speaker, in wishing everyone in the  
Black country a very happy Black Country Day? It is  
part of a month-long festival in Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell  
and Wolverhampton, and I invite everyone to come to  
Walsall.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I can certainly agree with the hon.  
Lady that that would probably be a more fun place to  
be today.

The hon. Lady raises some important points about  
our parliamentary democracy, but I find it deeply  
disappointing that the Opposition are trying to make  
something of what is an absolutely normal situation  
following a general election, when the Government of  
the day take steps to put Select Committees back in  
place, for instance. As she admits herself, the sitting  
days for private Members' Bills are already on the  
Order Paper, and we are making progress. I congratulate  
all the Select Committee Chairs on their appointment  
yesterday, and the individual parties now need to get on  
with electing their Select Committee members, which  
they are doing at pace. The chiefs of the Opposition  
parties have been talking about Opposition days, and I  
gather that there has been an offer of an Opposition  
day in the next short sitting.

We are absolutely getting on with the business at pace  
and in accordance with normal procedures. I am left to  
conclude that this is just game playing by the Opposition.  
On the anniversary of her leadership of this country,  
the Prime Minister asked—*[Interruption.]* The hon.  
Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) is clearly not  
listening; she has other things to talk about. The Prime  
Minister asked all Members to come together in the  
interests of our country and give their ideas, input and  
support as we seek to fulfil the democratic will of the  
people in this country to leave the EU. What did the  
Opposition do? They ridiculed that. They absolutely  
reject the concept of working together in the interests of  
our country. Well, 13 million people voted for them,  
and they should support those people in their wish to  
see this country's democratic will fulfilled.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Has my right hon.  
Friend seen my early-day motion 155, about the potential  
closure of London Road in Harlow?

*[That this House expresses concern over the decision  
taken by Harlow District Council to close London Road  
to motorists, restrict traffic with a bus gate and split the  
community in two; notes the record number of 409 objections  
to the planning application and 2,000-plus residents who  
have joined a protest group; understands that this road  
has been used as a primary route for residents to access  
health, educational and leisure services for over 20 years;  
and calls on the Government to investigate the decision  
that the local authority has taken to close this vital*

*connection and encourage Essex County Council to reject  
this Traffic Regulation Order from the planning decision.]*The decision by Harlow Council will cause immense  
problems to Harlow residents and motorists. May we  
have a statement on unnecessary road closures, as Harlow  
Council seems to be ignoring the wishes of thousands  
of people who have voiced complaints and the record 409  
objections to the planning application?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend  
on his appointment as Chair of the Select Committee  
on Education. He will be as delighted as all Members  
should be that there are 1.8 million more children in  
good and outstanding schools than there were in 2010.  
That is something for his Committee to build on. He is  
exactly right to raise the frustrating issue for all our  
constituents of unnecessary road closures. I am sure  
that he will give it his full attention, as he does everything  
he turns his mind to.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I  
thank the Leader of the House for announcing the  
business for next week. I join her in warmly congratulating  
my fellow Select Committee Chairs on their election  
yesterday. It is a great exercise in the democracy of this  
House, and we should be very proud of the way the  
Select Committees work, but we now need to get those  
Committees up and working. We need to get the  
membership of the Committees elected and we have  
one week in which to do it. Mr Speaker generously  
offered to facilitate with any issue, any party or any  
perceived blockage where he or the Deputy Speakers  
could help out. Did she take advantage of that generous  
opportunity? If not, why not?

We have passed one full piece of legislation through  
all stages of Parliament and two pieces on Second  
Reading, but we still have no Standing Committees in  
place. Will the Leader of the House endeavour to get  
this fixed before the zombies leave the building?

We have also not had a single debate about the  
perverse deal with the DUP, which has completely  
altered the usual funding allocations to the nations of  
the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister may have  
shed a tear on election night, but the DUP are marching  
all the way to the bank, rubbing their hands with glee.  
They will be back, demanding another few hundred  
million pounds, like an extortionist knows when he has  
someone in a vice-like grip in those sensitive places.

Hurray, the great repeal Bill will be out today, a Bill  
to unite the country in an invitation to climb aboard the  
battered jalopy as it trundles over the cliff edge. Apparently,  
Labour will oppose the Bill by defiantly agreeing with  
the Tory hard Brexit that will take us out of the single  
market and end freedom of movement. What opposition  
has been offered by the Labour party? In the meantime,  
we will continue to look after vital Scottish interests  
and fight for a place in the single market.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I completely agree with the hon.  
Gentleman about the membership of Select Committees.  
We want to get on with it, and on this side of the House  
we are getting on with selecting members. I hope that  
the hon. Gentleman's democratic elections will be as  
clear as our own. I can assure him that through the  
usual channels an enormous amount of work is also  
going on to establish Standing Committees. No one

429

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

430

wants that to happen more than we do on the Government  
Benches. However, his remark about “zombies” is very  
rude to his colleagues—a few of them are still here  
today, and I thank them for turning up.

The hon. Gentleman talks about this Government  
not being democratically elected, but I remind him that  
we got 56 more seats than the official Opposition, which  
means that, in a democratic place such as this, we have  
the duty as well as the right to form a Government. I  
hope that he and his colleagues appreciate that fact.

It is a great shame that the hon. Gentleman talks  
constantly about wanting to stay in the single market,  
which he knows for a fact means not leaving the EU. In  
other words, he, for his own ends and those of his  
Scottish nationalist colleagues, would seek to undermine  
the will of the United Kingdom. That is totally  
undemocratic. Government Members and, I hope,  
Opposition Members will fulfil the will of the people.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Is the Leader of the  
House aware of concerns regarding challenges to the  
democratic system of government in Hong Kong? Some  
elected representatives there are being prevented from  
taking their seats in the legislature, and a recent statement  
from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs described  
the Sino-British joint declaration as “a historical document”,  
which

“no longer has any practical significance”.

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment  
of Hong Kong as a special administrative region on the  
principle of “one country, two systems”, so will she  
consider a debate in Government time about this concerning  
issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend makes an incredibly  
important point. The Minister for Asia and the Pacific  
met the Chinese ambassador on 5 July, when he stressed  
the UK's strong commitment to the Sino-British joint  
declaration—a legally binding treaty, registered with  
the UN, which continues to be in force. As co-signatory  
to the joint declaration, the UK will continue to stress  
to the Chinese Government the need to implement  
faithfully the one country, two systems arrangement.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): We do not yet know  
the allocation that the Government have determined for  
the Backbench Business Committee in this Session. We  
hope that the 27 days allocated in a normal Session will  
be doubled to 54 in this two-year Session.

Will the Leader of the House try to facilitate deciding  
the membership of the Backbench Business Committee  
quicker than that of the other Select Committees? The  
Backbench Business Committee is not a normal Select  
Committee; it is here to determine the Chamber's business.

**Andrea Leadsom:** First, I congratulate the hon.  
Gentleman on his reappointment as Chairman. He did  
a great job in the previous Parliament and I am sure he  
will do so again. I am also sure that he recognises that  
we have tried to bring forward some of the carry-over  
requests from the previous Parliament for debates. As  
with Opposition days, the allocation of Backbench  
Business days is set out in Standing Orders. However, it  
has been the custom in longer-than-usual Sessions to  
offer additional days and we fully intend to do the same.  
More will be said about that in due course.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** I call “Our  
Man in Havana”—Alec Shelbrooke.

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): Thank  
you, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the previous Parliament, I  
introduced a private Member's Bill to ban unpaid  
internships. The Matthew Taylor report outlined this  
week that they are indeed damaging to social mobility  
and an abuse of power by employers. May we have a  
debate in this Chamber on all aspects of the Matthew  
Taylor report? For all the crowing on the other side, no  
Opposition Member bothered to turn up to debate the  
private Member's Bill.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend has really pushed  
this issue and he is right to do so. It is of great interest to  
the House, even when Opposition Members do not  
bother to turn up to support a Bill on it. The Government's  
position is clear: employing unpaid interns as workers  
to avoid paying the national minimum wage or the  
national living wage is illegal, exploitative and represents  
a real barrier to social mobility by squeezing out candidates  
from less wealthy backgrounds.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Last week, I visited  
Shelley College, an outstanding-rated school in my  
constituency, where staff explained that the budget had  
already been cut to the bone. Every school in my  
constituency faces further cuts. May we have a debate  
on the Government's worrying plan to cut funding for  
local schools?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady will know that the  
Government have protected cash spending on schools  
and we have created many thousands of new school  
places to meet demand. There has been a great deal of  
investment in the fabric of buildings. We fully appreciate  
that schools are under pressure. The hon. Lady will also  
know that we have accepted the recommendation of the  
independent schools' pay body and we will do everything  
we can to ensure that, as I said earlier, the number of  
children who are in good and outstanding schools—  
1.8 million more than in 2010—increases and that we  
do more than ever particularly to help disadvantaged  
pupils.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** I call Mike Penning.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): It has been  
a long time since I asked a question on health from the  
Back Benches. I am sure that the Leader of the House  
knows that Hemel Hempstead is the largest town in  
Hertfordshire, but that in 2006—we know which  
Government were in power—the acute services at Hemel  
Hempstead Hospital were closed. We now have clinical  
commissioning groups, but they seem to be completely  
unaccountable. The CCG for our part of the world  
costs £10 million a year and it has just rubber-stamped  
more closures at Hemel Hempstead Hospital. May we  
have a debate on the power of CCGs and their  
accountability—or lack of it?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My right hon. Friend makes an  
important point. Many colleagues from all parties are  
concerned about what happens to hospitals in their

431

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

432

*[Andrea Leadsom]*

areas. My right hon. Friend will know that there are  
clear rules about accountability and consultation with  
patients and that, of course, any decisions should be led  
by clinicians in consultation with users of the service.  
He makes an important point and he may well wish to  
raise it in Westminster Hall or in an Adjournment  
debate.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Yesterday,  
during the debate on the tragic events at Grenfell Tower,  
the Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government, the hon. Member for Reading  
West (Alok Sharma), was asked whether local  
authorities—such as Coventry, for example—would be  
helped to introduce safety measures. He said that the  
Government would help with the process. In view of the  
number of cuts that the Government have inflicted on  
local authorities over the last seven years, may we have a  
statement to clarify what help local authorities will  
actually be given?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Grenfell Tower is one of the most  
appalling disasters that the country has ever faced. We  
will all continue to be absolutely focused and determined  
to get to the bottom of what caused it, and the top  
priority is to try to help the people who have suffered so  
terribly. At the same time—as the Prime Minister and  
the Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government have made clear—we want to take steps to  
ensure that such a disaster cannot happen again, which  
will include requiring other local authorities to check  
what fire regulations and what sort of cladding their  
areas have and what other risks are being faced. The  
Government are giving as much support as possible to  
that process.

**Dr Matthew Offord** (Hendon) (Con): The public  
consultation on the future of the children's congenital  
heart disease service at Royal Brompton Hospital will  
close on Monday. If the proposals from NHS England  
are implemented, all CHD services at the hospital will  
be closed, including the adult research centre, the children's  
intensive care unit, and specialist children's respiratory  
services for conditions such as cystic fibrosis, asthma  
and muscular dystrophy. Will a Minister come to the  
Dispatch Box to explain how those services will be  
provided for my constituents and others in the south-east  
and London if the proposals go ahead?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend has raised a very  
important point, which I know is of huge interest  
throughout the House. No final decisions have been  
made, and there is no plan to close the Royal Brompton  
as a provider of CHD services. NHS England is currently  
conducting a review of congenital heart services across  
the country before finally deciding on and implementing  
any change. Let me make it clear that the review is not  
about cutting services or costs, but about ensuring that  
patients have the very highest standard of care now and  
in the future, regardless of where they live or which  
hospital provides that care.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP):  
Given the mess that the United Kingdom Government  
are making of the economy and Brexit, and given how

successful the Scottish Government have been with  
their recent economic measures, will the Leader of the  
House agree to a debate on devolving further fiscal  
responsibilities to Scotland?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think it behoves the hon. Lady to  
look very carefully at what the Scottish Government are  
doing now. Their track record of managing their current  
devolved powers leaves something to be desired.

The hon. Lady says that the UK Government are not  
doing well with EU withdrawal. I beg to differ from her  
completely. Today we are introducing the European  
Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which seeks to implement the  
will of the people. The Scottish National party clearly  
does not care about the will of the people. The Scottish  
people decided that they wanted to remain part of the  
United Kingdom, but, rather than trying to get on with  
the day job, SNP Members focus entirely on who makes  
the decisions to which the hon. Lady has referred. That  
is not a democratic approach.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Alderley Park in  
my constituency is the largest bio-centre in the United  
Kingdom. It is a true world leader, and it is currently  
undergoing a 10-year transformation. Will the Secretary  
of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
make a statement on the country's industrial strategy  
and how Alderley Park fits into it? *[Interruption.]*

**Andrea Leadsom:** Is it not interesting that Opposition  
Members are just chuntering? That is because they are  
not interested in the strength of our economy.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on one of her  
first interventions since she retook her seat, and I welcome  
her back to this place. We should be talking about jobs,  
economic growth and areas in which the UK can lead  
the world. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be  
keen to talk about the Government's industrial strategy.  
We are determined to ensure that it means that we have  
the high-skilled, highly paid jobs of the future, throughout  
the United Kingdom.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
The previous chief executive at Hull Royal Infirmary  
left having put the hospital into a terrible state. He  
moved to another hospital, which subsequently moved  
into special measures. During that time, he was investigated  
by NHS Protect, the anti-fraud body of the NHS. I  
understand that he has now retired and set up a consultancy  
to offer his services to the NHS. Can we have a debate  
on the revolving door of failed NHS managers and  
their role in the NHS?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises what sounds  
like an extremely concerning issue regarding one individual,  
and the bigger issue of the revolving door of people  
who have failed in one job and move on to another one,  
often at significant expense to the taxpayer. She will be  
aware that there have been a number of Public Accounts  
Committee reports on that issue, but she may want to  
raise it herself through a Westminster Hall debate.

**Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): The  
Leader of the House will be aware of the looming crisis  
involving the amount of plastic entering our seas and  
oceans. We are quickly getting to the point where there

433

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

434

will be more plastic than fish in the sea. In the light of  
that, I warmly welcomed the comment by the Secretary  
of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that  
the Government are now considering introducing a  
plastic bottle deposit return scheme, but can we have a  
statement from the Secretary of State, so we can discuss  
and indeed promote that scheme in the Chamber?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As my hon. Friend will know, I am  
passionately concerned about that issue. I was delighted  
with the results of the consultation on the banning of  
microbeads in face wash and other products and with  
the results of our litter strategy, which looks at what else  
we can do to eradicate plastics from our oceans. Eighty  
per cent. of the plastics that end up in the ocean come  
from the land, and it is important that we deal with  
litter on the land as well. I am sure that the Secretary of  
State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be  
keen to do just that, and that he will come to the House  
in due course when he has something clear to say.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): Can we have an  
urgent debate on the role and remit of the Homes and  
Communities Agency? I have two businesses under  
threat of closure after the HCA triggered break clauses  
in their leases. The HCA has also damaged communities  
in east Durham, notably in Horden, through its failure  
to act after the Accent housing association disposed of  
its housing stock. Will the Government take control of  
that public body, which has delivered little benefit and  
caused no end of misery in areas such as east Durham?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Again, the hon. Gentleman raises  
what sounds like an important and serious issue. I am  
sure that he will want to raise it directly with the  
Secretary of State, or perhaps at oral questions, to  
ensure that a spotlight is shone on the issue.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): Mr Deputy Speaker,  
you look like a gentleman who enjoys a glass or two of  
English sparkling wine. *[Interruption.]* Forgive me. I  
invite you and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the  
House to tour the many vineyards in my constituency,  
including the Fox & Fox and the Bluebell vineyards—  
award-winning vineyards supporting jobs and the local  
economy. Can we have a debate on the best of British  
produce, including English sparkling wine, and how we  
can best promote it in new markets and harness the  
opportunity of Brexit?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I can tell my hon. Friend that I have  
only ever seen Mr Deputy Speaker have a cup of tea  
and a Chorley cake. Isn't that right, Mr Deputy Speaker?  
She raises an important point. English sparkling wine is  
taking the world by storm. We are winning prizes and  
competing with famous brands. She is right to raise that  
valuable and growing sector and I would be delighted to  
take her up on her offer.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** I can assure  
you that Mrs Hoyle will be the one who will come.

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): Can the  
Leader of the House arrange an emergency debate on  
the re-routing of HS2 in South Yorkshire? At the HS2  
briefing for Members last night, the chairman of HS2 said  
that the reason it is not in favour of the Sheffield

Meadowhall station is the lack of backing by Sheffield  
City Council and the Sheffield chamber of commerce,  
blatantly ignoring the wishes of the other three councils  
in South Yorkshire. Can we have an urgent debate on  
those matters?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The right hon. Gentleman will  
know that there has been wide consultation on the  
routes for HS2, as I discovered during phase 1, which  
has now received Royal Assent, so there have been and  
will continue to be many opportunities for consultation.  
I urge him to take every opportunity to feed in to the  
process as early as he can.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): May we have a debate  
on sharp practices by private car parking companies?  
Smart Parking has taken over the car park behind the  
Co-op in Saltaire and has changed the rules so that  
people have to get a ticket for the first 20 minutes of  
their stay even though it is free, when previously they  
did not, and with very minimal and inadequate signage,  
and it then introduced draconian fines of £100 for  
anybody who does not meet that new requirement. This  
is not only ripping off its customers and my constituents,  
but is having a terrible effect on local businesses in the  
area. May we have a debate so that we can stop some of  
these practices of rogue companies such as Smart Parking?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sure all Members will share  
my hon. Friend's disgust at some of the activities of  
rogue and unfair private parking operators, and he will  
be pleased to know that the Government have taken  
steps to tackle this, including the banning of wheel-clamping  
and towing. Consumer protection regulations have also  
been amended to make it simpler and clearer for consumers  
to bring their own actions to seek compensation when  
they have been the victims of misleading or aggressive  
debt collection practices, but I do think this is an area  
that we will come back to.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): The Leader of the  
House says that the business she has announced for  
next week is business as normal, but it certainly is not.  
Normal business in this Parliament is when Select  
Committees are able to meet and are able to quiz  
Ministers, when every second sitting week includes an  
Opposition day debate on a votable motion, and when  
there is a Backbench Business debate every sitting week,  
but she is not allowing any of that. Will not voters start  
to conclude that this Government are absolutely terrified  
of the House? Since she has congratulated the new  
Select Committee Chairs, will she at least guarantee  
that they can actually chair a Committee because they  
will be able to sit by next Thursday?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is talking  
about what are routine measures after a general election  
to re-establish the Select Committees. If he looks back  
through history, he will see that we are moving exactly  
as quickly as any other new Government. We are trying  
to establish these Committees as quickly as we can. He  
says we are not discussing anything of any value; I think  
he must agree that we had the Grenfell Tower debate,  
and there is the issue of abuse and intimidation of  
parliamentary candidates, which is damaging—  
*[Interruption.]* He is not listening to the answer; he is  
not interested in the answer. *[Interruption.]* So,heis

435

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

436

*[Andrea Leadsom]*

saying that discussing abuse and intimidation of candidates,  
which is clearly putting people off actually standing—  
*[Interruption.]* He will appreciate that not nearly enough  
time and effort has been given to what is a very significant  
matter. *[Interruption.]* He waves his hand; people have  
had death threats and people are being put off from  
standing for Parliament—*[Interruption.]* So he does  
not care about that. Next week on the Order Paper are  
very important—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. I do  
not think that is the case; I think every Member cares  
about every other Member here—let us be clear about  
that.

**Julia Dockerill** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con):  
The Metropolitan police recently revealed that up to  
50,000 crimes a year are now being committed by  
thieves on motorbikes and pedal cycles. That is reflected  
in correspondence I receive from my constituents across  
Hornchurch and Upminster. Will the Leader of the  
House make time for a debate on whether police have  
all the powers they need to tackle this alarming new  
crime wave?

**Andrea Leadsom:** May I start by welcoming my hon.  
Friend to her place? I can confirm that the Home Office  
is currently in discussion with the Metropolitan police  
about the problem of motorcycle and moped theft in  
London and will look very carefully at the evidence on  
what more can be done to prevent it. Of course, how the  
police enforce the law and deploy available resources is  
the responsibility of individual chief officers, taking  
into account specific local problems and the demands  
they are faced with.

**Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): On Tuesday, the  
Foreign Secretary told this House that the UK Government  
will

“work closely under the Joint Ministerial Committee to bring in  
the devolved Administrations and make sure the great deal we are  
going to get has their endorsement and approval.”—[*Official  
Report*, 11 July 2017; Vol. 627, c. 139.]

The truth is that the JMC plenary last met in January,  
the JMC Ministers last met in February and there was  
no JMC agreement on triggering article 50 before the  
Prime Minister triggered it. Indeed, since the election  
no meeting date has yet been set with the Welsh and  
Scottish Governments. May we have an urgent statement  
from the Secretary of State for Exiting the European  
Union on the JMC and its role in the process of the UK  
exiting the EU?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As many of my right hon. and hon.  
Friends have made clear, it is fully the intention to  
consult widely on all matters regarding devolution, and  
those conversations have indeed taken place before. It  
has been made clear that no powers that currently  
reside in the devolved Administrations are to be withdrawn,  
and that there will be further opportunities for devolution.  
The hon. Gentleman is focusing on process, and I am  
trying to explain that we are absolutely attending to  
process but what is important is the intention of this  
Government, which is to consult widely and to seek the  
agreement of all colleagues across the House as we fulfil  
the will of the people of the United Kingdom.

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): Could my  
right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the laws  
relating to the unauthorised arrival of travelling people  
in parks and open spaces? Only last week, a group of  
very hostile people arrived in a local park and caused  
much damage to play equipment, not to mention the  
cost to the council officers and police who had to  
remove them.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises an important  
point, and I am aware that this is a matter of interest to  
Members on both sides of the House who understand  
the frustration when Travellers arrive on unauthorised  
land and cause damage and upset to local communities.  
I can tell him that local authorities and the police have a  
wide range of strong powers that enable them to take  
action, and the Government really want to see them  
working together to address this issue.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Please  
allow me to refresh the Leader of the House's memory.  
It was on 25 January this year that we last had an  
Opposition day debate. She referred earlier to Opposition  
Members needing to represent our constituents, and we  
wish to do so. Why will she not commit right now to  
granting Opposition day debates and to correctly doubling  
the number of Back-Bench business debates? Why not?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As I mentioned earlier, an Opposition  
day has been proposed for the next short session of  
Parliament, and that is going through the usual channels—  
*[Interruption.]* As a matter of convention, those things  
go through the usual channels. The Standing Orders set  
out the number of Opposition days and Back-Bench  
days. It is also the convention in a longer than usual  
Session to offer more such days, and it is our intention  
to do exactly that. It is absolutely the case that we will  
set up the Committees as soon as possible, as has  
happened before, and offer more Back-Bench and  
Opposition days than would normally be allocated through  
Standing Orders. I genuinely do not see why the Opposition  
are making such a big fuss about this. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): In the agreement  
made with the Democratic Unionist party, the Government  
generously and wisely offered a detailed study into the  
benefits of lower VAT for the tourism industry. May we  
have a statement or a debate in Government time on the  
benefits of such a study elsewhere in the United Kingdom,  
and potentially in coastal communities such as the Isle  
of Wight, and more generally on measures to support  
coastal tourism in the UK? May I recommend the Isle  
of Wight, not least because it has the highest rates of  
sunshine in the United Kingdom? Half our GDP comes  
from tourism, and it is a self-contained area that would  
greatly benefit from such a study into lower VAT on  
tourism.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I welcome my hon. Friend to his  
place. He will obviously be a strong advocate for the Isle  
of Wight, and I am sure that all hon. Members will be  
keen to go there just as soon as their summer recess  
plans permit. He has campaigned on the issue of tourism,  
which is vital for the economy of the Isle of Wight, and  
I completely understand his desire for more effort to be  
made for coastal communities. That is shared by this  
Government and he might wish to apply for an  
Adjournment or Westminster Hall debate in which to  
put forward his suggestions.

437

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

438

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): When can the  
House express its disdain and contempt for the rip-off  
decision made by a gullible Government in agreeing to  
buy the dearest electricity in the world from a French  
company and guaranteeing that price for 35 years? Only  
months after starting out, the project is £1.5billion over  
budget and a year behind schedule. Like all other European  
pressurised reactors—EPRs—this one will involve vast  
cost overruns and long delays, and none of them has  
ever produced enough electricity to light a bicycle lamp.  
May we debate this, to address the continuing rip-off of  
the taxpayer for the next 50 years?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I have the greatest respect for the  
hon. Gentleman, who has been an anti-nuclear campaigner  
for a long time. I respectfully say, as an ex-Energy  
Minister, that I just disagree with him. On average,  
nuclear energy provides around 20% of our electricity  
needs at all times, and our ageing fleet of nuclear power  
stations must be replaced. If we want to continue to  
keep the lights on, we have to take steps. This particular  
project protects taxpayers from the costs of budget  
overruns.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): As I understand it,  
the Government will deposit the High Speed 2 phase 2a  
Bill on Monday next week. According to parliamentary  
procedures, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stone  
(Sir William Cash) and I understand them, that leaves  
only 56 days of consultation over the summer holidays  
and summer recess, which is simply not enough. Will  
my right hon. Friend consider extending the period for  
six weeks or delaying the deposit of the Bill until we  
return in September?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I completely agree with my hon.  
Friendthatconsultationisimportant,andIwillcertainly  
take up this issue with the Secretary of State for Transport.

**Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): The Leader  
of the House has been asked several times about having  
an Opposition day debate so that we can represent our  
constituents. I want to ask her a simple question to  
which she may answer yes or no: can we have an  
Opposition day debate next week?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady will be aware that  
the business for next week has already been announced.

**Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): The  
exploitation of leasehold agreements by house builders  
and management companies is a national scandal that  
is leaving homeowners in my constituency in financial  
difficulty. May we have an urgent debate to explore an  
industry-wide solution to address the actions of such  
companies across the board?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right to raise  
that important issue. The Government are working  
with partners who have an interest in reforming residential  
leasehold, as outlined in our housing White Paper, to  
try to improve fairness and transparency for leaseholders.  
The White Paper responded to leaseholders' concerns  
that were raised by MPs in a debate on reforming  
leasehold in December 2016, and we will be consulting  
on what more needs to be done to promote greater  
transparency and fairness for leaseholders, including

whether all developers and managing agents are acting  
in the best interests of those thinking of buying and  
living in a leasehold property.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): On 25 July, we  
mark18yearsofbrutalityagainstFalunGongpractitioners  
in China. So many families have been destroyed and so  
many people have lost their lives for their faith in Falun  
Gong's guiding principles of truthfulness, compassion  
and tolerance. Despite all its resources and the inside  
knowledge, China has not provided any information to  
show that the forced organ harvesting of prisoners of  
conscience is not happening. Will the Leader of the  
House agree to a statement or, better still, a debate on  
this important issue?

**AndreaLeadsom:**Thehon.Gentlemanraisesaharrowing  
issue, which many hon. Members across the House will  
have been made aware of. It is certainly something that  
he should raise at Foreign Office questions, and it  
would also be worthy of debate either on the Adjournment  
or in Westminster Hall.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger** (Bridgwater and West Somerset)  
(Con): I do not know whether my right hon. Friend has  
had enough time to look at my blog today. More's the  
pity if not, but if she has, she will have been concerned  
to see that Taunton Deane has built up a secret land  
bank of houses with a nod and a wink from the leader  
of the council. Many millions of pounds are involved,  
and it smells and looks like corruption on an enormous  
scale. Before things get out of hand, please may we have  
time for a debate to discuss the matter, and to consider  
local government and how planning authorities are  
working in this country?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend knows that I spend  
most mornings doing nothing but read his blog. He  
raises a serious issue that I am sure he will want to take  
up directly with the Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): May we have a  
debate on the National Audit Office's damning report  
on the closure of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs  
offices, such as the one in my constituency? I received a  
letter from the Chancellor just yesterday, confirming  
that a decision about committing public funds was  
made during the election period, which looks very  
much like a breach of the ministerial code. This Parliament  
must have the opportunity to scrutinise such things  
properly before decisions are made.

**Andrea Leadsom:** As the hon. Lady knows, the  
consultation took place over a long period of time, and  
the decision on the closure was not contrary to the  
ministerial code. She will also be aware that, as we  
discussed last week, the decisions on closures have been  
taken to try to maximise the best use of taxpayer  
resources. More coaches are being provided to try to  
help people get back into work, and costs of travel are  
being accommodated where it can be shown to be  
further than would be reasonably expected.

**Chris Williamson** (Derby North) (Lab): May we have  
a debate in Government time on the activities of rogue  
debt management companies such as Compass Debt

439

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

440

*[Chris Williamson]*

Counsellors? The company operated in my constituency  
and went into liquidation last year, owing 1,700 people  
a total of £5.5 million after it emptied the coffers year  
on year, taking out hundreds of thousands of pounds.  
Is it not time that this kind of spivvery was outlawed  
once and for all?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am incredibly sympathetic to the  
hon. Gentleman's point. There have been some pretty  
awful examples of the behaviour of debt management  
companies. I am not familiar with the specific case, but  
I encourage him to take it up with the Financial Conduct  
Authority, which has responsibility for looking at some  
of these issues.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): One  
of the many casualties of the recent general election has  
been the Government's consultation on sentences and  
penalties for those causing death by dangerous driving.  
The consultation finished on 1 February 2017, and my  
attempts to find out the results have been met with  
evasive non-answers. May we have a statement on the  
progress of that consultation?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises an important  
point, and I will certainly look into it. If I may, I will  
write with any information I am able to give her.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): On a  
similar point to that of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Livingston (Hannah Bardell), three weeks ago I raised  
the issue of HMRC office contracts being signed during  
purdah. The Leader of the House received a letter from  
me, but I have not had a response. The Chancellor was  
asked this question two weeks ago, and he has not  
responded to me either. May I press upon the Leader of  
the House the urgency of having a debate or a statement—  
preferably a debate—on the issue, which affects all  
nations and regions of the United Kingdom, of why  
this Government negotiated contracts during purdah  
when, at the general election, four political parties  
opposed HMRC office closures?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting  
that he has written to me and not had a reply?

**Chris Stephens** *indicated assent.*

**Andrea Leadsom:** I apologise for that. I have not seen  
his letter, but I can assure him that I will always try to  
reply within a week to any hon. Member who writes to  
me. I reassure him that I specifically checked, and there  
was no breaking of the ministerial code. I cannot find  
the note in my folder giving the precise detail, but I am  
aware that the consultation took place over a much  
longer period of time. In order to protect against some  
quite significant costs, the decision was taken to announce  
the decision to close during purdah, but that was not in  
breach of the ministerial code. He will forgive me for  
not having the precise detail, but I will certainly write to  
him with it.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): This weekend,  
at Pontypool Park in my constituency, many of my  
constituents will take part in the 24-hour Cancer Research

UK relay for life, not only to raise funds but to show  
solidarity with families touched by cancer. May we have  
a debate on the contribution that our communities can  
make to supporting families blighted by this terrible  
disease?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a point  
that all hon. Members will be keen to support. Every  
one of us knows or is close to someone who has been  
touched by cancer, which is a frightening and horrible  
disease. It is fantastic to see the work of so many  
volunteers to try to contribute to research, so that we  
can get on top of cancer and find ways to cure every  
aspect of it. I congratulate his constituents on their  
efforts and I hope they enjoy their relay.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
The Leader of the House will be aware of the terrible  
neglect, which has proved a national scandal, at South  
Lakes safari zoo. May we have a debate—a debate was  
in train before the snap election was called—on the  
lamentably inadequate national regulation? Many senior  
members of the organisation team that was in charge  
while the neglect was happening have had to be granted  
a new licence simply because they changed the guy at  
the top.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I recall the South Lakes zoo case  
that the hon. Gentleman mentions from my time as  
Environment Secretary, and we were all very concerned  
about it. It would certainly be worth his while trying to  
obtain an Adjournment debate or a Westminster Hall  
debate to raise the issue. As I recall it, the real challenge  
is enforcement, not the rules being inadequate, but this  
may be well be something worth debating to try to  
ensure that we get to the bottom of it.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab):  
Last week, Barclays bank announced the closure of its  
branch in Neston, following which there will be no high  
street banks left in the town. May we therefore have a  
debate on how we can prevent communities being isolated  
in this way, and on what more can be done to ensure  
that banks are more responsible to the communities  
they are meant to serve?

**Andrea Leadsom:** This has been an issue right across  
the UK. The Post Office has really stepped up to the  
plate and I believe it now offers basic banking services  
for all the main UK banks and certainly for Barclays.  
The flexibility of post office opening hours means that  
many constituents can get better banking services. I am  
pleased that the hon. Gentleman raises this issue, because  
one of the biggest challenges is making people aware of  
that fact. He knows that the banks have an agreed  
consultation process before they decide to close.  
Nevertheless, I urge him to look at the prospects for  
post offices stepping into the gap.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): By  
September, we will not have had an Opposition day  
debate for a staggering seven and a half months. In the  
interim, may we have a debate in Government time,  
because I, for one, want to debate the capped expenditure  
process, which will lead to massive cuts in York's already  
underfunded NHS?

441

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

442

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is obviously the subject of the  
day for Labour Members. I have explained several times  
that we are making efforts to deal with all of these  
normal things: the re-establishment of Committees, the  
dates for Opposition day debates and so on. The hon.  
Lady will be well aware that next Thursday there is a  
pre-recess Adjournment debate, where she will have the  
opportunity to raise the specifics of the NHS in her  
constituency, for which I know she is a great advocate. I  
urge colleagues right across the House to try to understand  
that this is normal following a general election, and we  
need to focus on working together to try to deliver for  
the people of this country.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Last  
week, in a very animated response to a question from  
me, the Leader of the House advised that the Secretary  
of State for Scotland spent

“hours and hours of committed time”

on

“the discussion of a package of fiscal reliefs to support the oil and  
gas sector”.

The reliefs that came through were welcome. She continued  
by saying that,

“he spent hours with me working on a supply chain”.

But she omitted to say that the oil and gas sector is still  
awaiting action on late-life asset transfers and loan  
guarantees promised in 2016. I want the Secretary of  
State for Scotland not to spend hours on these matters,  
but to spend days, weeks and months, if necessary, to  
get Government action. Will the Leader of the House  
therefore advise on what discussions the Secretary of  
State had with her in her role as Minister in this area?  
She concluded her answer last week by saying that he  
has always

“spokenupforthepeopleofScotlandateveryopportunity.”—[*Official  
Report*,6July2017;Vol.626,c.1354.]

Will she therefore explain why he always avoids answering  
my questions on the discussions he has had with the  
relevant Departments? Will she speak to him about  
that, and will she once again list his achievements for  
Scotland?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman will appreciate  
that I cannot possibly explain to him why the Secretary  
of State for Scotland thinks something or does something;  
I am sure he will realise that that is not a question for  
me. However, I am extremely pleased that the hon.  
Gentleman now acknowledges what I did say in some  
spirited fashion last week, which was that I absolutely  
recall the Secretary of State for Scotland standing up  
for Scottish people on protecting and promoting the oil  
and gas sector—he continues to do that. If the hon.  
Gentleman would like to talk to him about it, I am sure  
he will be able to speak for himself about exactly where  
he is on his support for the people of Scotland.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I am lucky in my  
constituency to take part in parkrun on a Saturday  
morning; hundreds of local people now run regularly  
because the Parc Bryn Bach athletics club has its own  
Couch to 5k programme. May we have a statement on  
promoting physical activity and improving public health?  
Iinally, why will the Government not give us our fair  
share of Opposition day debates for the next two years?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman  
on his evident fitness and healthy approach to life. I  
hope that that will extend to his approach to the work in  
this Chamber over the next few years. It is absolutely  
vital that we do more to promote a healthy lifestyle.  
This Government have put a great deal of money into  
new cycling programmes, new sports for children in  
schools and so on, but I must also mention all the work  
that volunteers do to develop these programmes for  
running together through the park. It isa lovely thing to  
do and it also adds to the health of the nation, so I  
congratulate him on that.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): May we have an early  
debate on this week's report by the Independent Chief  
Inspector of Borders and Immigration on the failure of  
the Border Iorce to monitor properly small ports for  
immigration,smugglingandillegalmigrationissues—issues  
that were raised by me 18 months ago in parliamentary  
questions in this House. Perhaps it is the sort of issue  
that we could have an Opposition day debate on if we  
were granted one.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The problem is that, by the time we  
get to an Opposition day, there will be about 20 different  
subjects, and no one will agree on what exactly they  
want to debate. Let us get away from the process, and  
focus instead on the important subjects. The right hon.  
Gentleman does raise an important subject and I am  
quite sure that he will want to put in for an Adjournment  
debate so that he can discuss that very report.

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): The  
Manchester Royal Infirmary has had to stop congenital  
heart surgery because staff have been leaving following  
the uncertainty caused by the review which the right  
hon. Lady referred to earlier. Patients now have to  
travel up to 150 miles for treatment. May we have a  
statement on how we can continue to deliver local  
congenital heart services to those patients in advance of  
the review?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very  
important point. As I said earlier, NHS England is  
running a review of congenital heart services across the  
country before finally deciding on and implementing  
any change. This review is not about cutting services or  
costs, but about ensuring that patients have the very  
highest standards of care. He will appreciate, as will all  
hon.Members,thatasimprovementsinmedicaltechnology  
and medical capabilities continue, we will need to look  
at the best delivery to give every child and adult the best  
outcomes that we can.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): May we have a  
debate in Government time on income inequality, because  
research from the Resolution Ioundation shows that,  
for the decade to 2020, we have had the lowest wage  
growth in 210 years? In that debate, may we also look at  
the contract-cutting wage promoted by Her Majesty's  
Government that discriminates against the under-25s?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Youth unemployment in this country  
has dropped dramatically since 2010. It has been one of  
the enormous achievements in this country. Another  
enormous achievement has been the number of new  
apprenticeships that have been taken up. A third

443

Business of the House

13 JULY 2017

Business of the House

444

*[Andrea Leadsom]*

achievement of this Government has been the number  
of disadvantaged 18-year-olds going into higher education.  
We have a very strong, positive track record for what we  
are doing for the under-25s. There is still much more to  
do, but in terms of getting them into work, into  
apprenticeships and into higher education, we have a  
good track record.

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab):  
The planned closure and relocation of Department for  
Work and Pensions offices will have a major negative  
impact on the local economy of towns such as Merthyr  
Tydfil in my constituency as well as many others across  
the country. It will also cause major travel difficulties  
for employees with caring responsibilities. May I ask  
the Leader of the House to urge the Secretary of State  
to carry out a full impact assessment and bring the  
results of that assessment, together with the results of  
any consultation, to the House as soon as possible—perhaps  
for an Opposition day debate?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman knows that, in  
looking at maximising the value for taxpayers from  
managing the estate, any Government Department will  
always look at ensuring that access is good enough and  
that the service is at least as good as it was previously.  
He will also appreciate that we need to live within our  
means. We have taken huge steps to getting back to a  
position in which we spend only what we take instead of  
adding to the debt and deficit that was left by the last  
Labour Government. It is vital that, where we can, we  
seize the opportunities to get better value for the taxpayer  
out of our Government estate.

**Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): May we  
have a debate on the future of Durham Tees Valley  
airport, the promise made by the Tees Valley Mayor to  
buy it, and the Government's position on whether his  
nationalisation plans will be funded from the public  
purse?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think we all welcome additional  
air travel opportunities, and this sounds to me like an  
ideal opportunity for an Adjournment debate.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):  
As we rapidly approach summer and our thoughts turn

to holidays, many of our constituents might need to  
send money abroad. May we have a statement from  
Ministers on the payment services regulations and the  
results of the Government's recent research on transparency  
and consumer decisions on foreign exchange transactions?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is right to  
raise the very important issue of people going on holiday.  
I wish everybody who is about to embark on their  
holidays, including those in this place, a good time. He  
should probably raise his specific point during oral  
questions, as I am not sure that he has given me enough  
information to respond with exactly what he is after.

**Valerie Vaz:** On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Let me just  
clear something up. Normally, points of order would  
come after a statement, but if this is a special point of  
order on a point of clarification and is relevant to  
business questions I will take it now.

**Valerie Vaz:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. May I,  
through you, ask the Leader of the House to clarify  
whether she announced new business in the form of an  
Opposition day in the short sitting in September, and if  
so, on what date that will be?

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Does the Leader of the House  
want to respond?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Further to that point of order,  
Mr Deputy Speaker. What I said to the House is that  
through the usual channels I am aware that an Opposition  
day debate is being offered during that short sitting in  
September.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Further to that point  
of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Can you clarify that there  
is a means by which the Leader of the House can  
correct the record? She has suggested today that it is  
utterly normal for us not to have Opposition day debates  
at this stage, but in fact in 2015, by the summer recess  
after the general election, we had already had five—

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. We are not opening up  
the debate. The question has been dealt with and we will  
now move on.

445

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

446

Counter-Daesh Update

11.32 am

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**With permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to  
update the House on the counter-Daesh campaign in  
Iraq and Syria and the UK's involvement in this collective  
effort by some 68 coalition nations as well as the Arab  
League, Interpol, the European Union and NATO.

On Monday, three years after Daesh leader al-Baghdadi  
declared his so-called caliphate at the al-Nuri mosque  
in Mosul, Prime Minister Abadi declared victory in  
Mosul. It was an important moment. Today, Daesh's  
black flags no longer fly. Its fighters are dead or fleeing,  
and only very small pockets of resistance remain in west  
Mosul. I am sure that the whole House will join me in  
praising those involved in the operation. Over the past  
nine months, Iraqi security forces, including the Kurdish  
peshmerga, have fought in incredibly challenging conditions  
to root out a callous enemy. Over 1,200 Iraqi soldiers  
have been killed in the fight for Mosul and more than  
6,000 have been wounded; I pay tribute to their courage  
and sacrifice. They have been supported since September  
2014, with the permission of this House, by the RAF,  
whose precision strikes represent two-thirds of the coalition  
effort outside the US operations against more than  
750 Daesh targets. The Army has trained more than  
58,000 local Iraqi personnel in skills from counter-IED  
to medical support. The Royal Navy has helped to  
protect the US and French aircraft carriers from which  
strikes have been flown. The UK's cyber-capability has  
helped to disrupt the extremists' activities. As a result,  
in Iraq more than 1.8 million people have been freed  
from Daesh's cruel rule.

Daesh has now lost more than 70% of the territory  
that it once occupied in Iraq, but the liberation of  
Mosul does not mean that Daesh has been defeated in  
Iraq, or indeed in Syria. We in this country need no  
reminding of the danger that Daesh still poses. In the  
past few months, our nation has suffered three appalling  
attacks inspired by the ideology shared by Daesh. We  
must continue our comprehensive strategy to defeat it,  
and I want to update the House on three areas.

The first is the military effort. We must ensure that  
there are no safe havens for Daesh in Syria and Iraq.  
That is why Iraqi security forces, with United Kingdom  
support, will go on to defeat Daesh in Tal Afar and  
Hawija, uproot it from the Euphrates river valley, and  
clear the area of the improvised explosive devices that  
threaten the lives of so many innocent civilians. As Iraq  
is secured—we have some months to go—we will in  
Syria continue supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces,  
who have so far ejected Daesh from around 51% of the  
territory it once held in Syria.

The battle for Raqqa—Daesh's command and control  
centre—has begun. Syrian Democratic Forces currently  
control around 20% of that city. The SDF is relying  
heavily on coalition air assets, surveillance, reconnaissance,  
and pinpoint missile strikes, which we will continue to  
provide as part of the global coalition. As we maintain  
pressure on Mosul and Raqqa, we will continue to  
tighten the net around this callous organisation, squeezing  
the terrorists on simultaneous fronts, striking their senior

leadership, countering their poisonous narrative, and  
cutting off their finances, as they progressively lose  
access to the oil infrastructure on which they relied.

The second area is humanitarian aid. We will continue  
to provide stabilisation and humanitarian assistance.  
My right hon. Friend the International Development  
Secretary updated this House yesterday on the humanitarian  
response required in Mosul, yet while that city can at  
last begin to look forward, the humanitarian situation  
in Syria remains dire: 13.5 million people urgently need  
humanitarian assistance; 4.5 million of them are in  
areas that are hard to reach, and 1.3 million of them live  
under siege-like conditions. It is estimated that around  
100,000 civilians remain in Raqqa city, caught between  
Daesh and Assad, and in desperate need of aid.

Our response has been to commit £2.46 billion to  
support for Syria—the largest ever British response to a  
single humanitarian crisis—while pushing for better  
access, so that much-needed food and medicine can  
reach people, and for an end to attacks on civilians. UK  
support has helped to stabilise the region more widely.  
Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have become hosts to  
large-scale Syrian populations. The Department for  
International Development has helped to ensure that  
those countries have been given the assistance that they  
need in hosting large refugee populations; this improves  
regional security and reduces consequent migration  
pressures in Europe.

The third area is stronger governance. Humanitarian  
aid is only part of the answer. A meaningful political  
settlement is needed now to guarantee sustainable peace,  
so we are working with our international allies to strengthen  
regional governance. With regard to Iraq, as my right  
hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary emphasised to Foreign  
Minister al-Jaafari at their recent meeting in London,  
that means focusing on inclusive politics post-Mosul,  
allaying fears, addressing the grievances that led to the  
rise of Daesh, and sticking to the April 2018 election  
timetable.

In Syria, the barbaric chemical weapons attack on  
Khan Sheikhoun in April reminds us that the Assad  
regime is no partner for peace. We continue to work for  
a transition towards new governance, which is fully  
representative and committed to protecting the rights of  
everyone in Syria. It is for Syrians to decide how that  
happens, as part of a Syrian-led transition process, but  
to reach that goal we continue to support the work of  
United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura as  
well as the political process he is overseeing in Geneva.  
We are engaging with the opposition to help them move  
towards a political settlement, and we use our role in  
the Security Council and our participation in the  
International Syria Support Group to push for progress.

The recently negotiated ceasefire and de-escalation  
agreement brokered by the United States, Russia and  
Jordan is welcome. We hope it will lead to further  
de-escalation agreements and generate renewed momentum  
in the political process, but that all depends on all the  
parties involved, which we encourage now to comply.  
We have seen these agreement before. What will count is  
what holds on the ground.

As I took office three years ago, Daesh was closing in  
on the gates of Baghdad. Today it is a failing organisation,  
but one that remains a threat. Mosul has now been  
liberated, but the war remains to be won in Iraq as well  
as in Syria. Our resolve, as a leading member of the

447

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

448

*[Sir Michael Fallon]*

coalition, is unwavering. We will continue to do all we  
can to defeat Daesh, counter its warped ideology, bring  
stability to the region, and provide greater security to  
our people and our allies at home and abroad.

11.41 am

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): I thank the Secretary  
of State for his statement and for advance sight of it.

The liberation of Mosul marks the end of three years  
of Daesh control of the city, and we pay tribute to all  
the personnel who have taken part in the campaign,  
especially to our servicemen and women who have  
served in Operation Shader. Although the battle for  
Mosul has almost concluded, the fight against Daesh in  
Iraq and the wider region is far from over. Will the  
Secretary of State tell us about the nature of the support  
that the UK will continue to provide to Iraqi ground  
troops as they advance westward to clear the remaining  
towns and cities in Iraq that are under Daesh control?

Our armed forces have taken every precaution to  
prevent civilian casualties, and intelligence and targeting  
are vital to that, but the Secretary of State will be aware  
that Amnesty International has produced a report that  
is highly critical of the Iraqi Government and the  
coalition. It has been alleged that the actions of the  
coalition in Mosul have been “disproportionate” and  
even “unlawful”. Major General Rupert Jones, the deputy  
commander of the international anti-Daesh coalition,  
has condemned the report in the strongest possible  
terms, saying that it is “deeply irresponsible”. He has  
emphatically stated that we should not forget that it is  
Daesh that is “deliberately killing civilians”. What is the  
Secretary of State's response to Amnesty's report?

The Iraqi Government have concerns about the possibility  
of Daesh fighters crossing back into Iraq from Syria, so  
what role will our armed forces play in ensuring the  
security of the border between Iraq and Syria? As the  
operation against Daesh moves from one of counter-  
insurgency to counter-terrorism, the training that the  
UK provides to Iraqi forces will prove all the more  
essential. Will the Secretary of State update the House  
on the support and training that we will continue to give  
to the Iraqi ground forces?

The campaign against Daesh in Syria is undoubtedly  
more challenging and complex than in Iraq. Although I  
appreciate that there are limitations on what the Defence  
Secretary is able to tell the House, will he be a little  
more specific on the role our armed forces will have in  
the liberation of Raqqa from Daesh control?

Finally, as the Secretary of State will be aware, a  
number of Members on both sides of the House, including  
my hon. Friend the shadow Defence Secretary, have  
been calling for an operational service medal for personnel  
on Operation Shader. As the campaign in Mosul draws  
to a close, I would suggest that it is now the time to  
provide proper recognition to all those who have served  
on that operation and played a vital part in the fight  
against Daesh and its perverse ideology.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for what he said, particularly about the role of our  
servicemen. A large number of our servicemen and  
women have now served in this theatre for nearly three

years, sometimes under the most intense conditions,  
and it is right that we should, on both sides of this  
House, pay tribute to them.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the next stage  
of this campaign. It is important to emphasise that  
Mosul itself has not finally fallen; there is still a small  
pocket of resistance. Indeed, a Tornado and a Typhoon  
were over the city yesterday, bombing a final Daesh  
position, so there is still work to be done there. There  
will be work to be done to assist Iraqi forces in the  
capture of Tal Afar and Nineveh, so the campaign goes  
on and may well become more complex as Daesh spreads  
out and moves to some of the less populated areas.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the Amnesty  
report. I have not seen the Amnesty report as of yet, but  
I would certainly recommend that he does heed, as he  
has done, the words of Major General Rupert Jones,  
who is the deputy coalition commander. I can reassure  
the House that, so far as our own participation in the  
coalition is concerned, the airstrikes that we carry out  
are absolutely lawful and are conducted in accordance  
with the law of armed conflict and international  
humanitarian law. We have rigorous rules of engagement,  
which I set at the beginning of the campaign. There are  
very robust targeting procedures. Where the RAF are  
involved, they gather intelligence about the target they  
are aiming to strike. They strike it with a choice of  
weapon that is designed to absolutely minimise the risk  
of civilian casualties. They go back afterwards and do  
an assessment of the blast area and whether there were  
any unforeseen consequences.

Where there are allegations that the wrong building  
was hit or that there have been civilian casualties, again,  
we on the coalition side absolutely investigate those  
allegations. We publish the findings. This is in distinction  
to what the Russians and the Syrian regime have been  
doing in Syria. We investigate, we publish the findings,  
and if mistakes were made and procedures need to be  
corrected, that is done. But I want to assure the House  
that I have seen no evidence as of yet that an RAF  
strike has involved civilian casualties. I wait to see that  
evidence being produced, and if anybody has any evidence,  
it needs to be forwarded to us, as, indeed, other  
organisations, like Airwars, have been doing throughout  
the conflict, and we are ready to investigate. Otherwise,  
I would urge extreme caution in the handling of the  
Amnesty report.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the border area  
between Iraq and Syria. It is that middle bit of the  
Euphrates river valley where we now anticipate Daesh  
will coalesce, having been driven out of Raqqa in Syria  
eventually, and from Mosul and Tal Afar in Iraq. Our  
training effort will now be, of course, in Iraq. The  
training we do at al-Asad airbase in Anbar province will  
be to improve the capability of the Iraqi forces to police  
their border, having secured it. We will be doing more of  
that in conjunction with our other allies.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the campaign in  
Syria. We will continue with airstrikes. Again yesterday,  
a pair of our aircraft were in action on the edge of  
Raqqa, assisting that campaign. There is a lot of work  
to be done before Raqqa is liberated, and other towns in  
the Euphrates river valley, such as Mayadin, remain  
under Daesh control. The air campaign—the  
reconnaissance and the intelligence-gathering—will

449

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

450

probably become even more important as Daesh eventually  
moves from Raqqa and starts to disperse round some of  
these smaller towns.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about medallic  
recognition. I think the whole House would want to see  
this huge effort properly rewarded. I am awaiting final  
advice from the military on that, and I hope to make an  
announcement shortly.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** On his  
re-election, I call Dr Julian Lewis.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Thank  
you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The reason why, surely, these cities have not been  
liberated sooner is precisely the care that is being taken  
in the targeting of the aerial bombardment. Does the  
Secretary of State accept that whereas the intervention  
with airstrikes in Iraq was non-controversial because we  
were prepared to see the army of the Iraqi Government  
win, the same does not apply in Syria? Apart from the  
Kurdish elements in Syria, who else does he expect to  
run the country when Daesh's land is taken from it, if  
not the Syrian Government, with or without Assad?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Let me repeat your congratulations,  
Mr Deputy Speaker, to my right hon. Friend on resuming  
his chairmanship of the Select Committee. I look forward  
to working with him on that.

I know that my right hon. Friend and I have always  
differed on the nature of the Syrian campaign and that  
he has had reservations about it. He is right to recognise  
the difference in that we are not working with the  
Syrian regime. However, we do want to see Daesh  
driven out of Syria. It remains a threat—in Syria, to  
this country—and it needs to be defeated in Syria. But  
of course, as he says, we then need those parts of Syria  
returned to civilian control—a control that properly  
involves the Arab population as well as, in the north,  
the Kurdish elements. That is all part of the process that  
we are encouraging in Geneva. He is right that the  
solution lies in Arab-led governance.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
I, too, thank the Defence Secretary for his statement  
and advance notice of it. Let me put on record the  
tribute of Scottish National party Members to the  
forces who have been involved, particularly in liberating  
Mosul to the extent that it has been. I also extend our  
congratulations to the right hon. Member for New  
Forest East (Dr Lewis) on his re-election as Chair of the  
Defence Committee.

Scottish National party Members, and indeed the  
whole House, will welcome the diminished status that  
Daesh now has. While there is a difference of opinion as  
to how to move that from a diminished status to being  
defeated, there is of course unanimity that defeated it  
must be.

There are two particular areas of concern that I  
would like the Defence Secretary to address. The first is  
the dramatic rise in civilian casualties in the past few  
weeks. In June alone, there was a 52% increase on May's  
estimated figure of 529 to 744, according to Airwars,  
which he mentioned in response to the shadow Minister.  
Airwars claims that of the 1,350 UK personnel fighting  
Daesh, not one is permanently tasked with monitoring

civilian casualties. Will he make a commitment to greater  
scrutiny and transparency on that, and will he ensure  
that there are dedicated monitoring and investigation  
mechanisms within Operation Shader for UK forces?

The second point—the Defence Secretary knows of  
my particular concern about this because I have written  
to him specifically about it—is about the operation in  
Syria itself. The 2015 mandate of this House was very  
clearly about targeting Daesh, and nobody else in Syria.  
I tried to get some clarity from him on this on Monday.  
I do not know whether he misunderstood my question,  
but I did not get the clarity I was seeking. Will he  
confirm that the 2015 mandate to target Daesh stands,  
and that the Government have no plans to expand that  
target to any other actor; and that if they do, as the US  
President seems to wish the United Kingdom to do, it  
will happen only on the back of a debate and vote of  
Members of this House?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for the tribute he has paid to our armed forces. It is  
worth reminding the House that the Scottish nationalists  
voted against military action in both Iraq and Syria. It  
is all very well to say that they now welcome the fact  
that Daesh has been defeated in Iraq, but how much  
longer would Daesh have continued to behead people,  
to shoot people and to throw gays off buildings without  
air power, including British air power, and without the  
involvement of 68 countries around the world, but not  
the support of the Scottish nationalists? He should  
reflect on that.

We work with Airwars when it has allegations and  
suspects that there might have been British aircraft in  
the air at the time in question. We look at that information  
and investigate it. So far we have not found any evidence  
of civilian casualties being caused by a British strike,  
but we continue to work with Airwars, and if it has  
fresh evidence it should put it to us and we will investigate  
it. As I indicated, we also carry out what is called a  
battle damage assessment after any strike to see exactly  
what effect it has had and whether there is any risk that  
there may have been casualties.

The hon. Gentleman is right to point to the increase  
in civilian casualties in the final weeks of the battle in  
west Mosul. It is a highly compact and densely populated  
city, and Daesh pushed civilians into buildings, held  
them hostage and shot them if they tried to escape. This  
was intense urban warfare of a type that we have not  
been involved in since probably the second world war—a  
very complex military operation. However, it would not  
have been easier if it had been extended and we had let  
it drift on for months. The job had to be done, and I pay  
tribute to those involved in it, including our pilots for  
their skill and precision alongside the rest of the coalition.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about Syria, as he  
did on Monday. He has also written to me about it—I  
have in fact replied to him; I signed the letter yesterday,  
but he may not have had it yet. It certainly gives clarity  
on the point that he raised with me.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Is the  
expectation of sufficient reform in Iraq realistic?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes, indeed. The Abadi Government  
are representative of all parts of Iraq. Abadi himself is  
a Shi'a; the President of Iraq, whom I met, is a Kurd;

451

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

452

*[Sir Michael Fallon]*

and my opposite number, the Defence Minister, is a  
Sunni. They are a genuinely representative Government,  
but they have work to do to provide reassurance, particularly  
to the Sunni populations and tribes of Nineveh and  
Anbar provinces in the west, that they too have a stake  
in modern Iraq and must feel part of it, and that they  
will be protected from any kind of Shi'a aggression such  
as they have suffered from in the past. The Government  
are representative and have lasted longer than some  
critics originally suggested they would, but they now  
have a huge amount of work to do to stabilise the areas  
that have been liberated and promote genuine political  
reconciliation.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary  
of State referred twice to Staffan de Mistura's negotiations  
in Geneva, but he did not mention the Russian-Turkish-  
Iranian initiative and the meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan.  
What is the British Government's assessment of the role  
of that process and the fact that it seems to be undermining  
efforts in Geneva?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We support any genuine efforts to  
reduce violence in Syria and bring the civil war to an  
end, but we cannot endorse the Astana process for a  
number of reasons, principally because of the status it  
gives Iran as a guarantor of Syria's future. That is not  
acceptable. We want the pluralist type of governance in  
Syria that we now have in Iraq, and that does not  
require further interference from Iran.

**Sir Oliver Letwin** (West Dorset) (Con): I was delighted  
to hear my right hon. Friend refer in both his statement  
and his answers to the need for inclusive politics post-Mosul  
in order to win the peace, as well as the war, in Iraq. Can  
he assure the House that Her Majesty's Government  
will keep up the pressure on the Abadi regime to ensure  
that the new governor of Mosul fully respects the rights  
and needs of all sections of the population there?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Absolutely. The answer to that is  
an unequivocal yes. It is now so important that the city  
administrations and the governorates get engaged in the  
process of political reconciliation. My Foreign Office  
colleagues and I continue to urge that on the Abadi  
Government as an absolute precondition for the kind of  
reconciliation that we want to see.

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab): I welcome  
the liberation of Mosul and pay tribute to members of  
our armed forces who have been involved. The tactics  
used by Daesh mean that the cost to both the infrastructure  
and the people of Mosul has been great. Will the  
Secretary of State outline what strategy Iraq could take  
to rebuild the infrastructure of Mosul and to allow the  
return of those refugees who have fled Mosul over the  
past few years?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** An encouraging number of  
dispossessed Maslawis—people of Mosul—are returning  
to east Mosul. They are returning in quite large numbers  
now, and markets and schools are beginning to reopen.  
West Mosul has of course been much more badly  
damaged than east Mosul and a huge amount of  
reconstruction has to be done there. That will be led by

the United Nations Development Programme and its  
co-ordinator, but we will be playing our part financially  
and in the organisation of the rebuilding programme.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): RAF  
pilots and service personnel have played a vital role in  
this coalition campaign, particularly my constituents  
flying from RAF Coningsby. Will my right hon. Friend  
join me in thanking my constituents who have taken  
part in Operation Shader? Will he explain, please, the  
vital role that the RAF plays in ensuring freedom of  
movement on the ground, which enables Iraqi forces to  
combat Daesh?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** It is right that we pay tribute to  
the RAF, and not only to the pilots, who are always  
mentioned on occasions such as this, but to the huge  
numbers of other RAF members, such as the air crew,  
those who service, maintain and guard the planes, and  
those involved in the intelligence work of studying and  
preparing the targets. It has been a massive effort. The  
RAF is working at probably its highest tempo for more  
than a quarter of a century, and it is right that we  
should pay proper tribute to it.

The role of the RAF has been huge. Noticeably, more  
than 60% of the strikes not conducted by the United  
States in Mosul were conducted by the RAF and not by  
any other country, simply because of the precision of  
our pilots, the intelligence that goes into the selection of  
targets and the precision of the weapons that were  
chosen for each of those strikes. Now, the RAF will be  
increasingly involved in close air support as Daesh  
moves out of the cities and starts to coalesce along the  
Euphrates river valley.

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): I join the Secretary  
of State in paying tribute to the men and women of our  
armed forces and the civilians who support them. Given  
that operations against Daesh are likely to endure for  
some time and that since the previous defence and  
security review we have had a change to our national  
security context, a general election and a referendum in  
which Britain decided to leave the European Union,  
what plans do the Government now have to conduct a  
strategic defence and security review?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** On the first point, as I indicated,  
the campaign in Iraq is not over. It has many months to  
run, and I expect British forces to be involved well into  
2018. The situation in Syria is even more complex. The  
work of the RAF and Army trainers is likely to continue  
for some time.

The previous strategic defence review was only 18 months  
ago. The threats that were set out in it—from Russian  
aggression, Daesh, other terrorism and cyber—remain  
the principal ones facing this country. That review did  
not forecast the referendum or indeed its result, but I do  
not think we can blame defence intelligence for that—a  
lot of people did not predict that event. However, the  
review was only 18 months ago, although we will of  
course have a look to see if any of it needs any kind of  
refresh.

**Leo Docherty** (Aldershot) (Con): The role of the  
British armed forces in mentoring and training our  
Iraqi allies has been critical to the success of the operation.  
What plans do we have for continuing that support to  
the Iraqi military into the future?

453

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

454

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's  
question and I pay tribute to his own service. It is worth  
reminding the House that we are in Iraq at the request  
of the Iraqi Government. Everything that we have done  
as part of the coalition has been with the authority and  
at the request and invitation of the Iraqi Government.  
Although we have not entered into those discussions, I  
anticipate that the Iraqi Government would welcome  
the continuation of the coalition's training effort and  
indeed the support of air power until Daesh is completely  
eliminated from their borders.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): We all welcome  
the progress made in defeating Daesh in Mosul and  
Raqqa and pay tribute to the bravery and tenacity of  
the forces on the ground and in the air in liberating so  
many people from Daesh's cruel yoke. The Secretary of  
State has set out in great detail the effort that the RAF  
makes to avoid civilian casualties—rightly, in view of  
the terms of the resolutions of September 2014 and  
December 2015 that the House passed. Is he satisfied  
that all our partners in the air campaign are making the  
same efforts to avoid civilian casualties?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Certainly, as far as I can be. There  
are coalition rules of engagement and there are slightly  
different rules of engagement for each country involved  
in the campaign. It is perfectly true that targets have  
been offered or discussed within the coalition that we  
have chosen not to strike because of the rules that we  
apply. Each country approaches the matter in a slightly  
different way. However, the principal dozen air forces  
involved all work together in the same headquarters,  
and the rules that apply have become closer over the  
duration of the campaign. It is worth saying that, sadly,  
it is simply not possible to liberate a densely populated  
city such as Mosul without civilian casualties. Of course,  
those casualties have been made much worse by Daesh's  
policy of holding civilians hostage in buildings, shooting  
people trying to escape the city and generally making  
the population continue to suffer.

**Edward Argar** (Charnwood) (Con): I join the Secretary  
of State in paying tribute to the role that our armed  
forces have played and the progress that has been made.  
Will he reassure me that he is working closely with the  
Minister for the Middle East, my right hon. Friend the  
Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt)—I  
know that we all greatly welcome him back to the Front  
Bench—and our allies in the region to ensure that, as  
Daesh is pushed back, its fighters are contained and not  
displaced to pop up elsewhere in the region?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes, that is an increasing part of  
the work of the counter-Daesh coalition, in which I  
participate in so far as the defence effort is concerned,  
and in which my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary  
and the Minister for the Middle East participate on  
foreign policy. We work across the coalition to ensure  
that we can share intelligence on returning fighters,  
explore how Daesh leadership can now be held properly  
to account—let us not forget the British hostages who  
were beheaded two to three years ago—and that, where  
possible, those who committed those most heinous crimes  
can now be brought to justice.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
With more Yazidi women being freed this week with the  
liberation of Mosul, will the Secretary of State say  
more about the particular case of the Yazidis and  
whether the Government have reached a conclusion on  
whether their treatment by Daesh is genocide?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We continue to look for more  
evidence, specifically on the Yazidis, to ascertain whether  
the brutal treatment that they suffered was genocidal.  
We are also accumulating evidence across the board so  
that those who are eventually detained can be properly  
held to account.

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): Will  
my right hon. Friend join me in paying particular  
tribute to the Kurdish peshmerga, who have made a  
vital and continuing contribution to the defeat of Daesh?  
Can he assure the House that we will give them every  
possible assistance in training, equipment and weaponry,  
but also, importantly, access to medical care and treatment  
for their wounded? Is not there a case for providing  
additional, specialist care here in the UK for their most  
badly wounded?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I know that my right hon. Friend  
the Minister for the Middle East is looking at that  
specific point, but I too pay tribute to the peshmerga,  
and, indeed, to what has been an all-Iraq effort. There  
has not been the distinction that people fear between  
the different groupings in Iraq. The campaign to liberate  
Mosul was conducted by agreement between the different  
parts of the Iraqi forces, and that was done successfully.  
We played our part in helping to train peshmerga forces,  
and much of the training that we supplied was designed  
precisely to reduce the number of battlefield casualties  
that they might otherwise have suffered, particularly  
from improvised explosive devices.

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): I welcome  
the statement, and I agree with the Secretary of State  
that an important element of progress is countering the  
violent extremist ideology of Daesh and others. Does  
he agree that one of the most eloquent ways of doing  
that is demonstrating, through the reconstruction of  
Mosul and Raqqa and the establishment of law and  
order and security for the people who live there, that  
there are better systems of governing than those provided  
by ISIL?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Absolutely. It must be central to  
the work of stabilisation and reconciliation that we have  
a form of governance in Mosul, in the council there and  
in the wider provincial government, that is genuinely  
representative of all interests in Mosul, which is a very  
complex city, to ensure that all those living there have a  
proper stake in its future, and that the conditions under  
which the likes of Daesh originally flourished do not  
re-emerge.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): I join  
others in welcoming the statement and the liberation of  
Mosul, but what steps are the Government taking, as  
Daesh is defeated, to deal with the threat posed  
by dangerous individuals who seek to return to the  
United Kingdom?

455

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

456

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The purpose of part of the work  
that is being done in the coalition is to recover sensitive  
material in both Mosul and Raqqa—as the Syrian  
democratic forces move into Raqqa—that will enable us  
to track down foreign fighters, particularly British fighters,  
who have been based in either city, and, indeed, foreign  
fighters in those cities who have been involved in planning  
external attacks on the cities of western Europe. We are  
urgently trying to recover that material, which will  
enable us to identify more of those who are involved in  
planning of that kind and thus ensure that they are  
detained and properly held to account.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): May I ask a question  
on the same theme? The Secretary of State mentioned  
Interpol. Welcome though the liberation of Mosul is,  
we know that the capacity to deal with returnees from  
Iraq poses a challenge to our already overstretched  
intelligence and counter-terrorism services. Can the  
Secretary of State assure the House that the Government  
have sufficient capacity, not just in this country but  
throughout Europe, to ensure that returnees are dealt  
with appropriately?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. We are putting extra resources  
into our agencies to ensure that that is being done in  
this country, and we are working with other police  
forces across the coalition to share intelligence about  
the foreign fighters who are identified so that we have  
better information when they attempt to cross the borders  
back into western Europe, and so that each of us  
understands how we are now likely to prosecute those  
who have been involved in the fighting.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Further to the question  
asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Filton and  
Bradley Stoke (Jack Lopresti), does my right hon. Friend  
agree that we should pay special tribute to those in the  
Kurdistan region? They are building democracy, they  
have a rule of law, and they made a huge effort in  
defeating Daesh. Can my right hon. Friend guarantee  
not just that we will give military support, but that we  
will do everything possible to help them to build their  
emerging democracy?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on  
his election to the chairmanship of the Education  
Committee. I am sure that my colleagues look forward  
to working with him.

We work very closely with the Kurdish authorities—I  
meet the Prime Minister and president there regularly—and  
we want to see the economy and stability of the region  
improve. It is, of course, part of Iraq overall, and the  
future of Iraq, ultimately, is for the Iraqi people to  
determine.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
The fact that, apparently, there is currently no evidence  
that a single civilian casualty has resulted from an RAF  
strike during this campaign is extraordinary and  
commendable. Further to the question from my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary  
Benn), may I ask what influence the UK armed forces  
can have on some of our coalition partners, in whose  
cases the rules of engagement have clearly been different  
and the civilian death toll has been higher?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I was, I hope, careful to remind  
the House that this is war. While we as a coalition do  
everything to try to minimise the risk of civilian casualties,  
it is not possible to eliminate that risk entirely when we  
are trying to free cities from terrorism of this kind. I  
was equally careful to say that there is no evidence yet  
from an RAF strike. I am not claiming that that might  
never be the case, but so far no such evidence has been  
presented to us.

We work across the coalition with the other countries  
involved in airstrikes to ensure that we apply broadly  
the same rules of engagement: that we are selecting the  
same targets, for instance, and that we have the same  
institutions, such as mosques and hospitals, on our  
no-strike lists. Each country is slightly different; there  
are variations; but what we encourage our partners to  
do—and I think this is the best possible answer to the  
regime in Syria—is to be straight, and when an allegation  
is made, to investigate it, publish the findings, and if it  
then becomes clear that there were faults in procedures,  
set out how they will be put right.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): Daesh's atrocities  
have failed to deliver a caliph, let alone the so-called  
caliphate. As Daesh are flushed out of Mosul, they will  
convene in other parts of Iraq and Syria. Does my right  
hon. Friend agree that we must recognise that our  
military will continue to play a role in defeating Daesh  
for a considerable time to come?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. The military campaign is not  
over yet, in Iraq or indeed in Syria. We have every  
interest in staying the course, because we need to keep  
our country safe. There are still people in Raqqa who  
wish us harm and want to carry out attacks in this  
country and in other western European cities. We must  
not rest until that threat is removed, and then we must  
pay attention to what the Iraqi authorities want and to  
the scale of the training that they may now require.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): It is good to see so many Members entering the  
Chamber to hear my question. *[Laughter.]*

I pay tribute to our amazing armed forces personnel,  
who have acted with the utmost bravery and dedication  
in this conflict, and I second the calls for an operational  
service medal to be awarded. Given the special role that  
the Army has played in training during the conflict,  
among its many other roles, and given the depth, breadth  
and complexity of the operations that it now faces not  
only in this theatre but around the world, does the  
Secretary of State agree that this would be exactly the  
wrong time to reduce the number of our regular Army  
personnel?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful for the tribute that  
the hon. Gentleman paid to our armed forces. He will  
have heard what I said earlier about the issue of medallic  
recognition for personnel who served in this particular  
campaign. We have no plans to cut the size of the  
Army; indeed, in our manifesto we made a clear  
commitment to maintain the size of our armed forces.

**James Morris** (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con):  
The liberation of Mosul is a significant moment in our  
battle against Daesh, but does the Secretary of State

457

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

458

agree that the real victory will be the creation of a  
modern Iraqi state that is capable of governing itself for  
all the people of Iraq and of ensuring that it resists any  
infiltration by Daesh as we clear it out of Iraqi territory?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I absolutely agree. The kind of  
modern Iraqi state to which my hon. Friend aspires  
would not only reduce any threat to our country but  
would be good for the stability of the region. Iraq is  
already a democracy—a fragile democracy, but it is a  
democracy. It has called on its friends and allies throughout  
the world for help. Sixty-eight countries are in there,  
helping to bring about the kind of modern Iraq that he  
and I want.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I welcome the  
Secretary of State's statement and thank him for his  
commitment and leadership. I also thank our soldiers  
for the significant contribution that they have made to  
delivering the peace. The peshmerga have been a critical  
part of the allied forces to defeat Daesh, with many  
peshmerga fighters coming from Kurdistan. The regional  
government in Kurdistan wishes to have more devolved  
responsibilities and is seeking the release of moneys  
held in Baghdad for reconstruction. To deliver the  
transition to new governance that is fully representative  
and committed to protecting the rights of everyone, will  
he agree to those two issues being dealt with right away?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful for the personal  
words with which the hon. Gentleman began his remarks.  
Discussions are under way between the Kurdish authorities  
and the authorities in Baghdad on precisely those issues.  
We encourage those discussions. In the end, where there  
are disputes of that kind, they have to be resolved  
between the different parties in Erbil and Baghdad.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): The progress  
militarily in Mosul is welcome, but the poisonous ideology  
that underpins ISIL continues. What assessment has my  
right hon. Friend made of the number of UK citizens  
fighting on behalf of ISIL/Daesh? What is happening  
about those who choose to return home, so that we can  
apprehend them and ensure that they are not a danger  
to UK citizens?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** On the first point, we have not yet  
defeated the virtual caliphate. It is important that,  
across the coalition, we now intensify our efforts to  
destroy that caliphate in cyberspace as effectively as we  
are beginning to undermine it in Iraq itself. On returning  
fighters, that is predominantly a matter for my right  
hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, Daesh is a  
proscribed organisation. Fighting for Daesh is a criminal  
offence and, where those people can be properly prosecuted,  
they will be charged on their return.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): In December 2015,  
we were assured that, with the support of UK airstrikes,  
we could expect to see a transitional Government in  
Syria within six months, and that there were  
70,000 moderate ground troops ready to carry out a  
ground war in tandem with coalition airstrikes. What is  
the Secretary of State's current assessment as to when  
we can expect to see a transitional Government in  
Syria? How many of those 70,000 ground troops ever  
actually existed?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** On the first point, of course we  
want Syria to move towards a new political settlement  
and we continue to encourage that. So far as the existence  
of moderate armed opposition in Syria is concerned, I  
am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that the  
civil war would not be in its seventh year if there had  
not been formidable moderate armed opposition to the  
Syrian regime. Who does he think has been fighting  
Assad? It is important to recognise the progress that has  
been made since December 2015 in reducing Daesh and  
the amount of Syrian territory that it holds, in starting  
the battle to defeat it in its capital, Raqqa, and thus  
overall to reduce the threat that Daesh poses to the UK.  
I am only sorry that, although we had the support of  
67 other countries throughout the world, we did not  
have the support of the Scottish National party.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): I, too, welcome the Secretary of State's statement.  
In particular, I welcome his comment about reducing  
the risk and the number of civilian casualties. Perhaps  
for the benefit of those who have just entered the  
Chamber he could repeat the number of civilian casualties  
there have been as a result of our actions and repeat his  
confirmation and assurance that he will do all he can to  
reduce further such risks?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend  
but I am not sure that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, would  
welcome me repeating too much of the statement that I  
gave earlier. However, I emphasise that I believe it is  
because of the rules of engagement that we set, the  
careful use of intelligence and reconnaissance from  
the air, the skill of our pilots, and the precision of the  
weapons that are selected for each strike that we are able  
to say that, to the best of our knowledge, we have not  
caused significant civilian casualties on the ground.

**Andrew Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)  
(Con): I join the Secretary of State and Members of all  
parties in paying tribute to the work of the men and  
women in all three services. Does he agree that the  
important and prominent role played by the Royal  
Navy, Army and Royal Air Force further reinforces this  
country's place as the United States' most important  
ally and a vital partner in the region to ensure the  
ultimate defeat of Daesh and to ensure peace in the  
region?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I agree. The United States has led  
the coalition. I was able to review the next steps in both  
Iraq and Syria when I met the US Defence Secretary  
Jim Mattis in Washington last Friday. He and his  
predecessor have played a key role in leading the coalition.  
Like us, they now want to see us move on in Iraq to the  
work of stabilisation and reconciliation that must follow  
the military campaign.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I, too, pay tribute to  
all those who have served so diligently to make such  
progress. My right hon. Friend rightly mentioned in his  
statement the continued determination that we need to  
battle this warped ideology and to achieve long-term  
stability in the region, but what reassurance can he give  
my constituents and all communities throughout the

459

Counter-Daesh Update

13 JULY 2017

Counter-Daesh Update

460

*[Mims Davies]*

UK that the Government are determined to share  
intelligence during Brexit and beyond to keep us all  
safer?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We have made it clear that, beyond  
Brexit, we want to continue the various arrangements  
there are for security co-operation across Europe, including  
co-ordination between our intelligence agencies and the  
work of police in tracking foreign fighters. It is only by  
working together that we can ensure that this ideology  
is defeated not simply in Iraq but on a wider basis.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I return to the question  
of the skill of our pilots in avoiding civilian casualties  
wherever possible. Can my right hon. Friend please  
confirm that that extends to the selection of hot and  
cold targets, so that targets can be changed even at the  
last moment to avoid those casualties?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. These are operational matters  
for decision by our commanders in the Gulf, but they  
keep those matters under review before each mission is  
planned and while each missionisbeingcarried out.We  
had evidence of that yesterday in the strikes that a  
Tornado and a Typhoon together undertook in Raqqa  
and Mosul on the same day.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I welcome the Secretary  
of State's statement. Like him, I welcome the fact that  
the RAF has played a key role in defeating Daesh on  
the battlefield. However, my concern is that it will now  
move from the battlefield to being a guerrilla organisation.  
Therefore, what support can he reassure me will be  
given to training local forces to deal with threats such as  
improvised explosive devices and others involved in a  
guerrilla war?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** That is already a key part of our  
training effort. We are working with the Iraqi forces, for  
example, as I said earlier, in strengthening their border  
force. We are working with the police, not simply the  
military, so that they are better equipped to deal with

the threat of insurgency when the final remnants of  
Daesh go underground, particularly in the Middle  
Euphrates River valley.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Defeating  
Daesh in its twin capitals is a key step to demolishing  
the myth of the caliphate but in the statement the  
Secretary of State also referred to undermining  
the poisonous ideology elsewhere. Will he expand on  
the steps that the Government are taking to do just  
that?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. We are working with our  
colleagues in the coalition to deal with the extremist  
ideology that lies behind this terrorism. We are working  
to counter it in cyberspace, taking down the messaging  
that is posted there. We are working here at home on  
steps to improve the deradicalisation effort where extremism  
exists in colleges, mosques and elsewhere. We work with  
the Muslim community to ensure that it is properly  
recognised and tackled.

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): Last, but hopefully  
not least, I would like to ask the following question of  
the Secretary of State. The war against Daesh is a  
complex form of unconventional warfare: a hard insurgency  
fought with other tools—cyber, governance, propaganda  
and so forth. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that  
this war will be properly studied and the lessons actually  
learned? There has been a tendency to see unconventional  
warfare as an occasional accident, when in many ways it  
is becoming the new norm; will it be understood and  
studied as such?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** That is a very important point  
and I hope it was recognised in the strategic defence  
review that we carried out in 2015. This war has had to  
be fought using the full spectrum of responses; it has  
been fought predominantly by, with, and through local  
forces, but involving a spectrum of responses right  
across the different domains, and it is very important  
that we recognise that this may well become the fighting  
of the future and we learn the lessons appropriately.

461

13 JULY 2017

Parliamentary Business

462

Parliamentary Business

*Application for emergency debate (Standing Order  
No. 24).*

12.31 pm

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I rise to propose  
that the House should debate a specific and important  
matter that should have urgent consideration: the scheduling  
of business by the Leader of the House.

The title of the debate, if granted under this application,  
is that this House has considered the matter of the  
scheduling of parliamentary business and that, given  
the announcement by the Government of a two-year  
Session, references to “Session” in the Standing Orders  
should be interpreted as per year, therefore with dates  
allocated to be pro rata.

I have asked the Leader of the House several times  
for debates on issues that directly affect our constituents.  
We have just completed an election where we asked  
people to vote for us. As a parliamentary democracy,  
they expect us to debate and vote on motions that were  
relevant to their lives 31 days ago. Our constituents  
expected us to come back to work straight away; instead,  
since the Gracious Speech there have been only seven  
votes. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
The hon. Lady must be heard. She has three minutes.  
Afterwards, if hon. Members wish to have an argument,  
they can have one; but the hon. Lady will be heard for  
her three minutes.

**Valerie Vaz:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.  
My next sentence was “This is undermining our  
democracy”, and there that is, right in front of us.

As you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have  
asked a number of times for a debate on statutory  
instruments that have been prayed against, as is the  
usual convention, but no time has been allocated.

The second reason is to do with the days allocated for  
private Member's Bills. Only 13 have been allocated for  
one year up until November 2018. The current Session  
lasts for two years.

Thirdly, at the same time not a single date has been  
offered, or allocated for, an Opposition day for any  
party. Earlier, the Leader of the House said in response  
to a business question that a date was offered in September,  
but I am not aware of that. In this debate, we would also  
need to clarify what a Session is. It is now two years, but  
we would not expect one year's worth of Opposition  
days to be allocated over the two years.

In support of this application, I repeat the Prime  
Minister's words: “through debate and discussion,” these  
are the

“hallmarks of our parliamentary democracy”.

It is also important to our constitution to have the  
debate when required by convention as a number of  
statutory instruments will flow from the repeal Bill.  
That is why I make this application today.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I have listened carefully to  
the application from the hon. Member and have had the  
benefit of knowing the view expressed by Mr Speaker  
on the basis of the written material that the hon.  
Member supplied to him in advance, and I can tell the  
House that he is satisfied that the matter raised by the  
hon. Member is proper to be discussed under Standing  
Order No. 24. I now wish to ascertain whether the hon.  
Member has the leave of the House.

*Application agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member has obtained  
the leave of the House. Mr Speaker has decided that the  
debate will be held on Monday 17 July, as the first item  
of public business. The debate will last for three hours  
and will arise on a motion that the House has considered  
the specified matter set out in the hon. Member's  
application.

463

13 JULY 2017

Points of Order

464

Points of Order

12.36 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order,  
Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that in a moment the  
European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will be presented. It  
has already been online on the parliamentary website  
for the last hour and a half. This is a complete breach of  
the Standing Orders of the House: the convention is  
that it is presented to the House before it is presented to  
anybody else. Also, we cannot get a copy of it in the  
Vote Office, but we can get a copy of it online. I hope  
that there will be an investigation into this matter.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Iam  
grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing this matter  
to the attention of the Chair, and I understand that  
indeed the text of the European Union (Withdrawal)  
Bill has been located on the Parliament website this  
morning, in advance of its presentation. This should  
not have happened, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman  
and the House that an investigation is currently under  
way into this most regrettable matter.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): Iurther  
to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Has  
there been any indication from the Government Iront  
Bench whether a Minister will come to the House to  
apologise for that transgression?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I have said that the matter is  
being investigated, and I am sure that the Treasury  
Bench has heard the points that have been made.  
*Interruption.]* Order.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I call Sir Desmond Swayne.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Iorest West) (Con): Iurther  
to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Do  
Ministers have any responsibility for the website of the  
House? *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. *[Interruption.]* Order.  
The House is lively this morning. Let us have a little  
order. I have already said that those who are responsible  
are carrying out an investigation, and in due course I  
am quite certain we will be able to report to the Chamber  
just what went wrong and make sure it does not happen  
again.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Iurther to  
that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Mr Gapes, is it really further  
to that point of order, because I have answered the  
point of order?

**Mike Gapes** *indicated assent.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I call Mr Gapes.

**Mike Gapes:** During the investigation, will Government  
MinistersbequestionedabouthowtheHouseofCommons  
website obtained the document?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I have already answered  
that point. We have important business to get on to.

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): Iurther to that  
point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm  
that, immediately after the presentation of the Bill and  
its Iirst Reading, the Second Reading will deal with the  
principle of the Bill, according to “Erskine May” and  
all the rules of the House? Will you also confirm, with  
respect to this particular Bill, that although some do  
not seem to have seen it yet, it is about leaving the  
EuropeanUnionandrepealingtheEuropeanCommunities  
Act 1972 and that anyone who votes against its Second  
Reading will be in breach of that principle?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** As the hon. Gentleman and  
the House know, the Bill in question is about to be  
presented. When the Minister presents the Bill, it will  
then be there for all to see. Each Member can make  
their own consideration of what the Bill is about and  
how they would like to interpret it. If they wish to try to  
amend it, that is what Parliament is for. I am quite sure  
that we will have plenty of discussion about that in the  
forthcoming weeks and months.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your advice on  
an issue that was debated in Westminster Hall on  
Wednesday 5 July —namely, the Women Against State  
Pension Inequality campaign. The debate was very well  
attended, and the resolution to accept the motion was  
rejected. Given that we have no Opposition day debates  
and no opportunity for Back-Bench business debates  
before the recess, would it be possible to have a deferred  
Division on this question so that Members can have a  
recorded vote on it?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon.  
Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order. It  
is also refreshing to have a point of order that is a point  
of order. My understanding is that, following the debate  
in Westminster Hall last week, the motion—that this  
House has considered the state pension age for women—  
was, most unusually, negatived. This might reflect the  
strength of feeling on the matter, but it does not have  
any procedural effect. The fact is that the question was  
put to the Members present in Westminster Hall and  
they came to a decision, which was to negative the  
motion. That has no procedural effect, but I am sure  
that if the hon. Gentleman and any of his colleagues  
wish to have the matter further considered, they will use  
their ingenious knowledge of parliamentary procedure  
to ensure that that happens.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (WITHDRAWAL)

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

SecretaryDavidDavis,supportedbythePrimeMinister,  
Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Damian  
Green,MrSecretaryJohnsonandMrSecretaryLidington,  
presented a Bill to repeal the European Communities  
Act 1972 and make other provision in connection with  
the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time  
tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 5) with explanatory  
notes (Bill 5-EN).*

465

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

466

Passchendaele

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** We now  
come to the general debate on the commemoration of  
Passchendaele—*[Interruption.]* I trust, as we are about  
to consider such a sombre and serious matter as those  
who gave their lives a century ago for the freedom that  
we now enjoy, that hon. Members who wish to leave the  
Chamber will have the decency to do so quietly. We now  
come to the general debate on the commemoration of  
Passchendaele, the third battle of Ypres.

Just before I call the Minister to introduce the debate  
I would like, most unusually, to welcome to the Palace  
of Westminster the two police officers who apprehended  
the murderer of our late colleague, Jo Cox. Craig Nicholls  
and Jonathan Wright are here with us, and we welcome  
them and commend them for their bravery. It is fitting  
that we should do so as we are about to have a debate  
commemorating those who gave their lives for freedom  
and democracy.

12.44 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital,  
Culture, Media and Sport (John Glen):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Commemoration of  
Passchendaele, the Third Battle of Ypres.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to  
reiterate your words of welcome to Mr Nicholls and  
Mr Wright. I am sure that the whole House is very  
pleased that they are with us today.

The commemoration of Passchendaele is just one of  
the national events in our first world war centenary  
programme, as announced by the previous Prime Minister  
in 2012. This four-year programme has seen us deliver  
national events on 4 August 2014 to mark the centenary  
of Britain's entry into the war, with services for the  
Commonwealth at Glasgow Cathedral, at St Symphorien  
military cemetery and at Westminster Abbey. In April 2015,  
we marked the Gallipoli campaign in Turkey and at the  
Cenotaph in Whitehall.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): I also  
congratulate the two police officers on their bravery.  
Does the Minister have any plans to commemorate the  
battle of Loos?

**John Glen:** That is certainly something that I can  
consider, but I have no immediate plans at this point.

Last year on 31 May, we commemorated the famous  
naval battle, the battle of Jutland, with events in Orkney,  
and then one month later, on 1 July, we remembered the  
battle of the Somme with national events in France, London  
and Manchester. Overnight vigils were held at Westminster  
Abbey and in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and  
replicated in local communities across the UK.

Before I go on, I would like to acknowledge the huge  
support of my hon. Friend the Member for South West  
Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), who has shaped and steered  
this centenary programme. He is a hugely valued colleague,  
as well as being my parliamentary neighbour. I should  
also like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on  
his election to the chairmanship of the Northern Ireland  
Select Committee. If he brings to that role the integrity,  
wisdom and hard work that he has brought to this  
project, the House will be very well served. In addition,

I would like to thank the members of the Secretary of  
State's first world war centenary advisory group, who  
have provided vital advice and guided my Department  
through the programme every step of the way. I was  
tempted to name all of them, but there are just too  
many. However, I want to put on record the Government's  
gratitude for their work. In just over two weeks' time we  
will deliver our next commemorative event. Officially  
known as the third battle of Ypres, Passchendaele is one  
of the most famous battles of the first world war.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I, too, want  
to add my commendation to the police officers who are  
with us today. The South Wales Borderers and the  
2nd Battalion the Monmouthshire Regiment showed  
incredible heroism and made great sacrifices at  
Passchendaele. Both included members from my  
constituency. Soldiers were also lost in the days leading  
up to the battle. The 2nd Battalion the Monmouthshire  
Regiment moved up to the forward line on 29 July in  
preparation for the battle on 31 July. As we entirely  
appropriately remember those who gave so much in the  
battle, can we also remember those whose lives were  
lost, perhaps through wounds, in the days before?

**John Glen:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for  
that contribution. He makes a wise point with his  
customary eloquence, and I am sure it will be echoed  
across the House.

The battle was infamous not only for the terrible  
conditions but for the sheer scale of the losses. In the  
region of 250,000 allied soldiers and around the same  
number of German soldiers, a total of some 500,000  
men from both sides, were wounded, killed or missing.  
Those are quite frankly unbelievable numbers. Fought  
between 31 July and 10 November 1917, the battle saw  
the British Army attempt to break out of the notorious  
Ypres Salient and put intolerable pressure on the German  
defences. Troops from across Britain and Ireland took  
part, along with significant numbers from today's  
Commonwealth, particularly from Australia, Canada,  
New Zealand and South Africa. Allied air forces played  
an important role, providing vital reconnaissance for  
the ground forces and fighting deadly dogfights with  
their German counterparts in the skies above the trenches.  
The battle was conceived, in part, as a means of influencing  
the struggle against German submarines, and the Royal  
Naval Division served on Passchendaele's battlefield  
alongside other soldiers. Many others contributed during  
the battle and in the fighting around Ypres during the  
conflict, including servicemen from India and the West  
Indies, labourers from China and, of course, the nurses  
and medical staff who worked behind the lines to treat  
the wounded.

For all those who fought in that small corner of  
Flanders in the late summer and autumn of 1917,  
including those in the Belgian, French and German  
armies, it would prove to be one of the most gruelling  
experiences of the conflict. Much of the first world  
war's enduring photography, poetry and artwork was  
inspired by the desolate landscape, which became a  
featureless quagmire over the course of the battle. After  
periods of intense rain, the mud became so bad that  
men and animals could be swallowed up in the swamp.  
Images, such as the photography of Frank Hurley or  
the evocative paintings of Paul Nash, are a harrowing  
reflection of the utter devastation that was wrought.

467

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

468

*[John Glen]*

Many families, villages and towns were touched by  
the fighting. In Wales, the battle is partly remembered  
for the loss of the renowned poet Ellis Evans—better  
known by his bardic name Hedd Wyn—who died on  
Pilckem Ridge on the opening day of the battle.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): I apologise  
to the Minister because I have to be briefly absent for  
part of the debate, but I will return at the earliest  
opportunity. I know that props are not always welcome  
in the Chamber, but in the light of what he said about  
photographs, may I share with him a pair of photographs?  
They show Passchendaele village in June 1917 and in  
December 1917, and it is possible even from a distance  
to see how entirely the landscape was obliterated by the  
bombardment.

**John Glen:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his  
pertinent intervention, which the whole House will  
welcome.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
The Minister is right that the whole House will welcome  
the right hon. Gentleman's illustration, but the House  
will note that there is a good reason why we do not use  
props. I did not stop the right hon. Gentleman in this  
exceptional circumstance, because he showed us the  
photographs with the very best of intentions. I am not  
quite sure how *Hansard* will record the pictures, but the  
Minister is right to note the right hon. Gentleman's  
point.

**John Glen:** That day also saw the death of the Irish  
poet Francis Ledwidge. It is important to remember  
that many of those who fought at Passchendaele were  
conscripts and that the war had already led to huge  
changes around these islands. Women were already  
playing a vital role in the war effort, particularly in the  
production of munition for the artillery, which was so  
critical to the outcome of the fighting. For many of us,  
Passchendaele has come to epitomise the horrors of  
trench warfare on the western front.

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): I think my hon.  
Friend knows what I am about to say, but does he recall  
that, through him and the Wiltshire Regiment, I presented  
the city of Salisbury with a bugle that was used by the  
1st Wiltshire Regiment? I understand that it is now in  
the museum as a recognition and a memory of the brave  
people who fought in that wonderful battle.

**John Glen:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
reminding me and the House of that kind gift. It  
represents a whole plethora of gifts and memories  
concerning the first and second world wars that many  
Members of this House and many of constituents have  
in their families. It is important that we put those  
exhibits out there so that the next generation can fully  
grasp what happened during this period of our history.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): I rise because of  
the description of Passchendaele as a “wonderful battle.”  
For many who were there, including my father, it was a  
terrible tragedy that resulted from the misjudgment of  
generals and others. We cannot look at it without  
remembering that many of those who lost their lives—  
they did not give their lives—were told that if they  
went there, they would stop the “Huns” bayoneting

Belgian babies. They went there as a result of persuasion  
and propaganda, and we must remember that if we are  
going to learn the proper lessons of war and the immense  
and wasteful loss of human life.

**John Glen:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for  
his contribution. Every Member will have a different  
emphasis and interpretation of events, and I hope that  
the debate will give everyone an opportunity to reflect  
in our own way on the events of 100 years ago.

Three commemorative events will be held in Belgium  
on 30 and 31 July 2017 at iconic locations where soldiers  
fought, survived, died and are commemorated. On Sunday  
30 July, we will begin with the traditional last post  
ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres. It is one of the  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission's most iconic  
memorials. It was built to honour all of those who  
fought around Ypres during the first world war and also  
bears the names of more than 54,000 individuals who  
died while serving with the forces of Britain, Australia,  
Canada, India and South Africa but for whom there is  
no known grave. Designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, it  
is a remarkable monument, and a fitting place to start  
our proceedings. The last post ceremony has been held  
there at 20:00 hours every evening since the unveiling of  
the memorial in 1927—with the exception of the second  
world war, when the ceremony was held at Brookwood  
military cemetery near Woking. It is organised by the  
Last Post Association and its buglers have performed  
the ceremony since its origin.

The ceremony will commemorate the UK's shared  
history with Belgium. A UK military band and the  
National Youth Choir of Scotland will perform, and  
wreaths will be laid by representatives of some 23 nations  
who fought on the Ypres Salient during the war. Two  
hundred invited guests will attend, as well as 200 descendants  
who were successful in a public ballot and whose ancestors  
are named on the Menin Gate. After the ceremony,  
events will be held outside the Cloth Hall in Ypres'  
Market Square to an estimated audience of around  
6,000 members of the public, plus our invited guests.  
We will creatively tell the story of the war in the Ypres  
Salient from 1914, with a particular focus on the third  
battle of Ypres of 1917. Projecting on the Cloth Hall,  
we will use a range of contemporary digital techniques  
to bring history to life. Projections will enable the use of  
a broad range of visual media from photographic and  
film archive to animation. The projections will be supported  
by live readings and poetry and musical performances,  
including an orchestra and choir. The event will add a  
distinctive, engaging and contemporary element to the  
centenary programme that will help us to reach a wider  
and, I hope, younger audience, which is a key objective  
of the commemorations.

On Monday 31 July, exactly 100 years since the battle  
began, a national commemorative event will be held at  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Tyne  
Cot cemetery near Zonnebeke. In terms of burials, it is  
the largest CWGC cemetery in the world, being the  
final resting place of almost 12,000 Commonwealth  
servicemen, of whom more than 8,300 remain unidentified.

**James Heappey** (Wells) (Con): My hon. Friend has  
mentioned the Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
site at Ypres, and he mentions another now. Will he join  
me in paying tribute to all those, not just in north-western  
European but across the world, who maintain our

469

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

470

Commonwealth war grave sites with such dignity and  
who so brilliantly maintain the memory of those who  
died in service to their country?

**John Glen:** I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend,  
as I was just about to do that. He is right to mention  
their enormous contribution over the last 100 years.

Tyne Cot is the final resting place of almost 12,000  
Commonwealth servicemen, of whom more than 8,300  
remain unidentified—among them four German soldiers.  
At the heart of the cemetery is the Tyne Cot blockhouse,  
a formidable German fortification captured during the  
fighting and then used as a medical post. After the war,  
remains were brought to Tyne Cot from across the  
surrounding battlefields, but most of those buried there  
are thought to have died during the third battle of  
Ypres.

When the Menin Gate was constructed, its walls  
proved insufficient to bear the names of all the missing  
of the Ypres Salient, so a memorial wall at Tyne Cot  
bears the names of nearly 35,000 men who were killed  
after 16 August 1917 and whose graves are not known.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
Is the Minister troubled, as I am, by the inherent  
tension within the nation's commemorative programme  
for the first world war between the need to remember  
the sacrifice of previous generations and the desire to  
instil in current generations the need for patriotism and  
potential sacrifice in defence of our values? The dreadful,  
needless mass loss of life in the first world war was  
perhaps different from the second world war.

**John Glen:** The hon. Gentleman makes a typically  
thoughtful representation of the challenge in getting  
these commemorations right. I hope he will recognise  
that a lot of thought and work has gone into trying to  
get that balance right. I hope we will begin to understand  
how it is being balanced when we hear from some of my  
colleagues, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for  
South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison).

I will reflect, as I said I would, on the CWGC, which  
commemorates 54,000 of the missing on the Menin  
Gate and a further 35,000 on the memorial wall at Tyne  
Cot. When the names on other nearby memorials are  
added, the total comes to some 100,000 soldiers who  
have no known grave, numbers that are unimaginable in  
modern-day warfare.

Following the ballot for free tickets launched in January,  
I am delighted that around 3,900 descendants will attend  
the event at Tyne Cot. The content and staging of the  
event will evoke, I hope, a strong sense of place, making  
full use of the poignancy and historic significance of  
the cemetery. There will be readings by military personnel  
and descendants, musical performances by UK military  
bands, a choir and solo performances, and a formal act  
of remembrance. Readings of soldiers' recollections,  
letters and diaries, as well as poetry, will tell the story of  
the third battle of Ypres and the experiences of men  
who fought there. Content will reflect the contribution  
of men from across the UK and Ireland, as well as from  
the Commonwealth.

In addition, from 29 to 31 July, the Passchendaele  
centenary exhibition will be held at Passchendaele Memorial  
Park in Zonnebeke. We have been working with Memorial  
Museum Passchendaele, and the exhibition will include

contributions from a range of UK and Belgian museums  
and organisations. There will be artefacts, exhibition-style  
display boards and panels, living history groups and  
areas for historical talks and musical performances  
in open-air and covered areas. Memorial Museum  
Passchendaele will also have an exhibition entitled  
“Passchendaele, landscape at war,” which will be open  
to visitors.

I thank and acknowledge the help and support given  
to us by all the local organisations and local communities  
in and around Ypres and Zonnebeke during the planning  
stages over the last year. Their support has been invaluable,  
and my thanks go particularly to the mayors of Ypres  
and Zonnebeke, who have led that contribution.

We have also had a huge amount of support from the  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which is  
celebrating its own centenary this year. This organisation  
is one of our key partners, and it does outstanding work  
in ensuring that 1.7 million people who died in the two  
world wars will never be forgotten. The CWGC cares  
for cemeteries and memorials at 23,000 locations in  
154 countries and territories across the globe, making  
sure that our war dead are honoured with dignity. The  
CWGC recently launched a new scheme for interns who  
have been welcoming and guiding visitors at major  
cemeteries and memorials this summer, including at  
Tyne Cot. Also, the Ministry of Defence is a key partner  
that is contributing military assets to these events. I am  
delighted, too, that the BBC will be broadcasting the  
events on both Sunday night and Monday.

Our key themes across the entire first world war centenary  
programme are remembrance, youth and education. On  
youth and education, I am pleased that the National  
Youth Choir of Scotland will perform at all three  
commemorative events and that around 100 graduates  
of the National Citizen Service, aged 16 to 19, will be  
part of the delivery team at the commemorations. The  
graduates have undergone an educational programme  
on the first world war in readiness for their roles in Belgium.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP):  
I am grateful for what the Minister is presenting to the  
House. I completely agree that it is only right and fitting  
that we should commemorate the loss of life at  
Passchendaele. Will he talk about the role of the medical  
profession after Passchendaele and the trench warfare  
of the first world war? We are commemorating those  
who lost their lives, but many of those who came home  
suffered from shellshock, and so many advances in  
psychiatry were made by dealing with that on the frontline  
and with the impact on families. Will that play any part  
in the commemoration of those who survived?

**John Glen:** Given our understanding of many of the  
impacts of war, certainly psychologically, we will have  
those things in mind as we remember the events of  
Passchendaele, but it is very difficult to go back and  
reinterpret events as they were at the time and as they  
were experienced at the time. The hon. Gentleman  
makes a perceptive and worthwhile point.

The Royal British Legion's National Memorial  
Arboretum in Staffordshire is also hosting a special  
service on 31 July, which will include a broadcast on  
large screens of our national event at Tyne Cot. Members  
on both sides of the House are encouraged to attend  
this free event, if they can. They should encourage their  
constituents to attend, too.

471

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

472

*[John Glen]*

More Victoria Crosses were won on the first day of  
the battle of Passchendaele than on any other single day  
of battle in the first world war, and 61 VCs were  
awarded during the campaign as a whole. All 61 recipients  
will be honoured with a commemorative paving stone  
in the town of their birth on the anniversary of the  
action for which the Victoria Cross was awarded. The  
commemorative paving stone initiative forms part of  
the Government's first world war centenary programme.  
In the case of those men born overseas, their  
commemorative paving stones have been placed at the  
National Memorial Arboretum.

Passchendaele also saw Captain Noel Chavasse, a  
medical officer, receive his second Victoria Cross. He  
was wounded on the first evening of Passchendaele but,  
under heavy fire and in appalling weather, he continued  
to search no man's land to attend to the wounded. On  
2 August, while he was taking a rest, his first aid post  
was struck by a shell. Although he had at least six  
injuries, he managed to crawl away and was picked up  
andtakentothe32ndcasualtyclearingstation,Brandhoek,  
where he died on 4 August 1917.

We are also supporting Passchendaele at Home in  
partnership with the Big Ideas Company. There are  
over 400 graves in the UK that are very likely to belong  
to servicemen injured at the battle of Passchendaele  
who died of their wounds afterwards. The project will  
work with schools and communities across the country  
to identify graves in their area and to find out more  
about the brave men who fought at Passchendaele.

As the House has heard, and I hope Members agree,  
these commemorative events to mark the battle of  
Passchendaele will be both educational and poignant,  
and they will help us to reflect on this terrible war and  
battle 100 years ago.

1.10 pm

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): May I thank the  
Minister for his speech and, as this is my first opportunity  
to do so, may I welcome him to his new post? Although  
they have already left, may I, on behalf of Her Majesty's  
Opposition,addourgratitudeandthankstoMrNicholls  
and Mr Wright, the two police officers who helped to  
apprehend the killer of our beloved late colleague Jo Cox,  
whose plaqueisnowhere behind me on Opposition side  
of the House? It is rightly standing with all the plaques  
of hon. Members who gave their lives on behalf of the  
country in previous conflicts, including the first world  
war.

Across this House, we are immensely grateful for the  
opportunity to commemorate Passchendaele, the third  
battle of Ypres, and the chance to speak of our military  
history, our armed forces communities, and the sacrifices  
that were made, and are still made, on our behalf. I  
should also like to take the opportunity, on behalf of  
the official Opposition, to pay tribute to those who have  
served in our armed forces and those who continue to  
serve. We are all grateful for their courage, as they serve  
to keep us safe.

As we have heard, the battle of Passchendaele stretched  
from July to November 1917, as the allied forces and  
the German empire battled for control of the ridges  
around Ypres on the western front. It was the first

major British offensive on the Ypres Salient. The stalemate  
lasted for months, marked by the battles within the  
battles of Menin Road Bridge, Polygon Wood, and  
Broodseinde. As has been said, the casualties on both  
sides are difficult to calculate, but there were well over  
half a million, and yet the villageof Passchendaele itself  
was only 5 miles away from the starting point of the  
allied forces' action.

The battle is notorious, not only for the number of  
casualties, but for the conditions in which it was fought.  
The first few days of the offensive were marked by the  
heaviest rainfall in 30 years, turning the field into a  
quagmire which trapped soldiers and horses, and  
immobilised weaponry. A century on, in the safety and  
grandeur of this place, it is difficult, if not impossible,  
to imagine the mud, the blood and the horror, and the  
sheer scale of the losses of Passchendaele—but that is  
why it is absolutely right that we remember.

There were 325,000 allied casualties, a fact that is  
difficult to comprehend, as is their bravery, valour, and  
sacrifice. In the minds of many, Passchendaele has come  
to epitomise the senselessness of war.So these moments  
of commemoration are important, and I would like to  
join the Minister in thanking all of those involved: the  
Imperial War Museum; the BBC; the Royal British Legion;  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and all  
the other organisations, including those he mentioned,  
that work so hard to ensure that we do not forget. We  
are fortunate at the moment to have an exhibition in the  
Palace, in Westminster Hall, about Parliament and the  
first world war, which I encourage all hon. Members to  
visit if they have not already done so.

The scale of the great war was such that, today, most  
cities, towns, and villages have a memorial that lists the  
names of the local people who died while fighting for  
Britain in that war. Members will not be surprised to  
hear me, as a Welsh MP, observe that the sacrifices  
made in the first world war continue to resonate in  
Wales, despite the passage of 100 years. The first significant  
losses of Welsh life came during October and November  
of 1914. The Germans rushed for Belgian seaports, but  
were repelled by units of the Welch Regiment and the  
South Wales Borderers, who suffered many casualties.  
The Minister made reference to the fact that of all the  
events of that war, Passchendaele, in particular, is a part  
of Welsh cultural memory: every village in Wales was  
affected; 20,000 first-language Welsh-speaking soldiers  
alone were killed; the soldiers of the Welch Regiment,  
South Wales Borderers and Royal Welsh Fusiliers all  
fought alongside each other in the 38th Division; and  
further, the Welsh Guards fought at this, the third battle  
of Ypres. The 38th Division was devised by David  
Lloyd George, who went on to become Prime Minister,  
whose statue flanks the entrance to this Chamber and  
who was himself a first language Welsh speaker. The  
division first shipped to France in 1915 and suffered  
heavy casualties in the Somme. By 1917, it had come to  
be seen as an elite division, particularly following the  
battle of Pilckem Ridge at the beginning of the third  
battle of Ypres. The De Sportsman cafe at Langemark,  
not far from Ypres, has been dedicated by the owner,  
Marc Dacaestecker, to the many Welsh soldiers who  
died in the area in 1917. The red dragon on a black  
background worn by the 38th Division is the inspiration  
for the shoulder flash worn by the Royal Welsh today, a  
testament to the cultural significance of the 38th Division.

473

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

474

It is for reasons such as this that sacrifice and public  
service are commemorated today right across the UK,  
but particularly by the armed forces community in  
Wales in relation to Passchendaele. When contemplating  
casualties on such a huge scale, we often turn to individual  
stories in remembrance, as the Minister did and as I  
would like to do. As the Minister said, it is 100 years  
since Passchendaele, and it is also a 100 years since  
Eisteddfod y Gadair Ddu, the Eisteddfod of the Black  
Chair. Some hon. Members will know that the Eisteddfod  
is the annual Welsh-language cultural festival where  
people compete at singing, dancing, and reciting poetry.  
It is held every summer; this year's will be held in only a  
few weeks' time, and I am pleased to say that next year's  
will be a free event in the capital city of Cardiff, where  
my constituency lies.

In 1916, some people called for the Eisteddfod to be  
cancelled, as they did not think it would be appropriate  
to spend time singing while men were fighting and  
dying on their behalf in the trenches. But David Lloyd  
George insisted. He said:

“It is true that there are thousands of gallant men falling in the  
fight—let us sing of their heroism... Let us sing of our land that  
gave birth to so many heroes”.

So in 1916, the Eisteddfod went on. The following year,  
in 1917, as the battle of Passchendaele wore on, the  
Eisteddfod was directly touched by the tragedy of war.  
Ellis Humphrey Evans, under the now-famous pseudonym,  
Hedd Wyn, was judged as the winner of the Chair, the  
Eisteddfod's highest honour, granted to the best poet  
writing in traditional strict meter, known as cynghanedd.  
However, when the winner's pseudonym was called in  
the traditional dramatic ceremony at the Eisteddfod, no  
one stood up in the audience to reveal themselves as the  
triumphant poet. It was then announced that the winning  
bard had been killed in battle six weeks prior. Hedd  
Wyn had been one of 4,000 men killed on a single  
morning when the Royal Welsh Fusiliers went over the  
top near Passchendaele, in the Battle of Pilckem Ridge.  
The poet from Trawsfynydd has become the subject of  
poems and history lessons in classrooms across Wales,  
and even of an Oscar-nominated feature film. The  
poignant story of Hedd Wyn captured the mourning of  
a nation.

So in a way it is doubly appropriate that the Front-Bench  
lead in this debate today is the Department for Digital,  
Culture, Media and Sport, because in the greatest perils,  
it is poetry, songs and the arts that often keep people  
going, and miraculously, even though we would not  
want this to happen, manage to turn the horrors of war  
into the beauty of artistic inspiration.

The war effort in the UK was made up of not only  
the men who went to fight, but the surgeons and nurses  
on the battlefields. At home, women became the backbone  
of industry. Here, I would like to mention my own  
constituency. In 1917, the Women's Land Army formed  
and 20,000 women across the UK enlisted. Green Farm,  
in the Ely area of my Cardiff West constituency, is now  
a housing estate, which was built to deliver homes “fit  
for heroes” after the great war. As a farm, it was run  
predominantly by female farm hands during the war.  
One of the workers, Agnes Greatorex, left domestic  
service to work on the farm. She said:

“Every morning, we would get up at five o'clock and milk a  
hundred cows. We would then take the milk to Glan Ely Hospital.”

I am proud—I am sure that we are all proud—of the  
efforts of Agnes and of so many women across the  
country. Of course, Agnes is part of Cardiff West's  
history, but I am both proud of and humbled by the  
sacrifices that we still see from our armed forces  
communities across the UK today.

The UK armed forces continue to protect us. They  
are currently involved in more than 30 operations in  
over 20 countries. Abroad, our forces continue to work  
in Afghanistan, in non-combat roles. They support the  
EU and UN in peacekeeping missions in South Sudan,  
Somalia, Nigeria, and Mali. They are part of NATO's  
forces in eastern Europe, and, as we heard earlier today  
in the House, are responding to the continuing threat  
posed by Daesh.

At home, they support responses to terrorist incidents,  
protect our aerospace, and are supported by the entire  
armed forces community of families, reservists, veterans,  
and cadets. During this debate to commemorate the  
sacrifices made in Passchendaele, we should also remember  
the sacrifices that have been made, and are still being  
made, every year since then by the brave men and  
women of the UK armed forces.

To close, I turn to the words of Hedd Wyn's “Rhyfel”,  
which means war. I will read it in Welsh and then in the  
English translation.

Mae'r hen delynau genid gynt,

Yng nghrog ar gangau'r helyg draw,

A gwaedd y bechgyn lond y gwynt,

A'u gwaed yn gymysg efo'r glaw.

The harps to which we sang, are hung

On willow boughs, and their refrain

Drowned by the anguish of the young

Whose blood is mingled with the rain.

1.22 pm

**Mr Keith Simpson** (Broadland) (Con): May I begin  
by thanking the Minister for outlining the various  
ceremonies that are to take place over the next two or  
three months to commemorate the battle of Passchendaele?  
I also thank the spokesman for the Opposition, the hon.  
Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), for talking  
about the wider impact of the war, which we are also  
commemorating.

It seems to me that, at times, this commemoration is a  
bit like the first world war in that, year by year, we  
remember another campaign, another battle. I wanted  
to speak in this debate for a number of reasons. I am so  
old that I interviewed dozens of first world war survivors  
in the 1970s for a writing project—I published two or  
three books. I have a deep, connected memory of the  
first world war, as my grandfather served in it. As a  
member of the Prime Minister's advisory panel on the  
first world war, I am also conscious of the fact that we  
need to get the balance right—this point was made in  
an intervention on the Minister—between commemoration  
and not glorifying war. How do we bring the war to  
young people? I have a personal connection as I can  
remember talking to survivors of Passchendaele, but for  
my son, who is 26, the battle of Passchendaele is as far  
away from him as the battle of Waterloo.

Secondly, why are we remembering Passchendaele? Is  
it just because we have got into the habit of putting  
hooks on our commemoration? In other words, it was  
obvious that, in 2014, it was going to be the battle of

475

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

476

*[Mr Keith Simpson]*

Mons. We glided through 2015, but there was of course  
Gallipoli, which was very, very important to the Australians  
and the New Zealanders. The great irony there is that  
the Australians and New Zealanders played a far more  
important and significant role as part of the British  
Armies in Belgium and France in '16, '17 and '18 and,  
indeed, suffered far worse casualties. Now, in 2017, we  
are largely, but not wholly, commemorating Passchendaele.  
Next year, we will end up commemorating the great  
German Spring offensive, which nearly broke the allied  
line; the Hundred Days offensive, which was the more  
mobile campaign; and then the collapse of the Germans  
in October and November 1918. That is it—the end of  
the first world war, but of course it was not.

As the Minister pointed out, the Commonwealth  
War Graves Commission celebrates its centenary this  
year. It was the work of a remarkable man, Fabian  
Ware, who served with an ambulance unit—he was too  
old to serve in a frontline unit—in 1914. He was struck  
by the extent of the casualties and what was going to  
happen to them. Through the adjutant general, one of  
the chief of staff officers in the British Armies' general  
headquarters, he began to collect bodies together—he  
began some form of formalisation. In 1917, the Imperial  
War Graves Commission was established. Its work really  
began after the Armistice in 1918. As the Minister  
pointed out, Tyne Cot—named after a reference on a  
map—outside Passchendaele, became the largest cemetery  
for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Nearly  
50,000 men are commemorated there, the majority of  
whom have no grave.

That brings me on to my next point, which is that, for  
younger people, Passchendaele is about the sheer extent  
of casualties. I suspect that it is also associated in their  
mind not only with poetry and literature, some of which  
we have heard, but with film and photographs. The  
great thing about the first world war—if there is a great  
thing—is that we can actually see it. There is cine film,  
which is slightly more difficult, and a raft of photographs,  
many of which were taken on the frontline. It was  
against King's regulations for servicemen to take cameras  
onto the frontline. Most of them ignored that, and sent  
their photographs back home, which has given us a  
graphic display of what happened.

I talk to children and young people about the war.  
They say to me, “Another three or four years and I  
would have been old enough to have fought in the war.  
How did those people endure that? What did the  
Government do to force them to fight in the British  
Armies in the first world war?” It comes as quite a  
surprise to them when I say that there was no conscription  
until 1916-17 and that the majority of the servicemen  
were volunteers—either Kitchener volunteers or they  
were in the territorial army. There was a pretty dramatic  
and drastic military discipline code—we know, for example,  
that dozens of British servicemen were executed in the  
first world war, some for cowardice and some for murder.  
What I was struck by all those years ago when I talked  
to veterans and read their diaries and letters—it was  
clear that many of them were appalled by the death of  
their friends and the suffering—was that they volunteered  
partly out of a local interest. Many of them served with  
their friends, volunteering to serve in pals battalions or  
to serve alongside men from the same village or even the

same streets. It was a Victorian concept of duty. Of course  
one of the most important stimulants and determinants  
in battle, which I was always told when teaching at  
Sandhurst by men who had done this, is small-group  
loyalty. They were doing it not for their battalion, but  
for the people in their section—I am talking about half  
a dozen people.

We must remember that Passchendaele, as the Minister  
and the shadow Minister pointed out, was not a one-day  
battle. It was a series of campaigns from the end of July  
right through until 10 November and was only one part  
of the work of the British Armies in Belgium and  
France in 1917.

The next point I want briefly to touch on is that one  
question that is asked, not just by young people but by  
people who are interested in the first world war, is why  
the generals were so stupid—the point made by the hon.  
Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn). I have never  
been particularly in that camp; what I try to remember  
is that they came from a limited background and had  
limited experience and perception of war. We also need  
to bear in mind that the British expeditionary force of  
1914—mainly regular and reservist, with a few TA—was  
about 150,000 men. Douglas Haig commanded a tiny  
part of that. In 1917, the British Armies in France were  
roughly 1.3 million men—an enormous expansion in  
war. Many were not soldiers; they were on the logistics  
or support side. To use a modern academic term, the  
learning curve required to recruit, train, deploy and  
fight these armies was enormous.

That was the experience not just in Britain but in  
Belgium, France, Germany and Russia, and I have to  
say that bearing in mind the extent of the casualties at  
Passchendaele—we are talking about perhaps 500,000  
to 600,000 men, give or take 10,000, and that sounds  
appallingly inaccurate—we need to think about this in  
terms of the casualties of the second world war. To give  
just one example, historians now tell us that the average  
British infantry battalion in Normandy had more casualties  
than its equivalent in France in 1917. Passchendaele  
was unique in one sense, but there is a commonality in  
major war on a vast scale.

Then there is the question of the coalition Prime  
Minister mentioned by the Opposition spokesman, David  
Lloyd George, and what became the battle of the  
memoirs—involving Lloyd George, Churchill and the  
politicians on one side and the generals on the other—about  
who was responsible for the casualties and whether  
there was an alternative. Lloyd George wanted, for very  
good reasons, to avoid engaging the German enemy in  
the main theatre of operations, the western front. He  
was always looking for a way to knock the props out  
from under Germany. On the whole, the generals were  
against that. As far as they were concerned, the main  
battle was in Belgium and France, where we were a  
subordinate and then an equal partner of the French.  
There is no doubt in my mind that Lloyd George had, in  
theory, the power to have halted the campaign in third  
Ypres after the first month, when General Gough's  
army ground to a halt in the foulest of weather. He had  
that power—except he did not, because he felt weak up  
against Douglas Haig. Haig had the press on his side,  
and they were on his side until the end.

The debate is still going on today among historians  
about whether there was an alternative. There probably  
was not, but we did not have in place the methods and

477

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

478

organisation to have proper debates about such matters  
during the first world war. That was the big lesson that  
Churchill learned. Churchill, of course, left the Government  
after Gallipoli, and went and served in France before  
Lloyd George reluctantly brought him back as Minister  
of Munitions. When Churchill became Prime Minister  
in May 1940, the one lesson he had learned from the  
first world war was that the Prime Minister pretty much  
had to have total power. He therefore made himself  
Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, but he also  
sought to have a continuous day-by-day debate with the  
chiefs of staff over the full range of strategy and to use  
Government Committees to run the war. Churchill was  
in many respects a dictator, but almost without exception  
he never overruled the chiefs of staff.

Lloyd George did not have that ability. Not only did  
the Navy not talk to the Army, but Lloyd George had  
great difficulty pinning down the Chief of the Imperial  
General Staff, Wully Robertson, the only man to go  
from working-class private to head of the Army and a  
field marshal. His contempt for Lloyd George was such  
that at one meeting he walked out; he just decided he  
was not going to continue the debate. These are the  
kinds of things with which I try to get young people  
engaged—issues that are still alive today.

My final point concerns the sorrow and pity of war.  
Putting aside the plans and personalities of the senior  
officers, the battle of Passchendaele was defined by two  
things as much as anything. The sheer weight of artillery  
firepower was on such a scale that it totally dwarfed  
anything that had taken place at the battle of the  
Somme. We are talking about an ability to bring down  
box artillery firepower in very small areas, and my right  
hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis)  
has illegally shown us photographs of what Passchendaele  
looked like. The second element was the two periods of  
atrocious weather—absolute downpours of rain that  
ground everything to a halt. That is a phenomenon that  
we cannot deal with today.

If Members want to think about the impact of firepower,  
they should read the book “We Were Warriors” by our  
colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth,  
Moor View (Johnny Mercer). It is based on his three  
tours of operation in Afghanistan as a Royal Artillery  
officer attached to the Royal Marines. Members can see  
in that book that despite all the technology we now  
have—the firepower and the Cobra and Apache  
helicopters—it is still difficult, and there is an overwhelming  
desire not to kill or injure civilians.

I welcome this commemorative debate and I know  
that colleagues on both sides of the House will contribute  
to it. With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I  
want to read out two short contemporaneous accounts  
that combine the shellfire and the strain on soldiers.  
The first is from Britain and Private Bert Ferns of  
2nd/6th Lancashire Fusiliers, describing an attack in  
October 1917—in other words, halfway through the  
Passchendaele campaign. He said that Mr Kay—obviously  
a platoon officer—

“came up and said ‘Come on lads, it's our turn,' and we just  
walked round the corner of the pillbox and up the hill. The  
Germans didn't have much to fear from me that morning—there  
was no fire in my belly—no nothing. I staggered up the hill  
and...froze and became very frightened because a big shell had  
just burst and blown a group of lads to bits; there were bits of  
men all over the place, a terrible sight, men just blown to nothing.  
I just stood there. It was still and misty, and I could taste their

blood in the air. I couldn't move. I stood there staring. Then an  
officer came across and shouted we were too far left and must go  
half right. I would have probably been dead but for him jolting  
me out of it. These men had just been killed and we just had to  
wade through them to get on. That's one thing I'll never forget,  
what I saw and what I smelt.”

The second short account is from the other side of  
the hill, as Basil Liddell Hart would have said, and  
a letter from an unknown German officer dated  
20 September 1917:

“Dear Mother,

On the morning of the 18th, the dug-out, containing seventeen  
men, was shot to pieces over our heads. I am the only one who  
withstood the maddening bombardment of three days and still  
survives. You cannot imagine the frightful mental torments I have  
undergone in those few hours. After crawling out through the  
bleeding remnants of my comrades and the smoke and debris,  
and wandering and fleeing in the midst of the raging artillery fire  
in search of refuge, I am now awaiting death at any moment.

You do not know what Flanders means. Flanders means  
endless endurance. Flanders means blood and scraps of human  
bodies. Flanders means heroic courage and faithfulness, even  
unto death.

Your Otto.”

I do not know whether he survived.

1.39 pm

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for  
Broadland (Mr Simpson), who made an incredibly forensic,  
heartfelt and vivid speech—his two read-outs at the end  
were particularly emotional—and the House is better  
informed as a result of it, so I thank him most sincerely.  
I also thank the Minister for bringing the debate to the  
House, and pay tribute to the shadow Minister, the hon.  
Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), who made  
a very fine speech.

It is absolutely right that we commemorate  
Passchendaele; the word is a trigger that brings up what  
it meant to go through industrial warfare. The sacrifice  
paid then must of course never be forgotten, and we pay  
tribute to all the bodies mentioned by the Minister that  
will take part in the commemoration services this year.  
Commemoration is of course important. It is always  
important to commemorate the large-scale loss of human  
life, as we do this week on the 22nd anniversary of the  
genocide at Srebrenica. We welcome the fact that the  
families of those lost in the battle of Passchendaele will  
have the opportunity to take part in these commemorations.

In Scotland, no community, and barely a family, was  
untouched by the carnage of Passchendaele. This tragedy  
highlights, as do many other tragedies, the importance  
of international and institutional peacebuilding and  
co-operation, shared values, shared interests, and working  
together to ensure that war does not become the norm  
of our time.

I turn to Glasgow, as I am sure that you will have  
expected me to, Madam Deputy Speaker, given that I  
am a Glasgow Member of Parliament. I understand  
that another honourable friend from Glasgow, the hon.  
Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), may  
wish to catch your eye to touch on our city's heritage  
and history in this respect. I would like to mention  
something fascinating that I came across on the website  
of the Scottish Football Museum, which is based in  
Hampden Park in my constituency. I would like to tell  
the House about an individual you can read more about

479

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

480

*[Stewart Malcolm McDonald]*

on the website, or in the museum: the former Rangers  
player, Jimmy Speirs. His face will front the centenary  
commemoration of the Scots who did not make it back  
from Passchendaele. On 19 August, the unveiling of the  
life-sized steel silhouettes in Frezenberg will feature  
Jimmy Speirs, one of the many Glaswegians who never  
made it back from Passchendaele.

In addition to the excellent archives of the Scottish  
Football Museum, there is the fantastic portal at Glasgow  
University, which mentions a number of very distinguished  
people; I could read out their biographies and tell hon.  
Members lots about their lives, but there are a small  
handful that I would like to inform the House of. The  
first is Lachlan Seymour Graham, who was born in  
Glasgow on 19 September 1882. His father, Duncan,  
was a well-known Glasgow leather manufacturer with  
an interest in politics and public life. He was one of the  
founding members of the Glasgow Liberal Club, a past  
president of the eighth and Broomielaw municipal wards,  
the director of the Glasgow Agricultural Society, and a  
keen cricketer and golfer.

Seymour went up to the University of Glasgow in  
1900 to begin an arts degree. He took many subjects,  
including Latin, logic, law and moral philosophy. In his  
final years in arts, he discovered his strong suit: he did  
extremely well in political economy and James Irvine's  
civil law class. Perhaps it was that success that encouraged  
him to take up law. After graduating in 1905, he matriculated  
again for Scots law, and over the next few years he  
gradually put together a bachelor of law. He graduated  
for a second time in 1910. It was while he was forging  
his way in the legal profession that he decided to join  
up. Seymour took a commission as second lieutenant in  
the 7th Highland Light Infantry. It was at Passchendaele,  
the very name of which evokes so much loss—loss that  
hon. Members have adumbrated this afternoon—that  
he was fatally wounded. Lieutenant Graham died on  
29 August 1917.

Again in my constituency, there was George Ernest  
Main, the second son of an oil refiner, George B. Main  
of Pollockshields on the south side of Glasgow. He was  
educated at Glasgow University from 1907, and prior to  
that at the Glasgow Academy. Despite excelling in  
political economy, he was not able to pass his examinations  
in Latin, maths or constitutional law and left without  
completing his degree. By the time the war had broken  
out, he had begun to study for the ministry at the  
United Free Church's Divinity Hall.

Then there is Walter Ramsay Scott, born on 28 April  
1893 in Pollockshaws, which was then part of Renfrewshire  
and not the city of Glasgow. He was the son of Robert  
Scott, a cashier, and Margaret Scott, and lived at  
23 Barrington Drive, Glasgow, Lanarkshire.

It can be too easy, when we discuss these types of  
events, to remember numbers rather than people. I have  
selected a small number of extraordinary Glaswegians  
who took part in, and paid the ultimate price at, the  
battle of Passchendaele. Behind all those names are not  
just men, distinguished in education, politics, and public  
and military life, but their families—the children, wives,  
sisters and mothers who were left behind. My hon.  
Friend the Member for West Dunbartonshire (Martin  
Docherty-Hughes) makes an important point: it is  
absolutely correct to remember the dead and wounded,

but what about those who supported our brave soldiers?  
What about the nurses, doctors, and those who were  
supporting people with mental health problems? They too  
have a rightful place in any commemoration of not just  
Passchendaele but any other major conflict with an  
enormous loss of life.

I pay tribute to the Government's efforts in this  
commemoration. As a Glaswegian, I am very pleased  
and proud that the first of the Government's first world  
war commemorative events was in Glasgow cathedral;  
there is no finer cathedral anywhere in the United  
Kingdom. *[Interruption.]* I hear other suggestions being  
made from a sedentary position. On behalf of the  
people of Glasgow—this will, I am sure, be reinforced  
by the new hon. Member for Glasgow North East—I  
say: we remember and salute these people, and thank  
their families for their sacrifice.

1.48 pm

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con):  
In debates of this sort, we have a tradition of fine  
oratory and thoughtful contributions, which we have  
certainly had today. I was interested in the intervention  
of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John  
Woodcock); he rightly raised the issue of tone, which  
was the first question considered at the very beginning  
of this commemorative period, when the Government  
were drawing up their plans for the four-year centenary,  
because really on that hinges all the rest. Commemoration  
and celebration are phonetically very similar, but  
semantically they are very different indeed, and throughout  
this period the Government have rightly insisted that  
this is commemoration, most certainly not celebration.

Earlier in this commemorative period, we had to  
address issues such as whether this was a just war in  
Augustinian terms. Was it the right thing to do, and was  
it worth the price? Those are two very different things.

In Augustinian terms, it was a just war. It satisfied all  
the preconditions for a just war, and it is as well that it  
was a war that was won. But who among us would have  
signed up to such a thing if we had known in advance  
what the dreadful cost of the war would have been? We  
are reminded of that cost every day as we arrive here,  
when we look at our own war memorial at the end of  
Westminster Hall. That is replicated right across the  
country in our war memorials, which characterise every  
single settlement in the British Isles. It was a cost,  
indeed, and one that I suspect few of us today would be  
prepared to countenance.

The third battle of Ypres became known as  
Passchendaele. The word evokes such powerful sentiment,  
despite the fact that it was the part of the campaign that  
was right at the very tail end of the engagement. The  
battle began relatively well. It was preceded by Messines,  
of which we were reminded last week as we commemorated  
the death of a former Member of Parliament, Major  
Willie Redmond, who died at 56—think of that—at  
that particular battle. He was a truly great man, and his  
death reminds us of the great waste of life and lost  
opportunity.

In the Minister's excellent opening speech, he rightly  
mentioned Francis Ledwidge, the so-called poet of the  
blackbirds, and Hedd Wyn, the bard of the black chair,  
who died at Pilckem Ridge. The hon. Member for  
Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), who spoke from the  
Opposition Front Bench, was quite right to point out

481

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

482

that this cultural loss of wonderful creative men really  
brings home what a wasteful period in our history this  
war was. Just think of what the world might have been  
had those men lived to become fathers, grandfathers,  
doctors, poets and artists—to achieve their full potential.  
It is almost unimaginable. Yet, that is where we are left  
as a result of this terrible war. According to A.J.P. Taylor,  
third Ypres was

“the blindest slaughter of a blind war.”

We have heard that close on a quarter of a million  
British and British empire troops were either killed or  
injured between 31 July and 12 November; it was a  
similar number on the German side.

Basil Liddell Hart was writing in the 1930s, when he  
said that Passchendaele was synonymous with military  
failure and that it was “black-bordered” in the annals of  
the British Army. He had some experience of serving in  
the trenches, and he wrote his great works on the  
subject between 1930 and 1934. I am particularly moved  
by the accounts of historians of that time because they  
could remember; it was pretty much fresh in their  
memory. As Hilary Mantel has pointed out so recently  
in her Reith lectures, the difficulty with history is that it  
seems to change all the time. As generations go by, they  
seem to reinterpret history all the time. Well, Liddell  
Hart was reporting more or less in near time with his  
own recollections. I hope my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Broadland (Mr Simpson) would agree that,  
when examining the historical record, we need to have a  
particular mind to those who were writing very close to  
the great war. They were there and had seen it with their  
own eyes. They were not seeing it through the fog of a  
century or so, as we now are.

According to Liddell Hart, Lieutenant General Sir  
Launcelot Kiggell, when driving up to the front line in  
his staff car, is meant to have said, “Good God, did we  
really send men to fight in that?” Nick Lloyd's book  
“Passchendaele: A New History” was published this year,  
and his more contemporary account suggests that that  
was apocryphal. That may be the case, but it certainly  
served the narrative that this was a war all about chateau  
generals sending other men's sons to die in terrible  
circumstances—a narrative that prevailed in the 1960s  
when we were commemorating the 50th anniversary of  
the conflict, and which has only recently been corrected.

Public appetite for this material appears to be pretty  
much insatiable. The Government have been surprised  
by the level of interest that the centenary has provoked.  
We have never done this sort of thing before, so we had  
no real idea at the beginning how much interest there  
would be in the material and, frankly, how sustainable it  
would be. Well, the public have surpassed all our  
expectations, as they are proving to be incredibly receptive.  
Evidence suggests that one of the legacies of this centenary  
period will be a greatly improved level of understanding  
of this seminal period in our recent history. All the evidence  
suggests that people better understand the circumstances  
that led up to the great war, and the conduct of that war.  
As we get further into the centenary, the right questions  
are being asked. People are asking, “What does this  
actually mean?” and “How does it impact on how we  
live today?” The big question, of course, is “How on  
earth do we prevent it from ever happening again?”

When we come to examine all this investment in time  
and effort over the four years, we should also look at the  
diplomatic deliverables. The value of commemorating

shared history has really struck me. Some of this is  
actually quite uncomfortable, and it can be uncomfortable  
in surprising places. Our relationship, for example, with  
what is now the Republic of Ireland—more than our  
relationship with Germany—has been advanced quite  
significantly over this period. When we hear people in  
the Republic of Ireland talking about the service of  
their forebears in the uniform of George V, we know  
that something has changed. They would not have  
talked openly about that or displayed those campaign  
medals a generation ago. That is truly remarkable,  
despite the fact that a lot of this history is painful for  
many people, so the centenary underscores the importance  
of commemorating history, warts and all, and ensuring  
that at no point do we attempt to airbrush or finesse it.

Throughout the four years, we have focused on young  
people for obvious reasons. It was people of their age  
who, 100 years ago, were right at the forefront of all the  
action. It is salutary to stand at a place such as Tyne  
Cot and watch the reaction of young people arriving on  
bus tours. These are typically cynical youths, but not  
when looking around a place such as Tyne Cot. Just  
look at their faces; the penny has dropped, because they  
are looking at row on row of headstones above the  
remains of people their own age. One of the most  
powerful things we have done as part of the battlefield  
tours is to ensure, wherever we possibly can, the presence  
of a contemporary serviceman, so that the connection  
can be made. One benefit from initiatives of that sort is  
better understanding on the part of those young people  
who, with the contraction of our armed forces these  
days, perhaps do not have the first-hand connection  
with the armed forces that our generation might have  
had. That is an incredibly powerful thing, which brings  
the events alive to today's young men and women.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): I  
pay tribute—I am sure, on behalf of the whole House—to  
all the work that my hon. Friend has done personally to  
help to commemorate the first world war. He has put in  
a tremendous amount of time and effort, and it is right  
to acknowledge that today. He was talking about young  
people. I am sure he would agree that it is vital that  
young people of today's generation are able to learn  
about the tremendous sacrifice that was made so that  
they could live in a free country. Therefore, will he join  
me in commending FitzWimarc School, Sweyne Park  
School and Beauchamps High School in my constituency  
for all the work they have done to organise tours so that  
their young people can go to the battlefronts of the first  
world war, and learn about the importance of sacrifice?

**Dr Murrison:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. The thing that impresses one most of all about  
this commemorative period is the extraordinary amount  
of work that has been done right across the country—some  
of it sponsored and assisted by the Government, some of  
it not, and some of it quite spontaneous in its evolution.  
Together, that forms a wonderful patchwork of  
commemorative activity, and it just shows the passion  
the public have for commemorating this period in our  
history. That suggests to me that there will, indeed, be a  
very rich legacy when we come towards the end of our  
four years.

**Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan** (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con):  
I commend my hon. Friend for the extraordinary work  
he has done to ensure that this commemoration period

483

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

484

*[Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan]*

is given as wide a reach as it can be. Last year, he  
encouraged me to look at the Royal Northumberland  
Fusiliers—the young men from my constituency who  
went out to fight in the first world war. Those boys and  
young men were the same age as my son is now, which  
brings this home very bluntly to me. Last November, I  
went out to northern Italy to lay a wreath at the war  
graves at Tezze, in northern Italy. By chance, a group of  
Italian students of 17 and 18 was visiting. They had  
never been in the cemetery before, but they saw a woman  
in a red coat with a wreath, and they were curious, so  
they came over. Their teacher, who spoke perfect English,  
asked me to explain why I was there and why British  
soldiers had been fighting in their country. These children  
had had very little education about the first world war,  
because the fascist regime altered the way history was  
taught in Italy. To a young man and young woman, they  
were absolutely transfixed. They were enormously  
appreciative of, and slightly overwhelmed by, the fact  
that young men had come from far away—in this case,  
from Berwick in Northumberland—to fight for freedom.  
I commend my hon. Friend for the efforts he has made,  
which have given us the opportunity to share these  
things with those children across the water.

**Dr Murrison:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and  
she is absolutely right. That gives me the opportunity to  
say that this is, of course, not just about the western  
front. I am pleased that she mentioned Italy. It is  
important, as part of this four-year commemorative  
period, that people do come to appreciate that the first  
world war was, indeed, a world war, and the Italian  
campaign is an important part of that.

May I also mention centenary interns while I am  
talking about young people? I hope this project will  
become an important part of our presence on what was  
the western front for people wishing to visit commemorative  
sites. The Canadians have, for a long time, had young  
people guiding visitors from Canada around sites on  
the western front that are particularly important to  
Canadians. It struck me that if the Canadians can do so  
well from a distance of 3,000 miles, we can probably do  
something rather similar from a distance of 200 miles.  
Right now, we have established the first tranche of our  
centenary interns, who will guide people around the  
principal sites for us—Tyne Cot and Thiepval—under  
the supervision of the Commonwealth War Graves  
Commission. When colleagues and others visit the western  
front and the cemeteries and sites of importance in  
northern France and Belgium, I hope they will look out  
for the very obvious orange T-shirt uniforms of our  
centenary interns. Those I met last week when I visited  
Tyne Cot were people of exceptional quality, and I am  
sure people will be very pleased to see them and to be  
guided by them around those sites.

It is remarkable that the third battle of Ypres was not  
only preceded by Messines—a victory that I think  
encouraged Hague in his dialogue with Lloyd George—  
but succeeded the success at Cambrai, which was  
remarkable for another reason, in that it introduced  
mechanised warfare realistically for the first time on the  
western front. That was the gathering note for what  
became a far more kinetic stage in the last 100 days of  
the war.

For most people in this country, what makes  
Passchendaele special, as it were, is the mud and blood.  
It was quite different from the Somme, which resulted  
in far more casualties. That mud was caused by rain, of  
course, but also by the inundation of Flanders following  
the barrage of artillery that completely destroyed all the  
dykes and engineering that held back the sea from that  
part of the world. Flanders is, of course, pasture land,  
and crops cannot be grown there, because it is far too  
wet. The reason it can be utilised for agricultural purposes  
at all is that it has an advanced system of water engineering.  
Bombardment means that that is completely destroyed.  
It was not for the first time in the first world war that  
the British Army knew the full consequences of the  
destruction of that system. The combination of heavy  
rainfall and the destruction of civil engineering in that  
area made it a complete quagmire, which gave Passchendaele  
its particular awfulness.

I would like to finish on a contemporary note. In two  
weeks' time, many of us will be privileged to attend the  
commemorations in Ypres and Tyne Cot. We will stand  
there among the row upon row of headstones, we will  
look at the Menin Gate, with its rank upon rank of  
names carved in stone, and we will be left with a sense  
of wonder. We will try to work out what it all means. In  
the context of the debate we are having about our future  
in Europe, one wonders perhaps what others think of  
us, too. There are those in Europe who say that this  
country is somehow less than European—that we are  
poor Europeans. I would just say this: it has always  
been the case, and it is the case now—this country was  
certainly demonstrating this full well 100 years ago—that  
there is no country in Europe that is more engaged in  
Europe than the United Kingdom.

I would just ask colleagues, as they look among those  
headstones and gaze up among those names carved  
in stone, to reflect on this country's contribution to  
European history. Whether we are Brexiteers or not—and  
I am a completely signed-up Brexiteer—we need to  
understand that we are Europeans; that is what we have  
always been, and that is what we will always be. We  
should take absolutely no nonsense from those who, for  
their own purposes, try to suggest that we are in some  
way disengaged from Europe. I am proud of our  
history. This country has always been there when Europe  
needed us—when we needed to face down the general  
disturber of the peace. I am confident that we will  
continue to do just that.

Two weeks' time will be a solemn time for our country.  
The media will most certainly be focused on Tyne Cot  
and Ypres. We will be among friends in Belgium—a  
country that is extraordinarily sympathetic to this country  
and a good friend of ours. It is important that, whenever  
we have the opportunity, we reinforce in the minds of  
our friends and neighbours in Europe our solidarity  
and comradeship with them. There can be no more  
enduring testament to that European engagement than  
the Menin Gate in Ypres and Tyne Cot at Zonnebekke.

2.8 pm

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Each time we have  
these debates, they get nearer to the reality of the first  
world war. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff  
West (Kevin Brennan) quoted Eisteddfod y Gadair  
Ddu, which is renowned in Wales as commemorating  
Hedd Wyn and that touching symbol he used:

485

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

486

“A'u gwaed yn gymysg efo'r glaw”—

their blood mixed with the rain. We could see that in the  
imagery presented by the right hon. Member for Broadland  
(Mr Simpson) in the two poems he quoted. We must see  
the lesson of this terrible event from the first world war  
and learn from it.

There has been one visual aid this afternoon, and the  
picture I have here shows my father—Machine Gunner  
James Flynn. He was not a distinguished soldier, but  
one who volunteered because he was a great patriot. He  
had soaked up all the propaganda that was around at  
the time, and he went there to sort out the Hun. He  
went as a volunteer at the age of 15; he lied about his  
age. He went through the whole lot—the Somme and  
Passchendaele. Eventually he was captured by the Germans,  
to his great relief, because he was dying after being hit  
by a mortar; he was in a shell hole and could not get out  
of it. He was eternally grateful to the Germans for  
the rest of his life—he lived to 43—because of the care  
they gave him. They carried him across no man's  
land after the breakthrough by the Germans in 1918 and  
saved his life. He went out there to kill Germans, and he  
came back as a great admirer of the Germans who  
saved his life.

I was struck by a poem that the right hon. Member  
for Broadland (Mr Simpson) quoted in a previous  
debate, because it illustrates the truth of the first world  
war. It is one brief stanza by Rudyard Kipling, who was  
of course a great cheerleader for the war and all patriotic  
causes—so much so that he managed to pull a few strings  
to make sure that his son, who had defective eyesight,  
could pass the test to get in to become a soldier and  
then lost his life. Rudyard Kipling had a picture of what  
would happen when he died and went to heaven, and  
was forced to see the people he had encouraged to go to  
war and lose their lives. He said:

“I could not dig: I dared not rob:

Therefore I lied to please the mob.

Now all my lies are proved untrue

And I must face the men I slew.

What tale shall serve me here among

Mine angry and defrauded young?”

The youth of that generation were defrauded by the  
senior generation of officers and politicians. Although  
they were not wicked people, they had all kinds of  
heroic delusions.

We must not see Passchendaele through the fog of a  
belief in a false idea of heroism: it was not like that. It  
rapidly became a terrible scene of slaughter where men  
died like cattle and lives were not counted, with 16million  
deaths. What is our lesson, and have we learned it yet? I  
doubt if we have, because today we have heard the word  
“wonderful” used about that battle. What it can mean, I  
have no idea. There is no way that anyone can describe  
the first world war as anything other than a terrible,  
terrible mistake and a series of tragedies.

**Sir William Cash:** The use of the word “wonderful”  
in this context is about admiration for the heroism and  
for the courage. My hon. Friend the Member for South  
West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) used the word “wonder”  
with regard to how we feel when we look at what happened.  
Today happens to be the anniversary of my own father's  
death in the battle of Hill 112, shortly after Maltot, on  
13 July 1944. I have personal experience of this; I know  
that the hon. Gentleman has referred to his father.

The word “wonderful”in this context is about admiration  
for the heroism and for the courage, and I am not going  
to resile from that.

**Paul Flynn:** I think it is entirely true to say that there  
is a nobility in the soldier's craft and the soldier's  
sacrifice, and we are grateful for that to this day. We see  
in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, with the humanitarian  
work that was done there, acts that are absolutely  
defensible and in which we can take a great pride. We  
have had a marvellous military history, and much of it  
showed the best of human nature. I do not disagree  
with the hon. Gentleman on that.

But what are we learning today? We should look at  
what happened in this Chamber in 2006, when a decision  
was made to send troops into Helmand at a time when  
only half a dozen of our soldiers had been killed there.  
We had already been there for nearly six years, since 2001 .  
We went in in the belief that not a shot would be fired.  
The result was that 450 of our soldiers died there. We  
have yet to face up to the reality of that. Was it a  
mistake by us? The Chilcot report came out. A year  
later, Lord Chilcot has had to repeat some of the  
lessons that he drew from it, because those lessons have  
been glossed over. There has been a spinning of the  
reality of his conclusions. That is partly because so  
many people in this Chamber at the time were part of a  
mistake in our joining the Iraq war. We could not stop  
the war happening, but we could have stopped Britain's  
involvement in it, which would have avoided the deaths  
of 179 of our soldiers.

**Sir William Cash:** I would like to slightly pursue this  
point with the hon. Gentleman, because there is probably  
not much difference between us in terms of the sentiments  
that lie behind his reasons for advancing rather different  
arguments. I simply make the point that although the  
pity of war, as it was so aptly put, is a terrible thing, we  
have to reflect on the fact that sometimes it is necessary.  
Unprovoked aggression, as indeed we experienced in  
the second world war, does lead to our having to fight  
back, and that necessarily involves the cost of people's  
lives, like my father and others. When defining the  
boundaries of this matter, we must be very careful to  
ensure that we do not go overboard in suggesting that  
somehow the whole war is in itself unacceptable, because  
unfortunately it is a fact of life. We do have to fight back  
and respect and admire the heroism of those who take  
part.

**Paul Flynn:** There really is no difference between us. I  
never suggested that there were not entirely justifiable  
wars.

We should be recalling what lessons we have learned  
from Passchendaele and the rest of the first world war  
in the decisions we take in this House now. I once had  
five weeks' enforced absence from this House for saying  
what I am about to say, although I will say it in a rather  
more delicate way. I said that Ministers of all kinds were  
mistaken in the claim they were making to potential  
soldiers that they could go to Afghanistan and thereby  
reduce the threat of terrorism in this country. I think  
that was an untruth, because the only reason the Taliban  
were killing our soldiers in Afghanistan was that we  
were there. Other people had an interest in terrorism  
here, but there was never any interest among the Taliban.  
Soldiers were called on to go there for that purpose, but  
it was not true. I believe we are still in a position where

487

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

488

*[Paul Flynn]*politicians lie and soldiers die. Unless we can be frank  
with them, we are going to find that a generation will  
reject war.

It was interesting that General Dannatt said recently—a  
matter of days ago—that he did not want people to  
believe what Chilcot was saying because it would suggest  
to those who had lost loved ones in Iraq that they died  
in vain. But sadly that is probably the truth, because we  
had nothing to gain, unlike in the first world war. The  
main result of the first world war was the second world  
war; it was a terrible error. We have a duty to look at the  
opinions of the soldiers who fought at the time. None of  
them is alive now. The last one who died left us a  
message when he said that he thought that war was  
legalised murder. There are many other soldiers whose  
lives were destroyed by that war. Lives were shortened.

I feel particular pain in the case of my own father.  
His life was ruined by the war, and he could never do  
what he called a proper man's job again. In 1935, his  
pension was reduced by the Government, who said that  
his health problems—he went out there as a perfectly fit  
15-year-old—were not attributable to his war wounds  
but were aggravated by them. That was a cheat by the  
Government, and he died a short time later. We do not  
have a record of treating our soldiers with gratitude, and  
that remains the case. The essence of this debate is that  
we should remember the truth of the first world war.  
We should never again repeat the old lie that it is sweet  
and decorous to die for the country. That is not true. It  
is an old lie to which, sadly, new people would like to  
give new credence.

2.20 pm

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): I want to talk about  
the situation 100 years ago. At that time, one quarter of  
the vessels crossing the Atlantic were being sunk by  
U-boats coming from the Belgian coast. The Navy had  
warned the Government that unless something was  
done about it, we might collapse in 1918. The United  
States had entered the war on 6 April 1917, which was  
great from our point of view, but in May and June the  
French army was massively defeated by the Germans,  
resulting in a huge mutiny in its ranks. At the same time,  
the British generals wanted to break out of the Ypres  
Salient, so the Germans had very good reason to believe  
that they could win the war at that time. They felt that  
the Americans would not get into the war before they had  
won it. That is fairly true, because the American army was  
very small, a bit obsolete and did not have many weapons.

Field Marshal Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the  
British Expeditionary Force, desperately wanted to break  
out of the Ypres Salient where it had been stuck for  
several years. He wanted to get to the coast, because the  
strategic aim was to get to those U-boat pens and stop  
us being throttled by torpedo attacks.

The plan was simple. There was a preliminary operation,  
which other hon. Members have mentioned, to secure  
the southern flank of the British position. The first  
phase was to take out the railway junction at Roulers  
and to then swing around and advance towards the coast.  
That was the plan, but it went very badly wrong.

I want to talk about the soldiers. By mid-1917, machine  
guns had become what Correlli Barnett called the queens  
of the battlefield. They were devastating. The rifle by  
comparison was absolutely useless. The 1st Battalion

Cheshire Regiment, which I was to command 74 years  
later, had been equipped the previous year with 16 Lewis  
machine guns, which were pretty heavy: they were 28 lb,  
not including ammunition. Our soldiers had to carry  
them. Nobody really wanted to take a machine gun as  
they crossed the frontline, for two reasons: first, it made  
them an easy target and, secondly, its weight. They  
scurried across no man's land, going as fast as they  
could, but it was difficult to go fast in those conditions.

At the same time, by the start of the third battle of  
Ypres, Passchendaele, our soldiers had been issued with  
those awful helmets. They called them tin hats. I wore  
one when I first joined the Army—I am that old—and  
they were acutely uncomfortable and very heavy. Again,  
that made it difficult for our soldiers when they scrambled  
out of their frontline positions.

They had had one hell of a winter: 1916-17 had been  
incredibly cold. The soldiers received only one hot meal  
a day and it was usually supplied by the quartermaster  
in boxes lined with straw. They brewed tea themselves.  
They would usually fill old jam tins with grease and  
insert a wick to make a flame on which they would put a  
pot to heat up the water. Every day, the quartermaster  
tried to bring clean socks to the frontline positions,  
because trench foot was appalling. The conditions were  
so wet and the men needed to try to keep their feet dry,  
which was almost impossible.

It was good that some of the soldiers in my battalion  
were allowed leave. They went home and came back,  
but they knew damn well what they were coming back  
to. That is why they are heroes—because they came  
back. They came back from home, where they saw  
normality. War is not normality. War is disgusting and  
horrid, and it is something to be avoided. Heroism is  
going back to that because, as my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Broadland (Mr Simpson) has said, they did  
not want to let their friends down.

Even then, in the middle of the war, when reinforcements  
were coming, those that were supposed to come to my  
battalion, the 1st Battalion Cheshires, were diverted.  
The battalion was on the frontline near Cambrai and  
one would think that, before the battle, it would be fully  
manned, but it was not. It did not even have enough  
troops to go along the front. It had to have little posts  
on the frontline, in the hope that they could cover the  
area in front of the battalion position.

They knew damn well what would happen when the  
signal for advance was given—they had been there long  
enough. On 31 July, very early in the morning, at  
3.50, just as dawn was breaking, the battalion's officers  
blew the whistles. Can you imagine how absolutely  
terrified our soldiers were? They must have had a hell of  
a night up to that time. They were laden with ammunition,  
kit and Lewis machine guns. As H-hour—that is, the  
start time—was declared, some soldiers were being  
delivered by train right to the frontline. They disembarked  
and went straight across the start line and into battle.

When they went into no man's land, it was not a run.  
It was not even a walk. It was more like a crawl, I would  
think. No man's land was full of wire obstacles, which  
sometimes got worse under artillery fire. And then,  
within hours, the rain came—the worst rainfall for  
30 years. The men could not even get into the shell  
holes, because they were full of water. They were sitting  
ducks. They were covered in filth, absolutely exhausted,  
trying to go forward. And that is what they did. Some of

489

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

490

them sank right down to their waists in the mud, and it  
took six soldiers to pull each of them out. Stretcher  
bearers could not move—there was no chance at all of  
them moving in that mud.

Our soldiers were not brave—of course they were  
brave, but what they really experienced was terror—and  
they thought that within minutes, within seconds, they  
would be dead. Perhaps they prayed that it would be a  
head shot. The soldier's prayer is a head shot, to die  
straight out, not a wound to the stomach or the abdomen,  
when no one can get to the wounded and they lie there  
in agony for hours or days, sometimes just slipping  
under the mud and drowning while they are at it.

I think I have some idea of what they felt, because I  
have advanced when someone beside me has been shot.  
I knew I had to go, because I had to go and get some  
civilians—I am talking about Bosnia—but I was not a  
hero; I was not brave, but bloody terrified. I was so  
terrified that I wet myself. That is not bravery, but what  
mattered was that we went forward and did our duty.  
Our soldiers did that. They did not want to die—it was  
the last thing they wanted to do. They wanted to survive.

Passchendaele was a stalemate for four months, while  
our men were sitting ducks. It was a disgusting, exhausting  
and traumatic experience for anyone who was there. It  
cost both sides dearly. I do not think we know the exact  
figures, but the British were about 310,000 dead and the  
Germans 260,000. That was the dead, but three times as  
many casualties survived. The ratio then was one dead  
to three wounded.

Haig later justified what happened by saying, “It was  
necessary. We could take more casualties than the Germans,  
because we had more resources. That made it worthwhile.”  
Can anyone imagine a general today trying to give such  
a justification for the mass slaughter that occurred at  
Passchendaele? “I thought it was okay, because we  
could take more casualties than they could, so in the  
end we would win.” We remember them all, British,  
German and Commonwealth, today.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I  
call Mohammad Yasin to make his maiden speech.

2.33 pm

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): Thank you, Madam  
Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden  
speech in this very important debate.

It seems fitting to pay tribute to the Bedfordshire  
Regiment whose men also fought at Passchendaele.  
Many did not come back home. It is not lost on me that  
the sacrifices made by those men 100 years ago led to  
the freedoms, rights and opportunities that I am proudly  
expressing today. I am deeply honoured not only to  
have been chosen by the people of Bedford and Kempston  
to represent them as their Member of Parliament, but  
to be the first ethnic minority candidate to do so.

I made the journey from Kashmir to Bedford in 1992.  
Soon I was married and working in a factory. Later I  
became a taxi driver, which I continued to do until my  
election to Parliament. I can honestly say that from the  
moment I arrived in Bedford, I made it my home—but  
ever since, it is Bedford that has made me. I am very  
thankful for that.

I wanted to do more for the community that had  
welcomed me, so I became a councillor for Queens Park  
ward in 2006. Earlier this year, I took the next step and

was selected by my party to stand as Labour's candidate.  
Many people said that I stood no chance and that  
Labour could not possibly win Bedford back. Bedford  
and Kempston proved them wrong. With the support of  
my friends and fellow councillors, and my wonderful  
family—I am so thankful to my wife, Shakila, my  
mother, my four children and my new grandson, Imad—we  
fought a campaign that delivered Bedford and Kempston  
back to Labour. I am immensely proud to be on the  
Labour Benches, whose shadow Cabinet has the highest  
number of ethnic minority MPs ever, which means that  
the population is more fairly represented than it has  
ever been before.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Richard Fuller, who  
has worked so hard over the past seven years for his  
community. The Bedford Community Business School  
set up by Richard has been a great success and is a  
legacy that he is rightly very proud of. I also thank  
Bedford's previous Labour MP, Patrick Hall, for his  
13 years of dedicated service.

People from more than 50 countries of origin live and  
have settled in Bedford and Kempston, which has made  
the area the most ethnically diverse town in the United  
Kingdom in proportion to its size. All kinds of people  
have settled there, from the eastern Europeans and  
Italians who arrived after the second world war to help  
rebuild Britain through work in the Stewartby brickworks,  
to others like me who arrived more recently. It is that  
which makes my constituency so very special.

Bedford is warm, welcoming, neighbourly and  
compassionate. Difference and diversity of faith, colour  
and creed is not only tolerated but celebrated in this  
town. Churches, mosques, gurdwaras, faith groups and  
charitable organisations throughout my constituency  
work together to build upon that diversity and to support  
those who have been affected by so many years of  
austerity and damaging cuts.

Bedford has a strong arts scene. Our cultural heritage  
is celebrated in Bedford's many festivals, not least the  
biennial River festival that attracts a quarter of a million  
people to the beautiful riverside. We are also a town of  
sportspeople, with the Bedford Blues, the Eagles, and  
the Queens Park and Kempston cricket clubs. We have  
rowing clubs, sailing clubs and our international athletics  
track. We have been proud to produce gold Olympians  
and Paralympians, and then there is Iva Barr, who was  
still running the London marathon at the age of 88.  
Bedfordians are amazing people.

People talked to me a lot during the election, about  
their concerns about schooling, the cuts to policing  
and, above all, the NHS. At the very heart of our town  
is Bedford Hospital, where my children and grandson  
were born. I want to make sure that the hospital stays at  
the heart of my constituency. Two years ago, Bedford  
Hospital saved my wife's life when she suffered a heart  
attack. I can never repay the staff for all they did for us.

Let me say this now: the future of our hospital and its  
services have been in doubt for far too long. Since 2011,  
under this Government and the previous one, a string of  
expensive and inconclusive reviews have cast a shadow  
over the hospital, lining the pockets of management  
consultants while hard-working frontline staff have gone  
without pay rises. Threats to maternity, accident and  
emergency, and paediatrics make it hard to recruit and  
retain staff, and have caused much concern to the  
community.

491

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

492

*[Mohammad Yasin]*

As the As MP for Bedford and Kempston, I will fight  
every day to keep the services that we need in our  
growing town so that my constituents do not have to  
travel 15 or 20 miles to access life-saving services, or  
60 miles to access justice if plans to close Bedford  
courts go ahead.

I want babies to continue to be born in Bedford and  
Kempston, where they can grow up in a fairer society,  
access equal opportunities and realise their true potential  
in families that feel proud and part of their community.

2.40 pm

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bedford  
(Mohammad Yasin). I congratulate him on his maiden  
speech. I am sure it is the first of many contributions as  
he represents his community in Bedford and I wish him  
well.

Today's debate is focused on the battle of Passchendaele.  
It has been described as a long campaign that took  
place over several months. It was an honour to be in the  
Chamber to hear my hon. Friend the Member for  
Beckenham (Bob Stewart) describing the fear that he  
knows at first hand and what it is like to be in combat.  
He made a very powerful speech, and he has the respect  
of all of us for what he said.

I want to focus on a particular time in the battle. At  
the end of August 1917, Field Marshal Haig decided to  
replace General Gough With General Plumer. The website  
“War History Online” reports that General Plumer was  
an efficient, methodical commander. He had assembled  
an outstandingly competent staff, who had demonstrated  
their abilities as a team in a previous operation in  
Messines Ridge. There would be no rushing a meticulous  
planner like Plumer. He was told at the end of August 1917  
that he was leading the next big attack and he took three  
weeks to prepare and plan. There was a lull in fighting  
while he gathered his resources. However, in that lull  
more than 10,000 men were killed in just over two  
weeks.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham said,  
the weather was atrocious, but for the first time that  
year it turned to the advantage of the British. The  
continuous rain that had turned the battlefield into a  
quagmire let up for 10 whole days. In the relatively dry  
ground, Plumer's men dug trenches and repaired roads.

The skills and techniques of artillerists had been  
refined over the preceding three years, and Plumer  
made use of that. When his artillery opened fire at  
5.40 on 20 September, they did so in planned formation.  
Guns were concentrated to provide one for every 5.2 yards  
of ground to be attacked. Infantry advanced behind the  
shelter of a creeping barrage, one of the great innovations  
of the war. A wall of explosions helped to hide them  
from the fire of their enemies and to force those enemies  
to keep their heads down.

Today, we are rightly discussing and commemorating  
people who sacrificed their lives on the battlefield.  
However, in my city of Leeds, which I am proud to  
represent, we have Barnbow armouries. In the first  
world war, we had the Leeds canaries—women who  
made the munitions that would have been used in the  
battle. They were called canaries because the TNT turned  
their skin yellow. They knew that they were being

poisoned and were likely to become sterile. Tragically,  
on Tuesday 5 December 1916, there was an explosion in  
which 35 women were killed instantly. They have been  
commemorated in this place previously, but I want to  
take the opportunity to do so again. When the explosion  
happened, the War Office realised that it could not  
release the names of the women in obituaries at the time  
because it did not want the enemy to know where the  
munitions were being made. Over the next year, one  
woman a week had her obituary in the *Yorkshire Post.*The obituaries glossed over what the women were doing.  
There were casualties back home as a result of involvement  
in the battles as well as people dying on the frontline.

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): Richard  
Pinkett, a constituent from Belper, posts regularly on  
Facebook about people from Belper who died in the  
many different battles of the first world war. Belper is  
much bigger than it was and the posts show that not  
only the people who were killed in the battles but the  
families in the local region were affected. So many  
families in so many communities were affected by the  
deaths of their sons. My hon. Friend mentions the women  
who bravely helped. We should remember the people  
back home as well as those on the frontline. In Belper, a  
flag in the memorial garden is lowered to half-mast  
every time we commemorate 100 years since one of the  
young men died. It is a testament to local people that we  
do not forget those who died.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** I am most grateful to my hon.  
Friend for making that point so powerfully. We all have  
examples in our constituencies of people who were  
affected by the wars, and I am sure that we are all there  
on Remembrance Sunday to pay our respects, no matter  
how long ago the deaths occurred.

On 20 September 1917, there was an early morning  
mist and the temperature was about 66° F. The main  
thrust of the advance was on the Menin road, which led  
south-east across the ridge and toward the town of  
Menin. South of the road, the Germans put up heavy  
resistance, especially around their strong defence of  
Tower Hamlets. The advance was successful, but Tower  
Hamlets remained in German hands.

Remarkable advances were made on Menin road  
itself. The 11th Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire  
Regiment) and 69 Trench Mortar Battery took Inverness  
Copse, long a target of British attacks. Near Langemarck,  
the Germans held the strongly fortified positions of  
Eagle Farm and Eagle Trench. The task of driving them  
out initially fell to 11th Rifle Brigade, 12th Rifle Brigade,  
and 6th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.  
The 12th Rifles and the Light Infantry took Eagle Farm  
and moved on to seize the southern end of Eagle  
Trench. The 11th Rifles lost two thirds of their men  
before securing a section of the trench. For three days,  
Eagle Trench was divided between the Germans and the  
British.

I want to focus on 20 September 1917, the first day of  
the battle. When I was a child, our family visited the  
Tyne Cot cemetery, and on the memorial wall at the  
back are the words “Rifleman Harold Edward Shelbrooke,  
Kings Royal Rifle Corps”. My great grandfather—Ted  
as he was known—was killed on the first day of the  
battle. Harold Edward Shelbrooke was born on Christmas  
eve 1883 and married in 1915. On 16 January 1916 his  
son, my grandfather, George Edward Shelbrooke, was  
born.

493

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

494

Ted had three sisters and he used to walk through the  
Blackwall tunnel to court May, my great grandmother.  
By profession, Ted was an umbrella maker. His family  
lived in Poplar. His father, my great great grandfather,  
was killed in a gas explosion at Poplar gas works in  
April 1891.

Ted joined up in April 1916 because he had been  
white-feathered in Greenwich and it had played on his  
mind. He was not liable to be called up under the  
Military Service Act 1916 because he was a married  
man. That all changed later, in June 1916, when the  
second Act was passed and married men were included,  
but he signed up before then. His wife pleaded with him  
not to do it and to think of the baby, but he was  
determined to serve his King and country and, more  
importantly, he understood the consequences of our  
sitting and not doing anything. He joined the King's  
Royal Rifle Corps, which was stationed at Winchester,  
and that is where he did his initial training. My family  
do not have his military records, so I am not sure when  
he embarked for France, but my aunt has a postcard  
dated 20 July 1916, when he was transferred to Seaford,  
Sussex, prior to embarkation. We know little more after  
that. His younger brother-in-law, John Culley, joined up  
with him aged 15. Uncle Jack was, in common parlance,  
a man of small stature, and he was only about 17 at the  
time of the battle. He was employed—I use the term  
loosely—as a bugler in the trenches, but he did fight.

Uncle Jack—as he was known—survived the war,  
dying in 1981. He told my grandfather, George, that he  
saw Ted being stretchered off when a shell burst near  
them, and Ted and the medics were not seen again. No  
one knows whether they were blown to pieces or fell  
into one of the flooded shell holes and drowned. His  
body was never found. That is why his name is on the  
wall at the back of the Tyne Cot cemetery, along with  
those of tens of thousands of other men whose bodies  
were never found.

May Shelbrooke, my great-grandmother, could not  
accept that Ted had died and his body had not been  
found. That very much plays into what many Members  
have said today about the lasting effects of the war.May  
wrote constantly to the British Red Cross for about  
three years to find out whether Ted had been taken  
prisoner. When she was sent the famous “war penny”,  
she threw it across the room, exclaiming, “I don't want  
a bloody penny. I want my husband.” She was well  
supported by her family, and she lived with them for the  
remainder of her life. She never remarried, and she died  
in January 1977. She had to work to support her son, so  
she got a job in the office of Charlton Glassworks,  
where she stayed until she retired.

May's son George became a precious member of the  
family and proved to be a bright child, but his grandmother  
was a strict matriarch and forbade him to take the  
entrance exam for John Roan Grammar School because  
she wanted him to leave school as soon as possible and  
workinashop.Thatisanotheroftheongoingconsequences  
of this terrible war. The only son of a widowed mother  
was told, “I am sorry, but you have to go out and  
provide for our family: you have to work.”To those who  
know me, it will come as no surprise that there is a  
streak of rebellion in my family. George rebelled at that,  
and when he left school at 14, he found a job as a  
laboratory technician in an oil company on the Isle of  
Dogs called Sternol. He went to Woolwich Polytechnic

in the evenings to gain his science qualifications, eventually  
running his own department researching electrical insulation  
oils.

In September 1940, George married Helena Theresa  
Buck, whose father had also fought at Passchendaele.  
Alfred George Buck was born on 15 November 1885 in  
Meerut, Bengal, India. His father was in the Royal  
Horse Artillery in India. He was educated at the Duke  
of York's Royal Military School and the Royal Hibernian  
Military School, and enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery  
at Woolwich on 29 February 1904. He transferred to the  
Army Reserve on 29 February 1912, reverted on 29 July  
1913, and was mobilised in Glasgow on 6 August 1914.  
Having transferred to the Royal Engineers Signals in  
April 1916, he was awarded the Military Medal in  
July 1917 for gallant conduct and devotion to duty at  
Armentieres. We do not have the medal or the citation,  
but we understand that he was repairing telephone  
cables in no man's land under fire. I think that the  
experience outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for  
Beckenham must make clear to all of us the fear that he  
must have felt when he was in the middle of no man's  
land, a sitting duck, repairing vital communications. He  
was gassed on 4 November 1917 at Passchendaele, two  
days before the battle ended, and was discharged on  
15 March 1919. He died on 6 July 1952.

The trauma of the first world war was still at the  
front of people's minds when, only a couple of decades  
later, this country was again at war. To the relief of his  
mother May and his new wife Helena, the rebellion that  
had led to his becoming a scientist placed my grandfather,  
George Edward Shelbrooke, on the Reserved Occupations  
list at the beginning of the second world war. He  
became an air raid warden and a fire watcher during the  
Blitz in 1940-41. He explained to my father, Derek  
Edward Shelbrooke—who, I am proud to say, is in the  
Public Gallery today—how he used to stand on top of  
the oil tanks at Sternol during a raid and, armed with  
just a broom, sweep the incendiary bombs down to the  
men below, who would throw them into the River  
Thames.

That, I think, is something that we can barely imagine,  
along with everything else that was happening. The  
danger, the threats and the loss of life were as great at  
home as they were at the front, especially during the  
second world war. George was eventually called up in  
January 1944, and joined the Irish Guards. After training,  
he volunteered for the Guards Armoured Division. He  
was very proud of his service in the Guards. Sadly, in  
August 1985 he died, too young, at 69.

The impact on families of the great war lasted decades  
longer than the war itself. My grandfather never knew  
his father, and the trauma that his mother felt must have  
been overwhelming when the second world war started  
and her only son was put in danger as a fire warden, and  
then eventually called up and sent to war.

The sacrifice that we make our young make is through  
the failure of politicians like ourselves and it must never  
be forgotten. I do not agree with much of what the hon.  
Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) said, but I  
agree with him on this. At heart, every single person in  
the Chamber is fundamentally pacifist, but we understand  
that there is a necessity for war at times, that there is a  
consequence to not taking action and that, if we do not  
take that action, the loss of life can often be greater.

495

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

496

*[Alec Shelbrooke]*

We are right to commemorate, at this time, the sacrifice  
made. We should learn those lessons and how to move  
on. My hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire  
(Dr Murrison) has done an incredible job. I pay tribute  
to him for his work over the past few years in ensuring  
that the centenary anniversary is used not just to remember  
what happened, but to understand what happened and  
to educate new generations. I think it was my right hon.  
Friend the Member for Broadland (Mr Simpson) who  
made the point that the battle of Passchendaele is as  
distant to someone today as the battle of Waterloo, but  
we have to understand why it happened and how we  
move on.

On 20 September this year, my family will again visit  
Tyne Cot to see my great-grandfather's name on that  
wall, to take part in the commemorations of his comrades,  
all our fellow countrymen and those on the opposing  
side who died as well, and to remember the sacrifices  
made in that terrible war.

2.56 pm

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): It is  
a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Elmet and  
Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke), who gave a poignant account  
of the canaries and in particular his family history. As  
someone who also grew up in south-east London, I  
appreciate many of the stories. I wonder whether this  
will interest the Minister as well. My grandfather, Oliver  
Frederick Noyes, enlisted with the Royal Wiltshire  
Yeomanry. He was from Salisbury. The Royal Wiltshire  
Yeomanry saw service in the third battle of Ypres. It is a  
sort of pride. There have been so many references  
already to the people of Wales, to all the people who  
were affected by the conflict and in particular to Hedd  
Wyn, to whom I would like to turn.

The county of Meirionnydd was the home of Ellis  
Humphrey Evans, one of the hundreds of thousands of  
casualties at the third battle of Ypres, a campaign  
described by the Prime Minister of the time, David  
Lloyd George, Earl of Dwyfor, as  
“one of the greatest disasters of the war”.

To his superior officers in the 15th Battalion of the  
Royal Welch Fusiliers, 30-year-old Private Evans was  
most likely just another raw rural recruit, conscripted  
into the Army because of a surfeit of sons already  
working on the family farm. Ellis Evans died on 31 July,  
shot in the stomach—we have heard about the soldiers'  
prayer; being shot in the stomach is one of the most  
agonising things that someone could suffer—on the  
first day in the battle of Pilckem Ridge. He is buried in  
Artillery Wood cemetery. There is a war memorial in  
the centre of Trawsfynydd, which commemorates his  
death and the loss of 32 other men from the community  
or nearby army camps. This is where the story changes  
key. Ellis Evans could just be the smudged portrait in a  
dog-eared photograph, forgotten by the third generation,  
save for the fact that we do not remember him as Ellis  
Evans; we remember him as Hedd Wyn—not as  
Private 61117, but as a chaired poet, prif fardd Eisteddfod  
Penbedw, eisteddfod y Gadair Ddu, which was held in  
Birkenhead.

Ellis Evans, whose literary name was Hedd Wyn,  
grew up in a community where poetry in the strict rules  
of cynghanedd flourished. Men—it must be said that at

the time they were probably almost exclusively men—from  
all social backgrounds could win accolade in metrical,  
alliterative poetry whose unbroken tradition can be  
traced over a millennium and more.

Sixteen days before his death, Private Evans had  
posted his entry for the 1917 Eisteddfod of Wales to the  
adjudicators. He had come second in the previous year's  
Eisteddfod and he was never to know that this time he  
would be victorious. The winner of the awdl in the  
Eisteddfod is awarded a chair. The winner's chair at  
the 1917 Birkenhead Eisteddfod was draped in a black cloth,  
Y Gadair Ddu, the black chair, crafted by a Belgian  
refugee. It became, of course, the symbol of mourning  
for every Welsh-speaking farmhouse, manse and worker's  
cottage—the bond of tragedy to unite mothers bringing  
telegrams to the chapel minister to translate from English  
into Welsh. Our stories are our common heritage, and  
what we choose to remember becomes our history.  
Some stories are more retold than others.

Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri, the Snowdonia National  
Park Authority, is to be commended on taking the  
initiative to bring together a national investment worth  
£4 million, with support also from the National Heritage  
Memorial Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the  
Welsh Government. This money has enabled the purchase  
and renovation of Hedd Wyn's family farm, Yr Ysgwrn.  
It has just reopened this year as a publicly owned  
treasure for the nation. Perhaps the Minister might  
appreciate visiting Yr Ysgwrn; it is an impressive place.

Before this initiative was taken, Hedd Wyn's nephew,  
Gerald Williams, made sure the door was open to  
visitors. I remember taking my daughter, Lisa, there  
10 years ago. Only the ground floor could visitors see: a  
kitchen to the left, parlour to the right; the kitchen with  
hooks in the rafters, a fire always in the range and—this  
made an impression on me—layer upon layer of wallpaper  
to keep the place smart, for this house-proud family.

The parlour was the place where people would keep  
their Eisteddfod chair, and there it was—it was full of  
Eisteddfod chairs and newspaper cuttings. Visitors could  
pore over the Gadair Ddu. It was there; we could put  
our hand on it, brittle with romantic Celtic ornamentation,  
and repaired—again, we could see this—with dark wax  
to match the colour of the dark wood.

Although this makes for a romantic story, it was, of  
course, history at its most vulnerable. There is a pathos  
in the solitary guardian, Gerald Williams, but it took  
almost a century for the authorities of Wales to committee  
—“committee” is a verb in Wales—their way to  
safeguarding the symbols of Wales's national war poet.

The film “Hedd Wyn” was released in 2005 and  
became the first Welsh-language film to be nominated  
for an Oscar. It is to the credit of the director Paul  
Turner and script writer Alan Uwyd that this film has  
been shown to generations of school students.

To close, here is Hedd Wyn's englyn to his friend  
David Owen Evans of Blaenau Ffestiniog, who was  
killed in the trenches—and we find this on gravestones  
across Wales and also on the memorial in Trawsfynydd:

“Ei aberth nid a heibio—ei wyneb

Annwyl nid a'n ango'.

Er I'r Almaen ystaenio Ei dwrn dur yn ei waed o.”

There has been some discussion in this debate about  
pacifist attitudes and celebrating war. It would be beneficial

497

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

498

if we could put energy, time, emotion, imagination and  
funding into building peace as vigorously as we do into  
addressing war.

3.3 pm

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): There has  
been a remarkable series of speeches in this debate so  
far, not least the one we have just heard from the hon.  
Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts),  
and I will not usurp the role of the Minister in singling  
any of them out for special mention, other than to say  
in respect of the maiden speech we heard that the pride  
that the hon. Member for Bedford (Mohammad Yasin)  
takes in his town will no doubt incentivise him to be  
sure that Bedford will be proud of him by the way he  
conducts himself in this place.

As other more knowledgeable speakers have already  
explained, a century after the appalling losses on the  
western front historians still debate whether any alternatives  
existed. Some blame political intrigue and poor generalship,  
others emphasise technology, with the battlefield dominated  
by interlocking fields of fire. This ensured that slowly  
advancing troops would be mown down by machine  
guns before making any worthwhile inroads into the  
enemy's trenches. Minor advances, occasionally achieved,  
were usually reversed by counter-attacks or simply absorbed  
into a new, static confrontation a short distance from  
the original one.

A book called “Forgotten Victory” is a study of the  
western front battles that rightly draws attention to the  
100 days campaign in which the allied coalition won a  
sequence of decisive victories between mid-July and  
early November 1918. Its author, Professor Gary Sheffield,  
regrets the extent to which the British success in those  
battles at the end of the first world war has been  
disregarded. For example, he says:

“The burden of fighting the German Army fell mainly to the  
French and Russians in the first two and a half years of the war,  
but in 1918 it was the turn of the BEF.”  
That is, the British Expeditionary Force.

“Between them, the French, Americans and Belgians took 196,700  
prisoners and 3,775 guns between 18 July and the end of the war.  
With a smaller army than the French, Haig's forces captured  
188,700 prisoners and 2,840 guns in the same period. This was, by  
far, the greatest military victory in British history.”

So it is absolutely right that, as well as commemorating  
all the disasters of world war one, one of which we are  
commemorating today, we will next year recognise the  
triumph of the battle of Amiens in August 1918. Like  
others who have spoken in the debate, I pay the warmest  
tribute to my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for  
South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) for all the great  
work he has done on this rolling series of commemorations  
of the events, failures and successes of the first world  
war.

Professor Sheffield, whom I mentioned a moment  
ago, takes his thesis a bit further than I feel able to go.  
He suggests that the catastrophic offensives prior to  
1918 were in some way needed to enable the allied  
generals to learn the lessons they eventually applied to  
the successful campaign at the end of the war. I feel,  
however, that one should not have to waste the lives of  
legions of soldiers in the relentless repetition of unsuccessful  
tactics. Time and again, those tactics failed to break the  
stalemate, or to be exploited when, occasionally, they  
managed to achieve surprise.

After the catastrophe on the Somme in 1916, there was  
really no reason to believe that a breakthrough could be  
made and exploited with the available technology of the  
day, yet this was attempted not once but twice in 1917.  
First came the battle of Arras, which was the second of  
the three huge attritional offensives waged by the British  
Army in 1916-17. On the first day of the Arras attack—  
9 April 1917—the British Third Army took 5,600 prisoners,  
and the Canadians, who captured most of Vimy Ridge,  
took a further 3,400. This has been called the greatest  
success of the British Expeditionary Force since the  
beginning of trench warfare. However, the British advance  
soon ran out of steam as German reinforcements arrived,  
and the British Fifth Army had little to show for the  
heavy losses it sustained. Further major efforts on 23 April  
and 3 May 1917, partly intended to tie down forces that  
might otherwise be used against the French, simply  
added to the butchery on both sides.

In the spring of 1917, Russia was in revolution, albeit  
not yet a Bolshevik one, while unrestricted submarine  
warfare and the diplomatic disaster—from the German  
point of view—of the Zimmerman telegram had goaded  
the United States into entering the war on 6 April 1917.  
So did Britain and France really have to squander so  
many lives so fruitlessly after that date? Why risk the  
colossal price of failure when the balance of forces at  
the strategic level was shifting so dramatically? The  
German leadership fully understood the significance of  
American belligerency. They therefore gambled everything  
in the spring of 1918 to exploit the collapse of Russia  
before the United States could make a real difference. It  
was therefore folly for the British and French to wear  
themselves out in 1917 given that the balance of forces  
would change in their favour once the Americans arrived.  
Claiming that the Germans could stand the rate of attrition  
less than the British was no justification at the time, as  
we have heard already, and it is equally indefensible now.

After the Arras offensives of April and May came the  
unprecedented use of giant subterranean mines in a  
successful attempt to break the deadlock. Nineteen  
mines were exploded under Messines ridge on 7 June  
with a force that could be felt on the far side of the  
English channel. Although surprise was achieved, strategic  
gain was once again lacking. Nevertheless, on the last  
day of July 1917, the crowning effort of the BEF was  
made. The third battle of Ypres would endure until  
10 November and imprint itself on the British psyche to  
an extent matched only by the Somme disaster of the  
previous year. The focus was on the Passchendaele-Staden  
ridge, and the main thrust was delivered by General  
Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army along a 7.5 mile front.  
The flanks were defended by the British Second Army  
on the right and the French First Army on the left.

Having overrun some of the outer German defences  
on the first day, the British commander-in-chief, Sir Douglas  
Haig, then discovered that the weather was an even  
more formidable opponent than the enemy. The official  
history of the air war quotes Haig's dispatch as follows:

“The low-lying, clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden with  
rain, turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of  
the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed  
into long stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined  
tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave  
these tracks was to risk death by drowning... In these conditions  
operations of any magnitude became impossible, and the resumption  
of our offensive was necessarily postponed until a period of fine  
weather should allow the ground to recover.”

499

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

500

*[Dr Julian Lewis]*

Thus it was that the second phase of the attack, known  
as the battle of Langemarck and lasting from 16 to  
18 August, lacked any element of surprise. The Germans  
showed no sign of giving way. Next came the battle of  
the Menin Road ridge, beginning on 20 September and  
lasting for five days. Its aim was to capture objectives at  
a distance of between 1,000 yards and one mile, and  
that was largely achieved. The pattern was then the  
same in the fourth phase, known as the battle of Polygon  
Wood, which took place from 26 September to 3 October  
1917, with the objective of securing a jumping-off place  
from which to attack the main Passchendaele ridge.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I thank my  
right hon. Friend for giving way; I had hoped to speak  
in this debate, but unfortunately I have been off site. He  
mentioned the battle of Polygon Wood, and I was going  
to mention that my great-grandfather, who had been in  
France since August 1914, was wounded there on  
30 September and won the Military Medal. I wanted to  
mention that not only because I am very proud, but  
because it demonstrates how the war was fought by  
ordinary folk from normal backgrounds, who then went  
back to their ordinary lives—my great-grandfather was  
a postman in east Yorkshire. That is what was going on  
behind much of the conflict.

**Dr Lewis:** I am delighted that my mentioning of that  
phase of this terrible series of battles gave my hon.  
Friend the opportunity to pay that well-deserved tribute  
to his brave ancestor.

**Andrew Percy:** Whose name I wanted to get into  
*Hansard* but completely forgot to mention—John William  
Feasey.

**Dr Lewis:** The award of the Military Medal to John  
William Feasey is now well and truly, and most justifiably,  
recorded.

The next assault was planned for 4 October, and was  
persevered with despite a great deterioration in the  
weather. It was originally hoped that success at Ypres  
would drive the Germans away from the channel ports,  
as my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham  
(Bob Stewart) said, and an amphibious force to help  
achieve that had already been assembled. The reality, in  
the words of the official history, was very different.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** My right hon. Friend is rightly  
describing the sea battle and what was happening at sea,  
which brought the Americans into the war. Does he  
agree that, when people ask whether we had to go into  
the war, the reality is that we could well have been  
starved out if we had not taken those actions?

**Dr Lewis:** Yes and no. We certainly had to resist  
German aggression, but that does not mean there was  
any justification, when faced with a stalemate, to keep  
repeating tactics and strategies that were wholly unsuccessful  
and counterproductive. The concept of the “big push”  
might have had something to recommend it, despite the  
obvious imbalance between the technology of the machine  
gun, on the one hand, and the lack of armoured vehicles  
to override it, on the other, in the earlier phases of the  
war. That might have justified a big push on the Somme  
in 1916, but it did not justify repeating the same lethal  
strategic nonsense a year later.

This is what the official history has to say about what  
happened after the outbreak of terrible weather:

“The British line had now been advanced along the main ridge  
for 9,000 yards... The year was already far spent and the prospect  
of driving the enemy from the Belgian coast had long since  
disappeared. The continuous delays in the advance as a result of  
the weather and its effect on the state of the ground, had given the  
enemy time, after each attack, to bring up reinforcements and to  
reorganise his defences. Although General Headquarters now  
recognised that the major objectives of the Flanders operations  
were impossible of attainment, they were still anxious to continue  
the operations with a view to the capture of the remainder of the  
Passchendaele Ridge before winter set in. The weather was entirely  
unfavourable but there were hopes that it would improve, hopes based  
on the somewhat slender foundation that the abnormal rainfall of  
the summer presaged a normal, perhaps even a dry, autumn.”

Instead of remaining a means to an end, the offensive  
had become an end in itself. At 5.20 am on 9 October,  
after two days of continuous heavy rain, the attack was  
renewed on a six-mile front. Sir Douglas Haig had  
decided that Passchendaele must be captured, so captured  
it would be. The cycle was repeated on 12 October in the  
hope of helping to prevent German forces from being  
switched to meet the impending French offensive on the  
River Aisne. Some ground was gained east of Poelcappelle  
and on the southern edge of Houthulst forest on 22 October,  
with fighter pilots doing everything they could to attack  
German infantry in trenches and shell holes, on the  
roads and in villages.

And so it went on and on—a little progress here, a  
forced withdrawal there, and the final taking of  
Passchendaele village on 6 November by the Canadians  
who, with British assistance, extended their gains on the  
main ridge four days later. According to the official air  
historian, Passchendaele was

“the most sombre and bloodiest of all the battlefields of the war”.

One of the pilots who lived through it, and later  
reached the highest rank in the RAF, was Lord Douglas  
of Kirtleside, who, as Sholto Douglas, commanded  
84 Squadron's SE5 fighters when he returned to the  
western front in September 1917. He, too, regarded  
third Ypres as

“the most terrible of all the battles of the Great War”.

He wrote the following:

“The Somme of the year before had been bad enough, and  
after that it was felt that the lesson of the futility of mass attacks  
must surely have been learnt. But it was not learnt, and less than a  
year later our Army was called upon to embark on an offensive  
that in so many ways was even more terrible than the Somme”.  
He continued by saying that Passchendaele

“was the beginning of what was to become for those on the  
ground a long and indescribable misery. all the drainage systems  
were smashed in the opening bombardment, and eventually the  
whole area became clogged with mud. Over this devastated area,  
which had been reduced to the state of a quagmire, attack after  
attack was launched...For communication there were only the  
rough tracks which wound their way almost aimlessly across the  
mire, and wandering off them led to drowning. The Germans  
welcomed the rain as ‘our strongest ally'.”

Many of the pilots in the third battles of Ypres were  
tasked to carry out low-level attacks against enemy  
concentrations on the ground. As Sholto Douglas later  
recalled:

“In this job there was very little fighting in the air, and since we  
were flying at heights of only two or three hundred feet we were  
supposed to be able to see plenty of what was going on below us.  
What I saw was nothing short of horrifying. The ground over  
which our infantry and light artillery were fighting was one vast

501

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

502

sea of churned-up muck and mud, and everywhere, lip to lip,  
there were shell holes full of water. These low-flying attacks that  
we had to make, for which most of my young pilots were quite  
untrained, were a wretched and dangerous business, and also  
pretty useless. It was very difficult for us to pick out our targets in  
the morass because everything on the ground, including the  
troops, was the same colour as that dreadful mud...it was quite  
obvious to anyone viewing from the air this dreadful battleground...that  
any chance of a major advance or a break-through was quite out  
of the question.”

We can see from Douglas's memoirs that it was not  
just fashionable post-war opinion which came to damn  
the strategy of attritional offensives. The ordering of  
more and more attacks in such an appalling “morass”  
was seen at the time, by him and his comrades, as “the  
grossest of blunders”. They recognised the need to  
relieve pressure on the French by keeping the Germans  
fully stretched, but he said that

“as I watched from the air what was happening on the ground  
there were presented to me some terrible questions. Why did we  
have to press on so blindly day after day and week after week in  
this one desolate area and under such dreadful conditions? Why  
was there not some variety in our strategy and tactics? The  
questions that I asked then are the questions that have continued  
to be asked ever since; and the answers to them have never ceased  
to be most painful ones.”

As I said at the outset, I remain completely unconvinced  
by the argument, which some people deploy even to this  
day, that it was necessary to undergo the catastrophic  
failures of the Somme and Passchendaele offensives in  
order to learn the lessons necessary for victory in 1918.  
There is testimony enough from senior military figures  
in the second world war, writing of their experiences as  
junior officers in the first, spelling out the futility of  
relentlessly sacrificing huge numbers of British troops  
in fighting unwinnable battles. One does not have to explore  
every military cul-de-sac over and over again, in order  
to stumble across a strategy that might actually succeed.

Let us not forget that each one of these tragedies  
involved an individual personality, and I close with a  
quote from a young Welshman, Second Lieutenant  
Glyn Morgan, who wrote this to his father at the start  
of the Passchendaele offensive:

“You, I know, my dear Dad, will bear the shock as bravely as  
you have always borne the strain of my being out here; yet I  
should like, if possible, to help you to carry on”—  
this was a letter that would be sent only in the event of  
his death—

“with as stout a heart as I hope to ‘jump the bags'.My one  
regret is that the opportunity has been denied me to repay you to  
the best of my ability for the lavish kindness and devotedness  
which you have always shown me...however, it may be that I have  
done so in the struggle between Life and Death, between England  
and Germany, Liberty and Slavery. In any case, I shall have done  
my duty in my little way...

Your affectionate son and brother, Glyn”.

Glyn Morgan, who joined the Army straight from  
school, was killed on 1 August 1917. He was recommended  
for a posthumous Victoria Cross, and he was just 21 when  
he died.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** To  
make his maiden speech, I call Paul Sweeney.

3.25 pm

**Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op):  
Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to  
speak. I also thank right hon. and hon. Members and  
distinguished strangers in the Gallery for their presence.

I am grateful for this opportunity to deliver my maiden  
speech and to follow my hon. Friend the Member for  
Bedford (Mohammad Yasin) who made a remarkable  
and inspirational maiden speech about his journey from  
new citizen to Member of this House and we welcome  
him with genuine hearts.

It is a great privilege to deliver my maiden speech in a  
debate about such a tumultuous event in our nation's  
history. I congratulate the right hon. Member for New  
Forest East (Dr Lewis) on his re-election as Chair of the  
Defence Committee and thank my friend, the hon.  
Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald)  
for his kind introduction earlier today.

It is customary for a new Member to make some  
reference to his predecessors, and reflecting on the  
introductory remarks of Richard Buchanan in his  
1964 maiden speech, I noted that he declared:

“If it were within my power to introduce a new tradition to this  
House, it would be that hon. Members who are making their  
maiden speeches should do so from the Dispatch Box so that they  
might lay their trembling hands upon it and give some support to  
their quaking knees.”—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1964; Vol. 701,  
c. 412.]

On rising to speak today, I can thoroughly attest to my  
sympathy for those sentiments. The only consolation is  
that I will not have long to wait for relief, as I will have  
the first opportunity to address this House from the  
Dispatch Box next week as shadow Under-Secretary of  
State for Scotland. I can only hope that it will provide  
more ample support for my trembling limbs.

Dick Buchanan was the embodiment of the finest  
political traditions of my constituency: he was a proud  
railway worker, socialist and trade unionist. During his  
tenure as a councillor on the Glasgow Corporation, it  
was not unknown for him to turn up at the city chambers  
from the Cowlairs railway works in his boiler suit,  
before changing into the dapper pinstriped suit of the  
city treasurer. He also left an eminent legacy to future  
Members of this House as Chairman of the House of  
Commons Library Committee during its transition from  
an old-style, gentleman's-club library to the expert modern  
research facility that is at the disposal of Members of  
Parliament today. I am sure that that facility has been  
particularly appreciated by those new Members preparing  
their maiden speeches.

The area of Glasgow that I represent has a remarkable  
and diverse history, and that is reflected in the diversity  
and vibrancy of the people who live there today. From  
its early origins at the northern frontier of the Roman  
Empire, it has subsequently been vital to Glasgow's  
development, even though it was formally incorporated  
into the city only in 1891, when Glasgow's territory was  
doubled in size. The Molendinar Burn, on the banks of  
which the founder of Glasgow, St. Mungo, established  
his cathedral and with it the surrounding town, flows  
from Hogganfield loch, the fresh waters of which also  
nourished what is the longest established business in the  
city of Glasgow—Tennent's brewery. The brewery was  
founded at the Drygate in the 1550s and its amber  
nectar has slaked the thirst of many a Glaswegian over  
the centuries.

When I attempt to visualise the evolution of my part  
of Glasgow, Danny Boyle's epic opening ceremony of  
the London 2012 Olympic games immediately springs  
to mind. What was once an area of sylvan beauty and  
rural charm, a landscape of farms and weavers' cottages,

503

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

504

*[Mr Paul J. Sweeney]*

was rapidly swept away as the first harbingers of the  
industrial age emerged—the first canals and, later, the  
first railways in Scotland which, traversed the district.  
By happy coincidence of its position on the approach to  
central Glasgow from Edinburgh and the Lanarkshire  
coalfields, Springburn found itself at the epicentre of  
this frenetic growth as railway manufacturing and associated  
industries coalesced there to form the largest centre of  
locomotive manufacture in the British empire. At its  
peak, it employed 8,000 people and had the capacity to  
build 600 steam locomotives a year, most of which were  
for export.

Other engineering innovations were pioneered there,  
too, most notably the Johnston Dogcart, which, in  
1895, was the first motor car to be built in Britain by  
railway engineer George Johnston in Balgrayhill. The  
first road trials took place in the dead of night, with  
Johnston driving the car at a reckless 12 mph on a  
20-mile journey around Glasgow. For this apparently  
reckless behaviour, he was charged with contravening  
the Locomotive Acts by driving his horseless carriage  
during prohibited hours along Buchanan Street—then,  
as now, the main shopping thoroughfare in Glasgow.

Today my constituency retains this fine automotive  
industry pedigree in the form of Allied Vehicles, the  
largest manufacturer of specialist taxis and mobility  
vehicles in the United Kingdom, which employs more  
than 650 highly skilled people in Possilpark. This high-value  
manufacturer is also ingrained in the community, supporting  
many excellent projects such as Possobilities, which  
supports disabled people in the local area, as well as the  
highly successful Glasgow Tigers speedway.

As my friend the hon. Member for Glasgow South  
mentioned earlier, our engineering prowess was also  
critical to supporting Britain's war effort during the first  
world war. Springburn's railway works gave themselves  
over to the production of munitions for the duration of  
the war. Throughout this period, they were responsible  
for producing war material such as the first tanks and  
aircraft. The works also produced the first modern  
artificial limbs for wounded servicemen.

The directors of the North British Locomotive Company  
even offered their headquarters building to the Red  
Cross, as existing hospitals were insufficient to cope  
with the war wounded. It opened on Christmas eve  
1914. Wounded troops would be transported directly  
from the southern channel ports to the hospital on  
specially converted ambulance trains. By the end of the  
war, a total of 8,211 servicemen had been treated.

Nearby Stobhill Hospital, the place where I first  
entered a more peaceful world some 75 years later, was  
also requisitioned by the Royal Army Medical Corps in  
1914 and more than 1,000 patients were cared for there  
at any given time until the return of the hospital to  
civilian use in 1920. As an Army reservist, I have the  
sacrifice that my city made during the first world war  
impressed on me every year when I attend the Remembrance  
Day service in George Square. The stark enormity of  
the statement on the city's cenotaph, that Glasgow  
raised over 200,000 troops—a fifth of its population—with  
18,000 of that number losing their lives and a further  
35,000 injured, never fails to move me with the sheer  
scale of the carnage that afflicted working people a  
century ago.

My constituency of Glasgow North East was created  
at the 2005 general election by the amalgamation of the  
Glasgow Springburn and Glasgow Maryhill seats. Both  
areas have previously enjoyed excellent representation  
from exemplary parliamentarians. Although my seat was  
once described as a Labour citadel, there were even two  
Conservative Members in the interwar period, though  
that was thankfully a brief dalliance. The metaphorically  
and physically towering legacy of my antecedents was  
brought into sharp focus when I recently had the  
opportunity to venture into the Speaker's House and  
was confronted by a 14-foot-high oil painting of Lord  
Martin of Springburn and Port Dundas. If there was  
ever a more effective device to make his successors feel  
simultaneously inspired and inadequate I have yet to  
find one.

Michael Martin succeeded Dick Buchanan as the  
MP for Springburn from 1979 to 2009, which of course  
culminated in his election as Speaker of the House of  
Commons from 2000 onwards. His parliamentary career,  
spanning seven consecutive general elections, was selflessly  
committed to the service of others and epitomises the  
opportunity that the Labour movement has offered for  
the advancement of working-class people over the last  
century. He rose from being a Springburn sheet metal  
worker and shop steward to become the Speaker of this  
House. I was particularly gratified to meet Lord Martin  
just last week, and he told me of his delight that his seat  
was now back in “safe hands”, as he put it.

My first ever experience of party political campaigning  
was in the Glasgow North East by-election of 2009,  
after a telephone call from Gordon Brown's wife Sarah  
drew me from my exam revision to help William Bain  
hold the seat for Labour. As someone who was also  
born and raised in the local area—we were both the first  
members of our respective families to benefit from a  
university education—William proved to be a dedicated,  
industrious and committed champion for our city and  
its communities during his time in the House, speaking  
vociferously in opposition to the coalition Government's  
vicious and self- defeating austerity policies during his  
tenure as shadow Scotland Office Minister.

Before I had the opportunity to meet my immediate  
predecessor, Anne McLaughlin, I watched her maiden  
speech with great interest when she delivered it almost  
two years ago to the day, in July 2015. I was particularly  
impressed by her yearning passion for improving the  
lives of her constituents and restoring civic pride to our  
communities—a passion that I share deeply. Anne cited  
the example of the project to restore the historic Springburn  
winter gardens, the largest glasshouse in Scotland, as a  
totemic symbol of our mission to continue regenerating  
a community that is still contending with the challenge  
of urban dereliction. As one of the founders of the  
project, I was personally delighted that Anne made  
such a generous endorsement of our efforts in her  
maiden speech. I would also like to thank her for the  
friendly and good-natured election campaign we conducted  
in June and I look forward to working together in areas  
of mutual interest in the future.

All the maiden speeches of my predecessors reflect  
common challenges that have faced our constituents  
over the years. Though much progress has been made in  
certain areas, unfortunately many of the issues they  
identified decades ago remain all too stubbornly apparent  
today. Michael Martin referred to the urgent need to

505

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

506

strengthen Government intervention in developing new  
industries to revitalise the local economy and alleviate  
the unemployment and despair caused by the collapse  
of locomotive manufacturing. That legacy of decline is  
something that my constituency has never fully recovered  
from. I felt that keenly from an early age, as I learned  
about Springburn's past industrial glories from my  
grandparents. It is what inspired me to follow my  
grandfather and father into the Clyde shipbuilding industry,  
and later to move to Scottish Enterprise, burning with a  
zeal to rejuvenate the great Clyde-built industries that  
once gave pride and prosperity to our city.

Having recently been involved with the development  
of Labour's new industrial strategy for Scotland, I am  
excited about the opportunity before us to unlock a new  
era of prosperity with the application of coherent,  
long-term thinking about the development of more  
high-value industries in our country, and I look forward  
to pursuing that vision with vigorous enthusiasm in this  
place.

Another recurring subject for my predecessors is  
housing, particularly exploitation by private landlords  
and the mass clearance of housing in areas such as  
Springburn. All Glasgow Labour MPs have stood firmly  
in the tradition of John Wheatley and his famous  
Housing Act of 1924, which provided state subsidies for  
house building to build a land fit for heroes. It led  
directly to the creation of Glasgow's municipal housing  
system, and saw large-scale building of some 57,000  
new homes in new districts such as Riddrie and Carntyne  
in my constituency between the wars.

Heroines such as Mary Barbour led the struggle  
against rapacious landlordism during the first world  
war; she led the women of the city in the 1915 rent strike  
that ultimately forced this House to legislate to control  
rents for the duration of the war. I am delighted that my  
predecessor Maria Fyfe, who represented Glasgow Maryhill  
for so many years, has successfully campaigned for a  
statue commemorating Mary Barbour and the Glasgow  
rent strikers—only the fourth statue of a woman to be  
erected in the city of Glasgow.

As a result of the efforts of my predecessor Michael  
and others, Glasgow pioneered the modern housing  
association movement that saved many of the traditional  
Victorian tenements in areas such as Dennistoun and  
Springburn. By writing off the city's £1 billion housing  
debt, the last Labour Government enabled an  
unprecedented renewal of its housing stock, led by  
organisations such as ng homes; more than £100 million  
has been invested in improving housing standards in my  
constituency. These physical improvements are about  
not just the sandstone, glass and slate, but reinvigorating  
the very soul and character of our city, and what it  
means and feels like to be a Glaswegian from one  
generation to the next.

These efforts have, however, been frustrated by  
Conservative party policies that continue to undermine  
living standards in my constituency. Despite efforts to  
regenerate our communities, my constituents are still  
subject to the indignity of benefit sanctions, tax credit  
cuts and frozen wages. With unemployment and benefit  
claimant rates in my constituency double the national  
average, and child poverty at a disgraceful 36%, the  
continued onslaught of Tory cuts to living standards is  
too much to bear for many. When a constituent approaches  
me in the street to describe how she was forced to

financially support her son and his partner, who was  
suffering from a terminal brain tumour, for nine months  
before his death, as he had been found fit to work and  
had had his benefits cut, it is clear to me that we have  
seen the creation of a new national minimum definition  
of dignity, under which anything short of starvation  
and anything above destitution is now seemingly acceptable  
—a definition that is apparently blind to any appeal to  
human compassion. That view was galvanised when I  
watched those on the Government Benches cheer with  
perverse triumph as our effort to remove the public  
sector pay cap was defeated last month, quite oblivious  
to the harm it causes to millions of people.

My duty as a Labour Member of Parliament has  
been crystallised by those observations. The people of  
Glasgow North East sent me here because they despair  
of the Tories and yearn for the vision of hope and prosperity  
that Labour has offered them under the inspirational  
leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn).

In 1948, this House, having witnessed the disastrous  
effects of two terrible world wars, was told that the  
welfare state had been established to remove the shame  
from need and to create a society with solidarity at its  
foundation. Today it is our solemn responsibility to do  
everything in our power to defeat this Government and  
restore that abiding principle in our society. That is why  
the people of Glasgow North East sent me here, and I  
will do my utmost to repay their faith in me through  
how I acquit myself in pursuit of that endeavour in this  
House.

3.39 pm

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): It falls to me to congratulate  
my compatriot, the hon. Member for Glasgow North  
East (Mr Sweeney), on his maiden speech. There can be  
little doubt that he will bring passion, commitment and  
conviction to the proceedings of the House. I look  
forward to many jousts across the Floor of the House  
over the coming months and, hopefully, years. I was  
delighted to hear him recognising previous Scottish  
Conservative occupants of his seat. That was very  
encouraging; we look forward to further success down  
the years. I also congratulate him on his new position,  
which he mentioned. I look forward to seeing him at the  
Dispatch Box as soon as next week.

I rise with a degree of humility to make a small  
contribution of my own, and to pay tribute to those  
who fought and died during Passchendaele, the third  
battle of Ypres—the biggest British offensive of 1917. I  
say that I rise with humility because of the calibre of  
speeches in this debate. I have been informed and deeply  
moved by the things I have heard. I was particularly moved  
by the contributions of Members who have spoken  
in Welsh. Something has been passed to me from my  
great-grandmother, Mary Ann Owen Blakemore, which  
thrills at the sound of the Welsh language. Her son and  
my great-uncle, Harry Blakemore, served in the great  
war and died in the early months of 1918. He plays an  
important part in our family history, even though his  
life was short.

My hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire  
(Dr Murrison) spoke about the impact that first world  
war cemeteries and sites have on young people. My wife  
and I have made it a matter of course to take our  
children to these sacred places. My hon. Friend described

507

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

508

*[Stephen Kerr]*

the effect that those places have on young people, and I  
have witnessed that in my own children. He mentioned  
the dawning realisation of the sacrifice and slaughter of  
the great war, and it does make a massive impression on  
young minds. It reminds them and all of us of the price  
of our freedom. I have stood and witnessed the last post  
ceremony at the Menin Gate many times. It is an  
incredibly moving experience. I wish that every schoolchild  
in the country could have the privilege of standing there  
and visiting those sites because of the impact the experience  
has on our minds.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** My hon. Friend is making a powerful  
point about the education of young people. On a slightly  
tangential but important point, may I urge him to make  
contact with the Holocaust Educational Trust, which  
does massively important work in taking young people  
to Auschwitz, which shows what unbridled power can  
lead to?

**Stephen Kerr:** I thank my hon. Friend for that point  
of information. I will follow up on his invitation.

I was deeply moved by the account of my hon. Friend  
the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart), which I  
hope others who were not in the Chamber will have the  
opportunity to view and read. It was uplifting, and I  
thank him very much.

My constituency of Stirling has a long-standing  
connection with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders,  
who fought on the front line at Passchendaele. These  
things are all well documented, and the many war  
memorials throughout my constituency are filled with  
the names of local men who went off to fight, bravely  
answering their country's call. Behind each of the names  
engraved on those memorials there is a family left  
behind and broken-hearted.

It is also important to note in this debate that the  
men who fought at Passchendaele and throughout the  
great war were gathered from across the British empire.  
The cemeteries of the western front are full of gravestones  
for Australians; New Zealanders, whose worst casualty  
figurescamefromPasschendaele;SouthAfricans—Hindus  
and Muslims alike; Canadians; and Newfoundlanders.  
Men from all over the imperial territory, from every walk  
of life, from every race, and from every faith, background  
and culture came to fight for the mother country in its  
hour of need. In doing so, they came together in a  
common cause.

In later years, it has become a fashionable narrative  
that the men who went to fight for the British empire  
were victims whose blood was spent wastefully by British  
officers who had no concern for the men of the colonies.  
My dear friend Dr Iain Banks, who is a senior lecturer  
in history at the University of Glasgow and the executive  
director of the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, refutes  
and counters this idea. He calls it

“a false idea, because the men coming from the colonies were not  
unwilling victims, pressganged conscripts being sent to die. Certainly,  
the men of the AIF”—  
the Australian Imperial Force—

“who had arrived on the Western Front in 1915 were not sacrificial  
lambs; according to research carried out by the historical unit of  
the Australian Army, these men were confident and eager for the  
fight, and they had come to sort out the mess that the old country  
had made.”

TheScottishmemorialinFlandersstandsasapermanent  
reminder of the contribution that Scotland made to the  
British action at Ypres. This memorial is the only one  
on the western front dedicated to all Scots and all those  
of Scottish descent who fought in France and Flanders  
during the 1914-18 war. Scottish soldiers made a major  
contribution to the efforts of the British Army during  
the battle at Passchendaele, and it is worth pointing out  
that their sacrifice was proportionately greater—one  
might say, more disproportionate.

Between 31 July and 10 November 1917, all three  
Scottish divisions were on the western front. They  
were included in the 9th and 15th Divisions and the  
51st Highland Division. These men came from all over  
Scotland, representing famous Scottish regiments: the  
Black Watch, the Seaforth Highlanders, the Gordon  
Highlanders, the Cameron Highlanders, the Royal Scots,  
the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the King's Own Scottish  
Borderers, the Cameronians and the Highland Light  
Infantry.Thefamouslocalregimentfrommyconstituency,  
the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was in the thick  
of the fighting, with representatives in all three divisions,  
and it took casualties in every significant phase of the  
action.

**Bob Stewart:** I thank my very good hon. Friend for  
giving way. May I just remind the House that a lot of  
Scottish soldiers in reinforcement units were diverted to  
English, Welsh andIrish regiments? It is therefore absolutely  
apposite that there is a Scottish memorial to all Scottish  
soldiers, whichever regiment they served in. After all,  
some of us go abroad and command English regiments.

**Stephen Kerr:** I thank my very good hon. Friend for  
his intervention. It is also a tribute to the fighting  
qualities of Scottish soldiers that they can be reassigned  
and deployed as he suggested.

However, there were not only Scots involved. The  
Canadians, the Newfoundlanders and the New Zealanders,  
in particular, included a lot of Scottish immigrants and  
sons of immigrants, who were committed to the battle.  
The Scottish memorial project reports that of the nine  
Canadian Victoria Crosses awarded in the last week of  
October and the first week of November alone, the  
majority were awarded to Scottish-born immigrants or  
the sons of Scots immigrants.

Those who came back lived with the legacy of what  
they experienced. We have heard some very apposite  
comments about that legacy in this debate. Those who  
did not return—we will remember them. We must not  
make the mistake of thinking that these soldiers were  
passive victims of a war they did not understand or  
support. That is a view that is often expressed in certain  
quarters, especially when people say that we have not  
learned the lessons of past wars. Whether or not they  
understood the war in the way that we might want them  
to understand it, they fought because they wanted to do  
their bit; because they had been conscripted and it was  
their duty to go; because they were with men who had  
become their mates and they were not going to let them  
down. We do our fallen no justice whenwe strip themof  
the dignity that comes with the recognition of their  
agency. They joined up, they answered their nation's  
call, and they reported to the conscription hall. We can  
argue about the conduct of the war, but never let us  
downplay the sacrifice of the men who went to war and  
laid down their lives.

509

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

510

Whether a person loses their life in the service of  
their country in a vast battle in a global war such as the  
one we are talking about, or whether one person loses  
their life individually, without record or attention paid,  
such sacrifice is most worthy of remembrance. This is  
partly the inspiration behind the Unknown Warrior,  
who rests, anonymously, in the place of highest honour  
in our nation. While the war memorials, the remembrance  
services, the cenotaphs, the cemeteries and debates like  
these are a vital—indeed, essential—reminder of that  
sacrifice, the true honour and respect we must give to  
their memory is the kind of country and the kind of  
world we are building. The approach we take towards  
one another, and the way we work together as a country,  
within our borders and across borders, must always  
honour their sacrifice.

Those who died would no doubt have held a wide  
variety of opinions and views, as we do. They would  
have had the same broad diversity of opinion that the  
population of the country had at that time. Socialists,  
Liberals and Conservatives all fought and died together.  
They would have had their differences and disagreements,  
just as we do, as I said earlier, but demonstrating  
courtesy and respect to those whose opinions and beliefs  
differ from our own is one vital aspect of the way we  
honour the sacrifice of the fallen, as is enlisting ourselves  
in the pursuit of peace and justice for all, and the  
advancement of the civil society and democracy that I  
believe we all believe in. These aims are indeed a fit and  
proper memorial worthy to the memory of the sacrifice  
of so many souls.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
Before I call the next speaker, may I thank the last two  
speakers—the hon. Member for Glasgow North East  
(Mr Sweeney), who made an excellent maiden speech,  
and the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr)—for  
what they said about the Highland Light Infantry,  
because my grandfather served with them and was  
injured at Passchendaele. I am not able to make a  
tribute from the Chair, so I thank those hon. Gentlemen  
for doing it for me.

3.54 pm

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): It is a  
pleasure to be able to make a short contribution to this  
important debate and to follow so many interesting,  
thoughtful and informative speeches. It is a particular  
pleasure to have listened to two wonderful maiden  
speeches this afternoon. My hon. Friend the Member  
for Bedford (Mohammad Yasin) talked about making  
his life in Bradford, having moved here from Kashmir,  
and I wish my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow  
North East (Mr Sweeney) well for his Dispatch Box  
debut next week.

Like many other towns and cities up and down the  
country, on 30 July my constituency of Heywood and  
Middleton will commemorate the battle of Passchendaele.  
We will meet in Heywood memorial gardens as part of  
the programme of first world war commemorative events.  
I pay tribute to Rochdale Borough Council for its work  
and commitment in organising all those events, which  
are always very well attended by my constituents. They  
are observed with huge respect for those who gave their  
lives for our country, those who fought and survived,  
and all their families and descendants.

I want to give a special mention to Councillor Alan  
McCarthy, our lead member for the armed forces. I  
thank him for his work both in that role and as chair of  
Heywood Township, whose councillors, after consultation  
with the veterans, decided that commemorations of the  
centenary of the first world war should be held not  
in celebration, but rather in solemn reflection and in  
remembrance of all those who have died and served in  
our armed forces since the start of the great war.

It is important to remember that almost everyone in  
the UK has an ancestor directly affected by the first  
world war, and that nearly 1 million men and women  
gave their lives in service. My constituent Lynne Coxell,  
whose second cousin William Robinson died at the age  
of 18 in the first world war, will be among the many  
attending the memorial service at Ypres on 31 July, to  
remember their sacrifice. Lynne has donated William's  
pocket watch and other artefacts, including his prayer  
book, to the Passchendaele Museum in his memory.

The Heywood war memorial, where our local  
commemorations will be held, has its own very special  
link to the battle of Passchendaele. The war memorial  
was unveiled in 1925. A statue representing peace stands  
in front of the cenotaph, with bowed head and bearing  
a laurel wreath representing victory.

The statue was sculpted by Walter Marsden, an English  
sculptor born in 1882 in Church, near Accrington in  
Lancashire, in the constituency of Hyndburn. In 1901  
he was an apprentice at the Accrington Brick and Tile  
Company, whose owners, the McAlpine family, recognised  
his talent and encouraged him to study at the Accrington  
Technical School. From there he went on to study at the  
Manchester Municipal College of Art, and in the 1911  
census he gave his occupation as “clay modeller”.

Walter Marsden himself saw active service in the first  
world war as an officer in the Loyal North Lancashire  
Regiment. He fought in the third battle of Ypres, the  
battle of Passchendaele, for which he was awarded the  
Military Cross. He was later taken prisoner at Cambrai  
in France and sent to a prisoner of war camp.

After the war he continued his studies and attended  
the Royal College of Art. He later worked on many war  
memorials, many of which are in Lancashire. As well as  
the memorial in Heywood, there are Walter Marsden  
war memorials in his hometown of Church, Bolton,  
Tottington in Bury, and St Annes-on-Sea.

His sculptures reflect his experience of active service.  
The memorial at St Annes-on-Sea depicts walking wounded  
returning from the battlefield, blinded by gas. A gaunt,  
exhausted, helmetless soldier is seated at its base. Walter  
Marsden said that he had wanted to capture  
“the constant nervous rain of trench warfare and the ever-present  
feeling of danger that was the cause of so much mental agony.”  
I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob  
Stewart), because I think he gave us the reality of that  
with his own experience.

Walter Marsden also depicted a husband going off to  
war, his wife clutching at him, with a small, sad child  
looking up helplessly. His memorials tread a delicate  
line, portraying the human cost of war while paying  
proper tribute to bravery and sacrifice. The war memorial  
in Heywood is inscribed:

“To the men of Heywood who gave their lives for us during the  
Great War 1914-1918”.

It commemorates by name the 300 men who died in  
service.

511

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

512

*[Liz McInnes]*

I finish by quoting the words on the Walter Marsden  
war memorial in his home town of Church, Lancashire.  
That is a fitting point on which to end. The memorial is  
inscribed:

“Let those who come after see to it that their names be not  
forgotten”.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** I call  
Ben Lake to make his maiden speech.

4pm

**Ben Lake** (Ceredigion) (PC): Diolch, Madam Deputy  
Speaker. Thank you for affording me the opportunity  
to make my maiden speech this afternoon.

It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Heywood  
and Middleton (Liz McInnes) and, in particular, the  
hon. Members for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney)  
and for Bedford (Mohammad Yasin), who both made  
excellent maiden speeches. Indeed, they set an exacting  
standard. They spoke from the heart and I have no  
doubt that they will be a credit to their party, their  
constituencies and this House.

I welcome the opportunity to remember the third  
battle of Ypres in the House and to commemorate the  
first world war. As the years go by, it becomes increasingly  
important that we remember the conflict and especially  
the sacrifice of all those who lost their lives. We must  
ensure that we learn the lessons of the past and strive  
never again to subject people to such suffering and  
horror. While visiting one of the many Commonwealth  
war cemeteries that pepper the Flemish countryside, it  
was heartbreaking to stumble across seemingly never-ending  
rows of young lives cut short by the conflict.

As has already been mentioned this afternoon, perhaps  
the most famous of the casualties from Wales was Ellis  
Humphrey Evans, or Hedd Wyn, a son of Trawsfynydd,  
in the neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the  
Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts).  
Hedd Wyn was a talented poet who, tragically, was  
killed before learning of his greatest literary triumph.  
Just a few weeks before winning the most prestigious  
prize for poetry at the National Eisteddfod, the bardic  
chair, he was killed at the battle of Passchendaele at the  
young age of 30.

A manuscript of the winning ode, “Yr Arwr”, or  
“The Hero”, in Hedd Wyn's own hand, is one of the  
many precious treasures housed at the National Library  
of Wales in Aberystwyth. This sentinel of our nation's  
heritage is perched on Penglais hill, overlooking Cardigan  
bay, a jewel of the Welsh coast, which I now have the  
privilege of representing as the Member for Ceredigion.  
I am truly humbled that the people of this great constituency  
have put their faith in me to speak for them in this place.  
I am looking forward to working hard on their behalf  
and serving them well, and I will strive to be worthy of  
this trust.

My immediate predecessor, Mark Williams, was elected  
in 2005. He gained the respect of this House and the  
affection of the constituency, thanks to over 12 years of  
tireless service. Thousands of people from across the  
county have benefited from his advice and assistance,  
and I hope to continue with his good work. I wish him  
and his family the very best for the future.

Ceredigion is my home. From the peak of Pen Pumlumon  
Fawr to the tranquillity of the Teifi estuary, its hills and  
valleys rarely fail to speak to its sons and daughters. It  
is no surprise that hiraeth should be such a common  
affliction of Cardis who find themselves absent from  
the county for too long. As the second most sparsely  
populated county in Wales, Ceredigion is largely a rural  
area. Agriculture is the backbone of many of our  
communities. Farming not only supports a significant  
proportion of the workforce, but also sustains a range  
of social activities and events that are the lifeblood of  
the county.

Ceredigion stretches from the banks of the Dyfi in  
the north to Cardigan Island in the south. It is bounded  
in the east by the magnificent hills of the Elenydd, and  
flanked to the west by spectacular coastline. Indeed,  
this year blue flags proudly fly above the pristine beaches  
at Aberporth, Aberystwyth, Borth, Llangrannog, New  
Quay and Tresaith. Tourism plays a vital economic role  
in the area, which is unsurprising given that Ceredigion  
is widely acknowledged to be the most beautiful  
constituency in Wales.

Ceredigion's natural beauty is complemented by the  
diverse nature of her settlements, from the picturesque  
Georgian harbour town of Aberaeron to the historic  
mustering point of the drovers at Tregaron, which continues  
to hold a thriving livestock market to this day.

Although predominantly a rural constituency, we  
boast two university towns. The university at Aberystwyth  
was established in 1872, thanks to the pennies of the  
people—thousands of individual donations from across  
Wales; and Lampeter is home to the oldest degree-awarding  
institution in Wales, founded in 1822.

We can also justifiably claim to be the capital of  
Welsh culture. In addition to housing the National  
Library of Wales and two universities, Ceredigion has  
two thriving publishing houses in Talybont and Llandysul,  
and the recently restored castle in Cardigan played host  
to the first National Eisteddfod in 1176. The most  
famous of Welsh bard, Dafydd ap Gwilym, was born in  
Penrhyncoch, and my hometown of Lampeter is the  
birthplace of Welsh rugby, with the first recorded match  
being played there in 1866.

That rich mix of rural and urban defines Ceredigion—a  
tapestry of communities woven tightly by the emphatic  
landscape and the famous quick-witted humour of the  
Cardi.

Although we must speak to our strengths, we cannot  
be blind to the reality that the uncertainty surrounding  
our departure from the European Union poses a daunting  
challenge to the very fabric of our community. During  
my time in this place, I will strive to ensure that the best  
interests of the rural economy and higher education are  
at the forefront of the minds of Government Ministers  
as they conduct Brexit negotiations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we cannot allow ourselves  
to be forgotten. Decisions taken in London have long  
overlooked the rural economy, with public investment  
too often bypassing the hinterland. For too long, amenities  
considered essential to the urban economy are dismissed  
as mere luxuries in more rural areas.

Several of my predecessors in this House have pointed  
to the tragic irony that Ceredigion bestows upon its  
youth an unrivalled education, but offers them a paucity  
of job opportunities and affordable housing. For decades,

513

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

514

our county has lost the potential and the vitality of her  
youth. Around half her young people leave the county  
by the time they reach 25 years of age.

Many of the young who have left are Welsh speakers,  
which has meant that in my lifetime—which, I am sure  
hon. and right hon. Members will agree, is not particularly  
long—the percentage of people living in Ceredigion  
that can speak the language has declined from around  
60% to just 47%. This steady, silent haemorrhage saps  
the life of nearly every town and village the length and  
breadth of the county.

During my time in this place, I look forward to  
working with those across the political divide to refocus  
the Government's attention on the challenges facing  
rural areas, and to encourage greater efforts at developing  
our economy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are a proud people in  
Ceredigion, and we possess an historic resolve to buck  
national trends. We are also of independent spirit—over  
the years we have seen fit to elect Members to this  
House from across the political spectrum. I am particularly  
proud to follow in the footsteps of my distinguished  
Plaid Cymru predecessors, Simon Thomas and Cynog  
Dafis. They worked tirelessly for Ceredigion and were  
passionate about guarding rural areas from the negligence  
of a remote Government. Twenty-five years after the  
election of the first Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion, I  
am committed to building on this legacy. It is the  
greatest of honours to have been entrusted by the  
people of our county during this critical time. As we  
come together today to remember the sacrifice of those  
who gave their lives during the first world war, we can  
all be inspired by their deep sense of duty. It is that  
sense of duty and service that I will seek to embrace.

I would like to finish by quoting one of Ceredigion's  
greatest sons and a founding member of Plaid Cymru,  
Prosser Rhys. He wrote:

“Deued a ddel, rhaid imi mwy

Sefyll neu syrthio gyda hwy.”

Whether I am faced by opportunities or obstacles, the  
best interests of my county and my constituents will be  
at the very heart of all my endeavours. Diolch yn fawr.

4.10 pm

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): I commend  
the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) for an  
impressive first speech. I thought his mention of Hedd  
Wyn, who died at Passchendaele aged 30 was particularly  
appropriate. It reminds us all of what talent was lost, what  
futures were lost, and what artistic flourishing could  
have taken place in this country but for that first war.

I was also pleased that the hon. Gentleman acknowledged  
his predecessor, Mark Williams, saying that he was held  
in affection throughout the House. He most certainly  
was. He was one of those Members who have friends  
across the political spectrum. People would support  
him just because he was Mark: the political differences  
dissolved.

I took exception a little to the hon. Gentleman's  
suggestion that Ceredigion was the finest place in Wales  
to go on holiday—Porthcawl is obviously a great seaside  
town—but I hope that his speech inspired those who  
were listening to think of Wales for their holiday destination  
this year, because we have so many beautiful places. We  
must keep a welcome in our hillsides, no matter whether  
it is in the north or the south.

One thing is certain. There is not a family in the  
United Kingdom who will not, over the coming months,  
be remembering the first world war and the family  
members who were lost, the futures that were lost, as a  
result of that war. I have a tiny pocket diary that my  
grandfather took with him to the front. In it, he made a  
few comments every day about what he saw. I spent a lot  
of time tracking what he was talking about, and looking  
at the experiences that he made a note of. He left for war  
on 13 August 1914, noting:

“We left Limerick by train for Queenstown, embarked on the  
SS Matheron of steamers Liverpool.”

When he arrived in Belgium, the new idea of moving  
soldiers to the front quickly was in play. Off he went on  
a train journey. He spent many hours, indeed days, on  
that train, which went into sidings as those in charge  
tried to get all the trains with all the troops to the front  
as quickly as possible. On 20 August 1914, they finally  
arrived in a field, where they disembarked. They had  
nowhere to sleep: they had no tents and no blankets.  
They lay down in that field, exhausted by the journeys  
that had taken place from 13 August to 20 August, and  
slept.

Before they had a chance to sleep, however, they were  
addressed by Sir John French, who said:

“Our cause is just. We are called upon to fight beside our  
gallant allies in France and Belgium in no war of arrogance, but  
to uphold our national honour, independence and freedom.

We have violated no neutrality, nor have we been false to any  
treaties. We enter upon this conflict with the clearest consciousness  
that we are fighting for right and honour.

Having then this trust in the righteousness of our cause, pride  
in the glory of our military traditions, and belief in the efficiency  
of our army, we go forward together to do or die.”

We are still faced with that dilemma. What do we do as  
a nation when others violate neutrality and are false to  
the treaties that have been entered into? Do we then  
prove false to treaties that we have entered into to come  
to the support and aid of others? That is the dilemma  
that the House faces every time we have a debate about  
whether to go to war. In my time in the House, I have  
taken part in three debates in which we have had to  
decide whether to commit our personnel and to take  
that decision. Each time, it is the issue of neutrality and  
our treaty commitments that we consider. That is the  
thing that helps us to make our decision.

My grandfather's diary recounts countless days of  
heavy shellfire, near escapes from death, exhaustion and  
countless movements, as he survived the battles of Le  
Cateau and Mons, and the great retreat from Mons and  
Marne. He then took part in the first battle of Ypres.

In the first battle of Ypres, the British expeditionary  
force lost 2,368 officers and 55,787 men. The British  
regular Army virtually disappeared, leaving only a  
framework for the new mass armies that were to come.  
The German army lost 130,000 men, the French 50,000  
and the Belgian 32,000. Sometimes when I read the  
diary, I ask myself—what we have learned and what I  
need to learn as, hopefully to be again, a member of the  
Select Committee on Defence. In the Select Committee,  
we have many times looked at reports about equipment.  
It is one of the Committee's major priorities.

On 17 October 1914, my grandfather noted:

“Very fine morning, all my chums congratulated me on my  
birthday. We got a blanket served out to us. We have had nothing  
to cover us since we came out. Severe fighting is going all along  
the canal”.

515

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

516

*[Mrs Madeleine Moon]*

From August to October, theyhadnoblanket—nothing  
to cover them, despite the battles that they had fought  
and survived. There was hardly a man of the original  
expeditionary force who possessed more than the clothing  
he stood up in and that was often woefully inadequate.  
It is no wonder the Defence Committee even today is  
concerned about equipment, logistics, preparation and  
planning for war.

On 29 October 1914, my grandfather noted:

“Terrific firing all day and night. The Indian troops came here  
to relieve us, they look a fine lot of men, Gurkha, Sikhs and  
Punjabis.”

It reminds us that, even then, alliances, coalitions and  
interoperability were the way in which wars were fought.  
We rarely stand alone. In that war, 90,000Indiansoldiers  
and 50,000 labourers served in two infantry and cavalry  
divisions.

On 1 November 1914, my grandfather noted:

“Damp morning had to clean our saddles and harnesses.”

My grandfather was a signalman and often rode out to  
ensure that communications between the trenches and  
senior military command were clear. He continued:

“This was a quiet day in Beuvry but it was the 23rd day of the  
First battle of Ypres”.

It was also a time of great destruction and horror for  
the civilian population living in that area. We have  
talked a great deal about the impact of the war on our  
personnel, but it was also a time of great horror for  
civilian populations, who had no idea of where to flee  
for security. They had no idea where there was safety,  
and where a bombardment would not lead to death and  
destruction. Many people were forced out of their homes.

My town of Porthcawl took in many refugees from  
Belgium, as did many towns across the United Kingdom.  
This is also a lesson that we still carry with us today—the  
importance of refuge, and of offering support to refugees  
and civilians, who, more often than our militarypersonnel,  
are the ones who are slaughtered during warfare.

One of the things that happened as a result of the  
first world war was that we recognised that we needed  
totakeresponsibilityforhowwedealtwithwar, because  
in the second battle of Ypres the Germans used poison  
gas for the first time, and created alarm among the  
stricken British and French colonial defenders. Chlorine  
gas was a new experiment, and its success surprised the  
German commanders, but it also led us to look later at  
developing a law of armed conflict and international  
humanitarian law, and at what was going to be acceptable  
and unacceptable. It is horrifying that we still see the  
use of chlorine gas and mustard gas in Syria, something  
we thought we had stopped, and that everyone in this  
House, no matter of which political party, roundly  
condemns. It is viewed with the horror with which we  
viewed its first use back in 1915.

We also read with horror the stories of the impact of  
that relentless pounding on the mental health of the  
people who fought and the refugees who traipsed back  
and forth across the countryside trying to find safety:

“I'll tell you this much, I might not have been wounded in the  
body but I was wounded in my mind. I don't know if you can  
imagine it but obviously, when there is shell fire, you get down to  
get cover, only an idiot wouldn't get down, so you get down and  
you can't get your nails into the ground and your head under the  
ground and you can't get down because you can't go any further.

You're on the ground and your nails are dug in the ground and  
there you are and the shells are bursting around and there's  
screaming bits of shells and they're not just bits of metal, they're  
hot metal flying all over the place and there are machine guns  
going and pandemonium all around. How the devil did you get  
out of that unscathed? How did you get out? It's a miracle, if  
there's such a thing as a miracle.”

That was written by Sergeant Bill Hay of the 9th Battalion,  
and I think it is one of the most graphic descriptions of  
what it must have been like to have been in that hell.

On Sunday 2 May 1915, my grandfather noted:

“Dull day, we rested to-day. Lots of troops went past suffering  
from poisoning from the gas. A terrific bombardment commenced  
about 5 o'clock, the noise is terrible^ this is the heaviest bombardment  
I have heard. I had to go to Vlamertinge at 9 o'clock it was black  
dark and shells were bursting over my head. It was a terrible  
experience it being my first night out on the line in black darkness.  
The roads are full of our chaps suffering from gas poisoning.”

The diary ends on Wednesday 14 July 1915:

“Went and laid a line from signal office to 3rd Corps HQ  
finished dinner time. There was a very heavy bombardment last  
night in front of the Durham's trenches between Messines and  
Ploegsteert. I left Bailleul at 4.38 for England on leave, arrived at  
Boulogne at 9 pm”.

That is the last we know of my grandfather's day-to-day  
experiences. He died at the third battle of Ypres. We  
know that Driver Albert Edward Ironside, No. 17785,  
died on 22 July 1917. He is buried in plot 1, row F, grave  
No. 4 in Dozinghem military cemetery in Belgium. The  
advance dressing stations in the area were humorously  
named by the troops: Dozinghem, Mendinghem and  
Bandaghem. The cemeteries that were created perpetuate  
those names. We do not know when my grandfather  
was injured or how he died. We were told that he was  
poisoned by gas. From 10 July 1917, mustard gas was  
used every night against British positions. The *Glamorgan  
Gem* contains an article by Ceri Joseph of the Porthcawl  
Museum, which has been running amazing exhibitions  
on the first world war over this whole period to explain  
the local context, the service that the local people gave  
and the impact of the war on the town. In the article,  
Ceri suggests that German tactics had changed in that  
month. They allowed the British to cover an increasing  
amount of ground in the hope that they would lose  
momentum. Forward signal parties would often become  
involved in fighting, and Albert might have been trapped  
and died fighting.

What lessons can we learn? What knowledge can one  
man's experience give us? Never again should we send  
people to war without full preparation and without the  
kit and equipment that they need. We have done that  
recently. Members of this House did not want to send  
anyone into Afghanistan with the wrong equipment,  
but that is what we did. This is something we must  
always question before we make these decisions. We  
have also learned that there are few short wars. All wars  
have long-term consequences. Those who came back  
fromthefirstworldwarhadtolivewiththeirexperiences,  
as did their families and their communities. That war  
still resonates with us here and with their families, even  
today.

The accountability of generals has increased. The  
Defence Select Committee, and this House, demand to  
know why mistakes have been made and why certain  
things have happened. We are better at doing that now,  
and I believe that we play an honourable role here in  
that regard. All working men, and married women,

517

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

518

achieved the vote after the war. The Government were  
frightened that those men, returning from the horrors,  
armed and experienced, would revolt against them if  
they did not give them the vote. They got the vote but  
they still had to face the horrors of the great depression.  
I should like to end on what is, for me, a positive note.  
In the first election following the conflict, Labour tripled  
its vote. Five years later, the party formed a Government  
for the first time.

4.28 pm

**Kevin Brennan:** With the leave of the House, I will  
reply to the debate on behalf of the Opposition. We  
have had an excellent debate with some extremely good  
speeches from both sides of the House. The right hon.  
Member for Broadland (Mr Simpson) made a  
knowledgeable and thoughtful contribution and enlightened  
all of us with his expertise. The hon. Member for  
Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) spoke  
eloquently, as ever, on behalf of the Scottish National  
party. We should all thank the hon. Member for South  
West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) not only for his speech  
but for all that he has done to organise the first world  
war commemorations. He posed the important question:  
would we pay the price if we knew it in advance? We can  
never know the answer, for obvious reasons, but we  
should always consider that point when these decisions  
are before us in the House of Commons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Paul  
Flynn), who is not in his place, told us of his father's  
participation in the battles at Passchendaele. He also  
rightly reminded the House that, although we say that  
we must, we often do not learn lessons from such  
conflicts. He also rightly referred to the famous Wilfred  
Owen poem “Dulce et Decorum Est”. We were all  
moved by the contribution from the hon. Member for  
Beckenham (Bob Stewart). As ever, he had the House  
transfixed with his personal and compelling account of  
the reality of being in a conflict. We thank him for his  
service to our country as well as for his contribution  
today.

We have been fortunate to have some wonderful  
maiden speeches during the course of the debate. I pay  
tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedford  
(Mohammad Yasin), who told us of his personal journey  
from Kashmir to Bedford. I was pleased that he rightly  
paid tribute to his predecessor Richard Fuller, whom I  
know from my university days and who was a fine  
Member of this House. My hon. Friend is clearly proud  
of his constituency and his constituents have every right  
to be proud of him, too, for his contribution today.

The hon. Member for Elmet and Rothwell (Alec  
Shelbrooke), who is also starring later in our proceedings  
today, told us a moving personal story from his own  
family and reminded us of the consequences of the  
aftermath of war, which we should all remember. He  
also paid tribute to his father, who is watching our  
proceedings today. The hon. Member for Dwyfor  
Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts) spoke, as I did, about  
Hedd Wyn, the Welsh poet who was killed at the battle  
of Passchendaele. We then had a typically knowledgeable  
contribution from the right hon. Member for New  
Forest East (Dr Lewis), the Chairman of the Defence  
Committee, who gave us a detailed and vivid portrayal  
of the futility and horror of the battle. He brought great  
wisdom and knowledge to our proceedings.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow  
North East (Mr Sweeney) on his excellent maiden speech.  
When a Member makes a maiden speech, it is customary  
to say that they have bright future, possibly at the  
Dispatch Box. It took me six years to get to the Dispatch  
Box, but my hon. Friend has rather beaten that record  
since he told us that he will be making his debut just  
next week. We wish him well in his role, and I am sure  
that he will do very well indeed. He also mentioned  
Michael Martin, the previous Speaker. When I was a  
young new MP in 2002, I had the temerity to ask a  
question in this House without wearing a tie, and I was  
rightly admonished by the then Speaker. Times have  
changed, but I never quite got over that, so I am still  
wearing my tie despite the new dispensation.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr), who is  
another new Member—so new that I thought it might  
have been his maiden speech until he took an  
intervention—told us that he has visited the Menin  
Gate and witnessed the ceremony. He said that all  
schoolchildren should perhaps do the same, and I think  
we would all agree. He also referred to the war memorials  
in his constituency and reminded us of the contribution  
of Commonwealth troops in the first world war, including  
those from India. We should remember that 1.3 million  
people volunteered for the British Indian Army during  
that war, with 70,000 of them losing their lives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and  
Middleton (Liz McInnes) mentioned the events being  
organised in her constituency to commemorate  
Passchendaele. She also told us the fascinating story of  
Walter Marsden, who won the Military Cross at the  
battle and later sculpted the figure of peace on the war  
memorial in her constituency.

It was a pleasure to hear the fine maiden speech of  
the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake), who paid  
appropriate tribute to his predecessor Mark Williams,  
who was genuinely liked by Members across the House.  
He introduced yet another Welsh word into the debate:  
hiraeth, which means a deep longing for home. He  
clearly loves his constituency, which he describes as the  
most beautiful in Wales. I should remind him that it is  
in fact the murder capital of Wales because, as those of  
us who occasionally watch it know, the television series  
“Hinterland” is made in his constituency. Although he  
has invited us all to visit, we are a bit nervous because  
the murder rate seems to be particularly high; almost as  
high as Oxford in “Inspector Morse.” He makes his  
constituency sound like the garden of Eden—I am not  
suggesting that original sin was invented there—and  
hon. Members should take up his offer to visit, as it is a  
very beautiful place. He has a bright future in this place,  
so long as he never achieves his ambition of Wales  
leaving the United Kingdom. In that case he would have  
to give up his seat, and the House would be the poorer.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Bridgend (Mrs Moon), who told us the poignant story  
of her grandfather's diary from the front and how she  
uses it as inspiration for the fine work she does on the  
Defence Committee. We were all moved immensely by  
what she told us.

It falls to me to pay tribute, as the Minister and I did  
at the beginning, to all those who gave their life in the  
first world war, particularly at the battle of Passchendaele,  
and to those who still give service to us in our armed  
forces. Today's debate is a hugely appropriate tribute to

519

Passchendaele

13 JULY 2017

Passchendaele

520

*[Kevin Brennan]*

them. The greatest tribute we can give, as other hon.  
Members have said, is to do all we can to promote  
peace. Let us all pledge today to do just that.

4.36 pm

**John Glen:** This has been an excellent debate that I  
hope puts the House in good standing with those who  
are watching. We have had 13 Back-Bench contributions  
and three excellent maiden speeches. I will not repeat  
the excellent words of the hon. Member for Cardiff  
West (Kevin Brennan), who speaks for the Opposition,  
in going through all of them, but I will mention the  
three maiden speeches.

First, I pay tribute to the words of the hon. Member  
for Bedford (Mohammad Yasin). The way he spoke  
about his predecessor does him great credit. The whole  
House will be aware of his commitment to Bedford, and  
we wish him well for his future in the House.

Secondly, I will not say too much to the hon. Member  
for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney) about quaking  
knees and trembling at the Dispatch Box, but it took me  
seven years to get here. I am pleased that it will only  
have taken him a few weeks. I wish him well in his career  
in the House.

Thirdly, I applaud the young hon. Member for  
Ceredigion (Ben Lake) on his composed and measured  
first contribution. He describes his constituency very  
fully as the capital of Welsh culture, which, from what I  
heard in other contributions today, is a contested title. I  
wish him well in the House, too.

I am grateful for all the contributions and, as I reflect  
on them, I will refer to my hon. Friends. As we have  
heard, the battle of Passchendaele, which touched  
communities across Britain and Ireland, and across the  
world, was a grim series of events. It is right that we  
take this opportunity to reflect on the bravery, endurance,  
service and sacrifice of those involved. We should  
particularly remember that conditions and casualties  
were horrific for soldiers on both sides.

In the spirit of the personal reflections that so many  
colleagues on both sides of the House have shared, I  
will read a first-hand account of Passchendaele given to  
me by my constituent Colonel Newbould, a distinguished  
battle tours veteran. It said:

“While I and others were taking supplies into the line at Ypres,  
we waded through mud all the way. It was very necessary to keep  
following the leader strictly in line, for one false step to the right  
or left sometimes meant plunging into dangerous and deep mud-pools.

One of our men was unfortunate enough to step out of line  
and fall into one of these mud-holes. Knowing from past experience  
that quick action was needed if we were to save him from quickly

sinking, we got hold of his arms and tried to pull him out. This  
did not produce much result and we had to be careful ourselves  
not to slip in with him. We finally procured a rope and managed  
to loop it securely under his armpits.

He was now gradually sinking until the mud and water reached  
almost to his shoulders. We tugged at that rope with the strength  
of desperation in an effort to save him, but it was useless. He was  
fast in the mud and beyond human aid.

Reluctantly, the party had to leave him to his fate, and that fate  
was gradually sinking inch-by-inch and finally dying of suffocation.  
The poor fellow now knew he was beyond all aid and begged me  
to shoot him rather than leave him to die a miserable death by  
suffocation.

I did not want to do this, but thinking of the agonies he would  
endure if I left him to this horrible death, I decided a quick death  
would be a merciful ending. I am not afraid to say therefore that I  
shot this man at his own most urgent request, thus releasing him  
from a far more agonising end.”

That is the reality of the human misery that we are  
commemorating today. It is human misery that my hon.  
and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob  
Stewart) spoke of with such personal authority when he  
said that war is disgusting and horrid. But it is important  
that we as a nation commemorate what happened, and I  
wish to remind the House that after these events on  
30 and 31 July our focus will be on the centenary of the  
Armistice in November 2018. I urge Members from  
across the House to consider the resources available to  
ensure that their local constituencies engage in the  
commemorative programme.

Many Heritage Lottery Fund projects are taking  
place up and down the country, in which local communities  
are exploring and learning about their first world war  
heritage. Since April 2010, the Heritage Lottery Fund  
has awarded more than £86 million to more than 1,700  
projects covering the whole of the UK to mark the  
centenary. Some 7 million people have engaged in first  
world war heritage. As the hon. Member for Cardiff  
West so rightly said, poetry, songs and arts keep us  
going. Secondary school students continue to join the  
battlefield tours, with nearly 1,500 schools taking part  
so far. The Government want to ensure a lasting legacy  
of first world war remembrance, and education. After  
all, we owe it to all those who bravely fought 100 years  
ago on our behalf. So whether attending events in  
Belgium or the UK, or watching on television, we will  
remember all those affected by this dreadful battle  
100 years ago and ensure that they shall never be  
forgotten. It is right that this House remembers all  
those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of  
their country.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Commemoration of  
Passchendaele, the Third Battle of Ypres.

521

13 JULY 2017

Driving Offences: Private Land

522

Driving Offences: Private Land

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

4.44 pm

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): On  
9 August 2013, a terrible, tragic and preventable accident  
took place at Swithens farm in my constituency. Eleven-  
year-old Harry Whitlam died from injuries he sustained  
after being struck by a reversing farm vehicle. The  
driver of that vehicle was over twice the legal drink-drive  
limit, but the Crown Prosecution Service did not bring a  
prosecution as the accident was deemed to have occurred  
on private, not public, land.

Harry and his mum, Pamela, live in the constituency  
of my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Outwood  
(Andrea Jenkyns), who is on maternity leave and very  
much regrets that she cannot be here today. Pamela  
worked in the cafe kitchen of the working farm, which,  
like many other farms, has diversified and become a  
visitor attraction.

Areas of the farm are designated as both private and  
public, but, at the time of the accident, the boundaries  
of those areas were not clearly defined. Indeed, the  
police investigation was clear about the lack of separation  
between public and private areas. It said:

“Upon approaching the scene from Swithens Lane, there was  
no signage or other barrier that would restrict public access to the  
scene, or inform a person entering from that direction that they  
are in a non-public area of the farm.”

Harry was a regular visitor to the farm, especially  
during the school holidays when his mum was working  
there. He regularly assisted the farmhands with their  
work, particularly in the petting farm and collecting  
eggs from the chickens. He was a familiar face and well  
known to the farm staff. There was another young boy,  
a friend of Harry's, who helped out in just the same way.

On the morning of the accident, Harry arrived first  
thing at the farm with his mum. He was keen to meet up  
with his friend and also lend a hand with building a new  
wall to help house some new meerkats. He went off for  
a short while, returning to the cafe accompanied by one  
of his farmhand friends and ordered breakfast from his  
mum that they planned to collect a little later.

Approximately 15 minutes later, the accident occurred.  
Harry was in the farmyard when he was hit by a slurry  
trailer being reversed by a tractor. He was badly crushed  
by one of the large trailer tyres. The Yorkshire air  
ambulance flew Harry to Leeds General Infirmary, but,  
despite the best efforts of medical staff, he tragically  
died from his injuries.

The investigation revealed that Harry had been walking  
across the back of the slurry trailer from right to left  
when he was struck. He had gained access to this  
working area of the farm by a route that was not in any  
way cordoned off from the public. Indeed, there are public  
rights of way across the “private” area. There is no  
evidence that Harry was running, and evidence presented  
by PC Martin Ward, a collision investigator, confirmed  
that the view from the cab “was good” and that  
“Harry was there to be seen”.

He concluded that Harry would have been in the sight  
of the driver for “quite a long time” and that it was  
“a very low impact speed”.

Owing to the anomaly in the law that this debate  
seeks to address with “Whitlam's law”, the driver, Mr Gary  
Green, despite being over twice the drink-drive limit,  
was only prosecuted under the Health and Safety at  
Work etc. Act 1974. As such, the family had to wait  
some 17 months before the Health and Safety Executive  
was able to prosecute him for failing to ensure the safety  
of persons and other employees, contrary to section 3(2)  
of the 1974 Act.

This makes it sound as though it was nothing more  
than a tragic accident. The truth is that Gary Green was  
drunk, and having drunk such a huge quantity of  
alcohol, he knowingly and willingly took control of  
heavy machinery and killed a young boy, when all  
investigations show that if he had been alert he would  
have stopped his vehicle as Harry was in plain sight.

As this was only an HSE prosecution, Green was  
sentenced to just 16 months and two weeks in prison. If  
he had been prosecuted under section 3 of the Road  
Traffic Act 1988, causing death by careless driving while  
under the influence of drink or drugs, the maximum  
penalty would have been 14 years' imprisonment. In  
addition, there is scope for an unlimited fine, a minimum  
two-year driving ban and a requirement to pass an  
extended driving test before the offender can drive  
legally again. The CPS advise that it is probable that  
had Green been prosecuted under the Road Traffic Act,  
he would have received a sentence of about six years.

The disparity in the sentencing for the same offence—  
driving while under the influence of alcohol—is unjust  
and at odds with a society that widely condemns such  
behaviour. The CPS reported that it was unable to bring  
a prosecution as the accident happened on private land;  
questions have been asked about whether the CPS was  
instructed to advise an investigation and whether it  
considered a manslaughter charge. I have been advised  
that the police thoroughly investigated the matter and  
manslaughter charges were considered, but, according  
to the CPS, the case did not pass the test for gross  
negligence manslaughter.

What I have called Whitlam's law seeks to make this  
analysis irrelevant by calling for parity of esteem. There  
is much confusion, and contradictory prosecutions around  
the country. In 2010, David John Arthur, 62, tried to  
convince Truro magistrates that he was not guilty of  
drink-driving because he was caught in a Tesco Extra  
supermarket carpark, claiming it was private property  
and the law did not apply. He was convicted. In 2012,  
Lisa Docktray, 41, drove from her friend's caravan to  
her own at Presthaven Sands holiday park, Gronant.  
She had an alcohol reading of 102 micrograms compared  
with the legal limit of 35, and believed she could drive  
because it was private land. She was found guilty. But in  
2012, a priest, Canon Peter Maguire, was double the  
drink drive limit when he collided with a vehicle in a  
carpark. His defence was that the carpark was private  
land and therefore he could not be prosecuted. He was  
found not guilty on these grounds.

There are law firms that boast of getting around our  
laws and getting people off. I struggled over whether to  
name and shame them in the Chamber, but I fear that  
would only give them free advertising. They seek blatantly  
to disobey the law and then look for legal loopholes to  
get away with it. I think the majority of Members

523

Driving Offences: Private Land

13 JULY 2017

Driving Offences: Private Land

524

*[Alec Shelbrooke]*

would have rightful contempt for these so-called  
practitioners of law. The road safety charity Brake has  
said:

“As a road safety charity we know only too well the devastation  
and suffering caused by drink driving. A drunk driver in charge of  
a vehicle, of any type, is a lethal combination. Whether this takes  
place on public or private land ought to be irrelevant”.

The time has come to say that parity of esteem must  
exist for road traffic prosecutions as it does if someone  
kills a person in their own home or on the street.  
Whitlam's law is about changing the Road Traffic Act  
so that offences prescribed by it that are committed on  
private land are classed as criminal offences and are  
actionable by the police, particularly the offence of  
driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs,  
regardless of where that vehicle might be. Whitlam's law  
will prevent other families from having to go through  
Pamela's trauma of losing her only son and then being  
told that a prosecution for death by drink-driving could  
not be brought.

You may remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a  
few years ago you were in the Chair when I brought  
another case to the House—that of a young boy who, a  
day before his 20th birthday, was killed by a drink  
driver. How often do people have to come to this  
Chamber to try to do something about our drink-driving  
laws and ensure that people are properly prosecuted  
and that justice is meted out? That would at least bring  
closure to the family. I ask any parent in this Chamber  
how they would feel if their only child, their only son,  
was killed and the immediate reaction was, “We cannot  
prosecute”even though the driver was drunk and all the  
investigations showed that he had plenty of time to see  
the young boy, it was at low-impact speed and the boy  
was there to be seen?

Harry Whitlam is dead because of a drink-driver,  
and it shames us all that the driver cannot be prosecuted  
because of a loophole in the law that some solicitors  
will exploit to get people off for what is a crime.

I close with a simple but heartbreaking statement  
from Pamela:

“I believe there should be no distinction between private or  
public land if someone is found to be in charge of a motor vehicle  
whilst under the influence.

By driving in this state they not only endanger the lives of  
others, but also put their own lives at risk.

It is a sad fact that some law firms pride themselves in exploiting  
this legal loophole, using it to get drivers acquitted of drink  
driving offences.”

It is even more distressing to me when they quote my son's  
death as an example of how they can ‘beat' the system.”

4.55 pm

**TheMinisterof State,DepartmentforTransport(MrJohn  
Hayes):** I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet  
and Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke), who secured this  
Adjournment debate; he will have moved everyone who  
heard it today. As he knows, I am the father of two  
young sons, and I respond to the debate not only as a  
Minister of the Crown, but in that capacity. We have  
just been debating Passchendaele; how unfortunate that  
we should come to the Adjournment only to turn to  
another tragedy. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
bringing the tale of Harry Whitlam to this Chamber. I  
offer my heartfelt condolences to the Whitlam family.

Regrettably, motor vehicles are responsible for too  
many deaths on our roads. Although this country has  
an enviable road safety record, in 2015 there were 1,750  
reported road deaths in Great Britain, with many times  
that figure seriously injured. Motor vehicles were also  
responsible for a number of deaths away from the  
highway. In 2016-17, being struck by a moving vehicle  
was the cause of 31 deaths of workers, according to  
statistics compiled under the Reporting of Injuries,  
Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.  
This makes it the leading cause of worker fatality.

Harry Whitlam was a child; he was not a worker in a  
formal sense, of course, but he was entitled to the same  
attention from those about him that any worker would  
haveexpected,orbeenentitledto.Ourtrafficlawrecognises  
that the highway can be a dangerous place, and it is  
based on the premise that motor vehicles will be moving  
at speed in close proximity to each other and other road  
users. The offences of careless or dangerous driving have  
been framed in that context, as my hon. Friend says.

Once we look away from the highway, the range of  
activities using a vehicle that take place on private land  
multiply in unimaginable profusion. An activity such as  
motor racing is designed to demonstrate the skills of  
motor racing drivers and mechanical engineers in ways  
that would not be appropriate on an open highway.  
Workers on a construction site may be controlling vehicles  
in spaces that they know do not have firm foundations  
or walls. Drivers who are airside at an airport share the  
ground with aircraft, with all the concomitant dangers  
that might bring.

All those drivers of course owe a duty of care to  
those about them, and that duty comes not from being  
employees or drivers, but quite straightforwardly from  
being human beings with a responsibility to their fellows.  
That can never be greater than when one thinks of  
young people and children. Our responsibility to take  
care of those around us must surely be exaggerated in  
our hearts—must be even greater—when we are speaking  
about vulnerable people: the very young, the very old,  
the frail, the disabled and the infirm, and so on. I  
understand my hon. Friend's frustration that more is  
not done.

For more than 40 years, the Health and Safety at  
Work etc. Act 1974 has provided a framework for  
ensuring that workplaces are safe. There is a reporting  
regime that allows the Health and Safety Executive to  
monitor shortcomings. Of course, not all private land is  
a workplace. Indeed, places often serve as both workplace  
and home. Farms are a prime example.

5pm

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

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

**Mr Hayes:** Accidents in residential settings are just as  
tragic as those elsewhere, so when considering whether  
to formulate dangerous driving legislation for private  
land, we certainly need to think more widely than the  
health and safety legislation as it applies to work.  
Although we should recognise that the highway is a  
different environment from private land, we should not  
lose sight of the similarities. In seeking to address the  
toll of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents,  
the World Bank has been advocating that all countries  
adopt what is known as a safe systems approach to  
reducing national road casualties.

525

Driving Offences: Private Land

13 JULY 2017

Driving Offences: Private Land

526

In December 2015, my predecessor as a Minister in  
the Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate  
and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones), published the “British  
Road Safety Statement”, which, among other policies,  
set out what we are doing in this country to support the  
safe systems approach. While this obviously related to  
the highway, the principles can be applied off the highway  
just as reasonably and effectively.

A safe systems approach recognises that

“We can never entirely eradicate road collisions because there  
will always be some degree of human error; when collisions do  
occur the human body is inherently vulnerable to death or injury;  
and because of this, we should manage our infrastructure, vehicles  
and speeds to reduce crash energies”

to levels that do not lead to human injury or death.

In considering how to address the tragedy of off-road  
vehicle accidents, we would do well to adopt a safe  
systems approach. This is not to say that the solutions  
will be the same as those applied to the highway, but the  
aim of saving lives is the same. All this indicates that it is  
not straightforward to adjust the existing law to improve  
vehicle operational safety. Yet, the statistics tell us that  
we should, and must, aspire to do more to prevent  
future accidents. Legislation is not the only tool. For  
example, the Health and Safety Executive already  
works with trade bodies, including the National Farmers  
Union, to develop good practice relating to handling  
farm vehicles. This includes off-road specific factors  
such as working on uneven ground, steep gradients and  
using on-board machinery. Those things would not be  
covered by road traffic regulations, even if they were to  
apply.

I am conscious of how the law may appear, when the  
penalty for an illegal action depends on where it happens—  
that does not seem reasonable, does it?—particularly  
when it seems not to have regard to the equal severity of  
its effects. So, I am pleased to tell the House and my  
hon. Friend that I will consider how we might address  
the matter, including the possibility of future legislative  
reform. That may sound like a blithe, easy commitment  
to be delivered by a future Government. However, it is  
important that we get the reform right, and that we do  
not rush and make errors in how we frame that kind of  
legislation. It is more complicated than it first seems for  
some of the reasons that I have set out, but that is not a

reason to do nothing. To that end, I invite my hon.  
Friend to come to my Department to meet me and my  
officials and talk through how we might proceed.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** I am most grateful to hear what my  
right hon. Friend says, and it will come as a great relief  
to Pamela and her family that this has been taken so  
seriously. May I ask whether I could bring Pamela and  
her solicitor so that they can give their first-hand experience  
and talk about how this law may be developed?

**Mr Hayes:** I would be honoured and delighted to  
meet them, so of course the answer is yes.

I have a reputation for quoting poets, and I usually  
do so in a light-hearted or jocular fashion, as the  
Speaker mentioned recently. But sometimes poetry can  
be applied to the most difficult circumstances, and the  
poet John Donne said this:

“any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind”.  
We are all poorer for an untimely loss of the kind my  
hon. Friend has raised in the House. Of course we are  
poorer, and of course we hurt when we lose a relative, a  
friend or a colleague, but we are diminished by any loss,  
and the tragic loss my hon. Friend described will have  
moved the hearts, as I said at the outset, of everyone in  
this Chamber, and of many beyond it who have heard  
this debate.

I say again that I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
raising the issue of off-road vehicle offences. As I have  
said in reply to the debate, how we respond will depend  
on the joint working of a large number of bodies within  
Government. I am not able today to say exactly how the  
law will change, but given the short time from the point  
when this debate was announced, doing otherwise would  
have indicated that we had not thought this through  
properly. The implications of any such move will be  
planned carefully and considered, and we will proceed  
with certainty as a result of that deliberation. But I tell  
Members this: we will proceed with the firm intention  
that tragedies such as Harry Whitlam's might be prevented  
in the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.7 pm

*House adjourned.*

527

17 JULY 2017

528

House of Commons

*Monday 17 July 2017*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock***PRAYERS**

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr Speaker:** Before we come to questions to the  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government,  
I am sure the whole House will wish to join me in  
offering our congratulations to Britain's Jamie Murray,  
Jordanne Whiley, and Alfie Hewett and Gordon Reid  
on their successes respectively in the mixed doubles, the  
ladies' wheelchair doubles and the men's wheelchair  
doubles at Wimbledon. I am sure that colleagues will  
also wish to join me in offering our warmest congratulations  
to Roger Federer on his record-breaking eighth Wimbledon  
singles title, the oldest man to win the Wimbledon men's  
singles trophy in the open era, the oldest man to win a  
grand slam singles title since Ken Rosewall won in  
1972 and the first man to win the Wimbledon title  
without dropping a set throughout the whole tournament  
since Bjorn Borg in 1976. We are celebrating the  
achievements of a very great man indeed.

Oral Answers to Questions

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

*The Secretary of State was asked—***Homelessness**

1. **Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): What progress  
   his Department has made on plans to tackle homelessness.

[900501]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** No one should find themselves  
without a roof over their head. That is why this Government  
have committed to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to  
eliminate it all together by 2027. We are implementing  
the most ambitious legislative reform in decades, ensuring  
that more people get the help they need before they face  
homelessness.

**Alex Chalk:** Our manifesto makes it clear that rough  
sleeping is unacceptable, and I am delighted that the  
Secretary of State shares my view that we should be  
demanding nothing less than its complete eradication.  
WhatisbeingdonenotonlyinEnglandbutinCheltenham  
to end this stain on our society?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend cares very deeply about  
this issue and has done a lot in his constituency. I share  
those concerns and it is one of the reasons why, for  
example, we announced in our recent manifesto that we

will be piloting the concept of Housing First, which has  
worked well elsewhere. He will also know that his town  
of Cheltenham will receive £1 million of our£10million  
social impact bond, money that will help the most  
vulnerable rough sleepers get the help they need.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): The Secretary of State talked about homelessness  
as though it is people living on the street; in my constituency,  
the council is spending £35 million a year on people  
living in hostels and temporary accommodation, and  
there are many other hidden households who are living  
with another family because they cannot afford a roof  
over their head. The Secretary of State talks about his  
ambitious plans, but they do not help people here and  
now; what is he doing now to make sure that people in  
Hackney South and Shoreditch, across London and the  
country can get a roof over their head that is affordable?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady reminds us all that  
homelessness is much more than about people living on  
the streets; there are many more families and people  
affected across the country, including, of course, in  
London. One thing we are doing that I am sure she will  
welcome is the announcement in a recent Budget that  
we will be putting £100 million into low-cost move-on  
accommodation that will provide at least 2,000 places.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): First Point in  
my constituency works with many hundreds of my  
constituents who couldbe atriskof homelessness. Does  
my right hon. Friend think that housing associations  
should be doing more to refer individuals for support if  
arrears arise? That sometimes happens with larger housing  
associations, but smaller ones often fall short when it  
comes to referring constituents for support.

**Sajid Javid:** My right hon. Friend refers to how we  
can try to prevent homelessness from occurring in the  
first place, and rightly says that some housing associations  
do a much better job with these types of referrals when  
arrears arise. There is also a better role for local authorities,  
and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will certainly  
help to achieve that.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield)(Lab/Co-op):Surely  
the Secretary of State must give some hope of a vision  
that this Government actually believe in something.  
And if he believes in one thing, it must be sorting out  
the social housing market by building homes for people  
at affordable rents—and good quality ones, too.

**Sajid Javid:** I know the hon. Gentleman cares  
passionately about this, but it is worth reminding him  
thatstatutoryhomelessnessreacheditspeakin2003and  
since then has fallen to half that number. But, of  
course, more needs to be done, and the right type of  
social homes in the right places have a big role to play.

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): Will my right  
hon. Friendjoin me in commending the work of YMCA  
Black Country and its excellent chief executive, Steve  
Clay,as it works, through its Open Door programme,to  
persuade more private individuals to open their homes  
to homeless young people?

529

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

530

**Sajid Javid:** I will very much join my hon. Friend in  
commending the work that the YMCA does in his  
constituency, throughout the Black country and indeed  
throughout the country. This is a lesson that can be  
learned by many other areas, and it is exactly the kind  
of thing we want to look at and see whether we can do  
more of it.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The Minister will  
be aware of the TV programme “Can't Pay? We'll Take  
It Away!”, in which officers arrive to evict people from  
their homes. Some of those people do not understand  
the High Court process and might not have paid their  
money, but some of them have paid their money and  
the High Court is unaware of that fact. What can be  
done to help those people at that last minute before the  
midnight hour?

**Sajid Javid:** I agree with my hon. Friend that more  
should be done in such difficult cases to help those  
vulnerable people. I know that some councils do a much  
better job than others in that regard, and I hope that the  
work we are now doing as a result of the Homelessness  
Reduction Act will help us to spread that good practice  
to more councils.

**Grenfell Tower Fire: Advice to Landlords**

1. **Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab):  
   What advice his Department has provided to small  
   private landlords since the Grenfell Tower fire. [900502]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** The safety of tower block  
residents is absolutely paramount. We have made our  
testing process available to private residential owners  
free of charge. This means that landlords can check the  
safety of their buildings and take the necessary action to  
reassure residents that they are safe in their homes.

**Mike Kane:** The Residential Landlords Association,  
which is based in my constituency, has raised concerns  
about the complex and sometimes contradictory guidance  
being given to private landlords by various bodies,  
including the Government, on fire safety. What plans  
does the Secretary of State have to address this matter?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman will understand  
that, in the wake of the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, the  
Government had to move quickly and issue guidance  
within days. Much of that guidance was continuously  
updated as we were made aware of new information. I  
met representatives of the private sector on 6 July, and  
we are discussing with them what more we can do.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Will  
the Secretary of State confirm that it was this Government  
who introduced the requirement for private landlords to  
fit smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in  
private homes, and that we are introducing electrical  
safety checks as standard later this year? Does he  
acknowledge that all landlords have an overriding  
responsibility to make their properties safe for their  
tenants?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend reminds us that it is the  
legal responsibility of all landlords, whether in the  
private or public sector, to ensure that their properties

are safe for all their tenants. I think that he was also  
implying that, in the wake of the tragedy at Grenfell  
Tower, we should be looking at what more can be done.

17. [900518] **Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South)  
(Lab): I am concerned that a survey of social landlords  
carried out by HouseMark has found that they had  
little confidence that they would be able to take  
enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004 to  
ensure that leaseholders complied with fire safety  
regulations, including through fitting fire doors, which  
is obviously essential, given what the Secretary of State  
has just said about keeping all tenants safe. Will he  
respond to the request from Nottingham City Council,  
which is seeking additional powers to enable this to  
happen?

**Sajid Javid:** That is an important issue and I will  
certainly look carefully at that request. It is important  
that all leaseholders recognise their responsibilities as  
legal owners of their properties. A number of towers  
were evacuated in Camden recently and a lot was found  
to be wrong with the internal fire safety of the buildings,  
including fire doors that should have been in place but  
simply were not.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): I have pointed  
out to the mayor of Birmingham that the home in  
which he lives in Birmingham is in a block that is clad.  
Does the Department keep a register so that it can push  
out information to private landlords on what they should  
be looking for, specifically in relation to cladding?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend will know that the legal  
owners of the building, be they private landlords or  
otherwise, will have the best information about what  
type of cladding may or may not exist. Soon after the  
Grenfell Tower tragedy, after getting expert opinion, we  
swiftly issued guidance on how to handle that identification  
process better.

**Ms Harriet Harman** (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab):  
Could the Secretary of State be more specific about the  
financial help that he is going to make available to  
councils with tower blocks, such as Southwark, which  
has 174? He has talked about the legal duties of councils  
to keep their tenants safe, and of course that is very  
important, but they also have a legal duty to have a  
balanced budget. Since the Conservatives came into  
government in 2010, Southwark Council's budget has  
nearly halved. Fire improvements such as the installation  
of sprinklers should not happen at the expense of other  
improvements that tenants are waiting for; nor should  
the expense be placed on leaseholders. Will the Secretary  
of State come up with the £100 million that Southwark  
needs?

**Sajid Javid:** We have been very clear to local authorities  
and housing associations in the wake of the Grenfell  
Tower tragedy that they should carry out checks  
immediately. They should then consult with their local  
fire and rescue service, and whatever is recommended  
should absolutely be put in place. Where local authorities  
cannot afford that, we are happy to talk to them and to  
provide the support that they need.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): In the five weeks since  
the Grenfell Tower tragedy, both private and social  
landlords have met with an array of bewildering and

531

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

532

sometimes contradictory advice. They look to the  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
both for technical advice about acceptable specification  
and for real advice about what the Department will pay  
for. When is the Secretary of State going to make it  
clear to those responsible for tower blocks what is the  
right thing to do and how they will pay for the necessary  
improvements?

**Sajid Javid:** First, the hon. Gentleman is right about  
looking to the Department, among others, for advice.  
That is one reason why we set up an independent expert  
panel to provide more of that advice that can be relied  
on. Secondly, the Government have made their position  
clear on funding: there is no need to wait. If any  
necessary work has been identified, local authorities  
must get on with it, and where they cannot afford it they  
should approach us.

**Housebuilding**

1. **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): What assessment  
   he has made of the adequacy of the current level of  
   housebuilding. [900503]

11. **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): What assessment he  
has made of the adequacy of the current level of  
housebuilding. [900512]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** The level of housebuilding  
has not been matched by demand. Radical reform is  
needed to build new homes now and in the future. Our  
housing White Paper set out how we intend to do that  
and turn around a legacy of decades of not building  
enough homes.

**Mr Speaker:** I think the right hon. Gentleman meant  
it the other way around—that supply had not matched  
the demand. I think that that is what he meant.

**Sajid Javid:** I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I am extremely grateful to the right hon.  
Gentleman.

**Scott Mann:** The Secretary of State will be aware that  
Cornwall recently received £5 million for community-led  
self-build housing. Does he support neighbourhood  
plans that look to provide that facility instead of registered  
social landlord properties, so that Government Members  
can give people not only the ladder, but the spade, the  
spirit level and the trowel, too?

**Sajid Javid:** As you say, Mr Speaker, supply has not  
met demand, and one way of getting that right is to  
have more self-build homes. I understand that some  
255 people have registered in Cornwall Council's area,  
and the Homes and Communities Agency is working  
with igloo Regeneration to deliver 54 plots at Heartlands  
for people in Cornwall. Our recent announcement of  
the home building fund—£3 billion in total—can also  
help.

**Lucy Allan:** Telford is a new town that is about to  
celebrate its 50th anniversary, and it is playing its part in  
tackling the national housing shortage, so I am delighted  
that the housing infrastructure fund has been announced

to encourage new build. Will the Secretary of State  
confirm that the fund will also accept bids for the  
regeneration and renewal of new town infrastructure?

**Sajid Javid:** As we have shown in the housing  
infrastructure fund's prospectus, we have deliberately  
given infrastructure a broad definition, so we would  
welcome bids that would support regeneration. She is  
absolutely right to highlight that infrastructure is often  
the missing bit where we need new homes, which is  
exactly why we launched the fund.

15. [900516] **Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): Numbers  
matter, but so does the quality of new homes. I am sure  
that the Secretary of State will have seen some of the  
terrible stories in the national press, and I have seen  
some awful examples recently in my constituency. Why  
is it that someone can buy goods in a shop and have  
powers of redress, but if someone spends a fortune on a  
new home, they can sometimes struggle for months, if  
not years, to get what they paid for?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight  
the issue of ensuring that if things go wrong, as they  
sometimes do, when people buy new homes, owners do  
get proper redress. Mechanisms are in place, both in the  
private sector and through statutory means, but the  
issue needs to be looked at carefully.

**Fiona Onasanya** (Peterborough) (Lab): I would be  
grateful if the Secretary of State could confirm why the  
number of affordable homes built in the last year fell to  
the lowest level in 24 years.

**Sajid Javid:** I can happily tell the hon. Lady that the  
number of council houses built in the last six years is  
more than double what was built in the previous 13 years.  
Council houses offer an important choice to people in  
terms of affordability. We have seen almost 900,000 homes  
built since 2010, of which more than 300,000 are affordable  
homes.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Will the Secretary  
of State congratulate Exeter's Labour council on building  
more council homes and housing association homes in  
the last 10 years than all the surrounding Conservative  
districts put together? What more can he do to encourage  
those rural councils to provide more homes in their  
market towns and villages, instead of plonking their  
developments on the edge of cities such as Exeter in  
unsustainable urban sprawl?

**Sajid Javid:** I would like to see all councils playing an  
active role in getting more homes built in their area. It is  
to be welcomed when councils work with private partners  
to deliver more homes themselves. To make sure those  
homes are in the right place, local people should be  
involved in formulating the local plan and then the  
neighbourhood plans.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): Balancing  
supply and demand requires successful developers and  
confident buyers. Will my right hon. Friend bring in the  
owners of the freeholds, who are making a misery of  
the lives of people in leasehold houses, and the developers  
who are trying to put things right? People such as  
Adriatic, frankly, look like modern-day robbers.

533

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

534

**Sajid Javid:** I commend my hon. Friend for his work  
in this area to show up the leasehold abuses that take  
place, especially when it comes to buying new houses.  
He will know that we said in the White Paper that we  
will be bringing forward proposals, and I can confirm  
to him that we will be doing so very shortly.

**John Healey** (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): The  
Prime Minister has blamed weak housing policy for the  
Government doing so badly at the election and, now, a  
Government official speaking for the Secretary of State  
said the same thing yesterday, but blaming “selfish”  
Conservative councils who are not telling the truth  
about housing needs in their area. Is it not the truth that  
this is a desperate bid to shift the blame from the  
Secretary of State, who is failing on all fronts on housing?  
With affordable housebuilding now at a 24-year low,  
will he change tack and back Labour's plan to build  
100,000 new genuinely affordable homes? He can even  
offer it to the Prime Minister, and we will back him to  
see it through this House.

**Sajid Javid:** The right hon. Gentleman wants to know  
the truth, and the truth is that, when he was Housing  
Minister at the end of the last Labour Government,  
housing starts fell to their lowest level in almost 100 years  
—that is the truth. Since then, new-build housing starts  
are at a nine-year high. If he supports us on implementing  
the housing White Paper, we can work together.

**Core Cities: Economic Regeneration**

1. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What support  
   his Department is giving to the Core Cities to promote  
   economic regeneration. [900504]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry):** All  
Core Cities have benefited from city deals. Areas covering  
five Core Cities, including Bristol, have also agreed  
devolution deals, which provide funding powers and  
support economic growth for regeneration.

**Kerry McCarthy:** The Core Cities are responsible not  
just for 19 million people and a quarter of the UK's  
economy but for 29% of our trade exports, yet the  
Department for Exiting the European Union has not  
made any approach to the Core Cities to discuss how  
they can be represented during the Brexit negotiations.  
Will the Minister have words with his colleagues in that  
Department and tell them that they really ought to be  
talking to our cities?

**Jake Berry:** Looking at the list of Core Cities, I have  
lived in two and worked in one, so I know a bit about  
them. All I can say is that my right hon. Friend the  
Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has  
written to all Core Cities that have a mayor to say that  
he will meet them over the summer.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): We should be  
proud of the funding for our Core Cities, particularly  
through the devolution deals, but regeneration in the  
north also relies on the funding of our non-Core Cities.  
An important part of that for communities such as Hull  
has been coastal communities funding. Will my hon.  
Friend confirm that the Government remain committed  
to coastal communities funding?

**Jake Berry:** I can confirm to my hon. Friend that we  
will of course deliver on our general election manifesto  
pledge to extend coastal communities funding. I also  
wish to take the opportunity to thank him for the work  
he did when he was doing this job; I am all too aware  
that I am walking in the shoes of a giant.

**Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op):  
Devolution, as promoted by the former Chancellor and  
former Prime Minister, is no doubt dead in the water.  
Few real powers have been devolved and even less fiscal  
devolution has taken place. The only constant theme is  
the year-on-year cuts passed down to our local government  
base—the very base that should be the foundation on  
which devolution is built. When will Ministers bring  
forward a meaningful plan for devolution? When will  
they address the Treasury push for continued cuts to  
our local government base?

**Jake Berry:** Devolution has been one of the great  
successes of this Government and I have been delighted  
to welcome Conservative colleagues as our new metro  
mayors, from James Palmer in Cambridgeshire and  
Peterborough, Ben Houchen in the Tees Valley and of  
course Andy Street in the West Midlands, to Tim Bowles  
in the West of England. The Labour party talked about  
devolution for years, but what did Labour do? Absolutely  
nothing. We are getting on with devolution and we are  
delivering for every region of this country.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): I welcome the  
Minister's announcement about the coastal communities  
fund a moment ago. He will be aware that a major  
regeneration scheme is being developed by North East  
Lincolnshire Council, about which I wrote to the Secretary  
of State a couple of weeks ago. Will the Minister agree  
to meet me and other representatives from the area so  
that we can move this forward very quickly?

**Jake Berry:** Yes.

**City Deals**

1. **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):  
   What discussions he has had with his counterpart in  
   the Scottish Government on proposed city deals since  
   26 June 2017. [900505]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry):** My  
right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is  
leading on Scotland's city deals; he spoke to the Scottish  
Government as recently as last Thursday. No direct  
discussions have recently taken place between Ministers  
from this Department and the Scottish Government on  
this specific issue, although we would welcome such  
talks.

**Alan Brown:** I thank the Minister for that answer.  
Interestingly, the Democratic Unionist party managed  
to get £1 billion out of this Government in just a couple  
of weeks, yet the remaining city deals for Scotland are  
still on the table. Will he speak to the Secretary of State  
for Scotland to get his Government to push these deals  
along? While he is at it, will he consider the Ayrshire  
growth deal as well, because there has so far been a  
failure to have meaningful talks on that?

535

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

536

**Jake Berry:** On the Ayrshire growth deal, my  
understanding is that Ministers met Keith Brown MSP  
and local partners from Ayrshire in January and again  
in April to discuss the priorities for it. I would have  
thought that Scottish National party Members would  
welcome the fact that more than half a billion pounds  
went to Glasgow for its city deal, and that £53 million  
went to Inverness and the highlands and £125 million went  
to Aberdeen for theirs. Why do SNP Members not get  
behind their own cities and city deals, rather than  
sniping from the sidelines?

**Lee Rowley** (North East Derbyshire) (Con): Ashover  
in my constituency is being blighted by planning applications  
that we believe are inappropriate, despite our trying to  
put a neighbourhood plan in place, as the council had  
not put in place a local plan in time. Will the Minister  
be willing to meet me to talk about the challenge that  
Ashover is experiencing, as he will perhaps be able to  
offer some advice about a village caught between a rock  
and a hard place?

**Jake Berry:** It is for my hon. Friend to have a meeting  
with the housing Minister, who I am sure will be happy  
to have such a meeting.

**Mr Speaker:** It was not altogether to do with city  
deals, but nevertheless the hon. Member for North East  
Derbyshire (Lee Rowley) has plunged his feet into the  
water. We appreciate that and wish him well in further  
contributions in the House.

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): Not too far  
from the Scottish city deals are the great prospects for  
one in Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland. The  
Secretary of State was kind enough to meet us just prior  
to the election, and since the election we now have an  
agreement that we will bring forward city deals for  
Northern Ireland. May I ask the Minister to engage as  
soon as possible ministerially, so that we can make sure  
we get the best deal for Belfast and our city regions?

**Jake Berry:** We have already engaged with Belfast on  
the city deals and we look forward to working together  
to ensure that we can deliver on their promise. City  
deals for Northern Ireland are long overdue. They have  
succeeded in England, in Scotland and in Wales; now it  
is Northern Ireland's turn, and we look forward to it.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The reality  
is that the deal with the DUP has seen Northern Ireland  
get £1 billion, which is more than all of Scotland's city  
deals so far put together. The Edinburgh and south-east  
Scotland city regional deal has been delayed and the  
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work,  
Keith Brown, has had meetings cancelled at late notice  
by the UK Government. Will the Minister confirm  
whether the UK Government take Scottish city deals  
seriously and will he meet the ambition of the Ayrshire  
growth deal, the Tay cities deal and the Stirling deal?

**Jake Berry:** We absolutely take the entirety of Scotland's  
ambitious plans very seriously. That is why, as I said  
earlier, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for  
Scotland is leading on this important policy. If the hon.  
Lady thinks that I or my Department can do something  
more, she must let me know.

**Alison Thewliss:** The city deals so far have seen Scottish  
cities' plans short-changed by the UK Government.  
The Scottish Government have put in far more than the  
UK Government have sought to find. If money can be  
found for Northern Ireland—if £1 billion can appear  
overnight—how long will Scottish cities have to wait  
before they get their money?

**Jake Berry:** All the Scottish cities agreed the city  
deals mutually with the Government. Some £523 million  
has gone to Glasgow, £53 million to Inverness and  
Highland, £125 million to the Aberdeen region and,  
with a deal for Edinburgh and other deals on the table, I  
do not think the hon. Lady will have to wait too long.

Homelessness

1. **Ellie Reeves** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab):  
   What assessment he has made of trends in the number  
   of homeless people sleeping rough between 2010 and 2016.  
   [900506]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):**Nobody should ever have to sleep rough. My Department  
co-funded Crisis's recent Housing First report, which  
shows how that approach can work to end rough sleeping  
for those with the most complex needs. We are now  
considering how Housing First can help our manifesto  
commitment to end rough sleeping by 2027.

**Ellie Reeves:** Official figures released by the Minister's  
Department continue to show year-on-year increases in  
the number of rough sleepers since 2010, including a  
3% increase in London alone in the past year. Rough  
sleeping is often linked to mental health issues, so what  
specific steps will his Department take during this  
Parliament to address the mental health crisis among  
rough sleepers?

**Mr Jones:** I thank the hon. Lady for that question  
and welcome her to the House. A number of underlying  
issues keep people on the streets when they are rough  
sleeping, and they certainly include mental health issues.  
Let me give her some insight into what is happening in  
her constituency: there is a social impact bond focusing  
on getting people with underlying mental health issues  
off the streets. I hope that she welcomes that.

**Ben Bradley** (Mansfield) (Con): In my constituency,  
homelessness is raised with me regularly already. Will  
my hon. Friend lay out the progress with the Government's  
homelessness reduction taskforce so that I can allay  
some of those concerns?

**Mr Jones:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question  
and welcome him to the House. He is right that the  
Government are setting up a homelessness reduction  
taskforce in addition to the measures in the Homelessness  
Reduction Act 2017 and the homelessness prevention  
trailblazers being run by the Government as a forerunner  
to the Act's coming into effect. The culture is now starting  
to change and councils are starting to help people far  
earlier as a result of the trailblazers in areas where they  
are taking place.

537

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

538

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): Rough sleeping in Plymouth is on the increase  
and large numbers of those who are sleeping rough  
served our country in the armed forces; they are veterans.  
What discussions has the Minister had with the Ministry  
of Defence about increasing the amount of funding  
going into support for rough sleeping veterans so that  
we can give all our veterans a decent home?

**Mr Jones:** The hon. Gentleman mentions a critical  
area and it is vital that we support veterans who are  
rough sleeping. I run a cross-party working group attended  
by a number of Ministers, including one from the  
Ministry of Defence, and this is certainly a subject that  
we are eagerly trying to address.

**Jo Churchill** (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): We have  
heard about mental health issues and veteran issues, but  
does the Minister agree that another huge problem is  
addiction to both alcohol and drugs? What is he doing  
in that area?

**Mr Jones:** My hon. Friend makes a perceptive point.  
The use of drugs, particularly psychoactive substances  
such as Spice, which seems to be prevalent among rough  
sleepers, is having a very detrimental effect on getting  
people off the street. She will have heard that last week  
the Home Office launched a drug strategy, and we are  
working closely with it on that because we realise how  
critical that is in dealing with the underlying issues and  
making sure that we can help people off the streets.

**Grenfell Tower Fire**

1. **Emma Dent Coad** (Kensington) (Lab): By what  
   date all those who have lost their homes as a result of  
   the Grenfell Tower fire will be permanently re-housed.  
   [900508]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** I can confirm that the first  
new permanent homes will be available very shortly, and  
more are being secured, either in Kensington and Chelsea  
or very close by. In the meantime, good-quality, fully  
furnished temporary accommodation in the local area  
has been offered to every family.

**Emma Dent Coad:** I am sorry; I am not too sure  
about the formalities of this. In some cases, people are  
refusing homes because one single unsuitable offer has  
been made to them. That is absolutely true. I am dealing  
with casework daily, and I am amazed that only  
22 households have been matched with temporary  
accommodation; four have moved in. What on earth is  
going on? There are empty homes all across the borough,  
and they are still not being taken up. People are being  
offered unsuitable homes. Could the Secretary of State  
please say what is happening here?

**Sajid Javid:** First of all, I can tell the hon. Lady that  
over 220 temporary homes have been identified  
and inspected—that is all good-quality, available  
accommodation. She referred to unsuitable offers; she  
should certainly bring those details to me, and we will  
look at them and take this very seriously. There are  
169 families who have received offers; 30 offers of  
temporary accommodation have been accepted, and

nine families have already moved in. As she knows full  
well from talking to her constituents, many families do  
not feel ready to move into temporary accommodation,  
and we will absolutely respect their wishes.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Can  
any of the costs be met by the landlords' insurance?

**Sajid Javid:** That may well be the case further down  
the line, but right now, the absolute priority is to do  
whatever is necessary to help the victims of the Grenfell  
Tower tragedy to get into those homes. All those costs  
will be met by Government wherever necessary.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): Is it not  
absolutely crucial that we increase the amount of social  
housing available in Kensington and Chelsea? The  
Government have announced that 68 properties provided  
by Berkeley will be made available as social housing. Is  
it not true that negotiations were under way to provide those  
homes as social housing under a section 106 agreement  
before the Grenfell fire? So where are the extra new  
homes coming from?

**Sajid Javid:** First, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's  
re-election as Chair of the Select Committee on  
Communities and Local Government. I agree that we  
want more social homes—and not just in Kensington  
and Chelsea; we want to make sure that that choice is  
offered across the country. With regard to the 68 homes  
in the Kensington Row development, to which I think  
he was referring, my understanding was that they were  
originally planned to be affordable homes, not social  
homes, so they will be additional. Despite that, given  
what has happened and the need for social homes in  
Kensington and Chelsea, we should do more.

**Supported Housing: Funding**

1. **Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): When he  
   plans to publish his Department's response to the  
   consultation on funding for supported housing. [900509]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):**Developing a sustainable funding model for supported  
housing is a priority. We welcome the input into our  
recent consultation. We are now carefully taking stock  
of the joint report by the Communities and Local  
Government Committee and the Select Committee on  
Work and Pensions on supported housing, and we will  
set out further details of our plans in the autumn.

**Jessica Morden:** There are 38,500 people in supported  
accommodation in Wales, and landlords say that decisions  
about future developments are being delayed due to  
uncertainty about future funding. Will the Minister  
confirm that any proposals, devolved or not, will properly  
fund current and future needs in Wales, especially given  
Wales's ageing population?

**Mr Jones:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question.  
Nobody is under any illusions about how important  
supported housing and its provision are to all our  
constituents. That is why we have confirmed that we will  
exempt supported housing from the local housing allowance  
cap until 2019, by which time we will come forward with

539

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

540

a suitable solution. As I say, we are looking to bring  
forward our plans in the autumn, and we are taking our  
time to make sure that those plans work and are right,  
so that we bring forward that supply of supported  
housing. In England, we are putting £400 million in  
capital funding behind that, to bring forward new units.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): Will  
my hon. Friend update the House on what more is  
being done to support the victims of domestic abuse in  
supported housing?

**Mr Jones:** Domestic abuse is a critical issue across the  
country. We want to eradicate it, but we must understand  
that we need to provide safe refuge provision for people who  
do end up in that very difficult position. We announced  
earlier this year that we are supporting 76 projects to  
create 2,200 bed spaces to support 19,000 victims across  
the country.

**Local Authorities: Financial Support**

1. **Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): What discussions  
   he has had with local authority leaders on financial support  
   for local authorities since the Government announced  
   their policy on the 100% business rates retention.  
   [900510]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):**The Government are committed to delivering the manifesto  
pledge to continue to give local authorities greater  
control over the money they raise. We will open a  
conversation with local government over the next few  
months about the best way to achieve this.

**Imran Hussain:** Plans for the 100% retention of business  
rates fell at the general election and were not introduced  
in the Queen's Speech. Will the Minister explain whether  
the Government still plan to legislate for 100% retention?  
What should already cash-strapped local authorities do  
in the interim as the revenue support grant is phased  
out?

**Mr Jones:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point.  
As I said, the Government are committed to delivering  
our manifesto pledge to give local authorities greater control  
over the money they raise. To give councils certainty, we  
have given an unprecedented four-year settlement, which  
97% of local authorities have taken up. That does not  
end until 2019-20, during which time we will bring  
forward further proposals, which we will work with  
local government to achieve.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): If Barnet  
got the same Government support as Camden, it would  
probably be a realistic option for Barnet to reduce  
council tax to zero. Will the Minister look at the allocation  
of funding between outer and inner London to give  
boroughs such as Barnet a fairer share of resources?

**Mr Jones:** My right hon. Friend raises an important  
point. After more than 10 years without the funding  
formula being looked at, many areas across the country  
feel a number of challenges, with demographic and  
service pressures that are encountered more in some  
places than in others. I assure her that we will look at  
these matters carefully through the fair funding review.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Before  
the election, the Government had a plan and a timetable  
for business rates retention. We know the revenue support  
grant is going in 2020. In the absence of legislation in  
the Queen's Speech, I have asked the Government five  
times how they will introduce measures to fill the financial  
black hole. Can I assume from the Minister's answer  
to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford East  
(Imran Hussain) that the previous measures in the  
Local Government Finance Bill, and the timetable, have  
now been ditched? Will he now give absolute certainty  
to local councils? What precisely will be in place by  
2020 when the RSG goes?

**Mr Jones:** I think this is the sixth time that I have  
answered the hon. Gentleman's question; his question  
has been put with a considerable amount of faux rage  
each time, although it is an important issue. I say to him  
again that we are absolutely committed to what we said  
in our manifesto: we will give local authorities greater  
control over the money they raise. When his Government  
were in power, they only ever gave local authorities a  
year's certainty—a one-year settlement. We have given  
a four-year settlement, which 97% of councils have  
taken up. That enables us to have time to bring forward  
a sensible solution that works for local government, and  
we will work with local government to deliver that.

**Housebuilding**

1. **Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): What  
   steps his Department is taking to support the building  
   of high-quality, high-density housing. [900511]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** In February's housing White  
Paper, the Government set out a plan for high-quality,  
high-density housing. The Government plan to implement  
this through changes to the national planning policy  
framework later this year.

**Neil Parish:** Our Conservative manifesto committed  
to supporting new high-quality housing

“like mansion blocks, mews houses and terraced streets.”

How are the Government working to fulfil this promise  
and to build housing that is attractive, dense and popular  
with the public?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is right: it is about not  
just the quantity of housing, but the quality too. That is  
why, for example, getting local people engaged in  
neighbourhood plans is so important, and it is why we  
will be bringing forward the changes that we set out in  
the housing White Paper.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I asked the  
former Housing Minister back in April what the  
Government were doing to protect homeowners following  
the bogus homes scandal, which saw people spending  
significant sums, only to find that properties were unfinished,  
that basic plumbing was not working and that wiring  
was left unsafe. That was not a unique problem: Shelter  
has found that half of all new build buyers report a  
major problem on moving in. The former Minister said  
that an announcement was imminent, but there was  
nothing in the Conservative manifesto, the Queen's  
Speech or the Secretary of State's response to my hon.

541

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

542

Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner)  
earlier. When will the Government act to protect buyers  
of new build properties?

**Sajid Javid:** Of course it is very important—we had a  
similar question earlier—to make sure that people buying  
new properties get exactly what they believed they were  
purchasing and, where that is not the case, that they  
receive help in putting things right. There are already  
procedures in place, and we are looking to see what  
more can be done.

**Private Rented Sector**

1. **Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): What assessment  
   he has made of the effect of borough-wide licensing  
   schemes for private rented sector landlords on standards  
   and safety in that sector. [900513]

**The Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government (Alok Sharma):** Licensing can be  
an effective tool where it is targeted at delivering improved  
standards and safety in the private rented sector for  
areas suffering from serious problems. As the right hon.  
Gentleman will know, in April 2015 further conditions  
for applying selective licensing were introduced.

**Stephen Timms:** Newham Council introduced the  
first borough-wide private rented sector licensing in 2013.  
Last week, the council applied to renew the scheme for  
a further five years. It has been very successful, enabling  
the council, working with agencies such as Her Majesty's  
Revenue and Customs, to concentrate resources on the  
small number of private landlords causing problems.  
Some 81% of Newham residents say it has been effective.  
Can the Minister reassure me that renewal of the scheme  
will get the go-ahead?

**Alok Sharma:** I can certainly reassure the right hon.  
Gentleman that the scheme will be considered on its merits  
and in accordance with whether it meets the strategy  
requirements in part 3 of the Housing Act 2004, which  
was, of course, introduced under a Labour Government.

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): In Bath, we have a high  
number of family homes that have been turned into  
student accommodation, often with very low housing  
standards, and students take them up because they have  
no choice. In the light of the Grenfell disaster, will the  
Minister ensure that student safety is protected, by  
encouraging councils to include compulsory electrical  
safety checks as part of these licensing schemes?

**Alok Sharma:** We want all landlords, whether they  
provide student accommodation or otherwise, to keep  
their tenants safe. As the hon. Lady will know, the  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
is looking at issues related to electrical safety.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): The  
private rented sector has the poorest quality housing in  
my constituency. It is unregulated, and it needs looking  
at. I would very much welcome Manchester having a  
borough-wide licensing scheme like the one in Newham.  
I ask Ministers to take this issue very seriously, before  
we see safety concerns in the private rented sector as  
well.

**Alok Sharma:** If Manchester, or indeed any other  
area, wants to come forward with such proposals, they  
should make them known to the DCLG, and we will  
look at them on their merits.

Waste Collection

1. **Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con):  
   What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State  
   for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on ensuring  
   that local councils meet legislative requirements on  
   waste collection. [900514]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):** There is  
close collaboration between my Department and Ministers  
at DEFRA on waste collection issues. Ultimately, it is  
for local councils to determine when collections take  
place, but in doing so I would strongly urge them to  
consider the wishes of local people.

**Chris Davies:** Prior to the recent local elections, and  
against the wishes of local people, Powys County Council  
took the decision to reduce waste collection from fortnightly  
to three-weekly. What more can my hon. Friend to do  
ensure that local people's views are taken into account  
on waste issues to prevent potential health hazards?

**Mr Jones:** My hon. Friend has been a champion in  
the House on this issue. As he knows, it is a devolved  
matter in Wales. Ultimately, it is for local councils to  
decide on the frequency of collections. In England, we  
have done a great deal to proactively support councils  
to respond to the wishes of local people on this issue. I  
would say to my hon. Friend that this is the service  
people associate most with their local council, and the  
council should be mindful of the fact that local people  
should certainly be consulted before any changes are  
made.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
Rather than lecturing councils about their legislative  
requirements, would the Minister like to come up to  
Barrow and Furness—or so many other councils,  
particularly across the north of England—to see the  
scale of the cuts that these councils are having to  
implement and the near impossibility of being able to  
balance a budget in these situations, and provide more  
help?

**Mr Jones:** The hon. Gentleman highlights the mess  
that the public finances were left in when the Labour  
party left government in 2010, and this Government  
have been picking up the pieces of that for the past  
seven years. Unlike Labour, we have given a four-year  
settlement to local authorities—97% of authorities have  
taken that up—to give them more space and time to  
plan to change services to reflect the changing financial  
environment.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We are running late, but I want to  
take one last question from a new Member—Darren  
Jones.

543

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

544

New Homes for Social Rent

1. **Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): What  
   assessment he has made of the trend in the number of  
   new homes available for social rent since 2010. [900515]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** I welcome the hon. Gentleman  
to his place. Since 2010 we have delivered nearly 330,000  
affordable homes, including over 120,000 homes for  
social rent. Our priorities are to boost housing supply  
and to build more affordable homes to rent and to buy.

**Darren Jones:** Tens of thousands of Bristolians are  
waiting for a council house and many more are stuck in  
expensive, insecure and inadequate private sector housing.  
Many of these tenants are young families who feel  
disempowered and stuck in a system that does not care.  
Will the Secretary of State visit my constituency in  
Bristol to see at first hand how his supposed radical  
reformisfailingmyconstituents who arein often damp,  
inadequate and insecure housing?

**Sajid Javid:** We set out in our manifesto—again, I  
talked about this very recently at the Local Government  
Association conference—our ambition to help local  
authorities that have ambitions to build more council  
homes, so if that is what Bristol wants, then the Mayor  
of Bristol should approach me.

Topical Questions

T1. [900526] **Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con):  
If he will make a statement on his departmental  
responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** The ongoing response to the  
Grenfell tragedy has understandably dominated my  
Department's work for the past few weeks, and it will  
remain a priority in the months and years ahead, but we  
have not let up on our wider work. We have launched  
our £2.3 billion housing infrastructure fund, we have  
introduced the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Relief  
from Non-Domestic Rates) Bill, and later this week we  
will set out further details on our plan to get more  
homes built in the right places.

**Mr Speaker:** I see that the hon. Member for Kettering  
(Mr Hollobone) has beetled away from his seat and  
looks as though he is about to exit the Chamber. I  
would have called him at topical questions if he were  
standing, but I will not if he is not. Anyway, he has got  
the public information announcement, for which I am  
sure he is duly grateful.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** As you know, Mr Speaker, in  
Lincolnshire we have some wonderful coastal resorts.  
They trip off the tongue as a litany of sun and fun:  
Cleethorpes, Mablethorpe, Skegness. Indeed, Mr Speaker,  
when you go on your holidays on Thursday, do not go  
to Italy and France—come to bracing Skegness. Can  
my right hon. Friend promise to use the coastal communities  
fund to promote all-round tourism and, after Brexit,  
match the £143 million we receive from the European  
regional development fund for these resorts?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend rightly highlights the  
importance of all our coastal communities, including,  
of course, those in Lincolnshire, many of which I had  
the pleasure of visiting during the recent general election  
campaign. I can assure him that we continue to use the  
coastal communities fund, and whatever other resources  
we have available, to help promote those areas.

**Yvonne Fovargue** (Makerfield) (Lab): Does the Secretary  
of State agree with the Conservative leader of Warwickshire  
County Council, who also leads on community welfare  
for the Local Government Association, that fining councils  
and withholding money for delayed discharges will  
exacerbate the social care crisis, and has he spoken to  
the Health Secretary about these plans?

**Sajid Javid:** Of course I have spoken to the Health  
Secretary, and indeed I spoke to the leader of Warwickshire  
County Council only last week. I think there is a very  
broad understanding that with regard to combating  
and reducing delayed transfers of care, there is a role to  
play for local authorities and for the NHS.

T3. [900528] **Johnny Mercer** (Plymouth, Moor View)

(Con): Plymouth is leading the way on innovation in  
social care. The work between the local authority and  
care provider has broken new ground. What more can  
the Government do to support local authorities that  
are working so hard to meet social care needs in places  
such as Plymouth?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Mr Marcus Jones):**I am pleased to hear about the good work in Plymouth.  
My Department works closely with the Department of  
Health to promote joined-up working across health and  
social care, including capturing good examples of innovation  
across the country, through the better care fund.

T2. [900527] **Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and

Hillsborough) (Lab): More than 50% of firesin people's  
homes have an electrical source of ignition, and the  
Department set up a working group last August to look  
at electrical safety in the private rented sector. Does the  
Secretary of State agree with me and others, including  
London Fire Brigade, ElectricalSafetyFirstandShelter,  
that it is time for a more preventive approach to electrical  
fires, and that mandatory five-year electrical safety tests  
should be introduced as a matter of urgency in the  
private rented sector?

**The Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government (Alok Sharma):** As the hon.  
Ladymaybeaware,aworkinggroupwithintheDepartment  
for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking  
at precisely those matters. In the light of the Grenfell  
fire, the Prime Minister has made it clear that it should  
bring forward its work and recommendations.

T4. [900529] **Alan Mak** (Havant) (Con): The Guinness  
Partnership is reviewing fire safety measures in its three  
high-rise buildings in Havant. If it concludes that new  
sprinklers are required, will the Minister join me in  
calling on private landlords to take responsibility and  
meet the cost of installing those sprinklers?

545

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

546

**Alok Sharma:** Obviously, the Guinness Partnership  
will need to determine,with the local fire service, what is  
needed to keep those properties safe. As the Secretary  
of State has made absolutely clear, where work is necessary  
to ensure the fire safety of social housing, a lack of  
resources should not prevent it from going ahead.

T9. [900534] **Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South)

(Lab): Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating  
Nottingham Community Housing Association, which  
has been recognised by the Almshouse Association for  
its refurbishment of the William Woodsend memorial  
homes in my constituency? Will he also listen to NCHA  
and give it the certainty to enable future investment by  
dropping his plans to cut housing benefit for supported  
and sheltered tenants?

**Sajid Javid:** I join the hon. Lady in commending  
Nottingham Community Housing Association and so  
many other housing associations across the country on  
their work. I think that the housing association sector  
welcomes our provision of record funding and of new  
flexibility so that it can do more of what it does.

T5. [900530] **Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire)

(Con): What steps has the Department taken to provide  
safeand legal spaces in which Travellers can reside, instead  
of them having to go on really nice green spaces in  
Oakwood in Derbyshire, which they leave in a terrible  
mess?

**Alok Sharma:** I know from my own constituency that  
unauthorised encampments can cause distress for local  
communities. The Government are absolutely committed  
to reducing the number of unauthorised sites by providing  
affordable, good-quality accommodation for Travellers.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): Will the inquiry into  
electoral conduct take full cognisance of the superb  
all-party report written by the previous Deputy Speaker,  
Natascha Engel, which has, sadly, been rebuffed by  
successive leaders of parties on both sides of the House?

**Sajid Javid:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that the  
inquiry, which was announced by the Prime Minister  
and will be led by the Committee on Standards in  
Public Life, should take account of all information. We  
heard during last week's debate how many hon. Members  
and candidates suffered racism and other forms of  
abuse during the general election. I also suffered that. I  
am sure that everyone in this House agrees that racism  
has no place in our society.

T6. [900531] **Mr Gary Streeter** (South West Devon)

(Con): What is the current status of the Devon and  
Somerset devolution bid? Do they still need to have a  
directly elected mayor to get the full devolution  
package, and will the Minister please meet the leaders  
of Devon and Somerset councils and me this autumn  
to discuss the way forward?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government (Jake Berry):** Our  
manifesto makes it clear that there will be no requirement  
for mayors in rural counties. Devon and Somerset have  
notto date submitted any combined authority proposals,  
but I look forward to meeting my hon. Friend and his  
council leader in due course.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): A growing  
number of Grenfell survivors are being placed in  
budget hotels in my constituency as the central London  
hotels fill up for the tourist season. Despite their being  
unsuitable for long stays, especially for young families,  
they are being booked by the month. That gives the lie  
to the argument that the Government have suitable  
accommodation ready—not temporary or unsuitable,  
but permanent accommodation. Will the Secretary of  
State ask Kensington and Chelsea to use some of the  
£274 million in its reserves to buy a couple of hundred  
homes and make sure that those people have decent houses?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman will know that  
money is not the issue. We have already made it absolutely  
clear that we will do whatever it takes to find the victims  
of Grenfell Tower permanent homes. That is exactly  
what we are doing, but we will be led by the victims  
themselves, at their pace, on what they need.

T7. [900532] **Kit Malthouse** (North West Hampshire)  
(Con):Overton,OakleyandWhitchurchinmyconstituency  
have produced really ambitious neighbourhood plans  
with generous housing targets, but those communities  
are now concerned about the infrastructure investment  
required to make the housing developments happen.  
What can the Minister do to help?

A**lok Sharma:** I commend my hon. Friend's constituents  
for putting together neighbourhood plans—a great  
innovation that this Government introduced. In terms  
of infrastructure, I encourage him to get his local planning  
authorities to bid for the £2.3 billion housing infrastructure  
fund that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State  
announced earlier this month.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): When I was  
growing up, I had the security of the roof of a council  
flat over my head. I wonder what the Secretary of State  
would say to the 11-year-old boy in my constituency  
who pulled me aside after a classroom visit just last  
week because he, his mother and his two siblings are  
living in one room in a hostel, as they have been for  
more than a year. What message does the Secretary of  
State have for such children in my constituency who no  
longer have the security of a decent place to live?

**Sajid Javid:** My message is that successive Governments  
have not built enough homes of all types, and, if we are  
goingto do that, we should all unite around the housing  
White Paper.

T8. [900533] **Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Will the  
Secretary of State join me in commending excellent  
Cheltenham homeless charities Cheltenham Open  
Door and P3 for their compassionate and, above all,  
early intervention, which is turning lives around in my  
constituency?

**Mr Marcus Jones:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right  
to highlight the excellent work that is being done by the  
charitiesthathementionsinCheltenham. Earlyintervention  
is absolutely critical. That is why doing things earlier to  
prevent people from becoming homeless is the bedrock  
of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Already,  
through the homelessness prevention trailblazers that  
were the forerunners of that Act, the culture among the  
local authorities involved is definitely changing towards  
prevention.

547

Oral Answers

17 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

548

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): I have  
regularly raised my concerns about the safety of the  
rapid conversion of family homes in my constituency  
into houses in multiple occupation. In view of the  
Grenfell disaster, do the Government have any plans to  
issue newguidance to local planning authorities, particularly  
about the safety of such conversions?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that.  
There are many lessons to learn from the Grenfell  
tragedy, some of which will come from the public inquiry.  
The expert panel on fire safety has already made  
recommendations, and if they recommend anything  
urgent, we will implement it. I am also looking to see  
what more we can do regarding building regulations  
and enforcement.

T10. [900535] **Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con):  
What changes to the national planning policy framework  
are planned to implement the Conservative manifesto  
commitment to strengthen protection for ancient  
woodlands?

**Sajid Javid:** We will be bringing forward proposals  
very shortly to implement what is in the housing White  
Paper, under which ancient woodland will receive the  
same protection as green belt.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): I thank the  
Minister for the northern powerhouse, the hon. Member  
for Rossendale and Darwen (Jake Berry), for visiting  
New Ferry in my constituency, where the House will  
remember there was recently a terrible explosion. As a  
result of that meeting, the leader of the council in  
Wirral, Phil Davies, has written to the Minister. May I  
ask him to expedite a reply to that letter?

**Jake Berry:** No one could visit the scene of the  
disaster in New Ferry and talk to the residents without  
realising the seriousness of the explosion that took  
placesomemonthsago. Following my meeting, I received  
a letter from Phil Davies. A response will be going out  
later today, dealing with the queries he raised.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Can the Secretary of  
State tell me what he will do to ensure that Bradford  
Council builds on the brownfield sites that it has identified  
before it starts concreting over and building on greenfield  
sites in the green belt in my constituency?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend makes a very important  
point. As we made clear in the housing White Paper, we  
expect brownfield sites always to be the priority to meet  
our housing need. That is certainly what I would expect  
to see from Bradford.

**John Grogan** (Keighley) (Lab): It was not entirely  
wise for the Minister for the northern powerhouse last  
Monday to come across the Pennines from his Lancashire  
constituency and tell the people of Yorkshire that, in his  
words, they could not have “full Yorkshire devolution”.  
Are not those decisions best made in God's own county,  
not in Whitehall and certainly not in Lancashire, with  
its very different geography and the dominance of  
Manchester and Liverpool?

**Jake Berry:** As a proud Lancastrian, it is not for me,  
nor is it for Government, to tell Yorkshire what devolution  
deal it should have. However, I gently point out that

in 2015, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield  
asked for powers from the Government and we gave  
them to them; they asked for new money from the  
Government and we gave it to them; and they asked to  
have an election next May and we gave it to them. When  
will the people of south Yorkshire learn to take yes for  
an answer?

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Kettering  
Borough Council, of which I am a member, provides  
specialist housing advice to those in financial difficulties  
to prevent homelessness in the first place. It is working  
closely with local housing associations to bring forward  
a record number of new homes for social rent. Is that  
not exactly the right approach?

**Mr Marcus Jones:** I commend the work that Kettering  
Borough Council is doing. In my experience, where a  
local authority is preventing homelessness, it is doing  
very much those types of things, particularly helping  
people to deal with financial challenges through things  
such as budgeting. It is certainly good to hear that  
Kettering is bringing forward a significant number of  
affordable homes that residents in Kettering will benefit  
from.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): We heard earlier  
from the Under-Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government, the hon. Member for Rossendale  
and Darwen (Jake Berry) about coastal communities,  
but Dawdon, Easington Colliery, Blackhall and Horden  
in my constituency are also former coalfield communities  
that have suffered terrible levels of under-investment  
since the pits were closed under a previous Tory  
Government. Will the Minister meet me and the Coalfields  
Regeneration Trust to see what can be done to address  
those problems?

**Jake Berry:** It is not just for the Government to  
support our coastal communities. I encourage all Members  
across the House to visit the fantastic Great British coastline.  
I will, of course, happily meet the hon. Gentleman and  
representatives of his constituency to work out what  
more the coastal communities fund can do for him.

**Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): In my Cheadle  
constituency, Woodford neighbourhood forum is drawing  
up its local plan. However, there are concerns that the  
Greater Manchester spatial framework will override it.  
What assurances can my hon. Friend give neighbourhood  
forums that their plans will be given appropriate  
consideration?

**Alok Sharma:** As the Secretary of State reiterated, we  
made a commitment in the housing White Paper to  
protect the green belt. I cannot comment specifically on  
the plans my hon. Friend talks about, but I emphasise  
that plan makers need to consult their communities,  
especially in neighbourhood forums. Once a neighbourhood  
plan has been brought into force, it is part of the  
strategic development plan of an area.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I will come to the points of order  
because there are a number today relating to one matter  
that seems to me to contain a degree of urgency, so I  
will treat of it very soon. Just before I do, I have a short  
statement to make myself.

549

17 JULY 2017

550

**Speaker's Statement**

3.38 pm

**Mr Speaker:** On Thursday 13 July, the text of the  
European Union (Withdrawal) Bill was available through  
a tweet before the Bill was presented in the House.  
Points of order were raised about the Bill being available  
online before it was available to Members. An immediate  
investigation was carried out.

A flaw in the publishing process within the House of  
CommonsservicemeantthattheBilltextwasinadvertently  
available on a live parliamentary web server before the  
Bill was presented. A link to the text was circulated on  
social media just before 11 am. Immediate action has  
been taken to amend the publishing process to ensure  
that this cannot happen again. No one outside the  
House of Commons service bears any responsibility for  
this mistake.

This was a serious incident and I have been assured  
that the required changes have been made to strengthen  
the Bill publishing arrangements. I hope that that assuages  
the concern of right hon. and hon. Members.

Points of Order

3.39 pm

**Edward Miliband** (Doncaster North) (Lab): On a  
point of order, Mr Speaker. May I seek your advice on  
theurgentmatteroftheHS2routeandtheannouncements  
due to be made by the Transport Secretary, which will  
affect millions of people? The Secretary of State began  
his consultation with an oral statement last November,  
and there had been an expectation that he would announce  
his final decisions today in an oral statement; indeed,  
parts of the media were briefed to that effect. All the  
indications now are that the news will be sneaked out in  
awrittenstatementanytimenow.Thisisagrossdiscourtesy  
and adds insult to injury for my constituents. I seek  
your advice, Mr Speaker, about how we can get the  
Transport Secretary to come to the House and show  
some accountability on this issue.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman  
for his point of order. As others wish to raise points of  
order relating to the same subject, I will take them—or  
at least a number of them—and then respond.

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):  
Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your  
advice, because today the Government have announced—  
they have certainly been all over the airwaves—£6.6 billion  
of contracts on HS2. When such a large amount of  
taxpayers' money is being spent, it seems to me that the  
Minister should come to the House and make a statement.  
I appreciate that the urgent question, the statement and  
the business on the Order Paper today are equally  
important, but I wonder whether you could extend the  
sitting of the House, Mr Speaker, and allow us to have a  
statement from the Minister, in the light of what has  
happened with contractors before, CH2M having  
withdrawn from a £17 million contract because of a  
lack of due diligence and conflicts of interest. We need  
to look at these contractors, because one contractor has  
major project overruns and has written off millions of  
pounds, two contractors have pulled out of other public  
service contracts and one is having financial problems  
and restructuring. I would therefore seek a statement  
urgently from the Minister.

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab):  
Further to the point of order raised by my right hon.  
Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward  
Miliband), Mr Speaker. I would add that it is not just  
his constituents but voters across South Yorkshire and  
beyond who are affected by the decisions related to  
HS2. Not only that, but this is the latest in a long line of  
actions by the Government who are demonstrating an  
unwillingness to make themselves properly available for  
scrutiny by the House. I wonder what you can do,  
Mr Speaker, to improve the situation and encourage the  
Government to stand up and do their job properly.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): Further to that  
point of order, Mr Speaker. On the Order Paper today  
we have the High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe)  
Bill, which, as it points out, relates to Fradley Wood in  
Staffordshire, in my constituency. I have two farms on  
which it was announced there will be quarrying, and  
that is before we have even had First Reading. I have

551

Points of Order

17 JULY 2017

Points of Order

552

elderly residents who are being told that their homes  
will be taken away from them. We have already heard  
from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham  
and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) about cost overruns. I too,  
sadly, think it is outrageous that this major item of  
public expenditure, which is affecting my constituents  
and those of many others, is not being reflected by a  
statement here today.

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I am saving the right hon. Gentleman  
up. He is too precious to waste at an early point in our  
proceedings.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): Further  
to the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend  
the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband),  
which I entirely support, Mr Speaker. This is a major  
announcement affecting my constituency and many  
others. It is not an HS2 recommendation; it is a Government  
decision on a previous recommendation. The Government  
have always come to the House before with an oral  
statement. While we can ask for an urgent question  
tomorrow, by that time there will have been public  
debate on the matter. This House should have the first  
opportunity to debate it.

**Sir Kevin Barron:** Further to that point of order,  
Mr Speaker. Many of my constituents have taken part  
in the consultation on the re-routing of HS2, over many  
months now, and we do not know if their voices have  
been heard. There has been no publication of the  
consultation, and we are now threatened with a decision  
that is going to wreck over 100 homes in my constituency  
and many jobs, with different employers. It is absolutely  
outrageous that my constituents have been treated with  
contempt by Ministers, who are not prepared to come  
to this House, tell us what they have spent all the money  
on and come to logical decisions on this matter, as  
opposed to hiding behind making a written statement,  
we think sometime today.

**Mr Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover) (Lab): Further to that  
point of order, Mr Speaker. As you know, because you  
have already allocated an Adjournment debate to two  
colleagues—my right hon. Friends the Members for  
Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) and for Rother  
Valley (Sir Kevin Barron)—and because you have heard  
us, and me in particular, say it, this possibly £80 billion  
scheme means that a lot of houses in my constituency  
are going to be demolished; that roads are going to go  
straight through a development that has only just taken  
place; and that in Derbyshire there will be a slow track,  
dawdling its way to Sheffield and beyond, and then a  
fast track going to Meadowhall. This is a very important  
matter, and it should be debated at length, because it is  
going to cost the taxpayer a small fortune. As you know,  
Mr Speaker, the Sheffield line could be electrified all the  
way to London, and the trains could get to London a  
lot more quickly for a lot less money.

This is an outrage, and that is why I have raised the  
matter today, along with my right hon. and hon. Friends.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to right hon. and hon.  
Members for their points of order. What I will say in  
response is this.

First, my understanding is that the written ministerial  
statement has now been issued. There was some speculation  
on when it would be issued, and I am advised that it has  
been. Secondly, I am not in a position to require a  
Minister to come to the House today to make a statement;  
however, it is comparatively unusual for Members on  
both sides of the House, in unison, to raise such a  
concern, and to make, to all intents and purposes,  
exactly similar requests for a statement.

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I will come to the hon. Gentleman.

In the circumstances, the Secretary of State is bound  
to hear of these concerns within a matter of minutes. If  
the right hon. Gentleman wanted to come to the House  
today to make a statement, I would certainly be very  
happy to facilitate him.

Finally, the hon. Member for Sheffield—

**Mr Betts:** South East.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sheffield South  
East (Mr Betts)—the former hon. Member for Sheffield,  
Attercliffe—said that an urgent question could be applied  
for tomorrow, but by then all sorts of briefing would  
have taken place. I am afraid it is not within the power  
of the Speaker to reverse time. I cannot do anything  
about that; I can only deal with the situation as it  
evolves. What I will say, however, is that if no statement  
is forthcoming from the Minister, it will be perfectly  
open to Members to do their best to secure parliamentary  
time and attention tomorrow. It may be that such an  
exploration would take place at some length, and it may  
be that, faced with such a scenario, a Minister might  
think it prudent and judicious to anticipate the difficulty  
and offer the statement today instead. I do not know—we  
shall have to see—but I am on the side of the House in  
wanting Ministers to be accountable to it. That seems  
pretty clear to me.

**Andy McDonald** *rose—*

**Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough)  
(Lab) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I beg the hon. Lady's pardon. Point of  
order, Mr Andy McDonald, briefly.

**Andy McDonald:** Further to that point of order,  
Mr Speaker. Has there been any discussion between you  
and the Secretary of State about whether the further  
reports and documents that are scheduled to be published  
today should have been delayed until the Secretary of  
State was before the House tomorrow, if at all possible?

**Mr Speaker:** The short answer is no. There have been  
no such discussions, and it would not automatically be  
expected that there should be. Let me simply say to the  
hon. Gentleman that I have not been advised of any  
revised plans. We will leave it there for now.

**Gill Furniss:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On  
27 June, I put a parliamentary question to the Government  
asking when they would release the report on product  
safety produced by a working group from the Department

553

Points of Order

17 JULY 2017

Points of Order

554

*[Gill Furniss]*

for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. I am sure  
you will agree that, given the situation in which we find  
ourselves, particularly after the Grenfell Tower disaster,  
it is crucial for the House to be kept up to date with the  
progress of the report.

On 3 July, I received the response that an answer was  
being prepared and would be sent in due course. On  
12 July, I asked another parliamentary question pursuing  
the matter, for named-day answer today. May I ask you,  
Mr Speaker, to kindly ensure that the Government  
make their response known as a matter of urgency?

**Mr Speaker:** It is highly undesirable for questions  
that have been tabled in good faith and an orderly  
manner some time before the recess not to receive an  
answer by the time of the recess. That is not some new  
development articulated at this moment by me from the  
Chair; it is a long-established and respected practice  
that Ministers try, to put it bluntly, to clear the backlog.  
It has customarily been expected that the Leader of the  
House would be a chaser after progress on such matters.  
I very much hope that the hon. Lady will receive a  
substantive reply to her written question or questions  
before the House rises for the summer recess. That  
would seem to me to be a matter of proper procedure,  
and indeed of courtesy from one colleague to another.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Further to  
that point of order, Mr Speaker. The working group to  
which my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside  
and Hillsborough (Gill Furniss) refers was set up following  
a serious fire in my constituency last August. We were  
promised at least its first report before last Christmas,  
but we are still waiting. If we do not get it this week,  
and if we do not get a clear statement from the Government,  
we will be waiting, both in the case of my constituents  
and that of Grenfell Tower, until the autumn. The  
urgency cannot go unremarked by the Minister. Anything  
you can do to assist with that would be most welcome.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman has transmitted his  
concerns through me to the Government, who will very  
quickly hear that he is on the war path on the matter,  
which might yield a positive outcome for him over the  
next 48 or 72 hours. It is up to him to judge whether,  
having heard or not heard anything from Ministers, he  
wishes to find ways of trying to secure attention to the  
issue on the Floor of the House before we rise for the  
summer recess.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. I would have given advance notice of  
this point of order, but I thought that we were having  
points of order a little later. Last week, after meeting  
trade union representatives from Rolls-Royce outside  
Bristol, I attempted to table a written question asking  
whether the Government are seeking to stay in the  
European Aviation Safety Agency post Brexit. My question  
was rejected, on the grounds that a similar question had  
been asked back in January and nothing had changed.  
The answer to that question had been that we cannot  
pre-empt the negotiations. Today I would like clarity on  
two points. First, how will we know that nothing has  
changed if we are not allowed to table questions about  
this? Secondly, I have been told that I cannot ask the  
question again until the end of the Brexit negotiations,  
which seems absolutely ludicrous.

**Mr Speaker:** Well, it strikes me as a very rum business  
indeed. I hope that it will be possible for the hon. Lady  
to receive some satisfaction. My strong advice to her is  
that she should make the very short journey from here  
to the Table Office and seek advice, because I am quite  
sure that it will be possible to achieve a satisfactory  
outcome. Forgive me for making this point again, but I  
do make it again: the hon. Lady effectively refers to  
being denied on grounds of repetition. Repetition is not  
a novel phenomenon in the House of Commons. I think  
that we will leave it there for today.

555

17 JULY 2017 Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions 556

Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions

3.53 pm

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD) *(Urgent  
Question):* To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign  
and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement  
on what steps are being taken to intervene in the anticipated  
execution of 14 people in Saudi Arabia.

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** I  
thank the right hon. Gentleman for his urgent question.  
Media reporting has suggested that 14 men could be  
facing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia for attending  
protests in the eastern province of the country in 2012.  
We are looking into the details of the reports and  
seeking urgent clarity from the Saudi authorities, both  
in Riyadh and here in London. I have been in contact  
with the ambassador for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,  
who I know will come back to me with information  
when he has it.

We regularly make this Government's opposition to  
the death penalty clear—we are firmly opposed to  
it—and we raise such concerns at all levels and at all  
appropriate opportunities. The Saudis are aware of our  
stance on their human rights, and this position is a  
matter of public record. The Prime Minister most recently  
raised this during her visit in April this year.

**Tom Brake:** I thank the Minister for his helpful  
response. Evidence points to Saudi Arabia taking the  
final steps before executing up to 14 people, including at  
least two who were juveniles at the time of their alleged  
offences and were convicted on the strength of confessions  
obtained through the use of torture. Our Prime Minister  
has highlighted the UK's “long-term and historic  
relationship” with Saudi Arabia, and has said:

“rather than just standing on the sidelines and sniping, it's important  
to engage, to talk to people, to talk about our interests and to  
raise, yes, difficult issues when we feel it's necessary to do so.”

I am sure the Prime Minister and the Minister will agree  
that 14 executions are just such a difficult issue and I am  
pleased that it has been raised urgently with the Saudi  
Government.

I would like to ask the following questions, however.  
Will the Minister ask the Prime Minister to call on  
Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin  
Salman to stop the executions—especially of juveniles  
Mujtaba Sweikat and Salman Qureish—going ahead?  
If the executions of juveniles and others arrested in  
relation to alleged protest activity go ahead, will the  
UK commit to freezing and reviewing any criminal  
justice assistance which could contribute to the arrest of  
protestors and dissidents in Saudi Arabia? What further  
steps will Her Majesty's Government take to condemn  
Saudi Arabia's use of the death penalty, especially in the  
case of people with disabilities and juveniles, such as Ali  
al-Nimr, Dawoud al-Marhoon, and Abdullah al-Zaher?

Our Prime Minister is promoting the UK as a global  
nation. How she responds to the threat of summary  
executions by a partner and close ally will determine  
exactly what kind of global nation she intends the  
United Kingdom to be—a global champion of human  
rights or an apologist for human rights abusers.

**Alistair Burt:** First, on the death penalty, in particular  
in relation to juveniles, the UK Government oppose the  
death penalty in all circumstances and in every country,  
including Saudi Arabia, especially for crimes other than  
the most serious and for juveniles, in line with the  
minimum standards set out in the EU guidelines on the  
death penalty 2008, the provisions of the international  
covenant on civil and political rights and the Arab charter  
on human rights. A law has been proposed to King  
Salman by the Shura Council that codifies the age of  
majority at 18, and the death penalty should not be  
given to minors. All the cases the right hon. Gentleman  
mentioned towards the end of his remarks have been  
raised specifically by the United Kingdom, and in each  
case we have received assurances that minors would not  
be executed.

On the general relationship with Saudi Arabia, our  
starting point for engagement on human rights with all  
countries is based on what is practical, realistic and  
achievable, and we will always be ready to speak out as  
a matter of principle. Ministers frequently discuss  
human rights and raise concerns with the Saudi Arabia  
Government. We have a balanced relationship with  
Saudi Arabia and use engagement to encourage reform.  
This is a society that is going through a process of  
reform, heading towards Vision 2030, which the new  
Crown Prince has laid out as a pattern for Saudi Arabia  
for the future. Women's rights are changing with the  
addition of women to the Shura Council. It is a process  
that goes not at our pace, but at other paces.

We make sure that human rights are a key part of  
every conversation that senior colleagues have, and that  
would certainly be the case should it be necessary to  
intervene should any minors be in the position described  
by the right hon. Gentleman. As I indicated at the  
beginning, we have very sketchy reports on this at the  
moment. That is why we are doing more and I will write  
to the right hon. Gentleman when I receive further,  
more detailed information, so that he has it available.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Chair of the Select Committee  
on Foreign Affairs, Tom Tugendhat.

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Thank  
you very much, Mr Speaker.

We have heard—over the years, indeed—Her Majesty's  
Government talk about the influence they have had  
over the actions of the Saudi Government in terms of  
capital offences. I would be very grateful if the Minister  
could from his place today give some examples of how  
that has paid off, because, on days like this, it does leave  
some questions to be answered.

**Alistair Burt:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his  
election to the office of Chairman of the Select Committee  
on Foreign Affairs. It is an important office, which was  
well held by his predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Reigate (Crispin Blunt), to whom we would all pay  
tribute. These are difficult jobs done by colleagues, and  
my hon. Friend did it particularly well, but we are very  
pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge  
and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) in his place.

It is so difficult to try to prove a negative. The  
authorities with which we deal in Saudi Arabia are not  
necessarily in a position to make their judicial decisions

557 Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions 17 JULY 2017 Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions

558

*[Alistair Burt]*

dependent on external pressure, and nor would we be in  
a similar situation. We know that allegations are made  
about possible executions, including those of minors,  
and that they then do not happen, but we do not know  
whether that can be laid at the door of any specific  
representation. I can assure my hon. Friend and the House  
that these representations are regularly made to a changing  
society and a changing judicial process in Saudi Arabia,  
which must, of necessity, be theirs and not ours.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): I add  
my thanks to you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent  
question today. I also thank the right hon. Member for  
Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) for bringing  
such an important matter to the House and for speaking  
so eloquently on the subject.

I am sure that all Members present today share my  
concern about the impending executions. Saudi Arabia  
is one of the world's most prolific executioners, and the  
death penalty is increasingly being used there as a  
punishment for non-violent acts. In January 2016, the  
Saudi authorities executed 47 men in a single day for  
alleged terrorism offences, and just last Monday, six  
men were killed. It is becoming clear that these executions  
are being used not only as a form of draconian punishment  
but as a tool to suppress political opposition, to fight  
sectarian religious battles against the Shi'a minority  
and to antagonise regional rivals in the process.

It is just over six years since the then Foreign Secretary,  
William Hague, declared that there would be

“no downgrading of human rights under this Government”.

He went on to argue that

“pursuing a foreign policy with a conscience is... in the long term  
enlightened national interest of our country.”

It is striking how far the Conservatives have strayed  
from that commitment. When it comes to our relationship  
with Saudi Arabia, it would appear that human rights  
concerns are now of secondary importance to trade.  
This Government have treated Riyadh's human rights  
record as an inconvenient embarrassment rather than a  
cause for serious concern. Their reluctance to champion  
the values of human rights runs counter to who we are  
as a country and risks eroding our international standing,  
just when we need it most. My party's position on this  
matter is clear: the 14 executions—including those of  
two juveniles and one disabled man—must not take  
place. I call on the Government to use their influence to  
stand up for human rights and unreservedly condemn  
these planned executions.

**Alistair Burt** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Before the Minister responds, I  
must say in all kindness to the hon. Lady that the  
fluency of her delivery was unfortunately not matched  
by any conformity with the expected procedure for the  
posing of an urgent question. I allowed her to continue,  
but for future reference—this is directed not only to the  
hon. Lady but more widely—an urgent question requires  
a brief sentence or two in response to the Minister,  
followed by a series of questions. It is not an occasion  
for the setting out of an alternative party position. It is  
not like a debate—*[Interruption.]* It might very well  
have been very good, as the shadow Foreign Secretary,  
the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury

(Emily Thornberry) chunters from a sedentary position  
in a rather inappropriate way, but unfortunately it was  
not very good at complying with our procedure. I say  
good-naturedly to the hon. Member for Heywood and  
Middleton (Liz McInnes)—and I am looking at the  
Opposition Chief Whip too—that we really must encourage  
compliance with the required procedure. Now, I would  
like the Minister very briefly to respond—30 seconds  
will suffice, I think—before we move on to further  
questioning.

**Alistair Burt:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the  
hon. Lady for her remarks; I have got the gist of the  
points that she was making. Saudi Arabia remains a  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights priority  
country, particularly because of its use of the death  
penalty, its record on women's rights and its restrictions  
on freedom of expression, assembly, religion and belief.  
No aspect of our commercial relationship with Saudi  
Arabia prevents us from speaking frankly and openly to  
it about human rights. We will not pursue trade to the  
exclusion of human rights; they can be, and they are,  
complementary. The United Kingdom will continue to  
adhere to that.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): The Minister will agree  
that it is depressing how regularly the death penalty is  
carried out not just in Saudi Arabia, but in its neighbour  
Iran, which has already carried out dozens of executions  
this year. Given the small likelihood of persuading the  
Saudis to abolish the death penalty completely, does he  
agree that it is best to focus on getting them to adopt the  
most basic of standards, such as not executing people  
for crimes they committed when they were juveniles?

**Alistair Burt:** Absolutely. I concur with all my hon.  
Friend's points and, for brevity, I will leave it at that.

**Mr Speaker:** Splendid man.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): I thank the  
right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom  
Brake) for raising this issue today. The death penalty for  
political protest is something that horrifies any democrat.  
With that in mind, we have serious concerns about  
whether the Government are using their powers. The  
Minister confirmed that the Prime Minister has raised  
this matter, so was she satisfied with the response? If she  
was not, what further action will be taken?

**Alistair Burt:** The Prime Minister will continue to  
raise concerns as long as the United Kingdom has  
them. If we want to move to a position that would  
satisfy all of us, I suspect that Saudi Arabia is not yet  
there. Accordingly, the Prime Minister will continue to  
raise concerns if she believes that they are justified.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): Will my right  
hon. Friend again confirm that the Government oppose  
and abhor the death penalty in all circumstances and in  
every country, including Saudi Arabia? Does he share  
my concern that the death penalty is enshrined in Islamic  
sharia law—the law of Saudi Arabia? With what force is  
he is making our position known to our counterparts in  
Saudi Arabia?

559

Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions 17 JULY 2017 Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions

560

**Alistair Burt:** I can only repeat what I have said before.  
The United Kingdom's opposition to the death penalty,  
our carrying that through by votes in this House and  
our adherence to international conventions makes that  
clear, but not everyone is the same. The United Kingdom  
cannot unilaterally change the law elsewhere, but we  
can and will stand up for the rights that we believe are  
correct, and from Iran to the United States to Saudi  
Arabia we will make that clear no matter which country  
is involved.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): We are constantly  
told by the Conservatives that we have values in common  
with Saudi Arabia. What are they? They do not involve  
human rights or international law, so what values can  
we possibly share with Saudi Arabia when they propose  
to crucify somebody and to use the death penalty  
against minors?

**Alistair Burt:** In response to the right hon. Lady  
asking about what we may share, we should not ignore  
Saudi Arabia's important contribution to regional stability.  
It has had its own painful experiences as the victim of  
numerous Daesh attacks, and collaborating with Saudi  
Arabia has foiled terrorist attacks, potentially saving  
British lives. There are areas where our interests work  
together in the interests of the United Kingdom, but  
that is of course not universal.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): Given the fact  
that—alas, perhaps—we are no longer an imperial power  
able to send a gunboat to enforce our view of the world,  
will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in his considerable  
experience in the Foreign Office, a quiet conversation to  
make our case and set out our views is far more likely to  
be effective than shouting at people across the railings?

**Alistair Burt:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question.  
Different approaches have different impacts. It would  
certainly not be right for people to be silent on things  
that they think are important; they should raise them  
publicly. It is also true, however, that quiet conversations  
with states over a period of time effect change, which is  
true in consular cases as well as in the higher profile  
death penalty cases. My hon. Friend is right that both  
approaches can have an impact, but sometimes they do  
not.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP):  
In the Minister's communications with the Saudi authorities  
about this particular group of people, will he establish  
whether reports are correct that others, again including  
juveniles, are facing similar charges?

**Alistair Burt:** I will make what inquiries I can. Certainly  
from the media reports we have, it will be important to  
find out whether any juveniles are involved. Non-  
governmental organisations in the west are normally  
quite good at finding out and reporting this information,  
and the United Kingdom has acted upon such information  
in the past. We will certainly look for that information,  
and I will gather as much as I can.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):  
What impact does the Minister believe the 38% cut to  
the Foreign Office will have on dealing effectively with  
human rights in Saudi Arabia, or wherever?

**Alistair Burt:** All aspects of Government must pay  
attention to the need for financial probity, but the  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office has made sure that  
human rights is a key part of our work, certainly for as  
many years as I have been there—that now spans a few  
years—and human rights will remain a key part of desk  
work here and of the work that posts do abroad.

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):  
Among numerous others, my understanding is that the  
two juveniles at risk of execution were charged under  
Saudi Arabia's anti-cybercrime laws. Is the Minister in a  
position to confirm or deny that? Can he reassure the  
House that any cyber-security assistance and training  
provided by the UK to Saudi Arabia has not been used  
to facilitate charges that lead to the death penalty?

**Alistair Burt:** I do not have the detailed information  
that the hon. Gentleman asks for, but I will seek it. I will  
also seek reassurances in relation to the collaborative  
work on cyber-security, which is done to protect the  
United Kingdom and our common interests, rather  
than anything else. I will need further information  
before I can reply, but I will write to him.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con):  
Can my right hon. Friend confirm that our relationship  
with Saudi Arabia enables us to raise our human rights  
concerns? This House should also appreciate that the  
Government of Saudi Arabia are taking steps to improve  
their actions on human rights, and particularly to improve  
the opportunities and rights of women in Saudi Arabian  
society.

**Alistair Burt:** My hon. Friend is right. A vision of  
Saudi Arabia, as with a number of states in the area, is  
fixed in people's minds, but it does not always conform  
to the reality. Progress and reform in some of these  
states is extremely slow. They are very conservative  
societies, and sometimes their leaders are ahead of  
popular and religious opinion. It is a difficult process,  
but she is right. Objectively, it can be seen that the  
position of women has improved in relation to access to  
the Shura council and beyond, and there is more to  
come. The 100,000 people educated abroad by King  
Salman's predecessor included women who were educated  
in the west—in the United States and in Europe—and  
they were not intended to return to a Saudi Arabia that  
would be unchanging. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sure the Whips mean well in  
advising on these matters, but they sometimes get the  
timing a bit wrong. When an hon. Member is receiving  
an answer to her inquiry, she should remain in her seat  
rather than beetling around the Chamber because some  
Whip suddenly wants to relay some piece of information.  
It is no doubt well intentioned, but misguided.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): In  
response to the recent spate of executions, Amnesty  
International has renewed its call on the Saudi Arabian  
authorities to immediately establish a moratorium on  
all executions as a first step towards abolition of the  
death penalty. Can the Minister lend his support to  
Amnesty's calls?

**Alistair Burt:** As we are absolutely opposed to the  
death penalty in any circumstances, a moratorium is, in  
a sense, immaterial because we want to see the death  
penalty stopped everywhere.

561

Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions 17 JULY 2017 Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions

562

**Mr Stephen Hepburn** (Jarrow) (Lab): I hear what the  
Minister is saying about talking to, asking questions of  
and advising the Saudi Government, but should not the  
UK Government stop pussying around on this matter  
and demand that these executions do not go ahead?  
Those people were just protesting innocently and honestly  
for a fair society.

**Alistair Burt:** I understand the force with which the hon.  
Gentleman speaks. It is difficult always to convey to  
colleagues in the House exactly what the ambassador or  
the Prime Minister say in their conversations to convey, in  
a different form, exactly the same degree of force  
and concern that the hon. Gentleman conveys so eloquently.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): How far  
does the Minister really believe the UK's influence  
extends over Saudi Arabia? If the UK Government's  
supposed leverage cannot stop the Saudi Government  
beheading their citizens, why does he believe it is appropriate  
for the UK to continue to license the sale of arms to  
that country?

**Alistair Burt:** It is impossible to give a simple answer  
to the question of how much influence one state exerts  
on another. Let me point to a long-standing relationship  
with Saudi Arabia. It is a long-standing relationship on  
security and intelligence matters, which has acted in our  
interests and for the safety of our citizens. We have a  
common approach to dealing with not only terror and  
extremism, but changes in Saudi society over a period  
of time. As I say, it is not for those outside to take credit  
for internal changes. This is a continued dialogue with a  
state that we have known for a long time, but one that is  
still relatively new and coming to terms with the modern  
world. I think the relationship is the right one, but we  
will continue to press for the best values.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Does the Minister  
accept that executing individuals who were under 18 at  
the time of the commission of the alleged offence is in  
violation of not only international law, but Saudi domestic  
law? He is therefore on very strong ground in raising  
this matter. Will he do so in terms, because, whatever  
the longer term relationship, minors have been executed  
in the past year and many are now on death row there?  
Will he say exactly what representation he is making  
today or tomorrow? If he is in doubt about who is at  
risk, will he talk to Reprieve about that?

**Alistair Burt:** I reiterate the point that the UK makes  
about the death penalty, particularly in relation to minors.  
Where cases involving minors are brought to our attention,  
we reference them specifically, as we have done in  
several of the cases raised by the right hon. Member for  
Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake). I am gaining  
more information about the matters referred to in the  
newspaper report today, and if they do involve minors,  
specific representations will indeed be made.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Points of order normally come after  
statements; I made an exception for particular matters

earlier. Is this just because the hon. Gentleman wants to  
beetle off to some other commitment or is this urgent  
for the House now?

**Simon Hoare:** Sir, I would not presume to adjudge its  
urgency; I shall leave that to the Chair. There appears to  
be some confusion, which I certainly would not want,  
and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for  
Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) is of a like  
mind. Last week, when we had the opportunity to  
question a Minister about matters relating to Saudi  
Arabia, I conferred with one of the Clerks at the Desk  
to find out whether my having been on a visit to Saudi  
Arabia was a declarable interest. The advice I was given  
by the Clerk was that it was entirely up to the individual  
Member but as I was raising a question—rather than  
instigating an early-day motion or debate, or giving a  
long speech—on our relations with Saudi Arabia, there  
was no registrable interest to declare. I understand that  
that might have changed today. I would not, as I know  
my hon. Friend would not, have wanted to have misled  
the House in any way, and I would value clarification on  
whether we need to declare an interest when merely  
asking a question of a Minister.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for his point of order. As far as I am aware, nothing has  
changed today. Although he may find this less than  
fully satisfactory, or even a tad disquieting, I am afraid I  
must give him the advice the Clerks tend to give: it is for  
each Member to judge whether something requires to  
be declared in the course of any parliamentary contribution.  
I put it to him that certainly a relevant factor for him to  
consider is whether such a visit was externally financed;  
I would have thought that that was a germane consideration.  
Members go on Select Committee trips on a very regular  
basis and, as far as I am aware, they do not always, in  
the course of every question, refer to the fact that they  
have been on a Select Committee visit somewhere. If  
there is a question of outside financing and an outside  
body, it might be thought to be prudent to refer to it. I  
think that was the matter the hon. Member for Faversham  
and Mid Kent had in mind, and if she wants, briefly,  
now to make any declaration, I am happy for her to  
do so.

**Helen Whately:** Further to that point of order, Mr  
Speaker. It has been brought to my attention that in  
asking a question a moment ago, I perhaps should have  
drawn the House's attention to my entry in the Register  
of Members' Financial Interests.

**Simon Hoare:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I am not sure there is a “further”, but  
the hon. Gentleman has always seemed to be an amiable  
fellow, and therefore I shall indulge him.

**Simon Hoare:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.  
Ditto.

**Mr Speaker:** We are very grateful to the hon. Gentleman.  
I am sure the House feels better informed.

563

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

564

Schools Update

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening):**This Government believe that all children should have  
an education that unlocks their potential and allows  
them to go as far as their talent and hard work will take  
them. That is key to improving social mobility.

We have made significant progress. Nine out of 10 schools  
are now good or outstanding, the attainment gap is  
beginning to closeandwe have launched 12 opportunity  
areas to drive improvement in parts of the country that  
we know can do better. But that has all been against a  
backdrop of unfair funding. We know that the funding  
system is unfair, opaque and out of date, and that  
means that although we hold schools against the same  
accountability structure, wherever they are, we fund  
them at very different levels. In addition, resources are  
not reaching the schools that need them most.

School funding is at a record high because of the  
choices we have made to protect and increase school  
funding even as we faced difficult decisions elsewhere to  
restore our country's finances, but we recognise that at  
the election people were concerned about the overall  
level of funding for schools as well as its distribution.  
As the Prime Minister has said, we are determined to  
listen. That is why I am today confirming our plans to  
get on with introducing a national funding formula in

1. 19. I can announce that that will now be supported  
   by significant extra investment into the core schools  
   budget over the next two years.

The additional funding I am setting out today, together  
with the introduction of a national funding formula,  
will provide schools with the investment they need to  
offer a world-class education to every child. There will  
therefore be £1.3 billion for schools and high needs  
across 2018-19 and 2019-20 in addition to the schools  
budget set at spending review 2015. This funding is  
across the next two years as we transition to the national  
funding formula. Spending plans for the years beyond

1. 20 will be set out in a future spending review.

Asaresultof this investment, core funding for schools  
and high needs will rise from almost £41 billion in  
2017-18 to £42.4 billion in 2018-19. In 2019-20 it will  
rise again to £43.5billion. This represents £1.3billion in  
additional investment, £416 million more than was set  
aside at the last spending review for the core school  
budget in 2018-19, and £884 million more in 2019-20. It  
will mean that the total schools budget will increase by  
£2.6 billion between this year and 2019-20, and per  
pupil funding will now be maintained in real terms for  
the remaining two years of the spending review period  
to 2019-20.

For this Government, social mobility and education  
are a priority. The introduction of the national funding  
formula—from which previous Governments shied—  
backed by the additional investment in schools we are  
confirming today will be the biggest improvement to  
the school funding system in well over a decade.

I said when I launched the consultation last December  
that I was keen to hear as many views as possible on this  
vital reform. I am grateful for the engagement on the  
issue of fairer funding and the national funding formula.  
We received more than 25,000 responses to our consultation,  
including from Members from across the House. We  
have listened carefully to the feedback we have received

and we will respond to the consultation in full in September,  
but I can today tell the House that the additional  
investment we can make in our schools will allow us to  
do several things, including increasing the basic amount  
that every pupil will attract in 2018-19 and 2019-20. For  
the next two years, this investment will provide for an  
up to 3% gain a year per pupil for underfunded schools,  
and a 0.5% a year per-pupil cash increase for every  
school. We will also continue to protect funding for  
pupils with additional needs, as we proposed in December.  
Given this additional investment, we are able to increase  
the percentage allocated to pupil-led factors; I know  
hon. Members were keen for that to happen. This  
formula settlement to 2019-20 will provide at least  
£4,800 per pupil for every secondary school, which I  
know Members in a number of areas will particularly  
welcome. The national funding formula will therefore  
deliver higher per-pupil funding in respect of every  
school, and in every local area.

These changes, building on the proposals that we set  
out in December, will provide a firm foundation as we  
make historic reforms to the funding system, balancing  
fairness and stability for schools. It remains our intention  
that a school's budget should be set on the basis of a  
single national formula, but a longer transition makes  
sense to provide stability for schools. In 2018-19 and  
2019-20, the national funding formula will set indicative  
budgets for each school, and the total schools funding  
received by each local authority will be allocated according  
to our national fair funding formula, transparently, for  
the first time.

Local authorities will continue to set a local formula  
to distribute that funding, and to determine individual  
school budgets in 2018-19 and 2019-20, in consultation  
with schools in the area. I will shortly publish the  
operational guide to allow them to begin that process.  
To support local authorities'planning, Ialsoconfirmthat  
in 2018-19, all local authorities will receive some increase  
to the amount that they plan to spend on schools and  
high needs in 2017-18. We will confirm gains for local  
authorities, based on the final formula, in September.  
The guide will set out some important areas that are  
fundamental to supporting a fairer distribution through  
the national funding formula. For example, we will  
ring-fence the vast majority of funding provided for  
primary and secondary schools, although local authorities,  
in agreement with their local schools forum, will be able  
to move limited amounts of funding to other areas,  
such as special schools, where this better matches local  
need.

As well as this additional investment through the  
national funding formula, I am confirming our commitment  
to doubling the physical education and sports premium  
for primary schools. All primary schools will receive an  
increase in their PE and sports premium funding in the  
next academic year.

The £1.3 billion additional investment in core schools  
funding that I am announcing today will be funded in  
full from efficiencies andsavings thatIhave identified in  
my Department's budget, rather than higher taxes or  
more debt. That of course requires difficult decisions to  
betaken, but it is right to prioritise schools'core funding,  
even as we continue the vital task of repairing the  
public finances. I am maximising the proportion of my  
Department's budget that is allocated directly to frontline

565

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

566

*[Justine Greening]*

headteachers, whocanthenusetheirprofessionalexpertise  
to ensure that the money is spent where it will have the  
greatest possible impact.

I have challenged my civil servants to find efficiencies,  
just as schools are having to. I want to set out briefly the  
savings and efficiencies that I intend to secure. Efficiencies  
andsavingsacrossourmaincapitalbudgetcan,Ibelieve,  
release £420 million. The majority of this will be from  
healthy pupils capital funding, from which we can make  
savings of £315 million. This reflects reductions in forecast  
revenue from the soft drinks industry levy. I will be able  
to channel the planned budget, which remains in place,  
to frontline schools, while meeting our commitment  
that every single pound of England's share of spending  
from the levy will continue to be invested in improving  
children's health; that includes £100 million in 2018-19  
for healthy pupils capital.

We remain committed to an ambitious free schools  
programme that delivers choice, innovation and higher  
standards for parents. In delivering the programme, and  
the plans for a further 140 free schools announced at  
the last Budget, we will work more efficiently to release  
savings of £280 million up to 2019-20. This will include  
delivering 30 of the 140 schools through the local  
authority route, rather than the free schools route.  
Across the rest of the Department for Education resource  
budget, which is more than £60 billion a year, I will  
reprioritise £250 million in 2018-19 and £350 million in  
2019-20 to fund the increase in core schools budget  
spending that I am announcing today. I plan to redirect  
£200 million from the Department's central programmes  
towards frontline funding for schools. Although these  
projects are useful, I strongly believe that this funding is  
most and more valuable in the hands of headteachers.

Finally, alongside the extra investment in our core  
schools budget, it is vital that school leaders strive to  
maximise the efficient use of their resources, to achieve  
the best outcomes for all their pupils and to best promote  
social mobility. We already provide schools with support  
to do this, but we will now go further to ensure that that  
support is used effectively by schools. We will continue  
our commitment to securing substantial efficiency gains  
over the coming years. Good value national deals that  
procure better value goods and services on areas that all  
schools spend money on and purchase goods in can  
save significant amounts. They are available under the  
deals based on our existing work such as on insurance  
or energy. Schools can save an average of 10% on their  
energy bills if they use a national deal. We will expect  
schools to be clear if they do not make use of these  
deals and consequently have higher costs.

Across school spending as a whole, we will improve  
the transparency and usability of data so that parents  
and governors can more easily see the way in which  
funding is being spent, and understand not just educational  
standards in schools, but financial effectiveness too. We  
have just launched a new online efficiency benchmarking  
service that will enable schools to analyse their own  
performance much more effectively. We recognise that  
many schools have worked hard up to this point to  
manage cost base pressures on their budgets, and we  
will take action this year to provide targeted support to  
those schools where financial health is at risk, deploying  
efficiency experts to give direct support to those schools.

The significant investment we are making in schools  
and the reforms we are introducing underpin our ambition  
for a world-class education system. Together, they will  
give schools a firm foundation that will enable them to  
continue to raise standards, promote social mobility,  
and give every child the best possible education and the  
best opportunities for the future.

4.32 pm

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I thank  
the Secretary of State for the slight advanced sight of  
her statement.

I will always be the first to welcome new money for  
schools. After all, I have spent a year asking the Secretary  
of State to give our schools the funding they need. It is  
nice to know I am finally getting through to her. I thank  
parents, school leaders and teachers across the country  
for all their work in pushing this issue up the political  
agenda. Both the Secretary of State and I know that  
this would not be happening today without them. But,  
sadly, today's statement raises more questions than it  
answers.

I welcome the £1.3 billion announced today, but will  
the Secretary of State confirm whether it will protect  
per pupil budgets in real terms, or just the overall  
budget? Astoundingly, this has all been funded without  
a penny of new money from the Treasury. Perhaps the  
Chancellor did not want to fund schools, and thought  
that teachers and teaching assistants were simply more  
overpaid public servants. I wonder whether the Secretary  
of State agrees with him. Does her decision to seek  
savings from the free schools programme mean that she  
finally agrees with Opposition Members who believe  
that the programme has always been inefficient? It has  
always been more expensive than Ministers hoped it  
would be, so the idea that hundreds of millions of  
pounds can now be saved seems like a bad joke. Will she  
simply be honest with the House and tell us all exactly  
how much money will be cut, from which spending  
items and who will lose out as a result?

I know that Conservative Members are in full retreat  
from their own manifesto, but I do not see how this  
£1.3 billion can possibly fit with it. We were promised  
£4 billion—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. A kind of group hysteria takes  
over. Mr Chalk, you are usually a very understated  
fellow—rather a gentlemanly type, I had always thought.  
Calm yourself. And you are sitting next to a very senior  
Member—Prince Andrew over there—who normally  
behaves as the very embodiment of dignity. Anyway, I  
am sure you will recover your composure in a minute.  
You should watch a few Federer matches; you will learn  
something about composure.

**Angela Rayner:** Conservative Members are in full  
retreat from their own manifesto. We were promised  
£4 billion only a few weeks ago, and now we are getting  
only £1.3 billion. Can schools expect anything else in  
future, or is this yet another broken promise?

The Conservative manifesto promised a free breakfast  
for every primary school pupil. First, the Secretary  
of State said it would cost £60 million, leaving parents  
across the country wondering how you can provide  
breakfast at under 7p per meal. Then she said that it  
would be £180 million, but that it would go only to the  
most disadvantaged pupils. She has had plenty of time

567

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

568

to get her figures straight, so can she tell the House  
whether this is still her policy? How many pupils will  
benefit, and how much it will cost?

The Secretary of State said that the full funding  
formula has been delayed again, with local authorities  
playing a role in setting budgets until 2020. Is this  
because she has finally acknowledged the role local  
authorities have to play? Or has she simply realised that  
to implement her plans fully she would need to pass  
primary legislation, and that her Government are so  
weak and wobbly that they cannot even get new money  
for schools passed through this House?

What the Secretary of State has announced today is  
nothing more than a sticking plaster. Per pupil funding  
will still fall over this Parliament unless further action is  
taken urgently. I will welcome the opportunity to protect  
budgets for our schools, but this statement alone will do  
nothing of the kind.

**Justine Greening:** There is only one party that is in  
full retreat from its manifesto, and it is certainly not the  
Conservative party. We heard over the weekend that the  
promise to students was not worth the paper it was  
written on. I think it was one of the most dishonest pieces  
of electioneering I have seen in many, many years. Our  
young people deserve better than to be peddled some  
snake oil propaganda that proves to be not true.

I am pleased that the hon. Lady recognises this extra  
investment. I am shocked to hear that the Labour party  
has now turned its head on fair funding and suggested it  
might have voted against introducing the fair funding  
approach of a hard formula. I think many schoolteachers  
will be deeply concerned by that change of stance—yet  
another one.

The hon. Lady talked about getting through to the  
Conservative party in relation to school funding, but we  
have been funding schools. I think the message that has  
not been getting through to the Labour party is that  
simply loading up more taxes on people and more debt  
on our country for the young people of the future is not  
a sustainable way to run the public finances. What the  
hon. Lady's response shows is that Labour has learned  
nothing in its time in opposition and has, in fact, gone  
backwards.

The hon. Lady asked some questions. I can confirm  
to her that we are, indeed, saying that we are going to  
have per pupil, real-term protection for the next two  
years. In relation to the free schools programme, what I  
was actually setting out—I do not think she properly  
understood it—was that we are protecting it, but we  
think we can finance it in a more cost-effective way. She  
then talked about the £4 billion, not realising, I think,  
that it was £4 billion over four years. I have set out  
£2.6 billion over two years. I think she will recognise  
that that is bringing the process forward at a faster pace,  
which is something to be welcomed.

One of the hon. Lady's few questions—she did not  
have a lot of questions to ask—related to the approach  
we are taking to local authorities. She may have realised—I  
am not sure from her question—that we were always  
going to have local authorities use an approach involving  
a local formula in 2018-19, as it was due to be a  
transition year anyway. We are simply saying that we  
want that to extend for a longer time period. Given the  
historic nature of this change, it is right that we take the

time to make sure that we work at local level to allow  
local authorities to adjust their funding to start matching  
the funding formula. However, schools locally will of  
course be able to see what amount they should be getting.  
I have no doubt that teachers, parents and governing  
bodies will raise questions for local authorities that  
deviate significantly away from the formula settlement  
that schools think they are entitled to have.

This a strong announcement of additional money  
combined with making sure that our schools budget is,  
for the first time in a generation, spread fairly across  
our schools and our children wherever they are growing  
up in this country. I hope that the House will broadly  
welcome it.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I call the Chair of the Education  
Committee, Mr Robert Halfon.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This news will welcomed by schools, teachers and  
parents, especially given the additional costs facing  
schools. In addition to moving money from healthy  
pupil programmes, my right hon. Friend said that she is  
redirecting £200 million from the Department's central  
programmes to the frontline in schools. Which programmes  
are included?

**Justine Greening:** We will now go through a process  
of looking across programmes to identify the £200 million.  
Across an entire departmental budget of £60 billion, it  
is reasonable to make sure that my Department and its  
civil servants have to make efficiency savings in the  
same way—my right hon. Friend set this out—as we are  
expecting schools to do. I believe that we can and  
should do that. The alternative response—simply to dip  
into taxpayers' pockets every time we want to look at  
how we increase frontline school spending—is not only  
unsustainable but wrong when we can do a better job  
using the money we have got.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): While  
I welcome this announcement of extra money today, is  
not the fact that the Government got themselves into  
such a mess over schools funding an indication of the  
fact that they have not been straight with people all  
along—and I am not sure they are being entirely straight  
with people now? The Secretary of State talks about an  
increased schools budget but fails to mention that the  
number of pupils has increased significantly. Is it not  
the case that, even taking into account the money  
announced today, when considering per pupil funding  
the real-terms cuts that schools have faced since 2015 is  
£2.8 billion, with additional cuts of £8.9 billion, so  
there is still a massive shortfall? It is about time that the  
Government started being straight with the figures on  
the reality of what schools are facing on the frontline.

**Justine Greening:** I think we are setting out our  
figures very transparently. The numbers given on the  
website about school cuts have been worrying parents,  
but one thing I do not expect to happen as a result of  
today's funding announcement is for those numbers to  
be updated because it is far easier just to continue to  
peddle out-of-date data. The hon. Lady asked about the

569

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

570

*[Justine Greening]*

numbers of pupils. She is of course quite right, and that  
is why I am sure she will welcome the fact that I am  
saying that real-terms per-pupil funding will be maintained.

**Mr Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con):  
This is very good news for schools as they prepare to  
break up for the summer holidays. May I thank my  
right hon. Friend for engaging so constructively with  
colleagues across the House to make this progress? I  
particularly welcome her focus on bringing up the worst-  
funded schools, which has been so critically important  
for so long.

**Justine Greening:** This is a fundamental change to  
how we fund our schools and it is extremely challenging  
to get right. We held a very long consultation and took  
our time because we want to make sure that this work  
can take place on the ground. I appreciate that a formula  
needs to work for all colleagues, not just some, in very  
different communities up and down the country. That is  
why we have been listening to what people had to say,  
and we have reflected that today.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)  
(Lab): On Friday I visited Airedale Academy, which  
this year alone has already had £140,000 cut from its  
budget. That amounts to £190 per child. Was there  
anything in the Secretary of State's statement to indicate  
thatit would get anyof that money back? Despite being  
in a deprived coalfield area, our schools are being hit  
heavily by her funding formula. She has just said that  
schoolswill lose. They will getonlya0.5%cash increase  
per pupil, so will she confirm that that means that a lot  
of kids will still have a real funding cut? How many  
pupils will still face a real cut to their funding next year?

**Justine Greening:** I think that the right hon. Lady will  
welcome a number of things in the statement. Indeed,  
she has just pointed out that we will introduce a  
0.5% increase per pupil for those schools that are currently  
above the formula, as opposed to those that need to  
catch up through additional funding. The position taken  
by both her party and mine was that there would be no  
cash losers, and we are going beyond that today. In  
other words, her school will receive more than it would  
have done had her party won the election.

**Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): Clearly, more  
money going to the frontline of schools is a very good  
thing. Obviously, the devil will be in the detail of the  
funding formula, which I know well having spent many  
hours poring over it myself. I want to pick the Secretary  
of State up on two things. First, on the increase to the  
percentage allocated to pupil-led factors, she will be  
aware that many people were unhappy with the overall  
percentage allocated to basic per-pupil funding. Secondly,  
many schools in Leicestershire and elsewhere have been  
historically underfunded for many years, but the allocation  
of £4,800 per pupil is not the same as the £6,000 per  
pupil that schools in other parts of the country will get.  
I fully appreciate that the Secretary of State has to  
operate within the constraints of responsible public  
funding, but schools in Leicestershire really need that  
historical underfunding to be corrected at some point.

**Justine Greening:** My right hon. Friend will no doubt  
welcome the fact that today's announcement means  
that there will be an increase in funding through core

pupil-led factors. I felt it was also right to protect the  
amount that was already going to children with additional  
needs, because we want them to catch up. On the overall  
amount, I assure my right hon. Friend that the formula  
takes into account the different cost bases in different  
parts of the country. Today's announcement means not  
only that schools will get more funding, but that they  
will catch up faster because of the 3% increase for two  
years, which replaces the previous proposal of 3% and  
then 2.5%.

**Liz Kendall** (Leicester West) (Lab): It is very unclear  
whether the Secretary of State has dealt with the underlying  
problems with the funding formula. Nine schools in  
some of the most deprived parts of Leicester West  
would have lost out because the Government's initial  
proposals drastically reduced the amount of money  
allocated according to deprivation.

**Justine Greening** *indicated dissent.*

**Liz Kendall:** The Secretary of State shakes her head,  
but that is what happened in my constituency. Has the  
underlying basis of the funding formula been changed,  
or are schools in the most deprived areas still going to  
get a bigger cut, harming not helping social mobility?

**Justine Greening:** We will set out the detail of the  
national funding formula in September, but it is not  
true that the deprivation amounts were cut. In fact, as I  
have said, I actively made sure that they were protected.  
The hon. Lady will no doubt welcome the fact that, as I  
said to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract  
and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), the schools in her  
community that were already well funded are being  
protected more than they would have been had her  
party won the election.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): I welcome the Secretary  
of State's statement and applaud her for listening to  
the concerns that many of us have expressed about the  
funding formula for our local schools. At the end of the  
day, what really matters to schools is the budget that  
they are going to get. When will schools be told exactly  
what this will mean for their individual budgets? That is  
what headteachers, teachers, parents and governors want  
to know, so when will that information be disseminated?  
Can she confirm that the promise not to cut funding  
from any school applies to special schools as well as to  
mainstream schools?

**Justine Greening:** Briefly, the local authorities will  
now go through a process of setting a local formula, but  
we will confirm the allocation notionally to each school  
in September. That is a significant process, which involves  
confirming allocations for around 24,000 schools. Today,  
I have set out the funding not just for the core schools  
budget, but for high needs, and I hope that that is good  
news for my hon. Friend.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Schools  
in central Bedfordshire that currently get £4,314 per  
pupil will be very grateful to learn of the new figure of  
£4,800 per pupil. What can the Secretary of State do to  
spread best practice across academies regarding covering  
lessons when teachers are not ill? Some of my academies  
do this really well. They timetable a bit of extra time in  
so some staff can cover other staff. Could she have a  
word about spreading that best practice across all academies  
so that children do not miss out on lessons?

571

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

572

**Justine Greening:** I certainly will. One of our biggest  
challenges and opportunities is to enable best practice  
to spread more rapidly around our school system. That  
is one reason why I have introduced so-called research  
schools, which can be hubs in their local area for  
disseminating best practice and ensuring that it spreads  
quickly.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Will the Secretary  
of State confirm that protecting per-pupil funding from  
next year does nothing to reverse the cuts that are  
leading schools in Exeter to lay off teachers and staff  
now? What assessment has she made of the impact of  
raiding her own capital budget on vital improvements,  
for which many schools in my constituency will now  
have to wait longer?

**Justine Greening:** The funding I have set out is indeed  
for 2018-19, which is when the national funding formula  
will be introduced. In relation to capital, I simply believe  
that we can make better use of our budget. Significant  
funding has been set aside from the sugary drinks  
industry levy, and we have been able to retain that  
additional money despite the fact that receipts from the  
levy were slightly lower than we originally expected. I  
hope hon. Members welcome the fact that I am therefore  
pushing that to the frontline.

**Mr Speaker:** Mistakenly, because I was trying to do  
two things at once, I called two Government Back  
Benchers in succession. I would not want there to be a  
lingering sense of resentment on the Opposition Benches,  
so I call Mr Christopher Leslie.

**Mr Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op):  
Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to press the Secretary of  
State a little on the point that the right hon. Member for  
Harlow (Robert Halfon)—the new Chair of the Select  
Committee on Education—and some of my hon. Friends  
have mentioned: where in the Department is the money  
coming from? It sounds as though the Secretary of  
State will be robbing Peter to pay Paul from within  
central programmes. Will she set out a bit more clearly  
which of these central programmes will be cut: the  
teaching and leadership college, the standards agency,  
the mentoring programme, the longer school day  
programme, the 16-19 budget, university technical colleges  
or the apprenticeships programme? Or is she promising  
not to cut any of them?

**Justine Greening:** It is important to look across the  
piece to gain additional efficiencies from the Department.  
The hon. Gentleman talks about cuts, but the reality is  
that we have to take every single pound of taxpayers'  
money and get the most out of it. It has struck me how  
many different pots of money there are across the  
Department, and we have to make them work more  
strategically. In doing so, we can unlock funding that  
can go directly to the front line of schools.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): I welcome the statement  
and give the Secretary of State 10 out of 10 for progress  
and a huge gold star for listening to the concerns of  
Members on the Government Benches and, no doubt,  
on the Opposition Benches. This morning, I was at the  
George Spencer Academy, an outstanding academy in  
my constituency—that is not my view, but the Ofsted  
rating. The reality is that it will not be replacing eight

teachers and a librarian because of the difficulties with  
its budget. I hope that today's announcement will go  
some way towards rectifying that.

The complaint of that academy is not the formula,  
but its rising costs. There are huge rises in pension and  
national insurance contributions, which nobody begrudges.  
Although it is a small part of the piece, I urge the  
Secretary of State to look at why local authorities are  
putting the apprenticeship levy on our schools. That  
cannot be right. It is not a lot of money, but it is very  
meaningful for school budgets.

**Justine Greening:** It is important to get on with  
making more apprenticeships available for young people,  
including in sectors like education, but I recognise what  
my right hon. Friend says. It is important that my  
Department does more to work proactively with schools  
to help them deal with some of the cost base pressures  
they have been facing. I feel that best practice can be  
spread more effectively through schools when they are  
working out ways to do smart timetabling and smart  
procurement deals. We need to do that much more  
systematically in the future and if we do, I believe that  
we can get much more out of the budget we already have.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Pursuant to the plethora of points  
of order that I took on the subject of HS2 from right  
hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House  
immediately after questions, I can inform the House  
that the Secretary of State for Transport would like to  
make a statement at the moment of interruption—that  
is to say, at 10 pm—this evening. I have acceded to that  
request on the basis that the official Opposition are  
content to hear the statement at that time, and I have  
received that assurance. There will be a statement, I  
believe entitled “HS2 Update”, at the moment of  
interruption tonight. I hope that that is helpful to the  
House.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): In December last year,  
the National Audit Office said that the Secretary of  
State's Department was expecting 8% cuts, which is  
equivalent to £3 billion, in our school budgets—no one  
else but her Department. The figure was £24 million  
across Greenwich schools, which is the equivalent of  
672 teachers. She went into the last general election  
saying that my schools were overfunded. Does she still  
believe that?

**Justine Greening:** I do not believe we did say that, but  
what I can say is that the hon. Gentleman's schools will  
now get a better settlement under the national funding  
formula than they would have got under his party.

**Mr Speaker:** I know that the House will want to be  
well informed. The moment of interruption would  
ordinarily be expected to be 10 pm on a Monday, but it  
is not certain to be at 10. It could be a bit earlier and it  
could be a bit later. The point that colleagues need to  
have lodged in their little grey cells is that the statement  
will come at the moment of interruption. Keep an eye  
on the annunciator—always a very good piece of advice  
to proffer to new Members.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): Parents and  
pupils in my constituency will be delighted with the  
minimum funding of secondary school education, which

573

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

574

*[Antoinette Sandbach]*will represent a substantial increase in secondary school  
funding. However, I would be grateful if the Secretary  
of State outlined the minimum level of funding for  
primary school pupils, which was not addressed in her  
statement.

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend is right. We will set  
out more of those details in September. Today, we are  
setting out the fact that we recognise that there is an  
issue of minimum funding levels in secondary education,  
and we would expect that to be reflected in primary  
education.

**Maria Eagle** (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): Figures  
from the Secretary of State's Department showed that  
21 schools in my constituency were to lose out under  
her plans for the national funding formula before her  
announcement today. I am concerned that they still  
will, so will she guarantee today that those schools that  
were going to lose out on the basis of the formula no  
longer will, and that they will actually see gains?

**Justine Greening:** I think I have been very clear that  
every school will see gains from the announcement that  
I have made today, which I hope is good news. It is a  
reflection of the need to strike a balance between bringing  
up traditionally underfunded schools and recognising  
that those receiving higher funding need help to some  
extent to get on to the national funding formula.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): I warmly  
welcome today's announcement from my right hon.  
Friend. This is a real moment of celebration for those of  
us who have been campaigning with the f40 Group for  
years for a proper fair funding formula. Will she confirm  
to my governors and headteachers in Gloucestershire  
that by 2020 all schools currently receiving £3,800 per  
pupil will be receiving £4,800?

**Justine Greening:** I have set out that we will have a  
minimum of around £4,800, which will be transitioned  
in over these two years. That is good news, and I  
pay tribute to my hon. Friend who has been a tireless  
campaigner on fair funding. He has done an outstanding  
job of being very clear with me about his local community  
concerns and also his desire to see fair funding. It is  
responding to colleagues like him that has led to the  
statement today.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD):  
The Secretary of State will know that the National  
Audit Office said just a few months ago that school  
budgets needed an extra £3 billion by 2020 to avoid cuts.  
How does she square that figure with the £1.3 billion  
that she has announced today over two years? She also  
knows that the high needs budget—spending on special  
educational needs—is rising faster than inflation and  
faster than per pupil numbers. What in this statement  
will deal with that?

**Justine Greening:** In answer to the right hon. Gentleman's  
first point, we are maintaining real-terms funding per  
pupil, as I have set out today. That sits alongside the  
other work that we are doing with schools to enable  
them to unlock efficiencies from the investment that is

already there. I have also set out further additional  
funding for high needs today, which I hope he will  
welcome, given his long-term interest in this area.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): I hope  
that my right hon. Friend will accept that the West Sussex  
MPs who have been working with heads and parents  
will welcome the progress in her statement. May I say  
on behalf of the Back Benchers, perhaps the Parliamentary  
Private Secretary and the Minister for School Standards  
that we have all worked together and hope to continue  
doing so to get even more progress in future?

**Justine Greening:** It has indeed been a team effort to  
work out how we can best bring forward what is a very  
difficult thing: a national funding formula that broadly  
works for many, many different schools across our country,  
wherever they are, and one that is fair. We have more  
detail to set out in the autumn, but I hope I have given a  
clear signal to the House today that we are moving in  
the right direction and will indeed take this step forward  
to ensure fair funding.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): The Secretary of State's  
partial U-turn is bound to be welcome, but given the  
extraordinary cost pressures that many schools across  
the borough of Rochdale already face, can she give me a  
guarantee that none will be forced to cut teachers or  
teaching assistants over this two-year period?

**Justine Greening:** There will be higher per-pupil funding  
in respect of every school in every local area. What we  
are saying is that we want to be able to give more money  
to headteachers to enable them to take the decisions  
that they think are in the best interests of their schools.  
I have spent many years as a school governor, and I  
know the work that goes on to make the most of the  
budgets. I also want to challenge my own Department  
to make some efficiencies so that we can put that money  
in the hands of headteachers to spend on the frontline  
in schools.

**Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): I welcome  
the additional funding for Stockport schools, and I also  
welcome a very listening Secretary of State. Will she prove  
her mettle further by taking on board the recommendations  
on recruitment and retention contained in the report of  
the Education Committee in the last Parliament?

**Justine Greening:** This is a vital issue. I think we have  
more teachers in our school system now than ever  
before but we need more, and we have to ensure that the  
teaching profession—I have always seen it as a profession  
—is a strong career and one in which teachers see  
continued professional development right the way through  
and one that is competitive. One of my old teachers up  
in Rotherham is retiring today, and I have just written  
him a note to thank him for 45 years of service to  
children in Rotherham. Teaching is an amazing vocation  
and one that I would recommend to anyone who cares  
about developing our young people for the future.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): As other Members have pointed out, the National  
Audit Office and the Secretary of State's own permanent  
secretary have highlighted the £3 billion of efficiency

575

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

576

savings that schools were required to make by 2020,  
including £1.7 billion of savings through what her  
Department described as

“more efficient use of staff ”.

The Secretary of State has now paraded the fact that  
she is giving £1.3 billion in additional investment. Can  
she tell us, hand on heart, that she is actually giving  
more money, or are those efficiency savings continuing  
as planned?

**Justine Greening:** This was clearly an announcement  
of more money. However, as the hon. Lady will recognise,  
it is important for us to work with schools not only on  
their non-staff budgets but on their staff budgets. When  
I talk to headteachers, they are keen to ensure that they  
are able to use the staff they have as well as they can. We  
will be working more proactively with schools to help  
them to understand how they can do that better.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): I congratulate the  
Government on choosing to prioritise school funding,  
which has been such a huge issue in Tatton and throughout  
the country. All the Cheshire Members of Parliament  
have come to my right hon. Friend saying what we need  
for our local schools, and I therefore welcome today's  
announcement. So that everyone can be clear about the  
position, however, will my right hon. Friend confirm  
that what she is saying is that there will be a higher  
per-pupil funding level for every pupil?

**Justine Greening:** Yes, indeed. We will be making that  
funding available to local authorities. Ultimately, local  
authorities will also go through a process of setting  
their local formulas, but the funding that we are giving  
them will enable them to do that.

It is fantastic to see my right hon. Friend back in the  
Chamber. She made a rapid start in representing her  
community on this issue after returning to the House. It  
is great to see her. She was, of course, subject to some of  
the nasty campaigning that I think will be debated in  
the Chamber later this evening.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan** (Tooting) (Lab): On Friday,  
Ravenstone Primary School in Balham sent a letter to  
parents announcing that it was making five essential  
support staff go. It has also lost a deputy head. If the  
school had not made those cuts, it would have faced a  
budget deficit of more than £150,000. Will the Secretary  
of State pledge that schools in Tooting will be given the  
necessary funding to maintain current staffing levels,  
and will she meet me, and the fantastic head of Ravenstone,  
to discuss the matter in person?

**Justine Greening:** I pay tribute to the hard work of  
many teachers, a number of whom I know, in our local  
borough of Wandsworth, but I think we should also  
recognise that were that school in a different part of the  
country at the moment, it would have a very different  
funding settlement, but would be expected to deliver the  
same results for local children. What I am saying today  
is that we want some fairness in our funding formula,  
and what I have announced will also mean that additional  
money will indeed go into schools.

**Kelly Tolhurst** (Rochester and Strood) (Con): I welcome  
my right hon. Friend's announcement, and I thank her  
for all her work, but can she confirm that areas such as  
mine in Medway will benefit from the new funding

formula? We are being charged with building historic  
numbers of homes in the Medway towns. We are seeing  
new free schools coming on line, but will we get more?  
Under Labour, we saw schools shut in the Medway  
towns.

**Justine Greening:** It was not just grade inflation and  
poor standards that we inherited from Labour; it was a  
schools places crisis. That is why we had to get on with  
building hundreds of thousands of school places for  
children who needed them, and that is precisely what we  
have been doing. This funding formula does indeed  
mean that my hon. Friend's local schools will be given  
higher per-pupil funding, and I assure her that we will  
not make the mistake made by the Labour party of not  
planning ahead for the school places that children need  
in their local communities. We will ensure that they do  
not end up without those places.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): The Secretary of State's  
statement did nothing to address the service and consistent  
underfunding of 16 to 18-year-olds. Over the last two  
years, there was an underspend of £267 million. Will  
the Government commit themselves to reallocating those  
moneys as soon as possible, and also to addressing the  
underfunding of 16 to 18-year-olds in the future?

**Justine Greening:** The hon. Gentleman makes an  
important point. For too long, post-16 technical education  
has been put to one side; it now needs to be focused on.  
That is why the centrepiece of the Budget, from my  
perspective, was the “skills Budget” that we announced  
back in March. The CBI called it a “breakthrough  
Budget for skills”. We are now getting on with that  
reform, and not just by continuing to bring forward  
more apprenticeships, but by working with organisations  
such as the CBI and the Federation of Small Businesses  
to look at how we can bring forward reforms on T-levels  
so that every child who chooses to go down the technical  
route, rather than pursuing a purely academic education,  
receives a gold-standard education.

**Heidi Allen** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I thank  
the Secretary of State for this great news. I have been  
telling my schools and constituents that she has listened,  
and today she has proved it. I want to ask for a couple  
of things. I appreciate that time is very tight and that we  
are due to hear more in September, but my schools are  
letting teachers go today. If there is any chance that we  
could have a heads-up on the figures before September,  
that would be very helpful. My area can offer expertise  
on efficiency, because our schools have proved to be  
more efficient than many across the country. Will she  
look again at the apprenticeship levy? It does not really  
work for schools.

**Justine Greening:** I take my hon. Friend's point and  
assure her that we will be working very proactively with  
schools, particularly those that say they face the biggest  
challenges. I have put together a team of efficiency  
advisers who will be able to work directly with schools  
on the ground. I think that we can make a lot of  
progress in this area—we need to. I recognise her point  
about the cost base. It is about ensuring that our  
apprenticeships strategy really does give opportunities  
to young people in every single sector, while at the same  
time ensuring that we get funding to the frontline in  
schools, and that is what I have announced today.

577

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

578

**James Frith** (Bury North) (Lab): I welcome more  
funding. Schools such as Derby High in my constituency  
cannot recruit teaching talent because they face the  
rising costs of national insurance, an ageing teaching  
population, the apprenticeship levy and increasing class  
sizes, and they need new school buildings. Will this new  
money be enough to address these complicated problems?  
Will it go far enough to provide the enrichment activities  
that have all but disappeared in schools, with a whole  
generation of children from 2010 missing out on such  
activities because of the imposition of austerity by her  
Government?

**Justine Greening:** I know that the hon. Gentleman  
shares my concern about improving educational standards  
in Derby, which has been a challenge for many—  
*[Interruption.]* I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for  
not recognising him—he is obviously the new Member  
for Bury North. I was going to talk about how important  
the opportunity area that we have set up in Derby is to  
me, but I can also assure him that standards in his  
schools are just as much a priority for me as standards  
in any other. Today we are trying to set out a way of  
ensuring that funding is fair for all schools, including  
the one he mentioned, but it will be complemented by  
additional funding, which I think he welcomes. That is  
part of our strategy for improving educational standards,  
but by no means is it all of it. It is not just about the  
amount of money we put into schools; it is about what  
we then do with it and the strategy behind it. As we have  
seen, education in Wales has been going backwards  
under Labour because it has no strategy, and as a result  
children are getting worse standards. We do have a  
strategy, which is why standards are going up.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** From one James to another—James  
from Bury to James from Braintree.

**James Cleverly** (Braintree) (Con): I welcome the  
Government's delivery on our manifesto commitment  
to ensure that no school loses out under the national  
funding formula—it is nice to see that at least one party  
takes its educational commitments at election time seriously.  
For clarity, can the Secretary of State confirm to the  
parents and teachers who were concerned about some  
of the scare stories that were kicking around in March  
this year that no school will lose out as a result of the  
changes in the funding formula?

**Justine Greening:** I believe that I can, in the sense that  
we are going beyond saying that no schools will lose out  
as a result of the formula, and are saying that every  
school will gain at least 0.5% additional as part of the  
introduction of the school formula. It is important for  
me to be clear that the way we are introducing it is  
through working with local authorities. They therefore  
will put their own formula—the final allocation—to  
schools, but we will be very clear that what we are giving  
them means that no school need lose out, and in fact,  
further than that, every school should be able to gain.

**Helen Jones** (Warrington North) (Lab): Warrington  
is one of the lowest funded authorities in the country,  
yet schools in my constituency were still losing out  
under the funding formula the Secretary of State had  
proposed, and were preparing to sack teachers and

teaching assistants. Can she confirm that she still does  
not regard these as underfunded schools, and that the  
0.5% increase will not meet the costs imposed on them  
by staff pay rises, the apprenticeship levy and general  
inflation, and that pupils in those schools will still lose  
out?

**Justine Greening:** At this stage, the hon. Lady might  
be better off lobbying her those on her own Front  
Bench. What I have set out today will mean that her  
schools get a better settlement than they would had her  
own party won—disastrously, in my opinion— the last  
election.

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): I thank my right  
hon. Friend for listening to the consultation. Dorset has  
been historically underfunded for many years, so we are  
all extremely grateful for her announcement today. I  
have two questions. Can she guarantee to me that special  
needs will be met and properly funded? Also, I am  
afraid that I, too, do not agree with the apprenticeship  
levy; will she consider looking at that again?

**Justine Greening:** I have set out the fact that this  
additional funding will also in part flow into high  
needs, which is important. In relation to the apprenticeship  
levy, we are working with schools on a teaching  
apprenticeship, which will not only mean we can have  
more opportunity, but will enable those schools to be  
able to use that investment wisely.

**Laura Smith** (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): Does the  
Secretary of State think it is right that schools in my  
constituency are already having to rely on donations  
from parents for books, stationery and other basic  
resources? This is not scaremongering; this is actually  
happening.

**Justine Greening:** I would respond in a couple of  
ways. First, we all recognise that the most important  
thing for parents is that standards are going up, and  
indeed they are, as we saw in the most recent key stage 2  
results that came out last week. Also, I hope the hon.  
Lady will recognise that if there have been concerns  
about funding, this statement is a step in the right  
direction, because we are saying that we are going to  
put more into frontline schools. Additionally, I am  
saying we are going to fund more fairly, something that  
is long overdue.

**Peter Heaton-Jones** (North Devon) (Con): May I  
mark my right hon. Friend's homework today with a  
resounding tick and “VG”, and may we write in the  
margin a note to the effect that under her stewardship  
this Government are spending more on schools than the  
Labour party ever did? May I ask for her reassurance  
on a point that I have lobbied her and her Ministers on  
for some time? Devon has historically been underfunded,  
so can she assure me that today's very welcome package  
means that that historical underfunding, which has  
existed under Governments of all colours, will be corrected?  
If she can do that today, I will upgrade her to a gold  
star.

**Justine Greening:** Well, I think I might be getting  
upgraded because I can tell my hon. Friend that this  
will mean additional funding for schools in Devon. I  
know the debate that has happened in that part of our  
country. If we are going to have a country that works

579

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

580

for everyone, it is vital that regions like the south-west  
are able to develop their talent in the same way as any  
other part of our country, and Devon will indeed benefit  
from my announcement today.

**Mrs Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):  
I remain concerned about the position of the 28 schools  
in Liverpool, Riverside that were due to lose funding  
under the Government's formula. Can the Secretary of  
State assure me that they will not lose any funding from  
any source, and would she not agree that the £200 million  
cut to central projects that she announced today is  
really cutting by the back door?

**Justine Greening:** I do not agree with the hon. Lady. I  
can confirm that we are making the additional funding  
available, including to schools in her community. If any  
of them get less, that will be the result of a decision by  
her local authority, which I am sure she will want to  
follow up. More broadly, we need to recognise that, over  
time, several different pools of money are rightly directed  
towards improving schools across our country, and I  
want to see those working more efficiently. We also need  
to ensure that parts of my Department are being run  
efficiently, and the prize for doing that better will be to  
have more money to channel to frontline schools. That  
is precisely what I plan to do.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): Under the outgoing  
system, introduced by the previous Labour Administration,  
schools in West Sussex were among the lowest funded in  
the country, so I very much welcome the new national  
funding formula, which will result in a significant  
enhancement for schools in Crawley. May I seek an  
assurance, however, that capital funding for projects  
such as the necessary rebuilding work at Holy Trinity  
School in my constituency will not be affected as a  
result of this new revenue coming forward?

**Justine Greening:** I can assure my hon. Friend that  
there will be a substantial capital budget, not only to  
deliver the additional school places that we need but to  
invest in improving our school estate. As I have set out  
today, some of the additional money that we had expected  
from the sugar drinks industry levy can indeed be  
retained and converted into revenue to go to schools on  
the frontline. On capital, this Government have invested  
in the school estate and will continue to do so.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): May I offer  
to help the Secretary of State to find efficiencies in the  
budget? No school on its own can take on the unfair  
and exponentially rising private finance initiative costs,  
but the Department could lead a challenge to this. Will  
she help schools in my constituency to do that?

**Justine Greening:** As part of the consultation on the  
draft formula, we had to accept that some schools were  
saddled with PFI commitments put in place by the  
Labour party. Rather than penalising the schools, we  
propose to honour those commitments. However, the  
hon. Lady has raised a genuine point, which is that we  
need to work with schools with those liabilities and to  
understand how we can now manage them effectively.  
We also need to learn from those mistakes, so that we  
do not saddle schools with more debts and commitments  
that they cannot afford, like those that were introduced  
under Labour's failed PFI schemes.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): Schools in Corby and  
east Northamptonshire have been underfunded for far  
too long, relative to other areas, and I am pleased that  
my right hon. Friend is putting that right. Will she continue  
to keep at the forefront of her mind the challenges that  
rural schools face in relation to their viability, as well as  
the big challenges that housing growth presents?

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend will know that the  
original consulted formula looked at how schools in  
more sparsely populated areas could cope effectively  
and at how we would cope with housing growth when it  
takes place. I have said that I will respond more fully to  
the consultation in September, and that response will  
cover all those points, but he is right to put the issues on  
the table. We will think carefully about them.

**Derek Twigg** (Halton) (Lab): Many of the primary  
schools in my constituency are planning to cut staff  
and, under the new schools funding formula, all but one  
of our secondary schools will have big cuts in their  
budgets. If this new formula and the new settlement are  
so good, will that no longer have to happen?

**Justine Greening:** The amount of money that the  
hon. Gentleman's local authority will get in the coming  
two years will not see any cuts. In fact, as I have said, a  
0.5% increase per pupil will be allocated to that community.  
I reiterate that this is indeed a better settlement for  
those schools than would have been the case had his  
party won the election.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): I accept that I  
have been a pain in the butt to both parties over the  
years. I remember saying to Prime Minister Tony Blair  
many years ago that the funding postcode lottery between  
counties was unfair and he agreed, but he did nothing  
about it. I was also a pain in the butt to the Schools  
Minister when I gave him a hard time a couple of  
months ago. I welcome today's announcement, but the  
Secretary of State will know how much the National  
Union of Teachers' website has alarmed students and  
parents over the past few months. When our school  
funding formula is announced, will it be transparent  
and available on a website, school by school?

**Justine Greening:** Indeed it will be, and I hope that  
the unions will choose to update their websites with  
accurate data. As the questions today have demonstrated,  
it is not easy to introduce fairer funding. There are  
millions of reasons why it is a difficult step for any  
Government to take, but we have done it because we  
cannot expect social mobility or strong education outcomes  
everywhere when our children are funded in such different  
ways, purely depending on where they happen to grow  
up. Nobody can accept that if we want to tackle inequality  
of opportunity, and that is why we are taking these  
steps. It is complex, but we are doing it because it is the  
right thing to do.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): I  
welcome any additional funding. There is a lot of concern  
about the safety of schools following the Grenfell Tower  
disaster, so will the Secretary of State update me on  
how many schools in my constituency will be inspected,  
how that work will be co-ordinated and how any remedial  
action will be funded?

581

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

582

**Justine Greening:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will  
be reassured to know that we have already done a  
survey across all our schools to identify any that have or  
think they might have that particular sort of cladding.  
We have had a good response from schools, and we have  
been in contact with the handful of Members who have  
a school in their constituency with cladding that has  
needed testing. I reassure the House that we were clear  
to schools with such cladding that fire inspections should  
be done ahead of any testing of the cladding. We have  
been through that process now and, for the two schools  
with positive test results, the fire inspections had already  
shown that they were safe to continue operating. However,  
the hon. Gentleman is right to identify the importance  
of the matter, and I assure the House that working with  
schools on this has been uppermost in our minds over  
recent weeks.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): I welcome the  
extra funding for schools in my constituency, especially  
the extra investment in the core schools budget and the  
higher per-pupil funding. Will the Secretary of State  
confirm that the new formula will address the unfairness  
that has seen some schools in Wealden and across East  
Sussex remain underfunded for many years?

**Justine Greening:** Yes, it will. My hon. Friend speaks  
up tirelessly for her local community on this, and today's  
announcement will mean more money for that community.  
I have no doubt that her local authority will now want  
to ensure that it spreads that money fairly and will set  
out the notional allocations for schools in the autumn.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
May I make a suggestion to the Secretary of State?  
With the £1 billion earmarked in the Budget for capital  
funding to extend the free schools programme and the  
millions that her Department has already written off  
due to the chaotic funding formula for free schools,  
would it not be better just to scrap the free schools  
policy and actually put money into schools, such as  
those in deprived areas of Hull, that are seeing cuts to  
teachers and services?

**Justine Greening:** We need to get a balance between  
investing in the existing school estate, as the hon. Lady  
sets out, and planning ahead to ensure that we have  
school places and schools for children who are coming  
into our school system, particularly the secondary school  
system. All that we are saying with free schools is that  
the long-standing monopoly that councils had on being  
the only organisations that could introduce a new school  
into an area should change, and we changed it so that  
communities can set up their own schools if they want.  
That is what many have done and that is why we have  
seen so many free schools established. We will continue  
with that pipeline so that more of that can happen in  
the future.

**John Stevenson** (Carlisle) (Con): Like many, I welcome  
the commitment to the national funding formula. I am  
also confident that schools in Carlisle will welcome the  
increase in spending over the next few years. Can the  
Secretary of State also confirm that the very successful  
pupil premium funding will continue as is, and that  
there are no plans for it to form part of the national  
funding formula?

**Justine Greening:** I confirm that the pupil premium  
will be maintained. The pupil premium is important,  
and it has been a significant driver of how we have  
managed to begin steadily reducing the attainment gap  
between children in our country.

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab):  
Before the election, the Secretary of State would only  
commit to two years' implementation of the funding  
formula and would give no commitment to implementing  
the rest of the formula post-2020. Today's statement  
refers to a longer transition period. How long will it  
take to implement the full spending formula changes?

**Justine Greening:** I will set out our response to the  
consultation more fully in the autumn. As the hon. Lady  
says, we will need to come forward with more details.  
Today I am being clear about the overall level of funding  
going into schools while also, I hope, giving colleagues  
reassurance on specific elements before we set out our  
full plans in September.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I welcome the Secretary  
of State's statement. One headteacher has already emailed  
me to indicate that it will be worth about £300 per pupil.  
As the Secretary of State will know, Torbay schools have  
been underfunded for many years due to the inequities  
in the current funding formula. Can she confirm that  
the per-school funding amounts will quickly be available  
so that those schools will not have to rely on a dodgy  
website?

**Justine Greening:** Once we have done our analysis  
over the summer, we will make the per-school spreadsheets  
available. I hope that people will look at them, because  
they will contain the actual reality of school funding,  
rather than some of the falsehoods that are being  
peddled.

**Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab):  
Does the Secretary of State accept that, with schools  
having to pay £575 million in employer contributions to  
the teachers' pension scheme and £625 million in national  
insurance contributions, and with inflation at 2.9%, the  
£1.3 billion that has been announced will barely cover  
those costs?

**Justine Greening:** I do not agree. What is important is  
that we are able to maintain the rates of per-pupil  
funding in our schools. That is what I have set out  
today, and we can only do it because we have a strong  
economy that is creating jobs, growth and taxes that  
fund our vital public services. We must not fall into the  
trap of thinking that, every time we want to increase  
our public spending, we have to reach into the public's  
pocket and raise taxes. That is simply not sustainable.  
Neither is it sustainable to have increasing debt when  
our debt interest is still more than the amounts we are  
investing every year in our schools and high-needs  
funding. It is vital that we have a long-term strategy to  
deal with that debt, and I believe that we can make our  
departmental budget work more effectively and, in doing  
so, get more money to the frontline of schools. That has  
to be the first port of call for anyone in my role, rather  
than simply resorting to higher taxes or more debt.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): As a parent and  
a Member of Parliament for a rural constituency, I  
welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. May I urge her,

583

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

584

as the new formula is finessed, to keep at the forefront  
of her mind the higher cost of staffing and running a  
school in a rural area, compared with schools in an  
urban setting? I hope that will be reflected in any  
formula.

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend has done a good  
job of raising that issue and setting out his local area's  
concerns. This was part of the consultation we launched  
earlier this year, to which we have had 25,000 responses.  
We have gone through most of them, but we will set out  
our full response in September. Suffice it to say that I  
recognise those issues, and I am looking to get it right.

**Julie Cooper** (Burnley) (Lab): I appreciate that the  
Secretary of State does not yet have the details of what  
she is proposing, but parents and headteachers in my  
constituency will have listened to her announcement  
and will be wondering, as I am, what it will mean for  
our schools. We were expecting cuts of up to £700 per  
pupil in some of the most deprived schools in my  
constituency under the fair funding proposals. Can I  
now go back and reassure my constituents that the  
funding cuts to all the schools in my constituency will  
now not go ahead?

**Justine Greening:** The hon. Lady can be clear about  
the fact—I hope she will welcome it—that today's statement  
means there will be higher per pupil funding for every  
school in her constituency and every local area. I very  
much hope her local authority passes on those gains  
directly to schools.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): I, too, warmly welcome the Secretary of State's  
announcement on the fair funding formula, and I declare  
an interest, as a proud father of three children who will  
benefit as a result of it. Will she confirm that every  
parent with children at schools in Dorset and Poole,  
which have been historically underfunded, will benefit  
and that no school in my constituency will lose out as a  
result of her announcement?

**Justine Greening:** I can confirm that we will give local  
authorities the funding to make sure that what my hon.  
Friend has said is indeed the case. That is why this is an  
important step forward; it will balance the need for  
more investment in our schools system—which is precisely  
what we are doing—with making sure it is fairly funded.  
He represents a community that will benefit from an  
improved fairness in our funding system.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Trafford  
has traditionally been an underfunded authority, so I  
welcome any attempts to introduce a fairer funding  
formula, but I have particular concerns about whether  
funding will continue to reach schools that have a high  
proportion of high-needs students. We are already seeing  
de facto rationing, as parents are experiencing long  
delays for statements—or they are not getting them at  
all. Can the Secretary of State reassure me that in  
developing this funding formula the exceptional needs  
of those high-needs children will always be protected  
and they will not pay the price for an attempt to even up  
the playing field across the piece?

**Justine Greening:** This statement will mean more  
money going into the high-needs budget, which I hope  
the hon. Lady will welcome. It is also worth reflecting

on the fact that more generally within the formula I  
have been careful to ensure that money will follow  
children who are going into primary and secondary  
already behind, in order to help them to catch up. We  
looked at this in several different ways to make sure that  
no child was not getting the appropriate amount of  
investment. My concern in doing all of this was the fact  
that a child growing up in her community would get a  
very different amount invested in them than they would  
if they had grown up in a very different part of the  
country. That is iniquitous and we need to change it. I  
am delighted to be able to say that we are introducing  
fair funding, so we will change that for the better.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): I  
congratulate my right hon. Friend on today's statement.  
Schools in my constituency will be delighted to hear  
that per-pupil funding is being protected in real terms,  
and taxpayers in my constituency will be delighted to  
hear that it is being done through departmental efficiencies.  
Does she agree that paying for this by putting additional  
borrowing on to future generations really would be  
robbing Peter to pay Paul?

**Justine Greening:** I totally agree with my hon. Friend;  
none of these steps are easy. It would be far easier  
simply to put up tax, which is what the Labour party  
wants to do. That is not the right thing to do—never  
more so than now, given some of the challenges our  
country faces. We need to make sure we use the money  
that we are already getting efficiently, which is precisely  
what I have set out today. As I have said, the prize for  
doing that is to be able to put more money to the  
frontline of schools.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
When the Minister for School Standards met a cross-party  
delegation of Cumbrian MPs as recently as March, he  
was clear with us that it was necessary and fair for the  
schools budget overall, after having been protected, to  
now play its part in the Government's strategy of deficit  
reduction. Was he right or was he wrong?

**Justine Greening:** The hon. Gentleman is trying to  
get some politics out of what is basically a sensible  
announcement that I have made on more funding for  
schools. I am interested in what we are doing practically  
to improve education, rather than in the politics around it.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): I thank the Secretary  
of State and her Ministers for taking so much time to  
listen to my concerns about Cheltenham's schools and  
the concerns of f40 schools up and down the country  
affected by historic unfairness. This is a huge step  
forward. Will she confirm that every secondary school  
in Cheltenham will receive at least £4,800 per pupil  
regardless of additional needs funding for which individual  
pupils might be eligible?

**Justine Greening:** I have set out today that we will put  
in a floor of £4,800. I think that that is important. I  
should put on the record my tribute to my hon. Friend  
and the campaign setting out his local community's  
concerns in Cheltenham. He has done a very good job  
of being clear about local needs, and that has helped  
form today's statement.

585

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

Schools Update

586

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): Many young  
people in Bristol choose to go to St Brendan's Sixth  
Form College in my constituency rather than stay on at  
their school sixth forms. Will the Secretary of State  
categorically assure us that those pupils will benefit  
from fairer funding? At the moment their choices are  
being restricted, as are their facilities, because of cuts to  
sixth form colleges.

**Justine Greening:** Today's statement is, of course,  
about the core schools budget and high needs funding.  
There will be higher per pupil funding for every school  
and every local area. That will enable schools to do a  
better job in their local provision. The hon. Lady sets  
out some of the challenges of sixth form funding, but I  
want to reassure her and the House that we are absolutely  
committedtoensuringthatchildrenstayinawell-funded  
school system. I know that Bristol has successfully  
focused on education in recent years, and it is important  
that we work together to see that success continue.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): This statement will  
be welcomed by parents across Nottinghamshire and I  
know that the Labour party will be outside the school  
gates in my constituency once again, helping us to  
disseminate the good news. May I press the Secretary of  
State on free schools? I am glad that she is still committed  
to them, and we in Newark have seen the absolutely  
transformational effects of a good free school on a  
community. Will she confirm today that all the free schools  
due to open either this September or next September,  
including the brilliant one in Newark, the Southers  
School, will open?

**Justine Greening:** Absolutely. There is a strong pipeline  
of free schools and we are getting on with things in that  
regard. Indeed, more than that, what I have said today  
is that we are underwriting the next 140, and I am  
simply setting out that I think we can deliver that more  
cost-effectively. The reward is to release additional funds  
for the frontline of schools, including in constituencies  
such as my hon. Friend's.

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):  
I welcome the additional investment that has been  
announced today, but the Secretary of State will know  
that statements made by Ministers during the last  
Parliament on core funding and the national funding  
formula will already have been factored into schools'  
three-year business plans. As a result, schools in Greenwich  
and Woolwich and other constituencies will already  
have started to restructure and, in many cases, to lay off  
teaching and support staff. Will the Secretary of State  
confirm that there is nothing in today's statement that  
undoes the damage already done by the Government's  
direction of travel?

**Justine Greening:** The direction of travel, including in  
schools in London, has been towards higher standards.  
The real challenge is improving school standards across  
the country, so I hope that we will continue to travel in  
that direction. Having been a governor, I am sure that  
the additional funding I have set out today will be spent  
by schools, as and when they receive it.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): May I  
push the Secretary of State for a little more guidance on  
howlocalauthoritieswillallocatethemoney?Inparticular,

will she allow hon. Members on both sides of the  
House who have become more involved with spreadsheets  
and schools than they would care to be to be involved in  
the process so that we can identify which schools have  
an unfair deal within the LEA?

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend raises an important  
point. What will now happen is what happens every  
year: local authorities will consult on a formula to  
spread the money they will receive around the school  
system. We have made sure that, for the first time, as of  
2018-19, that amount will be fair, unlike in the past, and  
I encourage Members from all parties to work with  
local authorities as part of that consultation process to  
ensure that they feel that the money is being fairly  
spread. I will be clear that there is an indicative budget  
for every single school from 2018-19 onwards and I am  
sure that local authorities that do not want to pass that  
amount of money to schools will be asked why that  
is so.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mims Davies.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Thank you, Sir; lucky  
me. In my constituency surgery on Friday parents once  
against raised the issue of high needs with me, so I  
thank the Secretary of State for this statement, especially  
for its focus on that area. As she is being so bold, will  
she look at nursery funding, and post-16 funding, which  
we have heard about today, where standards can really  
make a difference to our children's generation?

**Justine Greening:** I reassure my hon. Friend that we  
have done so. Indeed, she knows that there has never  
been more additional investment in early years than  
under this Government. The good news is that the  
quality of early-years provision is getting better; that is  
to be welcomed, and it can, over time, significantly shift  
the dial on social mobility.

**Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): Iwarmly welcome  
the statement from the Secretary of State, which will  
benefit all schools in Harborough, Oadby and Wigston.  
I further welcome the fact that the funding is coming  
from efficiencies within the Department, rather than  
unfunded borrowing. There has been an excellent  
announcement that she will invest an extra £500 million  
a year in technical education. Will she confirm that  
today'smeasureisnotbeingfundedbyanyraidonthat,  
because it is an important reform?

**Justine Greening:** I take this opportunity to welcome  
my hon. Friend to the House. We are committed to  
pushingonwiththatBudgetannouncement.Iamabsolutely  
determined to make sure that that this really will be  
“a breakthrough Budget for skills”,  
as the CBI described it. We have had excellent engagement  
with employers on technical education since we set out  
our broader strategy. I assure my hon. Friend that the  
investment will be flowing in.

**Mr Speaker:** Last but not least, Rachel Maclean.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Thank you,  
Mr Speaker. I join hon. Members in welcoming this  
announcement from my right hon. Friend the Secretary

587

Schools Update

17 JULY 2017

588

of State. Schools in Redditch such as the Ipsley RSA  
Academy, whose pupils I have just been hosting in  
Parliament, will also welcome it. In Redditch, we have a  
three-tier education system. Can she confirm that the  
three-tier system will benefit from her announcement,  
just as the two-tier system will?

**Justine Greening:** I can confirm that the announcement  
will mean higher per-pupil funding for every school in  
my hon. Friend's community. That is good news for  
Redditch, and I hope that it will see continued improvements  
in standards.

Point of Order

5.47 pm

**Gareth Snell** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): I  
seek your guidance, Mr Speaker. On Friday, I was  
meant to meet the hard-working staff of Her Majesty's  
Courts and Tribunals Service in Bennett House in my  
constituency. Bennett House is leased by the Ministry  
of Justice and is scheduled for closure, and I was  
meeting staff who have concerns about those plans in  
my capacity as the local Member of Parliament. The  
meeting had to be moved, as MOJ officials informed  
staff that I would not be allowed on site, and that if I  
tried to get on site I would be prevented from doing so. I  
seek your guidance on how best I can raise this matter  
with the Ministry of Justice, and seek to ensure that  
other Members of Parliament are uninhibited by the  
Ministry in going about their constituency duties.

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Gentleman—a new, or new-ish,  
Member of the House—is alleging a breach of privilege,  
that is properly raised with me in writing. I would then  
in turn address the matter in writing. However, as he  
has not specifically used that term or made that allegation,  
but complained of what might be called—in his mind,  
certainly—an unreasonable prevention, or some sort of  
let or hindrance, this is not strictly a point of order for  
me as Chair of the House. That said, I am rather  
concerned to hear that a Government Department has  
prevented his access to a Government building in his  
constituency. The hon. Gentleman has made his concern  
clear, and it is on the record. This is ultimately a matter  
for Ministers to determine, but let me say without fear  
of contradiction and very explicitly that this is pretty  
obviously an unhelpful attitude on the part of a  
Government Department, and I would hope that a Minister  
would direct the Department not to obstruct a Member  
going about constituency business in that way.

BILL PRESENTED

HIGH SPEED RAIL (WEST MIDLANDS - CREWE) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*Secretary Grayling, supported by the Prime Minister,  
Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Greg Clark,  
Secretary Michael Gove, Secretary David Mundell and  
Secretary Alun Cairns, presented a Bill to make provision  
for a railway between a junction with Phase One of  
High Speed 2, near Fradley Wood in Staffordshire, and  
a junction with the West Coast Main Line near Crewe  
in Cheshire; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time  
tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 6) with explanatory  
notes (Bill 6-EN).*

589

17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

590

Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

*Emergency debate (Standing Order No. 24)*

5.50 pm

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the scheduling of parliamentary  
business by the Leader of the House and the implications of a  
two-year session for Standing Orders requirements.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for agreeing that this debate  
should take place. This is not a debate about a debate. It  
isaboutanimportantpointof principle: our parliamentary  
democracy and the role of this House. It is about the  
Opposition and other Members holding the Government  
to account, anditisaboutthesovereigntyof Parliament.  
This House is not supine. Our constituents—the electorate  
—expect us to be here. They voted for us, in the official  
Opposition's case, to set up our programme for change.  
This minority Government are not working.

The Standing Orders are set out in the Blue Book.  
Rules and procedures have to be consistent, certain and  
clear. What does the book say about Opposition days?  
Standing Order 14 says:

“Twenty days shall be allotted in each session for proceedings  
on opposition business, seventeen of which shall be at the disposal  
of the Leader of the Opposition and three of which shall be at the  
disposal of the leader of the second largest opposition party”.  
*[Interruption.]* Will Government Members hang on  
a second? Given the Government's announcement of a  
two-year Session, references to Sessions in Standing  
Orders should be interpreted as per year, with dates  
allocated pro rata.

The Government announced by press release:

“Rare two-year Parliamentary session...Double the length of  
a normal Parliamentary session”.

Therefore, the implication of those plain words is that  
the number of days would be doubled.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): The  
hon. Lady does not realise how lucky she is. When we  
were in opposition, we did not have the benefit of this  
Speaker in the Chair to call urgent questions with the  
frequency that he does now to the huge advantage of  
the House. We would have traded any number of  
Opposition days for the wisdom of the current Speaker—  
long may he remain in the Chair. By the time hon.  
Members actually get to an Opposition day debate, the  
Gallery is empty and the journalists have all pushed off  
having written their copy.

**Mr Speaker:** I am overcome with excitement. I am  
going to get very emotional in a moment. We are  
grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

**Valerie Vaz:** That intervention deserves no response  
whatever; I am really sorry.

Wait for this: in the 2010-12 Session, extra days were  
provided for business. Once the 20 Opposition days  
provided for in the Standing Orders had been allocated,  
a further 14 unallotted days were provided. We need  
certainty. The Government have not provided for an  
Opposition day before the summer recess, making the  
earliest Opposition day in September 2017. This means  
a staggering eight months—nearly as long as it takes to  
have a baby—without a single Opposition day, denying  
vital scrutiny of Government business. As you know,

Mr Speaker, the last Opposition day was on 25 January.  
At the same point into the parliamentary Session in  
2010-12, the Opposition were granted three Opposition  
days, and five in the 2015 Session.

We need to be clear. At business questions last week,  
the Leader of the House said in response to a question—not  
to me, although I did ask—that a date was offered in  
September. I was not aware of this Opposition day,  
whether through the usual channels or the usual suspects,  
so we need to clarify what a Session is. It is now two  
years, but we would not expect one year's worth of  
Opposition days to be allocated over those two years.  
Why is this important? Today is the 18th day that the  
new Parliament has been sitting. So far, legislation has  
been discussed only on four of those days for a total of  
just under 13 hours.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): The hon. Lady says that a Session should last  
one year. Why, then, were there only 20 days in the  
1997-98 Session, which lasted 18 months? In 2001, there  
were only 20 days. In the 2005 Session, which lasted  
18 months, there were also only 20 days.

**Valerie Vaz:** The hon. Gentleman clearly was  
not listening. The Standing Orders state exactly what a  
Session is, and the Government have extended it.

Why is this important? Decisions have to be made on  
important matters that affect our country. So far, the  
Government have been pushed to give us an answer. For  
example, my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow  
(Stella Creasy) had to table an amendment to the Queen's  
Speech. Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for  
Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) had to  
secure an emergency debate on contaminated blood to  
set up an inquiry, to which the Government conceded  
only just before the start of the debate.

As is the usual convention, Ihave askedthe Leader of  
the House several times for a debate on the Social  
Security (Personal Independence Payment) (Amendment)  
Regulations 2017, the Higher Education (Basic Amount)  
(England) Regulations 2016 No. 1205 and the Higher  
Education (Higher Amount) (England) Regulations 2016  
No. 1026, which have been prayed against. Time was  
given on 19 April but, given the interruption of the election,  
no time has been offered for that debate. The failure of  
this Government to allow a debate and a vote on the  
regulations has created growing uncertainty for students  
starting university or continuing their studies in the coming  
academic year. WilltheLeaderof theHouseconfirmthat  
the regulations have not been enacted and that there will  
be no increase for students in September? Paragraph 5  
of schedule 2 to the Higher Education and Research  
Act 2017 states that for any increases in the higher  
amount of tuition fees, it would be necessary that  
“each House of Parliament has passed a resolution”.

That has not been enacted yet, so have the Government  
sneaked this in under another Act and betrayed our  
young people?

This Government are just not working. There has  
been no justice for the 1950s women—an issue raised by  
my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Grahame  
Morris) last week. My hon. Friends the Members for  
Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) and for  
Swansea East (Carolyn Harris), and the hon. Member

591 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

592

for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands),  
have all raised this important issue, as have many  
Conservative Members.

We need a debate and a votable motion on the health  
service. There has been a 23% fall in nursing applications.  
As the shadow Health Secretary said today, more than  
12,000 surgical procedures on children and young people  
were cancelled last year—an increase of 35%. GPs are  
now charging for visits; that is obviously an end to the  
national health service as we know it.

A decision has to be made on the Swansea tidal lagoon  
before the end of July. I have a letter here that has been  
signed by 107 Members from all parties, asking that the  
Hendry review is put into effect. I also raised that  
matter at business questions.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill has now been  
published, and a number of statutory instruments will  
flow from it. Clauses 7 to 9 of the Bill all state:

“A Minister of the Crown may by regulations make such  
provision as the Minister considers appropriate”.

It is about Ministers having the power to do what they  
want. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European  
Union deflects this point. He said that if a statutory  
instrument is before the House, the House of Commons  
decided whether it debates it and votes on it. He said  
that that is in the call of the House of Commons and,  
patronisingly,

“it is what they call a statutory instrument which is, can be  
debated, can be voted on.”

Sorry, I cannot get his voice right.

The Secretary of State thinks that we should be  
debating. When was the last time the Leader of the  
House actually spoke to the Secretary of State for  
Exiting the European Union? The minority Government  
are not working.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): Will  
the hon. Lady give way?

**Valerie Vaz:** No. The hon. Lady will get the same  
answer that Mr Speaker would give—it is up to me to  
decide whether I give way. I just want to proceed.

Then there is the question of the days allocated for  
private Members' Bills: 13 have been allocated up until  
November 2018—that is 18 months, although the current  
Session lasts for two years. Why have no Opposition  
days been allocated? Are the Government scared of the  
Opposition? No dates have been agreed for Backbench  
Business debates, despite the diligence of the Opposition  
in having a Chair of the Backbench Business Committee.

I repeat the Prime Minister's words: “debate and  
discussion” are

“the hallmarks of our parliamentary democracy”,

although it seems that her Cabinet are busy trying to  
push her out. The Government need to know that, for  
our democracy to thrive, the citizens of this country  
need to have faith that their MPs will represent their  
views and not be disfranchised. It is vital for democracy  
to have debates when required by convention, and for  
the Opposition to set out what they stand for. The  
electorate need to see us at work—to see the rhetoric  
turned into action.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend  
give way?

**Valerie Vaz:** No, I am going to proceed.

If the Government truly believe in the rule of law,  
where Parliament, the Executive and the judiciary all  
play their part in upholding our democracy, the Leader  
of the House has to honour the interpretation of Standing  
Orders, clarify them, grant debates and uphold conventions  
in this Session. The key question is, is this in the public  
interest? The answer is a resounding yes.

6.1 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):**I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this  
debate. I know that you, Mr Speaker, have granted  
it with your usual focus on ensuring that Back-Bench  
voices can always been heard and on handling the creative  
tension between Back Benchers and the Government's  
right to schedule their own business. I am sure the  
temptation to be a bit teary after the example of centre  
court yesterday will never overtake you, but we are all  
grateful to you for granting this debate.

The debate gives me the chance to say that the  
business brought to this House since the general election  
is quite simply business as usual. As the House would  
expect, I will expand on that. As always happens after a  
general election, the House is getting itself in order so  
that the business can run smoothly.

Many important debates have already taken place.  
Last week, we had a vital debate on the Grenfell inquiry.  
Many powerful points were raised by Members on both  
sides of the House. It is right that we prioritised giving  
time to such a catastrophic and tragic event. This week,  
we are having a general debate on what more can be  
done to eradicate the evil of drug misuse. Today we are  
scheduled to have a debate on the intimidation and  
abuse of candidates in the general election—abuse that  
challenges the very heart of our democratic process—but  
it is now under threat because of this debate.

Those, to me, seem perfect examples of our parliamentary  
democracy working well, with lots of opportunities for  
debate. The Opposition would do well to explain to the  
House which of those debates they consider to be  
unimportant to the millions in the country who are  
relying on us to improve their lives.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): The Leader of  
the House has mentioned the need to be creative. When  
I raised a point of order about the Women Against  
State Pension Inequality Campaign, which we debated  
in a packed Westminster Hall on 5 July, the response  
was that Members need to be innovative. Well, if we  
have no Backbench Business time and no Opposition  
days, and if there is a refusal to have a votable motion,  
so that we cannot vote and express an opinion, how on  
earth can we air this important issue, which is of concern  
to not just me and other Opposition Members but  
Conservative Members, and have it resolved?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am delighted that there have  
already been five debates on this important issue and  
that there were six days of debate on the Queen's Speech  
where the Opposition chose the subjects they wanted to  
debate. There have been plenty of opportunities to  
debate whatever the Opposition want.

In addition, urgent Government legislation has been  
introduced, including the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing  
Bill and the European Union (Approvals) Bill, and there  
are a further 22 Bills in the Queen's Speech, which will  
be brought forward during this Session.

593 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

594

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): The  
bottom line is that the Government have essentially  
halved the number of days of debate the Opposition  
can nominate. How is that good for democracy?

**Andrea Leadsom:** That is simply not true, and I will  
come on to that if the hon. Gentleman will give me the  
chance.

**Sir Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire) (Con): My right  
hon. Friend should take no lectures from the Labour  
party, which, when in government, reduced Prime Minister's  
Question Time from twice a week to once a week and  
introduced the regular guillotining of Bills, thereby  
reducing debating time.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My right hon. Friend is exactly  
right to make those points. I want to be very positive  
and to talk about what we are doing.

We have been mindful of Back Benchers. As requested  
by the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee, we  
have rescheduled some of the debates that were agreed  
before dissolution. I am pleased that we have already  
found time for some of those debates, including on the  
ongoing challenge of seeking peaceful coexistence between  
Israel and the Palestinians.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): With regard to  
the intervention by—and I do mean this—my right  
hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Sir Greg  
Knight), is it not the case that when the arrangements  
for Prime Minister's questions were changed, there was  
no change to the amount of time for them, because the  
two 15-minute sessions were consolidated into one  
30-minute session, which now regularly lasts about  
45 minutes, so, in fact, there is more time than ever for  
Prime Minister's questions?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I would certainly agree that, under  
your watchful eye, Mr Speaker, Prime Minister's questions  
has become quite a lengthy experience, which I am sure  
we are all the better for.

Most Select Committee Chairs have now been elected,  
and elections to the Committees themselves will take  
place as soon as possible. The House will also know that  
sitting Fridays have been announced.

Given the outrage affected by the Opposition, we  
would be forgiven for thinking that there had been no  
opportunities at all for them to have their voices heard.  
However, in addition to the six days given to the debate  
on the Queen's Speech out of the 18 sitting days in this  
term so far—that is 40% of the time—where topics for  
debate were, of course, chosen by the Opposition, there  
have been two debates under Standing Order No. 24, six  
urgent questions, 14 Adjournment debates in this Chamber,  
15 departmental oral question times, 16 oral statements,  
24 debates in Westminster Hall and—I am sure the  
shadow Leader of the House would not wish to forget  
this—the four feisty business question sessions we have  
had in this Chamber.

It is therefore certainly not the Government's fault if  
the Opposition have failed to make good use of those  
many opportunities. They will be aware that an Opposition  
day debate has been offered via the usual channels for  
after the summer recess, in September.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): The Leader of the  
House says that the Committees will be elected in due  
course. The Labour party has carried out its elections  
today, and those Committee members will be in place  
tonight. How soon can we expect the Government to  
sort out their side of the equation?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As soon as possible, and within the  
normal timeframe for establishing Select Committees.

The Opposition make a comparison with the 2015  
general election, saying that, by the summer recess  
following the vote, Select Committees had been established  
andOppositiondayshadbeenheld.However,theelection  
in 2015 was in May, not June, and there were 32 sitting  
days between the Queen's Speech and the summer recess.  
Between the Queen's Speech and the summer recess this  
year, there will have been only 18 sitting days.

Let us look at our record on providing Opposition  
day debates versus the record when the Labour party  
was in government. Let us use the Opposition's assumption  
that each Session should be one year and that there  
should be 20 Opposition days each year. On their  
reckoning, between 1997 and 201 0, when Labour was in  
office, Opposition parties were short by 35 Opposition  
days. By the same calculation, and using the Opposition's  
assessment, they have had one more day than their  
allocation between 2010 and today.

**Chris Bryant:** I have to say that it is a bit rich of the  
Leader of the House to give us the number of days  
between the Queen's Speech and the recess, since the  
Government set the date of the recess and delayed the  
dateof theQueen'sSpeech. In1997,howmanydayswere  
there before the recess? Two. In 2001? One. In 2005?  
Five. In 2010? Two—and that is when the Conservatives  
had to cobble together a ludicrous Government. In  
2015? Five. So she is talking through a hole in her head.  
*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** It may have been a case of mistaken  
identity, but I thought I detected a Somerset burr in the  
voice saying, “Order.” My judgment is that what the  
hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) has said was  
not disorderly; whether it was in entirely good taste is a  
matter for people's judgment. However, the Leader of  
the House is a robust character, and I think she is  
unfazed. The only other observation I make at this  
stage—the Leader of the House has referred to me a  
number of times—is that, just as a point of fact, the  
tears in myeyeson Centre Court yesterday were tears of  
joy for the greatest of all time.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I felt sure, Mr Speaker, that were  
you to feel a bit emotional today, they would of course  
be tears of joy as well, so I am not inconsistent. As for  
the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), he may  
be technically correct, but he is extremely rude.

In the extended parliamentary Session of 2010-12,  
we provided extra days for private Members' Bills. The  
Standing Orders set out that electing the Chairs of Select  
Committees is a matter for political parties to agree on.  
Again, Chairs of Select Committees have been elected  
just as quickly as in previous Parliaments.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): It seems to  
me that this is descending into a rather pointless debate  
about what may or may not have happened in the past.  
Surely it is possible to get to an agreement. It is right

595 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

596

that we give the Opposition a chance to hold the  
Government to account. Surely, through the usual channels,  
we can ensure that, despite the fact that we have a  
two-year rather than a one-year Session, in broad  
equivalence they get the same number of supply days.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is exactly right.  
That is indeed what we are talking about, which is why I  
opened my remarks by saying that this is absolutely  
business as usual.

**Victoria Atkins:** Does my right hon. Friend share my  
regret that this debate about debates is potentially eating  
into the time to talk about the very serious issue of  
intimidation of parliamentary candidates in the election?  
I see that Opposition Members are sniggering. Do they  
not take democracy as seriously as me? I am concerned  
that we are eating into that important debate later this  
evening to talk about our diaries.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is exactly right.  
This is a debate about process. It is not about material  
things, and it is certainly not about things that our  
constituents care about.

In terms of respecting parliamentary supremacy—  
something that I know is very dear to you, Mr Speaker—let  
us look at the performance of my party versus the  
Opposition. Who created the Backbench Business  
Committee in 2010? My party. Who brought in elections  
to Select Committees? My party. Who introduced the  
e-petition system? My party. So in fact this Government—  
this party—have done far more for parliamentary  
supremacy than the Opposition have. So far, over 10 million  
people have signed various petitions, the Government  
have formally responded to 264 petitions, and 20 petitions  
have been scheduled for debate. The Government have  
also responded to 162 urgent questions in this House  
since 2015 alone.

This urgent debate is the result of party politics at its  
worst. Nearly 13 million people voted for Labour to  
come to this place and represent them. I do not believe  
they were voting for petty time-wasting by Labour. All  
the Opposition are doing is talking about process when  
what is important is policy. The Opposition say they  
want to talk about tuition fees—well, let us talk about  
tuition fees. We are committed to supporting all young  
people to reach their full potential, whether that means  
going to university, starting an apprenticeship, or taking  
up a technical qualification. Young people from  
disadvantaged backgrounds are now going to university  
at a record rate—up by 43% since 2009. But Labour  
Members are in a total mess over the pledge they made  
to students just seven days before the general election—a  
pledge they have now admitted would cost £100 billion,  
and was just an “ambition”, according to the shadow  
Chancellor. They should be upfront with young people  
about their plans. Is it still their policy to cancel all  
student debt, or was it a pre-election scam?

Or perhaps Labour Members would like to talk about  
the economy. This Government have shown determination  
to live within our means so that the next generation are  
not saddled with the debts of 13 years of Labour  
recklessness. We inherited the largest peacetime deficit  
ever from Labour, but since—

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab): On a point  
of order, Mr Speaker. This debate is about Opposition  
days and our ability to hold the Government to account.  
If the Leader of the House wants debates about the  
subjects she is now referring to, why does she not allow  
them rather than diverting from what this debate is  
about?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is aware that Front  
Benchers are usually accorded a modest latitude in  
developing their arguments, hence I have allowed a  
modest latitude, but I think the Leader of the House  
will shortly return to the thrust of the matter under  
debate—not what might have been under debate but  
what is under debate. I know that she will focus on that;  
I am perfectly sanguine on that score.

**Chris Bryant:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I do not think there is a “further”, but I  
will indulge the hon. Gentleman.

**Chris Bryant:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker. The Leader  
of the House has said quite categorically that she believes  
that the debate we are having now is completely irrelevant  
and the far more important one will take place later on.  
I just wonder, because I noticed the number of Conservative  
Members who stood to catch your eye earlier, whether  
you think that more Conservative Members would like  
to take part in this debate or in the debate that the  
Government have scheduled for later tonight.

**Mr Speaker:** The answer is that lots of Members are  
wanting to speak today. In this debate, which can last  
for a maximum of three hours, a lot of Government  
Back Benchers wish to speak. I am keen to accommodate  
both Government Back Benchers and Opposition Back  
Benchers, and I am certainly keen to accommodate  
would-be maiden speakers. Therefore, if we can now  
minimise points of frustration and focus on the debate,  
I think that would be beneficial to all concerned.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I was going to continue, Mr Speaker,  
to talk about the way we have sought to improve our  
ability to live within our means, and the amazing  
employment record of this Government, in an effort to  
get the Opposition to focus on what really matters.  
Nevertheless, I will not bother to talk about employment,  
but will continue on to the Opposition's desire to consider  
process.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
Does my right hon. Friend note the glorious irony that  
the Opposition have called for an emergency debate,  
and as soon as we debate anything they wish it to be  
curtailed?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Yes, I think my hon. Friend speaks  
for all of us in his observation.

I have outlined the many opportunities that the  
Opposition have had since the general election to debate  
in this House. In four days, the House rises for recess,  
but not before there are many further opportunities to  
put their views on the record. Today we are supposed to  
be debating the abuse and intimidation of candidates  
during the general election. Members on both sides of  
this House have been victims of vile abuse from anarchists

597 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

598

*[Andrea Leadsom]*

and hard-left activists, but obviously Labour Members  
are not interested. It is now unlikely that there will be  
any time for that critical debate to take place today. I  
sincerely hope that the Leader of the Opposition, having  
prevented this debate, will want to condemn in the  
strongest language the frightening and intimidating abuse  
endured by many Conservative Members, as well as a  
number of those on his own Benches.

This Government are working towards a brighter  
future for our great country. We are bringing forward  
the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and negotiating  
our exit from the European Union, fulfilling the will of  
the British people, and working to make a success  
of Brexit. We are putting in place a strong programme  
of social and economic legislation, introducing measures  
that will improve mental health provision, build the  
industries of tomorrow, and stamp out extremism and  
terrorism. These are issues that matter—

**Mr Kevan Jones:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I have to take it on trust, but I hope it is  
a point of order rather than a point of frustration.

**Mr Jones:** I know that you were deep in conversation,  
Mr Speaker, but the Leader of the House has returned  
to issues that have nothing to do with this debate. She is  
just giving a long list of what this Government have  
achieved. If she really wants those issues to be properly  
aired, why will she not give us Opposition day debates  
so that we can vote on them?

**Mr Speaker:** I note the hon. Gentleman's point. As  
far as I can tell—I hope I sense correctly—the Leader of  
the House is very likely approaching her peroration. A  
lot of Members wish to speak and there is usually a  
rough equivalence between the length of time taken by  
the Opposition spokesperson and the Government  
spokesperson. At this stage the right hon. Lady is in  
order, but I imagine that she is probably nearing the  
conclusion of her remarks.

Andrea Leadsom *rose—*

**Mr Jones:** Go on, get on with it!

**Mr Speaker:** Order. There was no need for that. It is  
rather ungracious of the hon. Gentleman to yell from a  
sedentary position. He can always adopt a gentle burr,  
like the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-  
Mogg), which is altogether more seemly.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Opposition Members are certainly  
not being very charming this evening, are they? I was  
trying to outline some of the issues that really matter to  
the people of our great country. It is in the interests of  
our country that this Government provide certainty,  
continuity and control, as we forge a new and successful  
future for the whole of the United Kingdom. I hope  
that colleagues agree that the safety, welfare and prosperity  
of this country should be our priority, and I will work  
with all willing colleagues across the House to achieve  
that.

6.21 pm

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP):  
We welcome this debate and share the concerns about  
the arrangements for this parliamentary Session over  
the next two years. We agree that clarity is needed  
on the scheduling of Back-Bench and Opposition business.

Since we have come back, the pace at which the House's  
usual arrangements have been put back in place has  
been woeful and unsatisfactory. There are only three full  
days left until the long summer recess, yet this House's  
Select Committees are still not up and running, nor do  
we know the arrangements for its Standing and Statutory  
Instrument Committees. Given that they are going to be  
particularly burdened by the repeal Bill, we need clarity  
and certainty about them.

**Lucy Frazer** (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con): I  
think I heard earlier that neither the Scottish National  
party nor the Labour party has yet agreed on its own  
members for Select Committees—

**Valerie Vaz:** We have!

**Lucy Frazer:** I am sorry if I am in error, but it is only  
recently that it has been possible to agree on Select  
Committee membership and we are about to go into  
recess.

**Pete Wishart:** I am grateful to the hon. and learned  
Lady for her intervention, because I can say with certainty  
that we are ready to supply SNP names for Select  
Committee membership, and I am pretty certain that  
the Labour party is in the same position.

You made a generous offer last week, Mr Speaker, to  
help facilitate arrangements for any political party that  
is finding it difficult to arrange its membership of Select  
Committees, but I do not know whether the Conservative  
party has approached you to fulfil that promise. It is not  
the Labour party or the SNP that is holding up the  
creation of Select Committees, but the Conservative  
party, so I ask it to make use of your very kind offer.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Could it  
be that so many Conservative Members want to take  
part in Select Committees that an election is required,  
and that a similar level of interest does not exist among  
Opposition parties?

**Pete Wishart:** I say candidly to the hon. Gentleman:  
get on with it, for goodness' sake. The Select Committees  
should be up and running before the summer recess. If  
the Conservatives cannot do that themselves, they should  
accept your offer to help them arrange it, Mr Speaker.

**Kevin Brennan:** I shall call the hon. Gentleman my  
hon. Friend. The Labour party has already held elections  
for Select Committee places. If the hon. Member for  
Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) thinks the Conservative  
party is going to have difficulties arranging its own  
membership, we could provide it with election observers  
and tellers.

**Pete Wishart:** I shall call the hon. Gentleman my  
hon. Friend, too. He makes a very good suggestion.  
How about we make use of the Office of the Speaker?  
We could send observers along to help facilitate the  
Conservative party's arrangements; and then let us get  
on with it, for goodness' sake. We are three days away  
from the summer recess. Let us get these things in place.

599 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

600

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Pete Wishart:** I will give way to the hon. Gentleman  
because I like him.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** The SNP was granted the Chairs  
of two Select Committees. I cannot quite understand  
how it was that Members of all the other parties were  
entitled to vote for different candidates, which was very  
democratic, but SNP Members were given just one  
candidate for each post, which seems rather Stalinist.  
Can the hon. Gentleman explain that?

**Pete Wishart:** That is because they were superb  
candidates, particularly the nominee for Chair of the  
Scottish Affairs Committee.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Pete Wishart:** I cannot resist the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The hon. Gentleman has left out the  
amazing abilities of the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan  
an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil).

**Pete Wishart:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has  
reminded me of that. How could I forget my hon.  
Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar?

**Chris Bryant:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Pete Wishart:** This will be the last intervention I take  
for a while, because we need to make some progress.

**Chris Bryant:** I just wanted to say that votes are still  
being cast for Labour membership of the Foreign Affairs  
Committee, so if any Labour Members have not yet  
voted, they have until 8.30 to do so. *[Interruption.]*

**Pete Wishart:** I think I am grateful for that intervention.  
It seems to have energised Conservative Members, so it  
must have been particularly good.

It is not as if this Government have been over-exercised  
or energised by business thus far. Perhaps unfairly, this  
Parliament has already been dubbed the zombie Parliament,  
but I think that that comparison gives the flesh-eating  
undead a bad name. This is turbo-charged political  
zombie-ism, but a curious type of zombie-ism, because  
the Government are not only tearing flesh from the  
public but starting to consume themselves. If we look  
around Whitehall, we see that what passes for normal  
discourse among Secretaries of State amounts to briefing  
and counter-briefing. I say to the Leader of the House  
that this is what happens when Governments do nothing—  
bad stuff happens. This is a Government at war with  
itself, where briefing and counter-briefing take precedence  
as they all jostle and compete to be the next captain of  
the SS Tory Titanic.

According to one anonymous Minister, the Chancellor  
is trying to “stymie” Brexit. If only he would get on  
with it! Apparently he believes that Brexiteers are a “bunch  
of smarmy pirates”, whatever a smarmy pirate is. I have  
an image in my head of a cross between Captain Pugwash  
and Jack Sparrow re-enacting the battle of the Thames  
between Nigel Farage and Bob Geldof. I do not know  
what a smarmy pirate is but—shiver me timbers and  
pieces of eight—I wouldn't mind being one myself.

The right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford  
Green (Mr Duncan Smith) says that the plotters should  
“just shut up for goodness' sake”,  
which would deprive this House of so much comedy  
value. The International Trade Secretary says that members  
of the Cabinet “should drink less prosecco”. And there  
was I thinking, “Cheap prosecco? Surely only the finest  
champagne is good enough for my Conservative friends.”  
According to the Transport Secretary, there is nothing  
to see here, concluding:

“We're not a group of clones.”

Well, thank goodness for that. It is no wonder that the  
Government do not want scrutiny when they are in such  
chaos and turmoil.

I agree with the Leader of the House on one thing,  
namely the question of public enthusiasm for this debate.  
During my surgeries over the weekend, I did not notice  
any banners calling for more Opposition days for the  
Labour party or for sorting out the membership of  
statutory Committees. The issue is important, however,  
and I think that our constituents expect us to come  
down here to ensure that we arrange the optimal conditions  
for debate and scrutiny and get on with the job of  
ensuring that this Government are held to account.

This is a very different type of Parliament. Perhaps  
that will excuse the Government's behaviour in not  
getting things back in place. I do not think there has  
been such uncertainty about a Parliament lasting a full  
term since the 1970s and the days of Callaghan and  
Wilson. The Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 has proved  
to be possibly the biggest waste of parliamentary time in  
history. It was supposed to give certainty to the scheduling  
of parliamentary debates, but it was always going to fail  
when a Government wanted to have an early election,  
assisted by an Opposition who would not be able to resist.

We therefore have a Parliament and Government on  
political life support, always requiring emergency treatment  
and always vulnerable to the infection of events as they  
try to define some sense of purpose and meaning. The  
Government's condition is all their own fault. After  
hubristically and unnecessarily calling an early election  
to try to take advantage of the crisis and chaos that they  
observed in the Labour Opposition, they have returned  
humbled, embarrassed, diminished, chaotic and in turmoil.

This is most definitely a House of minorities, and the  
way in which we conduct our business and scrutinise  
legislation must reflect that. Arrangements must be put  
in place to ensure that the new political arithmetic  
across the House is observed. That is why it has been  
profoundly disappointing that instead of rising properly  
to the challenge, the Government have done all they can  
to frustrate, delay and thwart the creation of all the  
arrangements that are essential for proper scrutiny in  
these new conditions. The Government's main strategy  
has been to try to make their legislative programme as  
opaque, meaningless and uncontentious as possible.  
They hope that we will get bored and take little interest  
in it, so that they will not lose any votes in Parliament.

The only thing that will be contentious—the one big  
deal of this parliamentary term—will be Brexit. Of  
course, the Government are unburdened in that regard,  
too. When it comes to the main themes of the Government's  
hard Brexit, the Labour Opposition agree with practically  
everything that the Government want to achieve, whether  
the leaving of the single market, the leaving of the customs

601 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

602

*[Pete Wishart]*

union or the ending of freedom of movement. The  
Government will therefore have no difficulty getting  
their Brexit business through, on top of a legislative  
programme that is so light it is almost totally opaque.

We also have to look at what was agreed in the early  
days of this Parliament. One of the most concerning  
and damaging of all the initiatives that the Government  
have embarked on is the appalling deal that they struck,  
right at the outset, with the Democratic Unionist party.  
That deal was agreed behind closed doors, and the  
House has not had the opportunity to debate it, scrutinise  
it properly or consider its consequences—not least how  
it turns the normal and usual funding allocations for  
the nations of the United Kingdom on their head. This  
is a deal designed to buy the Government their majority,  
and it has unfortunately set the tone for this Parliament  
and defined the Government's contemptuous approach  
to their business.

The other thing that has to go, very early on, is the  
appalling and divisive English votes for English laws  
procedure, which is opposed and loathed by every political  
party in this House apart from the governing Tories. It  
is clear that it no longer secures a parliamentary majority  
in this House, and it is ridiculous that in order to get  
their business through, the Government have to rely on  
a party that is subject to the constraints of EVEL.  
EVEL is disruptive to the House, and it divides the  
membership of this House by geography and nationality.  
Its days should surely be numbered. Let us get shot of it  
from our Standing Orders and see whether we can,  
through debate, secure a solution on which we can  
achieve consensus. Let us get something that reflects  
proper scrutiny and attention and serves all the nations  
of the United Kingdom.

We need to get down to business. It is simply unacceptable  
that the Select Committees will not be up and running  
before the recess. We have had a little exchange about where  
we are in the logjam of creating the Select Committees.  
I hope that the Leader of the House will take the matter  
seriously, so that we can get on and do it. We have to  
have the Standing Committees in place. Because we  
have no Standing Committees, Bills cannot receive proper  
consideration at Committee stage, so the Government  
have had to bring Bills before Committees of the whole  
House. Three Bills have been subject to that procedure.  
No Statutory Instrument Committees have been set up,  
and, as a result, we will be considering another statutory  
instrument after this debate. The situation is clearly  
unsatisfactory, and it is unacceptable for it to continue.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): We have all been  
through a process of election. If a prospective candidate  
does not get their name in in time, it is tough; the  
election goes on without them. It is not postponed until  
the end of the summer to give the candidates time to  
sort themselves out. Should we look at something similar  
in the makeup of Select Committees: if the governing  
party does not bother to put names down for Committees,  
the Committees just go ahead and meet without them,  
so that they can get on with the job?

**Pete Wishart:** That is an elegant solution to a very  
solvable problem, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend  
for suggesting it. Perhaps the Government are listening.  
I hope that some action will be taken in the next few  
days to resolve the matter.

My understanding—the Leader of the House can  
correct me if I am wrong—is that we have not got the  
Standing Committees up and running because there is a  
dispute about the arithmetic. As I understand it, the  
Government have nine places, the Labour Opposition  
have seven places and we have two places. That would  
properly reflect the political arithmetic of this House,  
suggesting that it is a House of minorities, and it would  
mean that the Government had to work just that little  
bit harder in Committee to get their business through.

What would be clearly unacceptable—this seems to  
be happening, and I hope it stops soon—would be for  
the Government to subvert the Committee stage by  
either bringing legislation to a Committee of the whole  
House, here in the Chamber, or looking to make all  
their amendments on Report. That would fly in the face  
of nearly everything we understand about the normal  
business of getting legislation through Parliament.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The hon.  
Gentleman is making an interesting point. Everybody  
knows that the most inadequate part of the whole  
legislative process is Report stage, where the Government  
can put down amendments that are never even debated.

**Pete Wishart:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right. She  
probably shares my concern about what would happen  
if that came to pass, and the inadequacy of Report  
stage. We would have everything baled into one, with  
Report, Third Reading and, probably, statements and  
other business on the same day. Intricate, important  
pieces of legislation require proper scrutiny in the proper  
Committees of this House, and it is incumbent on the  
Government to put that process in place. Any attempt  
to subvert the normal arrangements for Bills to go to  
Committee is clearly unacceptable, and I hope that the  
House will reject any such attempt.

We have heard quite a lot about how things are  
normally set up. I am almost disappointed that the hon.  
Member for—Chris Bryant, whatever his constituency  
is. *[Interruption.]* For Rhondda. I am almost disappointed  
that he is no longer here, because he is a keen student of  
the subject, and I think he actually gave us some figures.  
The Leader of the House said that we were in an  
unusual situation because we had had a June election. I  
was elected in 2001—I think you were elected before  
me, Mr Speaker—and I remember that in 2001 we had a  
June election, but all the Standing Committees and all  
the Select Committees were in place by the summer  
recess. The election in 2001 took place on 7 June, the  
Queen's Speech was held on 20 June and all the Select  
Committees were in place and functioning by 19 July.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** The reason for that is that in  
those days it was a stitch-up by the Whips. Now we elect  
the members of Select Committees, and that is the key  
difference.

**Pete Wishart:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman,  
because he reminds me of something that happened  
during the establishment of the Select Committees in  
2001. He is right; it was a stitch-up by the Blair Whips,  
and he will remember when they tried to remove Gwyneth  
Dunwoody and Donald Anderson from the chairmanship  
of two Select Committees. That held up the creation of  
the Select Committees, but we still managed to get them

603 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

604

in place. There is absolutely no reason why the same  
cannot happen now. The example of the year of 2001 is  
a good one.

I very much agree with the hon. Member for Walsall  
South (Valerie Vaz) when it comes to Opposition days  
and the setting aside of time for Back-Bench business.  
It looks as though Back-Bench business and private  
Members' Bills will be about the most interesting features  
of this parliamentary Session.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP)  
Hear, hear!

**Pete Wishart:** My hon. Friend has a particularly  
good private Member's Bill, and I encourage as many  
Members as possible to come along and listen to him  
speak about it. Back-Bench business and private Members'  
Bills will probably be our most interesting business,  
given the laxity that we are going to see from Government  
Members, and we must have the proper time and  
arrangements for such business.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The  
Leader of the House spoke earlier about giving the  
House more time for private Members' Bills. Is that not  
an almost pointless exercise unless the Government  
reform how private Members' Bills go through the  
House, and unless they get their own Members to stop  
stymieing them?

**Pete Wishart:** My hon. Friend is spot on. I share his  
frustration, as I think most in the Scottish National  
party do, about the way in which private Members' Bills  
are progressed through the House. It is clearly unsatisfactory.  
I remember the private Member's Bill sponsored by my  
colleague John Nicolson, which was stymied by the  
Government even though we had the necessary numbers  
here. The way in which certain Members of this House—  
none of them are in their place at this point—do all  
they can to talk out and filibuster private Members'  
Bills is a disgrace to this House. Our constituents expect  
better than that. When their Members of Parliament  
are lucky enough, as my hon. Friend the Member for  
Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) has been,  
to secure the opportunity to introduce a private Member's  
Bill, it is right and proper for them to expect those Bills  
to be properly debated in the House. I hope at some  
point we will be able to reform the process.

We support what the hon. Member for Walsall South  
said about the sittings for private Members' Bills. Of  
course the number should be doubled and I really hope  
the Government do that.

There has to be a proper arrangement and a proper  
understanding about the time allocated for Opposition  
days. The Labour shadow Leader of the House was  
absolutely right that we are entitled to three Opposition  
days per parliamentary Session and we now expect six,  
given that it is a two-year Session. I hope the Leader of  
the House will confirm that.

We have to get all these things worked out. The  
arrangements of the House are clearly unsatisfactory  
and there are lots of things we need to do. I spent a  
couple of weeks in the usual channels before my hon.  
Friend the Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady)  
was put in place. I saw how the usual channels are  
working just now. There seems to be a misunderstanding

about how the different parties' requirements and  
expectations of this Parliament are to be met. I encourage  
the Leader of the House and the Whips Office to get a  
better grasp of the new reality of this House—this  
House of minorities, where nobody has a majority—and  
ensure that our business is equipped, shaped and designed  
to accommodate that new reality.

This zombie Parliament must get up and working. It  
must be allowed to do its work. It must allow the  
optimal conditions for scrutiny and empower us, as  
Members of Parliament, to do the work that our  
constituents sent us here to do. For goodness' sake, let's  
get on with it and let's do it.

6.41 pm

**Kirstene Hair** (Angus) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker,  
for calling me to speak in this important debate. I am  
disappointed that time will not allow me to contribute  
to the debate on the intimidation of general election  
candidates. Nevertheless, I will contribute fully when  
the opportunity arises, drawing on my own experiences.  
I thank the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire  
(Pete Wishart), who is from a neighbouring constituency.

It is a great privilege to be here today, delivering my  
maiden speech and representing my home constituency  
of Angus. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mike Weir,  
who served the people of Angus very well in his 16 years  
in the House. He was a prominent campaigner to save  
the local post offices in the constituency, and in the  
House he took on the role of Chief Whip for his party. I  
wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

It would be remiss of me not to mention also the  
previous Conservative and Unionist MP for Angus, the  
late Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, as he was known after  
being ennobled in 1989. He was not just a great local  
voice for his area in this House, but had a remarkable  
legal career.

The diverse constituency of Angus, nestled north of  
Dundee and south of Aberdeenshire, incorporates the  
most beautiful, dramatic coastlines to the east and  
picturesque, tranquil glens to the north-west. The five  
main towns are Forfar, Kirriemuir, Montrose, Arbroath  
and Brechin, where I was born, brought up and educated.  
There are a number of villages and rural communities  
as well.

Unfortunately, it is the residents and businesses of  
those remote areas who have suffered most significantly  
from the lack of mobile and broadband coverage. With  
the current coverage roll-out being below the national  
average, it is unsurprising that this issue has emerged at  
every single constituency surgery I have held to date. I  
will use my voice here in Westminster to ensure that the  
Scottish Government deliver connectivity right across  
Angus, ensuring that residents and businesses are not  
left behind because of where they choose to reside and  
operate.

From my agricultural roots, I understand the importance  
of this industry to Angus and to Scotland. With the  
area producing 25% of Scottish soft fruit and 30% of  
the country's potatoes, agriculture remains a significant  
contributor to the local economy. Local farmers understand  
the increasing importance of diversification and Angus  
is home to many successful projects, ranging from  
renewables to the first potato-based vodka, Ogilvy vodka,  
which is distilled locally near the village of Glamis.

605 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

606

*[Kirstene Hair]*

Glamis itself incorporates the famous residence of  
Glamis castle, the childhood home of the late Queen  
Mother. I recently attended the annual Glamis prom,  
one of the many excellent events that are held in the grounds  
of the castle, attracting thousands of people from across  
Scotland.

Attractions across Angus entice tourists from far and  
wide, whether it is to visit the many historic houses and  
gardens, to try their hand at golf on some of the best  
known courses, or to get involved in a variety of outdoor  
pursuits. Montrose port will welcome its first cruise  
ship, which is due to dock next year—a further great  
boost for our local economy and tourism industry.  
Nevertheless, I am incredibly aware that there is a power  
of work to be done to further promote the area, to  
support the current offering and to ensure that no one  
slips north into Aberdeenshire without tasting a Forfar  
bridie en route.

The businesses throughout Angus range from the  
local to the global. We have engineering and manufacturing,  
oil and gas, textiles and a highly regarded food and drink  
offering. A host of global businesses operate across every  
corner of Angus in key sectors, including pharmaceuticals  
giant GlaxoSmithKline; the Montrose textile manufacturer  
Wilkie in Kirriemuir; the marmalade, preserves and  
curds exporter Mackays in Arbroath; the textile innovator  
Don & Low in Forfar; and the design and engineering  
specialists Hydrus in Brechin. They are supported by a  
strong network of local businesses, which collectively  
are the lifeblood of our local economy, providing the  
jobs that Angus so desperately needs. As a Government,  
we must support them wherever possible, enabling both  
prosperity and longevity.

Angus has much to be proud of. However, like many  
places, it has concerns that my constituents have asked  
me to stand up and represent them on. The rate of  
unemployment, particularly among the youth, continues  
to lie above the national average due to several factors.  
The north-east oil and gas industry, which many residents  
in Angus rely on heavily, still has positivity, with new oil  
fields emerging, but the steady decline in recent years  
has had a large impact on the livelihoods of residents  
and on businesses throughout Angus. My north-east  
colleagues and I will work together with the industry  
wherever possible to support them.

As we face the challenge of Brexit, I am confident  
that the Scottish farming and fishing communities have  
the resilience to remain one of the key pillars of our  
economy. One of the greatest opportunities from Brexit  
is the chance to build a support system that works for  
Angus and for all areas of our United Kingdom.

The political landscape in Angus has demonstrated a  
clear shift in recent years. In the 2014 referendum on  
independence, we recorded an above average no vote. In  
the last three elections, there has been a considerable  
vote swing towards the Scottish Conservative and Unionist  
party. Those were strong messages to Nicola Sturgeon  
and the SNP that the time for constitutional trouble-making  
was over. Make no mistake, I and my Scottish Conservative,  
Scottish Labour and Scottish Liberal Democratic colleagues  
are as patriotic as my Scottish National party colleagues.  
We now need to ask them to remove the threat of  
uncertainty over Scotland's economy and Scotland's  
people. No ifs, no buts—a second divisive independence  
referendum should be taken off the table.

I remain optimistic for the future of Angus and the  
extensive Tay cities deal, which will directly support  
those who live and work in Angus. The planned £1.8 billion  
investment will include key programmes specifically for  
Angus, such as the Hospitalfield future plan; the  
Dundeecom public-private partnership, which will create  
a major decommissioning centre in Scotland; and, of  
course, the ambitious investment corridor from Montrose  
to the A90 that will enable the delivery of much-needed  
infrastructure, stimulating major economic growth in  
north Angus. I look forward to working with the UK  
Government and all stakeholders to drive forward the  
Tay cities deal and ensure that it delivers for Angus.

As the Member of Parliament for Angus, my mission  
is to ensure that I am the strongest of local champions,  
representing my home turf with the greatest of integrity  
and never with complacency. As a staunch Unionist, I  
will continue to fight with every fibre of my being to  
keep Scotland as part of our wonderful United Kingdom.  
Quite simply, we are stronger together and weaker  
apart. I would also like to make it clear that I am here to  
help all my constituents, no matter how or, indeed, if  
they voted. I very much look forward to standing up for  
Angus and for Scotland in this Chamber on many more  
occasions to come.

**Mr Speaker:** Very warm congratulations to the hon.  
Lady. We look forward to hearing her and getting to  
know her in this House.

6.49 pm

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): The hon.  
Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) made what could be  
termed a model maiden speech. She was robust when  
necessary, she was fluent, humorous and generous to  
her predecessors, and she stood up for what she sees as  
the vital interests of her constituency. I am sure we all  
look forward to hearing further contributions from her.  
I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall  
South (Valerie Vaz) for securing this debate, because it  
is both timely and necessary.

During my time in the House, the role of Members of  
Parliament has been seen as either to support or to  
oppose the Government of the day. People do not  
always slavishly follow the Whip in the House, and  
rightly so on occasions. Occasionally, issues of conscience  
have to be decided—for example, on end-of-life decisions  
or stem cell research—and it is right and proper that  
free votes should be held on those. On other occasions—for  
example, on our relationship with the European Union—  
people's views are perhaps too distinctive to be easily  
bracketed within the confines of party loyalty.

As we know, the outcome of the last general election  
changed the political arithmetic of this House. Until  
such time as we have a further general election, the  
potential power held by each of us, including the hon.  
Member for Angus, is greater than it has been in the  
many years that I have sat in this House. I have two  
questions on that point. Are we willing to use that  
power—in my case to bring about greater fairness and  
address injustices, some of which I will refer to shortly—and  
can we look not at what we have been in the past as a  
House, but at what we could become?

I will be brief, Mr Speaker, because I know you want  
us to stick to the issue at hand more closely, but I want  
to say a word about party allegiance and how it works

607 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

608

in the context of the House. I have spent all my adult  
life in the Labour party, and I remain in it because I  
share its values on equality and social justice. That is  
not to say, however, that we as a party have a monopoly  
on virtue. I know that hon. Members on both sides of  
the House share those values, at least to some degree. I  
have one further point of a political nature: because the  
Government have no majority, the usual argument about  
having a mandate for measures contained in the manifesto  
is weak to the point of irrelevance.

I also want to say a word about the right hon. and  
hon. Members from the Democratic Unionist party.  
Since entering into a supply and confidence arrangement  
with the Conservative party, they have, perhaps in some  
ways understandably, been heavily criticised in some  
quarters. However, that agreement does not cover every  
measurethattheGovernmentmaybringforward.Knowing  
some of the DUP Members as I do, I am confident that  
on some issues we can achieve co-operation with them  
and, certainly on some of the issues that I feel strongly  
about, I think they will share a similar outlook. It is  
thereforenotagiventhatoneveryoccasiontheGovernment  
can rely on their support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall South,  
the shadow Leader of the House, has already referred  
to the injustice of the women born in the 1950s and the  
age at which they are entitled to their state pension.  
Many of us, on both sides of the House—including,  
I suspect, Democratic Unionists—support the WASPI  
campaign. If we as a House are firm enough in our resolve  
on that subject, we could bring about a fair solution.

I also hope we can all agree that the growing inequality  
in our country is unfair and corrosive. Wherever we  
look, whether at access to housing, the life chances of  
young people or insecurity of employment, we see the  
stark reality of those consequences—reliance on food  
banks, growing homelessness and unacceptable regional  
disparities in income and support for public services.  
That also means that we need to take a more generous  
approach to public sector pay.

If the House can adapt to the new realities of our  
power and influence, we can try to resolve those problems.  
However, in order to realise that power and influence,  
we first need to take more control of our own procedures  
and achieve much greater agency in the legislative process.  
In my view, that means empowering Select Committees  
to produce White Papers and draft Bills, and giving the  
Procedure Committee and the Backbench Business  
Committee control over the programming and timing  
of private Members' Bills. It would also mean that the  
Government were held accountable for some motions  
that were carried by the House with cross-party support.  
In other words, they should be bound by some decisions  
of this House in some circumstances.

Finally, I am sure that the Government will object to  
such changes in the way that we function on the grounds  
that the House does not take responsibility for the  
financial consequences of its decisions. However, the  
Government will have to put that argument on each  
occasion and Members of this House will have to  
assume responsibility for the decisions they take. In the  
recent past, the reputation and standing of politicians  
in western democracies, not least our own, have fallen  
alarmingly, the consequences of which we see in the  
rejection of long-standing political certainties. However,  
the arithmetic of this Parliament presents us with an

opportunity to take our reputations, both collectively  
and individually, into our own hands. Do we have the  
confidence to realise what we could become? Surely we  
have a duty to at least try.

6.57 pm

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): It is a great  
pleasure to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member  
for Angus (Kirstene Hair), who delivered a superb maiden  
speech. It is a great pleasure to see her in her place today,  
and I look forward to hearing further such contributions  
from her in the months and years to come. It really was  
a fantastic start to her parliamentary career.

I fear that today's debate has been something of a  
missed opportunity. No institution, let alone Parliament,  
should be set in aspic. We need a strong parliamentary  
institution, and if that is what it is, it should evolve. It  
should have adult conversations about the way it conducts  
itself. There are strong arguments for change in the way  
the parliamentary business is scheduled, but I am afraid  
that the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz)  
didnotmakethem, andnorindeeddidthehon.Member  
for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart).

That is a great shame, because debate on improvements  
in this place, including improvements to scheduling, is  
what our constituents would expect us to cover, despite  
what some hon. Members were implying earlier. That  
should be what we discuss, and the focus should be on  
what would make us more productive and what would  
reduce the costs of Parliament, which are still considerable  
and not to be ignored. Perhaps the Opposition should  
have focused this opportunity on areas where real change  
is needed—change that has already been recommended  
by publications such as “The Good Parliament” report  
and in the work of the all-party group on women in  
Parliament.

I want to focus briefly on three of those changes,  
which I hope those on the Opposition Front Bench and,  
indeed, the Leader of the House will consider in a little  
more detail.

First, I should like a Division hour to be introduced.  
That would give all of us parliamentarians an awful lot  
more certainty about how we can plan our days. At  
present, we suffer from the archaic system of voting at  
the end of debates, and Members are very uncertain  
about when the votes may come, particularly during the  
Report stages of Bills. Division hours, which are common  
in the European and Scottish Parliaments, might give us  
the extra productivity that we now expect regularly  
from our constituents when they are going about their  
everyday work.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The  
right hon. Lady makes an excellent suggestion. Does  
she agree that we should also get rid of the antiquated  
system of walking through the Lobbies to vote, and  
follow other modern European Parliaments such as the  
Scottish Parliament by introducing a press-button system  
for Members who are present?

**Mrs Miller:** We shall have to agree to disagree, because  
I think that going through the Division Lobby is one  
way in which Members of Parliament can talk to each  
other. It can be cohesive. We can talk to Ministers about  
the policies that they are developing, for instance. I do

609 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

610

*[Mrs Miller]*

not support the idea of electronic or remote voting; I  
think that the present system creates more of a team  
within Parliament.

I do not support the idea that a vote at the end of  
every day, sometimes in the wee small hours of the  
morning, gives anyone the edge. It gives no one the  
edge. It feels as if we were re-enacting the D-day landings,  
and trying to adopt guerrilla tactics, which, in my  
12 years of being in Parliament, have never worked.  
They have never changed the outcome of a debate, or  
the outcome of a vote. I urge the Government to think  
about how they can modernise that aspect of our  
parliamentary schedule—which brings me to my next  
point.

I am reliably told by some Members who have been  
here much longer than I have that late sittings are an  
integral part of parliamentary life. I know that they are  
not as late as they have been in past generations, but we  
are still regularly here until 10 pm, as we will be tonight.  
We may not mind that, which is absolutely fine, but  
there are consequences. The late votes that we decided  
to have cost the taxpayer £5 million over the last five  
years, and those were staff costs alone: the additional  
costs of policing and security must at least double the  
amount. At what point will we, as a Parliament, realise  
that sitting until 10 pm, or voting at 10 pm, on a  
Monday is not an integral part of the work that we do?  
When will we realise that we could change that, and  
save taxpayers money? We could also improve the quality  
of life of the staff who work here, which we currently  
seem to disregard when we make decisions about the  
scheduling of our sitting hours.

**Kevin Brennan**: This matter has been considered many  
times over the years, but does the right hon. Lady accept  
that one of the issues about Mondays is the need for  
Members to travel here from far corners of the kingdom,  
many of which are much further away from London  
than her constituency?

**Mrs Miller:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I  
am very fortunate not to have the long commute that he  
may have from his constituency. Ultimately, however,  
what I am saying is that while we could decide to  
continue to have debates into the evening, voting earlier  
in the day would mean that, from the point of view of  
parliamentary staff who must currently be on standby  
throughout the evening—and who, of course, receive  
compensation as a result—we would be at least one step  
further towards modernising the shape of this place.

**Kevin Brennan:** I am not sure that I heard the right  
hon. Lady correctly. Was she suggesting that we should  
have the votes before the debates had finished?

**Mrs Miller:** No. The hon. Gentleman's party might  
do that, but we would never suggest it in ours. The hon.  
Gentleman is obviously familiar with the concept of the  
deferred division, and he will, I am sure, have looked at  
what happens in Europe and Scotland.

I was rather disappointed that the hon. Member for  
Walsall South did not talk about the importance of  
changing parliamentary scheduling to protect the work  
of Select Committees. There has been a great deal of

debate about the importance of constituting Select  
Committees, but, having chaired a Select Committee for  
the last two years—and I am very pleased to have been  
re-elected to that position—I can say that much of our  
work can come to naught as a result of the scheduling  
of parliamentary business in the House. Indeed, my  
Select Committee's trip in connection with the United  
Nations convention on the elimination of all forms of  
discrimination against women was scrapped as a result  
of a vote here, because we do not have something as  
simple as a proxy system for Members of Parliament.

Rather than talking simply about Opposition day  
debates, will Opposition Members please talk about  
other important aspects of scheduling? It is not “job  
done” when it comes to the way in which our Parliament  
operates, but today's debate has risked obscuring that. I  
think it a shame that some Members have failed to  
focus on the real issues of the scheduling of parliamentary  
business. I hope that Labour Front Benchers will support  
some of the important changes that I have suggested, so  
that we can give the House a more modern face, and  
perhaps by doing so attract a wider cross-section of  
Members of Parliament in the future.

7.5 pm

**Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): Thank you,  
Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to  
make my maiden speech during this debate. It is an  
important debate, which goes straight to the heart of  
the kind of Parliament that we are going to be. Will it be  
a Parliament that stifles debate and scrutiny, or will it be  
a Parliament that is accountable to its Opposition and  
openly democratic? I know which Parliament my  
constituents would like.

When I was first selected as the candidate for Battersea,  
11 weeks ago, many believed that I would not or could  
not win. That is why it fills me with great pleasure that  
the people of Battersea chose me to be their Member of  
Parliament. It is a huge honour for me, and I will serve  
my constituents to the best of my ability. My family  
played a vital role in supporting me during the campaign,  
and I will be forever grateful to them for the sacrifices  
that they made to help me to be elected.

Before I go on, let me pay tribute to my predecessor,  
Jane Ellison, for the work that she did in trying to halt  
the practice of female genital mutilation. I do not share  
Jane's politics, but when it comes to this truly important  
cause, she leaves a proud legacy. We are both lucky  
women to have been given the privilege of representing  
Battersea, a vibrant and exciting part of south London  
with a long and proud history. Battersea is growing, and  
it has so much to offer. Our iconic Battersea power  
station, that symbol of municipal pride, is reawakening  
along the river. Our transport hub, Clapham Junction,  
has more trains passing through it than any other  
station in Europe. Our fantastic green spaces are well  
loved and used by many, from the kids in Battersea Park  
to the sunbathers of Clapham Common. But, of course,  
it is the people of Battersea themselves who make it  
such a wonderful place, and it is to them that I owe most  
thanks.

No one should be surprised that we in Battersea, one  
of the youngest, most diverse and most well-educated  
constituencies in the country, take our politics so seriously.  
Battersea, like much of London, is changing rapidly,  
and I want to ensure that those changes benefit everyone.

611 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

612

In this last election, there was an increase not only in  
the number of young voters, but in the number of  
people turning out to vote for the first time, and with  
good reason. We are increasingly divided, not least on  
housing. Private rents have soared. Housing is insecure.  
Glistening new developments are rising up around us,  
but the cost of housing puts them way beyond reach. It  
is a scandal that people under 35 have simply been  
frozen out of home ownership. Too many people are  
confronted with housing pressures that are getting worse.

It does not have to be this way. Here in Battersea, we  
have some of the oldest council housing. The Shaftesbury  
Estate, built in the 1870s, sought to produce decent  
homes for working people. That spirit needs to be  
reignited, and we need to become pioneers again. As the  
Labour MP for Battersea, I know that I am standing on  
the shoulders of giants: politicians who were radical  
and way ahead of their time. It was in Battersea—  
Labour—in 1906 that the first working-class MP became  
a Government Minister, in the form of the ferocious  
John Burns. In 1913, we gave rise to London's first  
black mayor, John Archer, whose father came from  
Barbados and whose mother was an Irishwoman.

In 1922 Battersea became the first constituency to  
elect an Asian Labour Member of Parliament, the  
Indian radical Shapurji Saklatvala. Of course, we also  
had the heroic Charlotte Despard, the Anglo-Irish  
suffragette who dedicated her life to championing the  
rights of the poorest in Battersea, and whose statue can  
be found in the central square of Doddington estate. In  
1933, at the age of 89, her last public activity was to  
address the crowds at a big anti-fascist rally in Trafalgar  
Square. Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that I have as much  
fire in me when I am that age.

I would also like to pay tribute to my more recent  
Labour predecessors: the wonderful Lord Alf Dubs,  
whose fight on behalf of Syrian refugees has been an  
inspiration to us all; and Martin Linton, who has  
continued to champion the rights of the Palestinian  
people since leaving office.

As you can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, in Battersea we  
are outward-looking and internationalist. It is that  
outward-looking spirit that I will endeavour to bring to  
Parliament. With the decision to leave the European  
Union, we face serious challenges ahead of us. It was a  
decision that my constituents care deeply about and  
voted overwhelmingly against. I will be standing up for  
them, drawing on that outward-looking Battersea tradition,  
one that values openness, tolerance, social justice and  
co-operation.

As you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, I was born  
with nystagmus, an involuntary movement of the eye,  
which has left me with a severe sight impairment.  
Living with my visual impairment, I have had to overcome  
many barriers, but I want to give a special thanks to my  
mum, who is here today. She made sure that I had a  
brilliant education—a brilliant state education. When I  
was at primary school, the headteacher thought that it  
would be better if I was sent to a special school, but my  
mother was having none of that and fought tooth and  
nail to keep me in mainstream education. I can safely  
say that I would not be the woman I am today, or an  
elected Member of Parliament, had it not been for her.  
Mum, I am truly grateful.

I have been a disability rights campaigner for most of  
my life. I believe that people living with a disability, like  
myself, should have the right to participate in society  
equally. They should have the right to a good education,  
the right to travel and access public transport, and the  
right to work. An important issue that is dear to my  
heart is the employment opportunities for people with  
disabilities. Still today less than half of working-age  
disabled people are in employment, compared with  
80% of the non-disabled population. That is just not  
good enough. We need to change that. Over the past  
seven years, policies on social security and social care  
have disproportionately affected disabled people. When  
we discuss all these matters in this House, it is important  
that we understand and empathise with the real people  
who will be affected by our decisions.

I am proud to be here in this Chamber, and I am  
proud to be representing the people of Battersea.

7.13 pm

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I congratulate the  
hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) on  
her maiden speech and welcome her to her place. I also  
congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Angus  
(Kirstene Hair) on her excellent maiden speech, for its  
wit and wisdom and its focus on connectivity to her  
constituency.

Democracy is a system for processing conflicts, and  
in this House that lies at the very heart of our debates; it  
is truly what we have come to this place, the mother of  
all Parliaments, to do. It is absolutely right that parties  
of all colours should be able properly to hold the  
Government of the day to account. Since arriving in  
this place in 2015, I have certainly found that the  
opportunities to do so have been plentiful.

It has to be said that the calling of this debate by Her  
Majesty's official Opposition has very little to do with  
representing their constituents; to my mind, it has everything  
to do with political point-scoring. This is truly a case  
of navel-gazing by the Opposition, using precious  
parliamentary time to do so. It is a debate about debates,  
which is exactly what my constituents and theirs will  
feel angry and aggrieved about.

The reality is that the Standing Orders state that  
there should be 20 Opposition days in any one Session,  
17 of which are for the main Opposition party, which in  
this case is the Labour party—I see the Opposition  
Benches emptying. The Labour party was provided  
with those 17 days in the previous Session, which lasted  
less than year. It has been offered the usual Opposition  
day debates for the short September sittings through the  
usual channels.

However, I agree with the Scottish National party's  
Front-Bench spokesperson, the hon. Member for Perth  
and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), that voters simply  
do notwant to see this type of debate;theywant to hear  
us discussing what matters, which is jobs, opportunities,  
schools, the impact of Brexit nationwide and so much more.  
Interestingly, the hon. Gentleman also mentioned his  
frustrations with filibustering. The greatest shame tonight  
is that we will be unable to discuss properly the shocking  
incidence of nationwide abuse of candidates during the  
general election, which is something I raised with the  
Leader of the House—I received a positive reception—in  
applications for Back-Bench business debates. It is up  
to the wit and will of Members of this House to use all

613 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

614

*[Mims Davies]*

the tools at their disposal to ensure that the points and  
issues raised by their constituents are heard via co-operation,  
and indeed their own persistence.

As right hon. and hon. Members will be aware, there  
have already been plentiful opportunities for Opposition  
Members to make representations in the Chamber on  
behalf of their constituents during the debates on the  
Queen's Speech, because the Labour party of course  
had six days to choose those topics. Therefore, I join  
right hon. and hon. Friends in their disappointment  
that these complaints are being made to the Government.  
Indeed, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member  
for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) that this was purely a great  
opportunity for the Opposition to look at process,  
rather than complaints.

**Kevin Brennan:** I am enjoying the remarks of the hon.  
Lady, who debates very openly and freely. Does she not  
also agree with her hon. Friend the Member for  
Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), who pointed out  
that, given that the Government have announced a  
two-year Session, anybody can see that it is only fair  
play to consider giving Her Majesty's loyal Opposition  
some extra Opposition days so that we can do our  
constitutional job of holding the Government to account?

**Mims Davies:** I think that there are two points to be  
made in response to that intervention. First, it is up to  
the wit and wisdom of Members to use all the tools at  
their disposal, and I absolutely agree that the Opposition  
will play every trick in the book, and why would they  
not? Secondly, I have found myself in a multiplicity of  
debates since the election, so I wonder how Opposition  
Members can feel so aggrieved. I have been in debates  
about new towns, WASPI—Women Against State Pension  
Inequality Campaign—Grenfell Tower, travel infrastructure,  
school funding and so much more since my return to  
this House. I am sorry that Opposition Members have  
not found the variety of opportunities that my colleagues  
and I have found.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): My hon. Friend makes  
an important point about attendance by some Labour  
Members. Perhaps she saw the coverage of last Tuesday's  
Westminster Hall debate on managing the public finances,  
which was attended by a great many Conservative Members  
and almost no Labour Members.

**Mims Davies:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.  
Far from weakening our democracy, the Conservatives  
in this Government have strengthened it by giving our  
constituents more voices and by turning up at the  
debates that have been held.

**Chris Bryant:** The hon. Lady referred to the WASPI  
issue. What we want is a votable motion so that she can  
prove that she is with us and with the WASPI women.  
How will she vote when there is a votable motion?

**Mims Davies:** As a former chair of the all-party  
parliamentary group for women in Parliament, I certainly  
have a lot of sympathy when it comes to the WASPI  
women, but Government finances are difficult, as we  
have heard. I would certainly like us to find a way to  
help those most affected, and I have made those points  
in every single debate in which that has been possible.

We have given our constituents a chance to have  
a voice. One area in which we have done so is through  
e-petitions. I know that has happened, because I have  
found the voice of my constituents in my inbox, and  
I thank them for that. The 10 years of its operation has  
provided the chance for Parliament to reach into people's  
homes and lives, with 10 million people signing petitions  
and no fewer than 20 petitions being scheduled for debate.  
E-petitions have engaged us in various subjects in this  
debating Chamber, and I have been delighted about that,  
particularly, thinking back to my time on the Women  
and Equalities Committee, those on transgender issues.  
This Parliament is more diverse and outward-reaching  
than people will ever know, but the problem with debates  
such as this one is that we will look more enclosed.

The Government have looked to ensure that the most  
talented MPs from across the House get a chance to  
feed into in-depth policy discussions and I congratulate  
all the Members who have been elected to be Select  
Committee Chairs. By contrast, we know that during  
Labour's period in office the time for Prime Minister's  
questions was reduced and there were complaints of  
sofa-style government. In fact, the complaint was always  
that the media was told first and the Chamber second;  
we do not see that from this Government.

I will conclude as I know we are pressed for time. Her  
Majesty's Opposition have tried today to make out that  
there is one rule for us and another rule for everybody  
else. However, all of us in this Chamber are defenders of  
democracy, and we can see that if we use all the tools  
and instruments, we will have a voice for our community.  
So I think that Opposition Members would do well to  
listen to us on strengthening democracy. They should  
take a very serious look at taking a leaf out of our book  
when it comes to hearing from our constituents and  
reflecting what matters to them.

7.21 pm

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab):  
First, I want to pay tribute to the two Members who  
have made their maiden speeches this evening. I agree  
with the strong comments of the new hon. Member for  
Angus (Kirstene Hair) about the need to keep the UK  
together. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea  
(Marsha De Cordova) made a moving speech, telling us  
how she and her mother shared a determination to  
make sure that she had access to mainstream education.  
That is a tribute to the strength of a mother's love and  
also to the disability rights movement and the need to  
make sure that people with disabilities enjoy full access  
to mainstream society, education, employment and so  
forth. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend.

This debate is not just about technicalities; it is about  
the national interest, and it would behove all Members  
of this House to remember that on 8 June this country  
decided it did not want to give any one party a majority  
position and the strength to form a majority Government.  
It gave Parliament the power to shape Government  
policy potentially, and to hold the Government to account.

It is clear that the electorate expect this Parliament to  
act in the national interest and not to behave in any way  
that is deeply tribal or which puts the party interests  
before the interests of the country. In that respect,  
I found the Leader of the House's speech deeply  
disappointing. She was deeply tribal in her comments

615 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

616

and, indeed, was losing the House to the extent that two  
points of order had to be made to get her back on track.  
It is detrimental to the interests of this House when we  
have a debate about parliamentary democracy itself  
and it descends into a tribal slanging match between the  
Front Benches on different aspects of Government or  
Opposition policy. That is not what this debate is about.  
This debate is also not a parliamentary game; it is about  
democracy and the ability of Parliament to hold the  
Government to account.

I want to make a quick comment about the general  
debate on abuse of candidates in the general election,  
which was to have been held tonight. I made a short  
contribution to the debate in Westminster Hall last  
week. I do believe that all it takes for evil to prosper is  
for good people to do nothing, and I am ready to have a  
debate in the main Chamber on abuse generally in  
society and abuse of politicians within political parties  
and outside them and between them. However, would it  
not be a good idea if Conservative Members were to  
join with some of us on the Opposition Benches and  
develop a proper application to the Backbench Business  
Committee so that we can have that debate in the  
Chamber, based on support from both sides of the  
House for such a debate?

The technicalities of the current debate are clear: it is  
about the number of Opposition day debates, Backbench  
Business debates and private Member's Bill days, which  
has barely been mentioned tonight. It is also about the  
timeliness of the first Opposition day debates. I have  
looked at the House of Commons Library research on  
this and it is clear that our Opposition Front Bench has  
a strong case. The records are clear. In the first Session  
of the 1997-98 Government, which lasted 18 months,  
there were 38 Opposition day debates, and the delay  
before the first Opposition day debate after a general  
election in the last seven or eight years has been 22 days,  
22 days and 14 days. On that basis, we should have had  
that Opposition day debate by now.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:** I am following what the hon.  
Lady is saying closely. However strong the case the  
Opposition have made, does the hon. Lady think it is  
wise to ask for an emergency debate on a debate rather  
than on a specific and urgent topic?

**Angela Smith:** That point has already been made this  
evening, but the point is that we are not getting the  
space necessary for us to raise those important topics.

**Kevin Brennan:** On a point of order, Mr Deputy  
Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for North  
East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) to question the Speaker's  
ruling that tonight's debate is taking place on an urgent  
specific topic under Standing Order No. 24?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Idonot  
think we need to worry about that.

**Angela Smith:** Fortunately, the intervention of the  
hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg)  
feeds directly into my next comment. Opposition days,  
Backbench Business Committee days and private Member's  
Bill days on sitting Fridays are all very important and  
are the key means in this House of raising issues of  
concern to our voters. That precisely answers the hon.  
Gentleman's point.

Opposition days and private Member's Bill days give  
us a chance to effect real change to Government policy,  
yet we have had only 13 days allocated. The Backbench  
Business Committee is, and will be, crucial in this  
period of minority Government to developing the cross-  
party, cross-Bench relationships and the arguments  
necessary if we are to be effective as a Parliament in  
effecting real change to Government policy.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** This point has not really been raised  
in this debate, but is not the real reason why the Government  
are doing this the fact that there can be votes on those  
debates? The Government are scared of a number of  
individuals on their Back Benches doing what my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth)  
said, which is voting in the national interest rather than  
their party's interest.

**Angela Smith:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend  
and that was exactly the point I wanted to make.

The Prime Minister said only two weeks ago that she  
wanted cross-party working and a national consensus  
between the parties in order to serve the national interest.  
The Government have made a very poor start on that. If  
they want consensus, I am more than happy to play my  
part, but they need to show that they mean business and  
are ready to use the mechanisms of the House and to  
make it possible for a consensus to develop in real and  
meaningful terms in this Chamber. We have seen very  
little evidence of that so far.

I shall finish on a rather more controversial point. I  
believe that the real reason we are seeing so little action  
from the Government in providing for meaningful  
Opposition day debates or for legislation—there is still  
no Committee of Selection, and Bills are coming to the  
Floor of the House when they should not be doing  
so—is that the Government are absolutely desperate to  
avoid any kind of Back-Bench instability in the Commons.  
That is because they are so worried about the future of  
their own Prime Minister. The truth is that Government  
Front Benchers want to get beyond the conference  
season and beyond October to be sure that they still  
have this Prime Minister in No. 10. They are absolutely  
desperate to avoid any meaningful debate in this House,  
in order to shore up the Government's position. That is  
an appalling abuse of parliamentary democracy, and it  
is not in the national interest. When is this zombie  
Parliament going to end?

7.30 pm

**Kelly Tolhurst** (Rochester and Strood) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Penistone and  
Stocksbridge (Angela Smith), and I may refer to one of  
her comments later. As she knows, I very much respect  
her, having worked with her in the Council of Europe. I  
would like to congratulate the hon. Member for Battersea  
(Marsha De Cordova) on her maiden speech. Well done  
to her! I would also very much like to congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair),  
who made an absolutely wonderful speech. It is so  
lovely to see another young lady—a Scottish one—in  
the House of Commons today, so well done and thanks  
for your contribution.

I find it quite surprising that I am speaking in this  
debate. I was not going to do so, but I read the request  
that came through and I found that I could not stop

617 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

618

*[Kelly Tolhurst]*

myself. I felt that I really had to contribute. I am  
disappointed that the debate will mean that, sadly, we  
will not have time for the debate that was to follow. I am  
quite sad about that. I am very surprised that the  
Opposition have called this debate today—

**Mr Kevan Jones:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Kelly Tolhurst:** No, I want to make some progress.

I am surprised that the Opposition are complaining  
about the amount of time they have had to debate  
issues that are important to them. Since the election, we  
have had six days of debate on the Queen's Speech,  
which many Opposition Members took part in. They  
had an opportunity to have their say in those debates.  
We have also had numerous urgent questions involving  
current issues and matters that are relevant to our  
constituents. I cannot speak about what happened before  
2015, because that is when I was elected, but I have  
looked back over the past two years. There have been a  
number of debates on Government business and on  
important pieces of legislation which have not taken the  
full allocation of time because there was little appetite  
from the Opposition to join in. One occasion in particular  
takes me back.

The Children and Social Work Bill was one of the  
biggest pieces of legislation on children and social work  
for a number of years. Interestingly, it did not use up all  
its debating time on Second Reading, on Report or on  
Third Reading. However, interestingly, when we were  
debating an amendment on unaccompanied minors  
that had been tabled to grab the headlines, the Opposition  
Benches were packed. As soon as the amendment had  
passed, the Chamber emptied again. In fact, only one  
Opposition Member spoke on that Bill, which covered  
issues such as advisers for care leavers and adoption.  
Did the Opposition feel that those key issues in that  
massive piece of legislation would not quite grab the  
headlines? I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for  
Eastleigh (Mims Davies) that tonight's debate seems to  
be about political point scoring and the Opposition  
trying to grab headlines when they think it will matter.

We have two years ahead of us in which, as the  
Government make progress, to debate the biggest piece  
of legislation that this Parliament has seen for many  
years. It covers something that my constituents are  
extremely concerned about. They are concerned that we  
should debate the issues properly and that we get the  
right legislation through the House, so it is absolutely  
correct that that must be the focus on both sides of the  
House. We must have enough time to debate that issue—

**Chris Bryant:** What is it?

**Kelly Tolhurst:** It is the issue of Brexit: the laws that  
will come through and the intricacies of what will  
happen when we leave the European Union.

Really, I think the Opposition should get over themselves  
a bit. As many of my hon. Friends have pointed out,  
20 Opposition day debates have been put aside, which  
will give Labour 17 to take part in. I look forward to  
joining in those debates when they occur—*[Interruption.]*The hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones), who

is sitting at the back there, has spent the whole debate  
being quite rude, not only to the Leader of the House  
but to me. What a shame—

**Mr Kevan Jones:** May I give the hon. Lady some  
advice? If she is going to make a speech, will she please  
look at the subject before she stands up to speak? She  
said she was disappointed that this debate was limiting  
the time available for the next one, a point made by the  
hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mims Davies). If she had  
not given in to the Whips and agreed to speak in this  
debate, would we not have had more time for the next  
one?

**Kelly Tolhurst:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention—

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Kelly Tolhurst:** I will.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I thought my hon. Friend might like  
toremindthehon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones)  
about an hour-long speech he once gave in an attempt  
to filibuster a Finance Bill debate. Motes and beams  
come to mind.

**Kelly Tolhurst:** I thank my hon. Friend for his  
intervention, but I would like to go back to the hon.  
Member for North Durham's point. I am fully aware of  
what this debate is about. That is exactly why I wanted  
to highlight the poor performance of the Opposition in  
the debates on the Children and Social Work Bill. We  
had three debates on a subject that I and many of my  
constituents—including the young, looked-after children—  
care about, and it was really depressing when I had to  
go back to those children and say, “I'm very sorry, but  
the Labour party, which says it represents you, was not  
speaking up for you in the Chamber. It was the  
Conservatives who did that.”So I will make that point!

Anyway, Mr Deputy Speaker, I shall carry on. I am  
looking forward to the next two years here, in which we  
will do what the British people want. They want us  
to make sure that we deliver on Brexit. I suggest that  
Labour Members get over themselves and recognise that  
they have many opportunities to debate and to contribute  
in the House. They should just get on with it, and work  
with us to deliver what the British people want.

7.38 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I congratulate the  
hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair), who made an  
absolutely sterling, brilliant Union speech. I concurred  
with nearly everything she said in it, apart from the  
political stuff—*[Interruption.]* Well, the party political  
stuff. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha  
De Cordova)—who is not in her place at the moment—also  
made an exemplary speech. It is nice to hear a Member  
paying tribute to their mother in the Chamber, and my  
hon. Friend did that beautifully and elegantly.

It is a shame that I am following the hon. Member for  
Rochester and Strood (Kelly Tolhurst), because I am  
actually rather fond of her, having spent a great deal of  
time in her constituency contributing to the Labour  
party coming third in the by-election. She said that  
Labour Members needed to get over themselves and get

619 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

620

on with it. Yes, we would like to get on with the business  
of opposition; the problem is that we are not being  
given the Opposition days on which to be the honourable  
Opposition. That is the whole point. I apologise to the  
Leader of the House; I was rude to her earlier. I actually  
like her, and there are some things that I want out of  
her, so I am going to be nice to her now. Seriously, I was  
rude earlier, but I feel strongly about such issues.

The Government and Government Members need to  
bear it in mind that the power of the Executive in our  
parliamentary system is quite phenomenal. Standing  
Order No. 14 says that the Government have complete  
control over the timetable. They get to decide when they  
are going to give days to the Opposition, to private  
Members' Bills and to the rest, but Government business  
always takes precedence. Standing Order No. 48 says  
that only the Government can table motions relating to  
money and taxation. We do not have a proper Budget;  
we have a Budget speech. This House does not actually  
decide on the process of how money is allocated at all.  
Standing Order No. 83A means that only the Government  
can table a programme motion, so only the Government  
can decide how much time we are going to devote to  
each element. Even in the utter nitty-gritty of the Welsh  
Grand Committee, only the Government can table a  
motion under Standing Order No. 108 to say when we  
are going to have a Welsh Grand Committee, what it  
will debate and all the rest of it.

**Kevin Brennan:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who  
is also speaking through a hole in his head. It is just a  
biological fact, and I hope he does not think I am being  
rude.

My hon. Friend is describing a fundamental principle  
of this place, and that is actually what this debate is  
about—it is not a debate about debates. The principle is  
that the Government have their way, but the Opposition  
have their say. By denying us Opposition days while  
having their way about extending the Session to two  
years, the Government are breaching that fundamental  
principle of Parliament.

**Chris Bryant:** Yes, we have had several Sessions that  
lasted only several months because of early general  
elections or because, in the old days, the parliamentary  
Session started in November and then ended in the  
spring. We did not suddenly have 17 Opposition days  
because that is the fixed number of such days in a  
Session. Since Richard Crossman introduced these in  
November 1967, the whole idea of the change from  
Supply day debates to Opposition day debates was that  
the Opposition would have a fair amount of guaranteed  
time during the year.

This is not just about the Standing Orders; the  
Government have the absolute power to decide on the  
date of the Prorogation and how long a Session will be.  
That is only in the hands of the Government, not in our  
hands or the House's hands. The Government get to  
decide when we will adjourn and go into recess. Only  
Government amendments are guaranteed to be considered  
on Report, and only the Government can table an  
amendment to the Standing Orders and be certain that  
it will be debated. That is a phenomenal tying up of  
power in the hands of the Executive, and the only thing  
that the Opposition have in return is the expectation  
that the Leader of the House and the Government will  
exercise fair play.

**Pete Wishart:** I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for  
totally forgetting his constituency during my contribution.  
How could I forget that he is the hon. Member for  
Rhondda? May I suggest a solution that he may like to  
think about and put to the Leader of the House? If  
there is going to be an issue with Opposition days, one  
way around this is through unallotted days, which were  
used in 2015 to 2017. I am sure that he will remember  
that they were also used in 2001. What is the reason for  
not giving unallotted days? The Government could just  
say how many of them they were going to give.

**Chris Bryant:** They could do that. In the 2010 to  
2012 Session, the problem was that we did not know  
that it was going to be a two-year Session until the  
Session moved along. The Government kept on refusing  
to announce whether there would be a Prorogation or a  
two-year Session, so it is not an exact match with what  
we have now. The Government have already said that  
this will be a two-year Session, so they should be able to  
say that there will be a proportionate number of Opposition  
days and days for private Members' Bills and Back-bench  
business. Any ordinary member of the public would say  
that that is what everybody would genuinely expect.

The hon. Members for Eastleigh (Mims Davies) and  
for Rochester and Strood (Kelly Tolhurst) said that all  
this stuff does not really matter and that it is not about  
democracy. I would ask them just to remember that the  
big row in this House in 1939 was about whether the  
House should adjourn in August when there was a fear  
of war with Germany. That was the row. It was not  
about some grand piece of legislation; it was about  
whether the House should adjourn. Ronald Cartland—the  
younger brother of Barbara Cartland—who was killed  
while serving bravely in the second world war and who  
has a shield on the wall of the Chamber, accused  
Chamberlain of having “ideas of dictatorship” because  
Chamberlain was using the undoubted power that  
Government had to decide when the Adjournment was  
and he thought that that was wrong, especially in a  
House that was largely composed of Conservative Members.

Another problem is that the recent move towards lots  
and lots of secondary legislation might be okay if what  
the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union  
has regularly said in the House were true—namely, that  
if a piece of secondary legislation is prayed against, it  
will always come to the House—but it is not. Between  
2010 and 2016, 69 pieces of secondary legislation—statutory  
instruments—tabled by the Government were prayed  
against by the Opposition. According to the “David Davis”  
rule, it should have been guaranteed that they would be  
debated on the Floor of the House, but how many of  
the 69 were debated in the House? Three. Eight were  
debated in Committee, but the debates in Committee  
were not about whether they were good statutory  
instruments; they were on whether the matter had been  
considered. Even if every single member of the Statutory  
Instrument Committee had voted no, the measure would  
still have gone on the statute book.

When the Government come forward with something  
called the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which  
wants to give massive amounts of secondary legislative  
power to the Government, the Opposition are very  
sceptical. That is when it starts to look like, in the words  
of Ronald Cartland, “ideas of dictatorship”, not because  
any of the individual members of the Government think

621 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

622

*[Chris Bryant]*

of themselves as dictators, but because the power that  
this House has, over the years, given to Government  
over every element of the agenda is so important.

Several people have already made the point that we  
should have had an Opposition day by now. I say to the  
hon. Member for Eastleigh that there is a vital difference  
between a hot-air debate that ends with a vote on  
whether we are going to adjourn, as we had at the end  
of the WASPI debate, and a substantive motion on the  
Order Paper that has effect, either because it is legislation  
or because it is an Opposition day debate. When Labour  
were in government and had a majority, we lost an  
Opposition day debate on the Gurkhas and that changed  
what happened—several of us here have scars from that  
debate. In the end, the Government cannot always run  
away from those kind of debates. I say to Conservative  
Members that there has to come a point when the whole  
House has to consider the long-term future of how we  
do our business, not just the partisan advantage of today.

**Mims Davies:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Chris Bryant:** If the hon. Lady does not mind, I will  
not because I want to—

**Mims Davies:** You are talking about me.

**Kevin Brennan:** She has a very good point.

**Chris Bryant:** As my hon. Friend the Member for  
Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) says, the hon. Lady has a  
very good point, so I will give way.

**Mims Davies:** The hon. Gentleman is very kind. As a  
former shadow Leader of the House—I enjoyed his  
speeches when he was sitting where the hon. Member  
for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) is—will his constituents  
in Rhondda really think that the time that this House is  
spending debating parliamentary business is what we  
should be doing in the last week before the recess? I said  
in my speech that jobs, opportunities and schools are  
what really matter.

**Chris Bryant:** Of course, there are lots and lots of  
things that we should debate. I would like a debate in  
Government or Opposition time—I do not mind—with  
a votable motion on the WASPI campaign. I know  
exactly how I am going to vote, and I hope that I will  
able to persuade the hon. Lady to join us in the Lobby.  
We can have as many warm-words debates as we want,  
but if there is no vote at the end, our constituents will  
feel fundamentally let down. I say to Conservative Members  
that they would be better off having that debate sooner  
rather than later; otherwise, they will have an awful lot  
of upset people.

If the Government had a programme, I would be  
happy for us to debate that programme, but there is no  
legislation. The Leader of the House referred to the Air  
Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill, but that is not a  
Bill—it is barely a clause in a Bill. As my hon. Friend  
the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela  
Smith) said earlier, we had to debate it on the Floor of  
the House because the Government have not set up the  
Committee of Selection so that we can have a proper  
Committee to debate the thing.

I do not doubt that the Government have the power  
to do these things, but I no longer think they have the  
authority to do them. Every day they abuse that power,  
they diminish their own authority; and every day they  
stretch the gap between their power and their authority,  
they abandon government by consent and lapse into  
ideas of dictatorship. That is why the Government are  
wrong.

7.49 pm

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
In some ways I feel that Christmas has come early,  
because here we are with three hours to debate  
parliamentary procedure, one of my favourite activities.  
Indeed, I look forward to aestivating in Somerset and  
talking with my family about all the intricacies of  
Standing Orders, so I feel in many ways fortunate.

It has been a particularly happy and fortunate debate,  
with two brilliant maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the  
Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair), whose constituency  
I have had the privilege of visiting—I know its manifold  
beauties—put the case for the Union perfectly. She  
should be hired by her tourist board to encourage  
further visits to her wonderful constituency.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova)  
was so generous to her predecessor. It is one of the great  
charms of maiden speeches that we recognise in them, if  
only briefly and for the only time in our political  
careers, that people on the other side of the House are  
actually not all bad. It is very charming that that is  
done, and she did it particularly well.

Standing Order No. 14(2) is an important subject,  
and I have much sympathy with what the hon. Member  
for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) said in his well-considered  
speech. It is the job of those of us on the Back Benches  
to hold the Government to account, but the job of  
holding the Executive to account is not just one for the  
Opposition; it is one for Government Back Benchers,  
too. Our constitution works if it is balanced and if the  
Government have to make their case and their arguments,  
but this debate misfires because the Opposition have  
come to it too soon in the Parliament and have given it  
an urgency that it does not deserve.

In my earlier intervention I questioned whether it was  
wise to have asked for this debate, not whether it was  
wise to grant the debate. Standing Order No. 24 is an  
exceptionally valuable tool, and I am glad you are back  
in the Chair, Mr Speaker, because the more that Standing  
Order is used, the better.

**Kevin Brennan:** That is not what the hon. Gentleman  
said earlier, as *Hansard* will show. Standing Order No. 24,  
as he well knows, puts the onus completely in the hands  
of the Speaker to decide whether something is an urgent  
matter for debate, and the motion does not proceed if  
the Speaker does not believe it is urgent.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I questioned the wisdom of requesting  
the debate, not of granting it, which is a very important  
distinction. It is of the greatest importance that the  
Speaker, if asked for an emergency debate by the formal  
Opposition, should in almost all circumstances grant it  
because such debates are an important way of holding  
the Government to account and of inconveniencing the  
Government.

623 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

624

As the hon. Member for Rhondda said, Standing  
Order No. 14 gives enormous power to the Government  
to set out the business of this House, but the Opposition  
need opportunities to raise urgent matters. There, the  
Opposition must be wise in what they ask for.

**Kevin Brennan:** Given the hon. Gentleman has put on  
the record that he believes the Speaker should, in almost  
all circumstances, grant a Standing Order No. 24 request  
from the Opposition, I look forward to his supporting  
future applications that the Opposition will have to  
make because of the lack of time for Opposition day  
debates.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** That is where I think the Opposition  
have misfired today:

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose  
under the heaven.”

But this is not the season or the time. So much is  
happening of general urgency, and this debate strikes  
me as fiddling while Brussels burns. We have the massive  
Brexit debate to consider, we still have a huge deficit to  
be debated and we have a great housing crisis that has  
been so starkly brought to our attention by what happened  
at Grenfell Tower, and what do Her Majesty's loyal  
Opposition ask for? They ask for a debate on Standing  
Orders—a debate on a debate. A debate on conversation.  
Even for one who loves procedure and thinks it of great  
importance, can that be what is of most urgency to us  
today? It is a question of proportionality.

The hon. Member for Rhondda made many important  
points about how the House has limited powers to hold  
a strong Government to account and about how it  
should use those powers, but the Opposition have asked  
for this debate a few days into the Session, before we  
have had any real opportunity to discover how many  
Opposition days we will have, and well before it is  
decided whether additional days will be given because it  
is a two-year Session. I have no doubt that further days  
will be given. Indeed, if all 20 days have been used up a  
year from now and the Government come to the Dispatch  
Box to say that there will be no more days, I will be on  
the side of the Opposition. I would support the Opposition  
in asking for a proportional share during the second  
year of this Session, which would be only right. I would  
also be in favour of an extra three days for the Scottish  
National party, because that is what this Parliament  
ought to do, but the hon. Member for Walsall South  
(Valerie Vaz), the shadow Leader of the House, has  
misfired—this is too soon and too early, and it is not  
genuinely urgent.

**Pete Wishart:** I sort of accept the hon. Gentleman's  
point. Maybe it is a bit too early, but he knows the  
history of previous Parliaments and of how Opposition  
days were granted after the Select Committees and  
Standing Committees were up and running. It is unusual  
for those Committees not to be up and running after  
four weeks. Surely he must have some concerns about  
that.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Again, I think the hon. Gentleman is  
premature. The issue is the month lost between May  
and June. We have the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011,  
and we have gotten used to having elections in May. We  
therefore expect these things to be up and running in  
time for the summer recess, which I absolutely accept,  
but he misses the point that the election was under not

the normal procedure but the extraordinary procedure  
of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act. We therefore assembled  
a month later, closer to the summer recess. The process  
of electing Select Committee Chairmen and Select  
Committee members takes a little time, and the Opposition  
are simply being unreasonable. If we were having this  
debate in September, they would have a fair point; and  
if we were having it in October, they would have an  
outrageous point if they did not have any Opposition  
day debates by then.

This Session has hardly begun. It is in its infancy. It is  
like Sixtus, my newborn son. It is still in the mewling  
and puking stage. It has not reached the stage of toddling,  
walking and taking bold steps.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op):  
Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, when raising a  
child, one must try to instruct that child in good behaviour  
from the very beginning and not let it misbehave early  
on? Therefore, surely our role is to ensure that the  
Government do not misbehave early on.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The hon. Gentleman is a harsher  
authoritarian than I am. The strict disciplining of a  
child not yet a fortnight old would be unreasonable by  
any standards. All I can say is that I am glad not to be  
an infant in his household.

This debate is too early, and the problem with it being  
too early is that it comes when things of real gravity are  
happening. We are in as uncertain a time as I can recall.  
There is so much of gravity with which we need to  
grapple. I have said that I think and hope that you  
would grant any reasonable request by the Opposition  
for a Standing Order No. 24 debate, Mr Speaker, and  
there are so many debates for which they could have  
asked. In her opening speech, the hon. Member for  
Walsall South listed about a dozen things that could  
have been debated. If any of them had been requested  
under Standing Order No. 24, we could have had a  
sensible debate that added distinction and lustre to this  
Parliament. But standing here—I am as guilty of it as  
anyone else, but I have admitted that I am a procedural  
bore—and discussing the intricacies of procedure when  
so much is going on is not in tune with the nation and is  
not serious opposition; it is opportunism. If they can,  
the Opposition should withdraw the motion.

7.59 pm

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): I am delighted to  
be able to speak in this important debate. I thank you  
for granting it, Mr Speaker, and my hon. Friend the  
Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) for securing it.  
I wish to follow everyone else in congratulating the new  
Members, the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair)  
and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha  
De Cordova), on making superb, notable maiden speeches.

I want to confine my remarks to the procedural  
debate and the arguments we are putting forward, which  
I believe are solid and sound. Let me start by pointing  
out that the result of the general election has changed  
the role of this Chamber; power has shifted from the  
Executive to Parliament. There have been few times  
when we, as Back-Bench MPs, have had a greater ability  
to influence and shape Government policy. It is all very  
well Members suggesting that this is a needless debate,  
but I do not think that is true; people can stretch the

625 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

626

*[Grahame Morris]*

truth thin enough, but when they do that others can see  
through it. It is true that a lack of time has been  
allocated to Back-Bench business, private Members'  
Bills and Opposition day debates, and people can see  
that that is an attempt to stifle the role and influence of  
this Chamber. I sincerely hope that Back Benchers, of  
all parties, can also see that.

At the Prime Minister's recent relaunch, she reached  
out to the Labour party, asking us to

“contribute and not just criticise”.

That is a worthy sentiment. Although I may disagree  
fundamentally with the right wing of the Conservative  
party, the Prime Minister's plea to Labour was an  
attempt to stifle the Back-Bench voice in this Chamber.  
I am willing to work with parliamentary colleagues, but  
I would never vote to cut workers' rights or to privatise  
even more of our public sector services. I accept that I  
will be unable to convert many in the Conservative  
party—perhaps not any—to the benefits of re-nationalising  
our railways, abolishing university tuition fees, or increasing  
spending on social care or on other public services,  
although there are many sound arguments for doing  
such. However, there are areas of consensus, and issues  
that can bridge politics.

I had hoped the public sector pay cap would be such  
an issue. I had hoped that some Conservative Members  
would be outraged by the Chancellor's alleged comments,  
which were widely reported, about public sector workers—  
the idea that nurses, teachers, firefighters, police officers  
and prison staff were “overpaid” and receiving a  
“premium”. I would like him to tell that to the student  
nurse who contacted me over the weekend as she faced  
the prospect of sleeping in a colleague's car, because  
there were no trains after her night shift and she only  
had £10 to last the week. I hope eventually we will see  
the lifting of the pay cap. If it does not come from  
Conservative Members, perhaps their colleagues in the  
Democratic Unionist party can exert their influence  
and give public sector workers the pay rise they deserve.

I will look beyond the Prime Minister's offer to  
“contribute”, as there is little prospect of her ever  
listening to a lowly Back Bencher, particularly a socialist,  
trade union supporting Labour MP like me. So perhaps  
there is more prospect of reaching out to other Back  
Benchers, not just to criticise, but to contribute. Other  
right hon. and hon. Members have made reference to  
the Westminster Hall debate on 5 July about the women's  
state pension age and the Women Against State Pension  
Inequality Campaign. It was extraordinarily well  
attended—the Chamber was packed. It was dominated  
by Opposition Members from the Labour party, the  
Scottish National party and other nationalists, but a  
sizeable number of Conservative Members were there,  
too. There were excellent contributions by Members  
from every party, who recognised that a clear injustice  
had occurred and that the Government should take  
steps to put things right. The Government's response  
ranged from indifference to ridiculousness.

I ask Conservative Members to look at the comments  
from the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions,  
the hon. Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), who  
was here just a few minutes ago. He is not a bad  
individual and I get on with him incredibly well, but it is  
outrageous to suggest that women who have been forced

to wait longer for their state pension should be offered  
apprenticeships. For the Members who were not there, I  
can tell them that I have never heard anything like what  
I heard from the public gallery; there were gasps and  
cries of “Shame!” when the Minister made that outrageous  
suggestion. He did a disservice to the women affected,  
the Conservative party and the Government.

Although I do not have a great deal of interest in the  
reputation and popularity of the Conservative party, I  
expect many Members sitting opposite do. I certainly  
know that, privately anyway, many may disagree with  
the Government's position on the WASPI women and  
strongly believe action should be taken to right this  
wrong. As Back Benchers, we have not only a voice in  
this Parliament, but the ability to shape policy and, in  
this case, improve the lives of millions of our constituents.  
I know we do not want to have a re-hash of the debate,  
but I am trying to deal with the point that the hon.  
Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg)  
made about how we could be addressing important  
issues, as this is a crucial issue.

With all due respect to the Leader of the House and  
the Government, who determine the business, in this  
Session we seem to get involved in a lot of displacement  
activity; we are debating the same things over and over  
again, without a vote on the motion. If we do not have a  
resolution, we simply cannot move forward. We need to  
demand of the Government—this needs to come not  
only from the Opposition, but from Back Benchers—that  
they do something. I can assure Members that if we  
have consensus, or we are dealing with sensible policies  
or sensible Bills from Members from any party, I will  
give such matters my full consideration, and I hope  
others would do the same.

I ask Conservative Members to recognise that they  
have the power to demand change for the WASPI  
women. If the Government will not budge, we will have  
to demand and obtain a meaningful vote on the Floor  
of the House. I know the extent of the changes we can  
achieve will be determined by those willing to break the  
Conservative Whip, but Back-Bench MPs had only a  
small voice in the last Parliament. Now the arithmetic  
has changed and, in this Parliament, we have the power  
if we choose to exercise it. WASPI is one campaign  
where I know we have the numbers, and other hon.  
Members may be able to identify other issues or concerns;  
I have a whole bagful in relation to the Coalfields  
Regeneration Trust, the Homes and Communities Agency  
and so on. If we have a basis for consensus, we can  
achieve policy changes. If, as I suspect, we have a  
legislature that does not wish to legislate, I urge and  
implore all Members to make this Parliament the Back-  
Bench Parliament.

8.8 pm

**Mr Charles Walker** (Broxbourne) (Con): Thank you,  
Mr Speaker, for calling me to speak in this important  
debate. I love process and procedure, and I do not think  
it is to be derided or criticised. Process and procedure is  
why we settle big debates in this place and not out there  
on the streets, so there are no apologies from me.

I am delighted that we have such experts in this place  
on process and procedure. I know very little about it,  
but my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset  
(Mr Rees-Mogg) is an expert, as are you, Mr Speaker, in  
the Chair today. I do not want to sound like a crashing

627 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

628

bore in what is my maiden speech in my fourth Parliament  
—four Parliaments is quite impressive; we are moving  
in the right direction. But I would just say that the  
genuine maiden speech—

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** “Erskine May” makes it clear that  
someone's maiden speech is their maiden speech only in  
their first Parliament, so they are allowed to be interrupted  
in subsequent Parliaments.

**Mr Walker:** My hon. Friend makes that point brilliantly  
in the way that only he can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Kirstene  
Hair) made a fantastic speech, a Unionist speech, and  
touched on a part of the world I love greatly, Scotland.  
It is a beautiful country and my hon. Friend will be a  
fantastic representative for her constituency.

Although she is not in her place, the hon. Member for  
Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) made a fabulous speech  
about a part of the world I hold very dear. I was, after  
all, a councillor in Battersea, in the borough of Wandsworth,  
for many years—well, actually, for four years, but it  
seemed longer. I was a councillor for the most famous  
and celebrated ward of Battersea, Balham. If you are  
going to be a councillor anywhere in the country, why  
not Balham?

In concluding my brief remarks, let me say that it is  
always best for Governments of whatever colour to be  
generous and magnanimous. As you will know, Mr Speaker,  
in this place generosity is often abused but never despised.  
My plea to Government as we go forward is for them  
please to be generous in their approach to the Opposition  
Benches. They will be on the side of the angels if they  
are.

8.11 pm

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): I pay tribute  
to the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) and  
my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha  
De Cordova) for their maiden speeches. I pay particular  
tribute to my hon. Friend, who, as I was, was one of the  
unexpected winners that brought my party some steps  
closer to being the party of government.

With the greatest of respect to right hon. and hon.  
colleagues, I have sometimes been a bit disappointed by  
my experiences as a new Member of Parliament. The  
first disappointment I commented on was the lack of  
answers to questions and our inability to hear either  
during Prime Minister's questions. Indeed, a tweet I  
made on the subject was viewed more than half a  
million times and retweeted 10,000 times by the public,  
who no doubt share that concern. The fact that I have  
to take part in this debate today as a new Member  
without the ability to do anything substantive as an  
Opposition Member until, allegedly, October, is adding  
to my disappointment.

I, like many others, have looked towards politics since  
childhood as the route to achieving change in this  
country. I, like many other Members, have worked hard  
for years, election after election, to be elected to this  
House to try to achieve that change. Like in the children's  
novel, “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz”, I always assumed  
that if I made it to the end of the yellow brick road to  
this place I might find the wonderful wizard of government.  
Instead, much like Dorothy and her obviously disappointed  
dog, Toto, I have failed to find a Government of mandates,

leadership or stature and instead, behind the curtain, I  
have found a group of middle-aged men protecting  
their egos in a bid to take over from a lame duck Prime  
Minister.

**Andrea Leadsom:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.  
May I challenge the hon. Gentleman on whether he just  
called me a middle-aged man?

**Mr Speaker:** I hope he did not; that would be a  
serious error. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not  
accusing the Leader of the House of being a middle-aged  
man, and if he could confirm that, honour will be  
served.

**Darren Jones:** Of course I would not class the Leader  
of the House in that group of middle-aged men—but I  
am sure that she knows each and every one of them as  
they vie for the leadership of her party and, perhaps, try  
to take her position.

When Britain faces arguably her most challenging  
time since the second world war, with decisions taken  
here in this Parliament deciding what type of country  
Britain will be for the next generation, it seems to me  
that the Government need to step up to allow for  
accountability and opposition. As my hon. colleagues  
have said, this debate is about the lack of time being  
given to us, with Opposition day and Back-Bench business  
debates seemingly in short supply on the basis of simple  
parliamentary mathematics.

Many Government Members who campaigned to take  
back control and argued for parliamentary sovereignty  
for this place will no doubt share my concern. A. V. Dicey,  
the father of parliamentary constitutional theory, would  
be turning in his grave; the theories on which he built  
from Montesquieu on the separation of powers and the  
trias politica, which mean that power should be balanced  
between the Executive and the legislature, are not being  
followed because the Opposition are not being allowed  
to hold the Government to account. The balance is not  
as it should be. The taking back of control to this  
Parliament, as opposed to the Executive, is failing. With  
a Government entirely consumed by their chaotic  
management of Brexit, seemingly more interested in  
self-preservation than the national interest, it must be  
left to the Opposition to act as a party of government  
with a mandate for government in our manifesto to  
ensure proper debate on the issues about which my  
constituents are concerned.

Dare I say that it is no longer acceptable for Ministers  
to stand up and say, “Everything will be fine; we are a  
great nation”? Blind patriotism detached from the real  
world will only show us as a country out of touch and  
out of control. That is why we must be allowed proper  
time for debate in this House, to help the Government  
understand the reality of their inaction. My frustration  
at the news yesterday was a prime example, as Ministers  
decided to waste their time by briefing against each  
other instead of getting on with the job in hand. That  
frustration might have been calmed by the knowledge  
that I would have the opportunity to debate the issues  
of the day in a grown-up, professional and respectful  
fashion in this House, in the way my constituents expect  
of us and for the reasons they elected me to this House  
in the first place. But it seems that that most normal of  
asks is being thwarted by the Government, so it is with

629 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

630

*[Darren Jones]*

great disappointment that I find myself having to make  
this speech in support of the motion from my hon. Friend  
the Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), arguing  
for what should be normal debate in this Parliament.

Although you might not be able to resolve my  
disappointment, Mr Speaker, at what I found behind  
the curtain of power, I hope that this House will put the  
national interest above power games and party political  
concerns and allow proper time for debate and scrutiny.

8.17 pm

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): It is a  
pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bristol North  
West (Darren Jones). I, like other hon. Members, am a  
bit disappointed that the debate has eaten into time that  
we might otherwise have used for the debate on abuse  
and intimidation of candidates and the public during  
the general election campaign, particularly as at the  
weekend, when I was trying to enjoy some quiet time  
with my family, a member of the public went to the  
considerable extent of getting my private number to  
phone me up and tell me that she disliked me and what I  
stood for so much that she was not surprised I got death  
threats. That was a charming start to the weekend with  
my family. But this is also an important debate, and it is  
important that we consider the scheduling—or rather,  
the lack of scheduling—of parliamentary business before  
the recess.

We have heard two excellent maiden speeches. The  
hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair) made an  
accomplished speech and I thank her for the gracious  
comments she made about our friend and colleague,  
Mike Weir, our previous Chief Whip. I respect her  
Unionist views and I hope that she will respect my  
wishes for my country to become independent in due  
course. She is very keen for the SNP to take independence  
off the table according to what she says were the wishes  
of her constituents in 2014, but I remind her that last  
year her constituents voted by a significant majority to  
remain part of the European Union. She might also like  
to ask the Government to take Brexit off the table if she  
is so keen on her constituents' wishes.

We also had a fantastic maiden speech from the hon.  
Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova). She is not  
in her place, but I found it a fascinating history of her  
admirably diverse constituency and a very moving tribute  
to her mother in assisting her in the battle with her  
disability. I am sure that she will be a fantastic advocate  
in this House for those of our constituents who have to  
deal with disability in their lives.

As hon. Members have said, there can be no doubt  
that this Government seem to be running scared of  
scrutiny. The very reason we had an unnecessary general  
election four or five weeks ago was that the Prime Minister  
wanted to avoid scrutiny by getting herself such an  
enormous majority that this House would not scrutinise  
her effectively, but she did not get her wishes, and now  
we have a hung Parliament in which there is the possibility  
of true scrutiny. But she need not despair; she need only  
look north to Holyrood for an example of a minority  
Government who have managed to bring forward a full  
legislative programme in their first year that includes  
groundbreaking legislation on child poverty, and the  
Social Security (Scotland) Bill, which will put fairness,

dignity and respect at the heart of Scotland's social  
security system; that is not what happens in the system  
under which the rest of the UK labours.

It seems that the Prime Minister is running rather  
short of ideas. Those of us in Scotland who fought Tory  
candidates in the general election, as I did—successfully,  
I am glad to say—will be aware that the Tories in  
Scotland had only one policy. People are beginning to  
wonder what the Tory party stands for. What is it here  
to do? What do the Government exist to do, other than  
take Britain out of the European Union in the most  
inane and hapless fashion possible?

What will the new Scottish Conservative Members of  
Parliament do in this Parliament to scrutinise the  
Government? What will they do with their time here?  
Clearly the Prime Minister's estimation of their abilities  
is such that she has had to ennoble one of their colleagues  
who was defeated by my hon. Friend the Member for  
Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) and shove  
him into the House of Lords to be a Minister, because  
she does not think that the Tory MPs are up to it. I  
wonder if she is right, as they have shown a remarkable  
ignorance, since they got here, of the difference between  
devolved and reserved powers—rather like the drafters  
of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, it seems. I  
would like to make a generous offer: I would be happy  
to recommend an undergraduate law student from my  
alma mater to give the Conservatives a little tutorial on  
the difference between reserved and devolved powers,  
so that they can cope with this Parliament.

**Pete Wishart:** As the Scottish Conservatives are 13 in  
number, it is quite possible that they could inflict a  
Government defeat, if they chose to. They said that  
they would work for Scotland's interests; does my hon.  
and learned Friend remember exactly what they did in  
response to the appalling deal between the Government  
and the Democratic Unionist party that was put forward?

**Joanna Cherry:** I do, and as somebody who is LGBT,  
I find the deal with the DUP particularly obnoxious,  
but it is not just my rights that I am bothered about; it is  
everyone's human rights, including women's reproductive  
rights and human rights generally. *[Interruption.]* An  
hon. Gentleman shouts at me to give over, but human  
rights are important to some of us in this House. I am  
happy to tell him that I will not give over on human rights.

My hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North  
Perthshire asked what the Conservative Tory MPs would  
do to represent the interests of voters in Scotland. We  
are promised an immigration Bill sometime this Parliament.  
There is no sign of it yet. One thing that Conservative MPs  
could do is respect the wishes of business in Scotland.  
The Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Institute  
of Directors have said—

**Pete Wishart:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it  
right and appropriate that while my hon. and learned  
Friend makes a speech, Tory heavies stand at the Bar of  
the House and heckle and chunter away, though they  
are not part of this debate?

**Mr Speaker:** I had not heard the alleged chuntering.  
Hon. Members certainly should not chunter; it is unseemly  
behaviour. The hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh  
South West (Joanna Cherry) is a robust individual and

631 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

632

is well able to fend for herself, but they should not stand  
in an aggressive, Mafioso posture. It is rather disagreeable  
and quite unnecessary.

**Joanna Cherry:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Perth and North Perthshire.

**Mark Pritchard** (The Wrekin) (Con): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope this is a point of order rather  
than a point of advertisement.

**Mark Pritchard:** Not to correct the hon. Member for  
Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), but may I  
confess that it was not the Whips chuntering? It was my  
good self, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** That is both candid of the hon. Gentleman  
and, arguably, a first.

**Joanna Cherry:** My hon. Friend the Member for  
Perth and North Perthshire, some hon. Gentlemen and,  
of course, the Speaker, are gallant, but I can assure  
them that I have no difficulty with the chuntering going  
on to my left. It certainly will not put me off my stride.

I was suggesting that the Government need to bring  
forward a debate on the Floor of the House on the basis  
fortheirimmigrationpolicy.Weheardduringthegeneral  
election campaign that the Prime Minister wants to  
stick with the unrealistic targets that she has missed for  
seven years. The reason why the targets are unrealistic is  
that they are based on ideology, not evidence. We need  
an evidence-based debate on the Floor of the House  
about immigration policy for the whole of the UK. If  
we have that, we will see that immigrants are on average  
more likely to be in work, better educated and younger  
than the indigenous population, and that Scotland's  
demographic needs are such that we require a progressive  
immigration policy. As I said earlier, business in Scotland  
wants this; the Chambers of Commerce and the Institute  
of Directors in Scotland have said that they want the  
post-student work visa bought back, and a different  
immigration policy for Scotland, given its unique democratic  
needs. Let us have a debate about that, rather than  
about process.

Countries such as Canada and Australia manage to  
operate differential immigration procedures within their  
federation. Professor Christina Boswell of the University  
of Edinburgh has produced an excellent report evaluating  
the options for a differentiated approach to immigration  
policy in Scotland. There is cross-party support in  
Scotland for the post-study work visa; even the Scottish  
Tory party supports its return, so what will the Tory  
MPs do about that, and when will we have a debate  
about it on the Floor of the House?

Another important issue from the last Parliament is  
the plight of child refugees in Europe. Many of us,  
including Conservative Members, fought for their rights,  
and we got the Dubs amendment to the Immigration  
Act 2016. Last week, I attended the launch of a report  
by the Human Trafficking Foundation that followed an  
independent inquiry on separated and unaccompanied  
minors in Europe. It reveals that the UK Government  
have woefully failed those children, and that Ministers  
have done

“as little as legally possible”

to help unaccompanied children in Europe. It says that  
the Government have turned from a humanitarian crisis  
that “would not be tolerable” to the British public  
if they could see the truth of what was happening in  
France. When will we be able to hold the Government  
to account for the promises that they made when the  
Dubs amendment was agreed to, and for bringing only  
480minorstotheUnitedKingdomwhentheunderstanding  
was that they would bring in 3,000? When will we have a  
debate about that important issue? We must find time in  
this Parliament to force the Government to rectify their  
dereliction of the duty that we imposed on them when  
we agreed the Dubs amendment.

Finally, on the connected issue of human rights,  
hon. Members have mentioned the European Union  
(Withdrawal) Bill that was brought forward last week.  
Clause 5 makes it clear that the Government do not  
intend the EU charter of fundamental rights to become  
part of what they call domestic law after Brexit. This  
must be challenged and debated immediately. There was  
a time not so long ago when the Secretary of State for  
Exiting the European Union was a great fan of the  
charter. He liked it so much that he used it to take up a  
legal challenge against the “snooper's charter”, which  
ended up in the European Court of Justice, but he has  
changed his mind, and he has brought forward a draft  
Bill under which a whole swathe of rights and protections  
enjoyed by our constituents will go, if the Bill is passed  
unamended. Where is the debate about that?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The charter of fundamental rights  
only applies to citizens of the United Kingdom insofar  
as it applies to EU law. It therefore cannot have applicability  
once we have left the European Union because we will  
no longer be subject to EU law.

**Joanna Cherry:** Yes. But if, as the Government have  
promised, the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is  
going to guarantee all the rights that we already enjoy  
by virtue of our EU citizenship, the charter of fundamental  
rights should not be going. The charter defends all sorts  
of rights, such as data protection, children's rights and  
the freestanding right to equality, which are not protected  
by the European convention on human rights.

**Lucy Frazer:** Would those rights not be protected  
when incorporated into our laws as British laws,  
notwithstanding that their source was the EU?

**Joanna Cherry:** The hon. and learned Lady is ably  
illustrating why we need a debate about this. Despite the  
fact that the EU charter of fundamental rights will not  
be part of domestic law, she thinks that those rights  
will, nevertheless,stillbeprotected.Letushaveadebate  
about how we are going to do that. That is my point.  
On the face of the Bill, it looks like these rights will be  
lost.

These rights are real. Just last week in the Supreme  
Court, a gentleman called John Walker was able to  
ensure equal pension rights for his husband thanks to  
EU law. That was a timely reminder of the value of EU  
law to our constituents. Those are important rights.  
What is more important than a married couple of two  
men or two women having the same pension rights as a  
straight couple? I personally find that very important,  
as I am sure do many other Members.

633 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business

634

*[Joanna Cherry]*

We cannot afford to fall behind the standard set by  
the European Union on human rights. But, on the face  
of it, the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill seems to  
be about to do that. We must insist on parliamentary  
time to debate these issues properly. I call on the  
Government to get their act together, have the courage  
of their convictions and bring the business to the Floor  
of the House. We can then debate some of the issues  
that I, and other hon. Members, have mentioned in a  
full and frank fashion. The Government should do that,  
rather than running scared from the policies that they  
were so keen to espouse when they thought they were  
going to have a whopping majority. They are not so  
keen now.

8.31 pm

**LloydRussell-Moyle**(Brighton,Kemptown)(Lab/Co-op):  
It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speeches of myhon.  
Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova)  
and the hon. Member for Angus (Kirstene Hair).

If we get time today, we may get to a debate on the  
Youth Parliament. I am probably one of the only Members  
of the Youth Parliament when it was set up in 2000 and  
2001 who has now become a Member of Parliament. I  
reflect on that experience compared to this one. The  
kind of behaviour we now see from the Government—  
cutting down the opportunity for debate and discussion—  
would have been unheard of in the Youth Parliament.  
This is meant to be the mother of Parliaments, but it  
seems perfectly acceptable to play jiggery-pokery with  
the timetable. I wonder about the responsibility of the  
Government, and what this looks like for constituents  
out in the wider world.

Today my constituents were queuing around the block  
for more than an hour, not for a gig or a music activity,  
but to see the local doctor in Peacehaven. That is a  
regular thing for my constituents. Why? Because, of  
course, doctors'workloads have doubled, and the resources  
to our NHS have reduced. Equally, we do not have  
enough houses. Independent research shows that teachers'  
pay has reduced by £3 an hour in real terms and that  
their workloads have increased since the Conservative  
party took power. *[Interruption.]* Members on the other  
side of the Chamber may wish to chunter about that,  
but I suggest they read the research.

My constituents would be flabbergasted to think that  
we are effectively reducing our workload by covering  
the same amount in two years as we would in one. I am  
afraid that saying, “Oh, it is all because that is what it  
says in the Standing Orders” is a weak response. We  
need to take the moral high ground, not just the letter of  
the Standing Orders.

**Mark Pritchard:** May I suggest that the facts contradict  
the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks? Today we are  
having a debate about future debates, and that is democracy,  
whether he likes it or not. However, does he agree that  
we need a strong economy to pay for a strong NHS? Is  
the British model or the Venezuelan model the best way  
to pay for a strong NHS?

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** We can take from the best all  
around the world—from Scandinavia, Germany and so  
on. Germany, for example, has a strong economy and a

fairer society, unlike under this Government, where we  
have a bigger divide between rich and poor, and where  
people have not been able to access vital services.

Last week, a woman came into my surgery and said  
she had been on the waiting list for a council house for  
two years. I had to tell her that she was likely to remain  
on that waiting list for another three or four years,  
because the reality is that not enough houses have been  
built under this Government, under previous Governments  
and for a generation. Surely, we need to talk about  
making sure we can hold the Government to account  
for their policies. My constituent asked me to make sure  
her voice is heard in this Chamber. If I go back to her  
and say, “I'm terribly sorry, but we didn't quite get  
enough Opposition days to raise your urgent needs,”  
she will feel as if her voice, through me, has been taken  
away—and she will feel like that quite rightly, because it  
has been taken away. A lack of debate and Opposition  
time takes the voice away from constituents from all  
constituencies across this country.

This has happened not with a vote in Parliament but  
just with an announcement in the papers that we will  
now have a two-year period rather than a one-year  
period. *[Interruption.]* Session. I do not think constituents  
will really care what you wish to call it. They will care  
about the fact that the Government are denying them a  
voice in Parliament, not about the petty name politics  
that some Members wish to play.

I am a relatively new Member—I have been here only  
a few weeks—but if I were an employee and I suddenly  
said, “I'm not going to do my work in a year. I'm going  
to take two years to do it,”Iwould be put on capability,  
and Iwouldprobablynot have ajob. Well, Isuggestthat  
this Government are put on capability and that they  
should not have a job, because extending the amount of  
time in which to do the same amount of work in is not  
on in the workplace, and it should not be on in our  
Parliament.

What the Government could do is very simple: they  
could come here and pledge to do three things. They  
could say the same number of days per year will be  
offered for Opposition and Back-Bench business as  
there are in the Standing Orders per Session—easy-peasy.  
They should say that, make a pledge and make a  
commitment. Then we will not need to shoot our guns  
early; we will be able to sit down and relax.

The second thing the Government could easily do is  
say that there will be the same number of days in this  
Parliament for all these things as there were in previous  
Parliaments. That would be nice and easy to do. They  
could make that statement now, and, again, we could relax.

Finally, the Conservative party could get on with  
selecting its Select Committee representatives. Theycould  
get on with allowing us to scrutinise legislation. They  
could get on with the work. It is easy. The Labour party  
has managed to hold an election today. Our election  
shut 10 minutes ago. We will be announcing our  
representatives. Conservative Members could have been  
busy doing the same. Why have they not done that?  
They have been fiddling while democracy burns. Get on  
with it! That is what members of the public want: they  
want you to get on with it. That is what Opposition  
Members want: they want you to get on with it. The  
Government should agree the times, agree the days,  
make a statement, allow us to debate the issues that  
matter, and stop wasting our time by their prevarications.

635 Scheduling of Parliamentary Business 17 JULY 2017

636

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the scheduling of parliamentary  
business by the Leader of the House and the implications of a  
two-year session for Standing Orders requirements.

**ADJOURNMENT (NOVEMBER AND  
CHRISTMAS)**

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing  
Order No. 25),*

That this House—

1. at its rising on Tuesday 7 November 2017, do adjourn until  
   Monday 13 November; and
2. at its rising on Thursday 21 December 2017, do adjourn  
   until Monday 8 January 2018.*—(Andrea Leadsom.)*

*Question agreed to.*

Business of the House  
(Private Members' Bills)

8.41 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):**

1. beg to move,

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government  
business on 20 October, 3 November, 1 December 2017, 19 January,

1. and 23 February, 16 March, 27 April, 11 May, 15 June, 6 July,  
   26 October and 23 November 2018.

The purpose of this motion is to provide 13 days for  
private Members' business, in line with what is required  
under Standing Order No. 14. Given that we have already  
announced that this will be an extended Session, we will  
of course expect to provide additional days in due  
course. In the extended parliamentary Session of 2010-12,  
the Government provided extra days for private Members'  
Bills, and these were approved at a later date. The  
motion we are dealing with today covers days for private  
Members' Bills between now and 23 November 2018.  
We will therefore bring forward a motion to provide  
additional days for private Members' Bills in due course,  
which will allow us to take into account the progress of  
business and any new recess dates that are announced in  
future.

This House must balance the needs of Members to  
proceed with private Members' business with Members'  
other priorities. Members value time spent in their  
constituencies on Fridays, and scheduling additional  
sitting Fridays for private Members' Bills in 2019, with  
no regard to what pressures might exist at that time,  
could cause avoidable inconvenience. This motion is a  
proportionate way to deal with this being a longer  
Session, and I encourage the House to support it.

**Mr Speaker:** I should notify the House that I have  
selected both of the amendments on the Order Paper—the  
amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition  
and the amendment in the name of the hon. Member  
for Rhondda (Chris Bryant).

8.43 pm

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I beg to move  
amendment (a), after ‘That', insert

‘, subject to the House agreeing before Thursday 13 September 2017  
to a Motion providing for an additional 13 sitting Fridays for  
Private Members' Bills together with the necessary adjustments to  
Standing Order No.14,'

I thank the Leader of the House for moving her  
motion. I should like to speak to the amendment in the  
name of the Leader of the Opposition. I will not go  
over some of the arguments that I have made previously,  
but clearly, to our constituents private Members' Bills  
are a very important part of parliamentary business.  
Given what has been said previously, we do not have  
any confidence that the Government are actually going  
to provide us with the extra dates that the Leader of the  
House mentioned. That is why we tabled our amendment  
to provide for an extra 13 sitting Fridays.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): I am sorry to cut the  
hon. Lady off so early in her speech, but if she wants  
13 extra days will she clarify whether she is also campaigning  
for another ballot to be held in a year's time? If private  
Members' Bills from the existing ballot were given

17 JULY 2017

637 Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

*[Philip Davies]*

26 days, that would double their chances of success  
compared with an ordinary Session. That strikes me as  
unfair. Her proposal would work only if there was  
another ballot in a year's time.

**Valerie Vaz:** I really would like that ballot, and at the  
top of the list would be a request that the hon. Gentleman  
did not disrupt private Members' Bills.

Private Members' Bills are an important means for  
Back Benchers to bring issues before Parliament. Many  
outside organisations and charities also wish such Bills  
to be debated. I am deeply concerned that it has been  
very difficult for members of the public to submit  
petitions, partly because Select Committees, especially  
the Petitions Committee, have not yet been organised.  
As I have said previously, we have already picked our  
Select Committee members, but the Leader of the House  
has said that the Committees will not be sitting or even  
organised until September.

That is why it is important, for the confidence of  
Parliament and for democracy, in the interests of all our  
constituents, that time be allocated to private Members'  
Bills in line with Standing Order No. 14. The Government's  
press release states that the Session is double the length  
of a normal parliamentary Session, so we would expect  
and accept an extra 13 days.

8.46 pm

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): I had not intended to  
speak in this debate, but given that the hon. Member for  
Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) failed to answer my very  
simple question, it seems that we need to explore this  
subject a bit more deeply. Her amendment merely asks  
for another 13 sitting Fridays, while that tabled by the  
hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) goes a bit  
further and names an additional 13 Fridays. Neither of  
them, however, addresses the issue of whether they  
want an extra ballot in a year's time.

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab):  
Surely the important point is that, of the 14 Bills that  
made it on to the statute book in the previous two  
parliamentary Sessions, three came from ten-minute  
rule Bills. There are other routes to getting private  
Members' Bills on the statute book.

**Philip Davies:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her  
comment, but the problem with ten-minute rule Bills is  
that they go to the back of the queue. The Bills that get  
precedence are those that come out of the ballot—they  
are the ones that get the best slice.

Of course, I understand why the hon. Member for  
Rhondda has tabled his amendment. Obviously, if I  
were in his shoes I would make the same argument: he  
wants 26 days rather than 13 because his Bill is top of  
the list and that would enhance his chances of getting it  
through. He is arguing out of natural self-interest and I  
do not blame him for doing so. If I had come top of the  
ballot—

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab) *rose—*

**Philip Davies:** The hon. Gentleman can tell us that he  
is not arguing out of self-interest.

**Chris Bryant:** I am arguing out of the hon. Gentleman's  
interest actually, because he supports my private Member's  
Bill.

Business of the House 638

(Private Members' Bills)

**Philip Davies:** It is an ugly rumour but it also happens  
to be true: I do support the hon. Gentleman's private  
Member's Bill. It seems to me, therefore, that he does  
not need 26 days to get it through. This, however, might  
be his tactic in reserve, in case things do not go so well  
on the first day and he needs more days. I hope he will  
declare his interest when he moves his amendment.

The hon. Member for Walsall South has not given an  
explanation for her amendment. The House's Standing  
Orders are clear that there shall be 13 days for private  
Members' Bills in a Session—not a minimum or a  
maximum of 13 days, but 13 days. That is it. That  
is what is in the Standing Orders. If people want to  
meddle with those Standing Orders, they have to meddle  
with the whole thing. It is not acceptable to say, “We  
will have one ballot in this Session of Parliament, and  
we will have 26 days for that ballot.” That does not  
wash.

The hon. Members for Walsall South and for Rhondda  
could have come along with an amendment to the effect  
that over this two-year period we need to have a second  
ballot in a year's time, with 13 extra days for that ballot.  
That would be a perfectly respectable position to hold,  
and I would have a bit more sympathy with that argument,  
although I am not saying that I would support it. The  
argument that they are making—that we should have  
26 days for one private Members' Bill ballot—is completely  
and utterly unreasonable.

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab): I understand  
what the hon. Gentleman is saying about the Standing  
Orders, but the Leader of the House just announced  
that the Government may come forward with additional  
sitting days for private Members' Bills throughout the  
Session. Would he oppose those, and for what purpose  
would he suggest they should be used?

**Philip Davies:** I think the Standing Orders are perfectly  
adequate. There should be 13 days for private Members'  
Bills in a Session; that seems to me a perfectly reasonable  
number. I do not really see any justification for saying,  
in effect, that those who enter this ballot of private  
Members' Bills in this Session deserve a better chance  
of getting their Bills through than they would have  
done in any previous Session of Parliament.

**Angela Smith:** The hon. Gentleman is being generous  
in giving way. If I recall correctly, there was a motion in  
the 2010-12 Parliament to extend the number of private  
Members' Bill days on the basis of the Session being  
extra long. I cannot recall him calling for an extra ballot  
when that motion was passed.

**Philip Davies:** Just because something happened in  
the past, it does not mean that it was a good thing. The  
example that the hon. Lady has given falls into that  
category. If she looks at my voting record, she will  
notice that an awful lot of things that happened during  
the coalition years were not particularly to my taste. I  
used to vote accordingly, as the record will confirm.  
Praying in aid something that happened during the  
coalition years is not necessarily the best way to win my  
support.

My point is that this is a matter of fairness. Everybody  
enters a ballot in each Session of Parliament knowing  
that there will be 13 days in that Session when private

17 JULY 2017

639 Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

Members' Bills can proceed. We are being asked today  
to agree that in this particular ballot from this particular  
Session, MPs will have a better chance of getting their  
private Members' Bill through than they would have  
done in any previous Session.

**Mr Jones:** I understand what the hon. Gentleman is  
saying, but surely if this was a normal, year-long Session,  
the chances of getting a private Member's Bill through  
would be less even than with the 13 days. I have some  
sympathy with him about the idea of having another  
ballot, but does he really think it is fair that the number  
of days should be limited when the Session has been  
increased to more than a year?

**Philip Davies:** As I have said, I think there is an  
argument for saying that there should be 13 days for  
this ballot, and that in a year's time we should hold  
another ballot for which there would be another 13 days.  
That would give people 26 days within the Session. That  
would be a perfectly reasonable thing to request, and I  
would have a great deal of sympathy with that. But  
nobody in the Opposition appears to be making that  
case. Why can we not have another ballot in a year's  
time if we are going to have double the number of days?  
The hon. Member for Walsall South has not been able  
to answer that question. No doubt the hon. Member for  
Rhondda will have a crack at answering it, but I do not  
think that there is much of an answer.

The hon. Lady seemed to be making the point that  
we should be trying to replicate what would normally  
happen over the course of two years. What would  
normally happen over the course of two years is that we  
would have two ballots, so why has the hon. Lady not  
included in her amendment the extra ballot that would  
normally have occurred during that time? She seems to  
be cherry-picking the bits that she wants.

I say to the Deputy Leader of the House that he  
should beware such requests for supposed fairness, when  
they would actually introduce a very unfair system in  
this Session of Parliament. He should stick to his guns  
and say that for each private Member's Bill ballot, there  
should be 13 days. That is plenty of opportunity for  
people to try to get their legislation through. If people  
want another 13 days, there must be another ballot—  
something that nobody, as yet, seems to have called for.

8.55 pm

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I  
wish I could say it was a pleasure to follow the hon.  
Member for Shipley (Philip Davies). I am very fond of  
him, as he knows. He is a regular visitor at Perth races  
and we enjoy that. I say to him, in all candour, that he is  
everything that is wrong with the private Members' Bill  
system as it is currently constituted. His filibustering—his  
attempt to destroy honest attempts by Members of  
Parliament to bring legislation forward—is the thing  
that our constituents hate most about sitting Fridays. I  
wish at some point that he would just stop.

**Philip Davies:** What the hon. Gentleman ought to reflect  
on is that the first Bill that appears on a Friday needs  
just 100 people to turn up to support it. He is guilty, like  
many other hon. Members, of complaining that a Bill  
did not get passed when he could not be bothered to  
turn up and support it. If he bothered to turn up, some  
of the Bills he claims are so important would get  
through. Perhaps he should tell that to his constituents.

Business of the House 640

(Private Members' Bills)

**Pete Wishart:** Yes, of course it is a matter of 100 Members  
turning up, but we have had 100 Members here and  
private Members' Bills have been thwarted not by the  
hon. Gentleman, to be fair to him, but by the Government.  
There is something wrong and rotten in the way we deal  
with private Members' Bills in this House. We waste our  
time coming down from Scotland to participate in these  
debates, only for him to drone on, sometimes for two  
hours, to ensure that they do not proceed.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Procedure  
Committee has produced dozens of reports over the  
years—at least two in the last couple of years—outlining  
sensible reforms to the private Members' Bill system,  
many of which reflect the eminently sensible system in  
the Scottish Parliament, where a Bill that has cross-party  
support can continue to make progress. Should not that  
system be adopted here?

**Pete Wishart:** My hon. Friend is utterly right. The  
Procedure Committee has looked at the issue on several  
occasions—four that I can remember—and each time  
has made strong and sensible proposals, suggestions  
and recommendations on how we should address it.

The time is right, given that we have the two-year  
Session. Let us vow to resolve the outstanding issues in  
our private Members' Bill system and ensure that we get  
something that is fit for purpose, something that ensures  
we have the respect of our constituents and something  
that enables us to work across the parties. I would love  
to work with the hon. Member for Shipley on horse-racing  
issues or on another interest that he and I share, but we  
cannot do that because he would probably filibuster a  
Bill so that I could not get it through. I am most  
surprised that he is a sponsor of the Bill introduced by  
the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant). Perhaps  
that suggests a change in attitude and approach—a  
mellowing over the years. He might actually be  
constructively engaged in some of these issues.  
*[Interruption.]* I hear, “Don't hold your breath,” from  
one of his colleagues and I will not do so.

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): While  
the hon. Gentleman is making accusations about my  
hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), it  
may help to point out that my hon. Friend spoke for  
over an hour on my private Member's Bill and made  
some very constructive points, even though he opposed  
it. He did not just oppose it for opposition's sake.

**Pete Wishart:** I am actually a great fan of the speeches  
by the hon. Member for Shipley. He has a unique talent  
for filibustering. I just wish he would not do it on  
private Members' Bill days, when we are trying to get  
things through the House. He seems to be able to speak  
for hours and hours on these things. It is something that  
new Members of the House might have to look at to see  
howtodoit.

We will support the amendments put forward by the  
hon. Member for Rhondda and the Labour Front Bench.  
We fundamentally and profoundly agree that we must  
have a routine for private Members' Bills that respects  
the fact that this is a two-year Session of Parliament. To  
have 13 days for private Members' Bills is clearly insufficient.  
I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Shipley  
that the Rolls-Royce solution is to have another ballot

642

641

17 JULY 2017

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

*[Pete Wishart]*

next year. That is something that the Government will  
not do, so what should we do in the face of the  
Government's refusal to do that? Surely the sensible  
approach is to ensure sufficient time for the private  
Members' Bills that we already have, which would possibly  
allow more to progress through this House than we  
would normally expect.

**Mrs Anne Main** (St Albans) (Con): The hon. Gentleman  
said that it would be the Rolls-Royce solution to have a  
second ballot—my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley  
(Philip Davies) made a perfectly good point about  
that—but nobody has asked for that and it is not in the  
amendment.

**Pete Wishart:** How about the hon. Lady and I campaign  
to ensure that we get that in place? If she agrees with  
me—some of her hon. Friends look like they might also  
agree with her—let us do it, because that is surely the  
solution we need. Now, we will not get that—the  
Government have made it clear that it will not happen—so  
what we need is an arrangement for the existing private  
Members'Billsthatproperlyreflectsthetwo-yearSession.

We have a long affection for private Members' Bills  
on these Benches. We had the first SNP private Member's  
Bill last year, when Eilidh Whiteford, the former Member  
for Banff and Buchan, got her private Member's Bill on  
the Istanbul convention through the House—it was  
probably opposed by some Conservative Members. Last  
year we had four private Members' Bills in the top 10  
—there were some fantastic ones proposed—but we  
were really pleased for our former colleague Eilidh  
Whiteford and proud that she managed to get hers  
through the House last year. We also have two this time  
round, and I look forward to the fantastic private  
Members' Bills to be proposed by my hon. Friend the  
Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan  
MacNeil) and by my hon. Friend the Member for  
Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald)—they  
are no longer in their places. I look forward to hearing  
them support their Bills in the House.

We need certainty about private Members' Bills, because  
while it is quite easy for some colleagues on the other  
side of the Chamber to get back and forth to the House  
of Commons on Fridays, it is not so easy for Members  
from Scotland. Getting down to the House of Commons  
to take part in these debates involves getting on a plane  
which takes probably in the region of four to seven  
hours. We therefore need certainty about when sitting  
Fridays will be, and we are grateful to the Leader of the  
House, who has listed the seven sittings we will secure  
over the next year.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con):  
I declare an interest as the person who came fifth in the  
private Members' Bill ballot—the highest on this side of  
the House. By the hon. Gentleman's logic, he is arguing  
for more sitting Fridays, when it would be even harder  
for people from Scotland to come down here, and  
nowhere in his argument does he acknowledge the fact  
that the most important stage of a Bill's progress is  
Committee, which can go on for weeks and weeks and is  
not subject to any of the criticisms of what may happen  
on a Friday. Surely that is an important part of a Bill's  
progress, yet he is making no proposals about that, and  
it is not being curtailed.

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

**Pete Wishart:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman,  
because he makes a very good point about the Committee  
stage of private Members' Bills—there is one that I  
particularly support and I hope to be a member of the  
Committee. What I am asking for is not to abandon  
these sitting days, but to have certainty about when they  
will be available. We are grateful that the first ones have  
been listed, but if we are to have further days for  
consideration of private Members' Bills, as the Leader  
of the House seemed to suggest, surely it is only right,  
proper and appropriate that they are listed now, so that  
we get that certainty. We have to make a massive effort—  
maybe not the effort that the hon. Gentleman has to  
make—to get to this House readily and easily. It is not  
easy to get down here and back from Perthshire on a  
Friday. This is about ensuring certainty about the dates.  
The Leader of the House suggested that there might be  
further days; all we are asking is that we get them in  
place.

I will end by saying a little about private Members'  
Bills and their importance to the House. Our constituents  
like private Members' Bills. I can tell new Members that  
they will probably be lobbied on private Members' Bills  
more than on any other pieces of legislation in their time  
as Members of Parliament. People like that private  
Members' Bills are usually cross-party and consensual,  
and they like the way that private Members' Bills are  
usually on issues that they feel are important to them,  
so let us make sure that we respect our constituents' wishes.  
Given the vacuity of the Government's legislative  
programme, it also has to be said that private Members'  
Bills will probably be the most interesting and exciting  
Bills that we will consider in this Session, so let us make  
sure that we get the necessary time to consider them  
properly.

I will end with one plea. Of course we will support  
the amendments, but let us get the whole issue of  
private Members' Bills properly resolved, so that we do  
not have my friend the hon. Member for Shipley continuing  
to talk them out.

9.4 pm

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): I am grateful to you for calling me, Madam  
Deputy Speaker. As a new Member, I hope you will  
excuse me for not being entirely au fait with all the rules  
and procedures of this place. When it comes to the big  
principles, however, I can say that I was elected by the  
people of Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport to create  
action, and to shine a light on some of the historic  
procedures that we have in this place.

The motion strikes me as incredibly sound and  
reasonable. It proposes that in a normal parliamentary  
Session, which is generally a year, a set number of days  
should be allotted to private Members' Bills, as should  
happen in the case of Opposition day debates.

**Philip Davies:** And ballots.

**Luke Pollard:** Indeed.

If the procedures are to be changed in such a way that  
a year becomes two years—the Session becomes larger  
and the aeon, or era, goes on for longer—we should  
reflect that in the way we operate in this place.

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

Business of the House 644

(Private Members' Bills)

643

17 JULY 2017

I am frustrated because I did not come into Parliament  
to talk about procedure, and part of me really dislikes  
my standing up and speaking in this way. I was elected  
to come here and deliver action. If the Government are  
not able to implement their manifesto because of the  
arithmetic of this place and the unpopularity of some  
of their policies—both on their own Benches and among  
the public—Back Benchers on both sides of the House  
should be able to introduce legislation that will make a  
difference, be it small in some cases or large in others. It  
is the promise of Westminster to all Back Benchers that  
they will be able to change the law of the land to help  
their constituents, and that is what I think we should be  
discussing here today.

Having watched the proceedings of the House on  
television, I am now part of those proceedings as a new  
Member. The idea of filibustering on Bills is something  
that the majority of our electorate find abhorrent. They  
want to see politicians achieve change by having debates.  
The possibility that we will not have opportunities to  
introduce legislation is something that I imagine people  
in Plymouth and elsewhere will find a little curious.

I do not want to play procedural games, if only  
because I am surrounded by people who are, I fear,  
much better at it than I am. Let me simply say that if we  
are to have a Session that lasts for two year, not one, it  
seems logical and fair to me—both as a new Member  
and as someone who is trying my best to represent the  
people who elected me—for the number of private  
Members' Bills to be scaled according to the length of  
the Session.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): Is it not also  
an issue that our constituents who are watching all this  
expect us to come here for a certain number of days?  
The fact that Her Majesty's Opposition are absolutely  
totally useless, and would really rather we were not here  
at all—[HON. MEMBERS: “Her Majesty's Opposition?”] I  
am happy to replace the word “useless” with a number  
of other adjectives. But is it not also true that our  
constituents expect us to be here for 13 sitting Fridays,  
when we can discuss private Members' Bills?

**Luke Pollard:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her  
intervention. As someone who fought the 2010 and  
2015 general elections, I spent seven years trying to get  
to this place, and I do not mind spending a few more on  
sitting Fridays, helping legislation along the way.

What worries me about this debate is that, to the  
average folk in Plymouth, it looks as though we are  
playing procedural games. We are not spending the time  
debating food banks or the crisis in our national health  
service. We are not looking into why the M5 stops at  
Exeter and does not extend to the Tamar bridge and  
Plymouth. We are not discussing the issues that arise on  
the doorstep. We are discussing procedural games because  
the Government have chosen to play those procedural  
games, cancelling the Queen's Speech and elongating  
this Session without correspondingly carrying over measures  
in a fair way. That tactic strikes me as a 1970s throwback  
and something that should have been consigned to the  
past. We should be striving for a 21st-century Parliament  
with 21st-century procedures and policies, which would  
enable Back Benchers to introduce legislation if they so  
chose.

**Philip Davies:** Has the hon. Gentleman told the  
Opposition Chief Whip that tonight will mark the end  
of procedural games in Parliament? According to my  
experience of being on the Opposition Benches, procedural  
games are one of the few things that Oppositions have  
at their disposal to try to cause trouble for the Government.  
Has the hon. Gentleman clarified with the Chief Whip  
that the Labour party is tonight ruling out the use of  
procedural games during the current Parliament?

**Luke Pollard:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that  
intervention—I think that is the polite response I am  
supposed to give. I want to talk about food banks and  
the issues that really matter. I appreciate that he has  
strong views on the matter, but so do I. My view is that  
the opportunity that Back-Bench Members have to  
bring forward legislation in a two-year Session should  
be proportionate to that which they have in a single-year  
Session.

My name was not drawn in the private Members'  
Bills ballot, but if it had been I would bring forward  
legislation to extend the voting franchise to 16 and  
17-year-olds, which I think would be a perfect antidote  
to what is happening in this debate. Instead of locking  
ourselves in the past with procedures that do not reflect  
the everyday, common decency of the pub that would  
say, “If you have a one-year Session, you have this  
number of days for private Members' Bills; if you  
extend the Session by this much, you extend the numbers  
of days by this much,” we could talk about how to get  
young people involved in politics, which would hopefully  
shine a light on the workings of this House and make  
them better and fairer.

When I go back to Plymouth for the recess, I want to  
be able to hold my head up high and say that I was  
defending my constituents' rights and responsibilities in  
this place. As a lowly Back Bencher, I want to be able to  
support other Back Benchers bringing forward legislation  
that could make a difference. The Government seem to  
be caught like a rabbit in the headlights of their party's  
right wing, unable to bring forward the manifesto that  
they were elected on, unable to propose the solutions  
that we really need, and unable to stand up to scrutiny  
on various issues. Let us bring forward those debates on  
WASPI and the public sector pay cap, and the private  
Members' Bills that would allow each and every one of  
us to adjust something along the way. For a baker's  
dozen of extra private Members' Bills, I hope that the  
House will support the amendment.

9.11 pm

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab):  
The Opposition's view on the motion is not about  
causing trouble; it is about maintaining an important  
democratic principle of this House, which is that in a  
two-year Session that has already been declared it is  
perfectly legitimate and fair that the Government should  
allocate a proportionate number of days for private  
Members' Bills. They could do that tonight if they  
wanted to. That is why we support the amendments on  
the Order Paper.

I want to refer briefly to some of the successful  
private Members' Bills that reached the statute book in  
2016-17, to illustrate the importance of that route and  
of sitting Fridays. The Merchant Shipping (Homosexual  
Conduct) Act 2017, introduced by the hon. Member for

646

645

17 JULY 2017

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

*[Angela Smith]*

Salisbury (John Glen), is really important legislation  
that omits from the Criminal Justice and Public Order  
Act 1994 the sections that make homosexual acts grounds  
for dismissal from the crew of merchant ships. It makes  
society fairer and eliminates very serious discrimination  
from the statute book.

**Mr Kevan Jones**: The need for that legislation came to  
light when we were passing the Armed Forces Act,  
when we were able to remove that provision in relation  
to the armed forces but not in relation to the merchant  
navy. That came forward as a private Member's Bill,  
rather than the Government using their time to do it.

**Angela Smith:** My hon. Friend strengthens and enhances  
my point. We need the route offered to us by private  
Members' Bills to correct failures by Government to  
deal with such important issues.

The Scottish National party Front-Bench spokesperson,  
the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete  
Wishart), has already referred to the very important  
measure introduced by the previous Member for Banff  
and Buchan, Eilidh Whiteford, the Preventing and  
Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic  
Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017, which  
relates to ratification of the Istanbul convention. The  
House overwhelmingly agreed to that on a sitting Friday  
through the private Member's Bill route, yet even now  
the Government have not acted upon the instructions of  
the House. Rather than denying the democratic rights  
of Members of this House, the Government would do  
better to spend their time ensuring that the democratic  
will of the House is observed in letter and in spirit.

Finally, I want to refer to two measures predating  
2016-17. My Bill did not immediately make it on to the  
statute book but became law when the dangerous dogs  
legislation made it possible to prosecute people for dog  
attacks that occurred on private property. It took about  
five years to get it on to the statute book, but we got  
there in the end. The private Member's Bill route—the  
Friday sittings—made that possible.

The co-operation of both Front Benches in the closing  
months of the 2010-15 Government made possible the  
Control of Horses Act 2015, introduced by the hon.  
Member for York Outer (Julian Sturdy). Why can we  
not have that co-operation now? If the Government  
believe in consensus, they should act on it and give us  
the time on Fridays.

9.15 pm

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): I will be brief.  
Unusually, I find myself in agreement with the hon.  
Member for Shipley (Philip Davies). We are perpetuating  
the myth that we as individual Back Benchers are  
legislators; other than in very rare cases, we are not. The  
reality is that if any Bill does not attract the veto of the  
hon. Gentleman or of anyone who cares to join him  
and does not have Government approval, it will most  
probably be procedurally talked out by a Minister standing  
at the Dispatch Box and making sure it does not pass.  
Unless and until we as a House decide we want to make  
this system work, it is a sham, and we are fooling the  
public into believing that Bills will be passed that never  
stand a snowball's chance in hell of doing so.

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

9.16 pm

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): I  
started the day, as perhaps did some others, by listening  
to an excerpt of “Night of the Living Dead” to  
commemorate the passing of George Romero, the creator  
of the modern-day zombie, and now, twice in one  
evening, we are discussing the zombie Government that  
those on Treasury Bench have become. While they have  
lost their majority, and some would say their authority,  
they do have control of the parliamentary timetable and  
are turning the screws on that. We have heard about the  
disappearing Opposition days, and now we turn to the  
topic of private Members' Bills.

I listened carefully to what the Leader of the House  
said, but it was vague in the extreme. We are still no  
clearer on whether we will have the commensurate  
increase in the number of Opposition days that this  
unusually long two-year Parliament demands; it should  
be 26 days, not 13, and nothing less.

Let us think about some of the contents of the  
ill-fated Conservative manifesto that did not make it  
into the Queen's Speech, such as the dementia tax. I  
remember the Prime Minister was in my constituency  
when she came a bit unstuck; all the TV pictures were of  
one of my constituents arguing on the doorstep with  
her about the detail of that. The 25-year environment  
plan does not seem to have made it into the Queen's  
Speech either, and nor do grammar schools or foxhunting;  
all these bits of the manifesto are on the scrapheap. The  
First Secretary of State and Minister for the Cabinet  
Office said the other day that the Conservatives do not  
have a “monopoly on wisdom” and the Prime Minister  
was inviting suggestions; if they are bereft of ideas,  
private Members' Bills on a Friday are a good way of  
plugging that gap.

It has been said before that our constituents send us  
to this place because they want us to debate issues and  
vote on legislation. In the last Parliament, I cut my teeth  
in Opposition days and private Members' Bill debates  
on Fridays. The first topics I spoke on were our Wednesday  
debates on the NHS. I was never lucky enough to have  
my blue-sky thinking translated into anything that would  
get on to the statute book, but I did attend Friday  
debates on private Members' Bills promoted by hon.  
Friends: the Off-patent Drugs Bill of my hon. Friend  
the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds), the  
Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Bill of my hon.  
Friend the Member for Westminster North (Ms Buck),  
and the Hospital Parking Charges (Exemption for  
Carers) Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley  
(Julie Cooper). None of them saw the light of day as  
they were filibustered out of existence by certain Members;  
I will not name names—although they are on the  
Government Benches. *[Interruption.]* Yes, the Bills that  
did make it were the ones that had the Government's  
fingerprints all over them—the handout Bills. I remember  
being involved in a complex radio services Bill in which  
someone was going on ad infinitum about their favourite  
radio stations and pop groups. To the public outside,  
this looks like a denial of democracy; it looks really bad.

When private Members' Bills are given the time they  
need and properly debated, they represent Parliament  
at its best. People remember September 2015 when we  
debated the Assisted Dying Bill. A lot of Members  
came in on that Friday. The numbers for the vote were  
118 and 330, so it is possible to get Members here on a

17 JULY 2017

647 Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

Friday if things are given time. Okay, the Bill did not  
change the law, but the debates on both sides had a  
good airing.

The hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire  
(Pete Wishart), speaking for the Scottish National party,  
mentioned the vote on the Istanbul convention, which  
also took place on a Friday, as did a vote this February  
on vital legislation on violence against women and girls.  
The zombie Parliament is carrying on, however.

We can construct a long list of things that have  
changed the way in which modern society operates, the  
origins of which were in private Members' Bills. Examples  
included the decriminalisation in 1967 of homosexual  
acts between two consenting adults over the age of 21,  
the ending of the death penalty and the legalisation of  
abortion. All those changes came from private Members'  
Bills. Hunting with dogs has cropped up a number of  
times; it was under a Labour Government that foxhunting  
was outlawed. The plans for a free vote on that under  
this Government seem to have bitten the dust as well.

Members have said that the Procedure Committee  
has recommended reforms to private Members' Bill  
procedures. However, the Government do not appear to  
be entertaining the idea of reversing the filibuster farce  
and the curtailing of debate. They have dismissed those  
concerns out of hand. During this Parliament, we have  
seen how my hon. Friends the Members for Kingston  
upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) and for Walthamstow  
(Stella Creasy) have secured the revenge of the Back  
Benchers. That is what happens in a zombie Parliament,  
and it should be encouraged by allowing the commensurate  
amount of debate on private Members' Bills for a two-year  
Parliament. We need 26 days, and nothing less.

This is part of a pattern. No Select Committees are to  
be constituted before the autumn. We saw the withdrawal  
of Short money in the last Parliament, and the  
Conservatives'201 7 manifesto had a lot of really illiberal  
constitutional stuff in it. For example, they were soldiering  
on with their boundary reviews for 2015 registrants for  
an election that will not happen until 2022—or will it?  
Do they know something that we do not? This has gone  
beyond an issue solely for constitutional anoraks. An  
e-petitiononthereformofprivateMembers'Billprocedures  
last year got 50,697 signatures. I urge everyone to  
support the amendment calling for a pro rata allocation  
of the time to debate such Bills. We need 26 days, and  
nothingless.Donotletthezombieswin,becausedemocracy  
will be the loser.

9.22 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I want to speak to my  
amendment, but first I want to respond immediately to  
the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), who said  
that I should declare my interest. I would argue that of  
all Members in the House, I probably have the least  
interest in extending the number of days this year,  
because I came top of the ballot. It is those Members  
who came further down the ballot—at No. 5, No. 10,  
No. 15 and No. 20, for example—who perhaps have a  
greater interest in this. I very much hope that the hon.  
Gentleman and all other hon. Members will unite on  
20 October and turn up here to vote for my Bill to  
ensure that our emergency workers do not get spat at  
and attacked when they are doing their work. I hope  
that my Bill will attract his support, briefly, and that of  
Government Ministers. We have yet to see whether that  
will happen.

Business of the House 648

(Private Members' Bills)

The hon. Gentleman rightly said that the Standing  
Orders provide for 13 private Members' Bill days in a  
Session, but that is not true when we have a short Session,  
is it? We just curtail in those circumstances; we do not  
say that we have to have another six private Members'  
Bill days before the end of the Session. The truth is that  
this is a bit of a conundrum, but it is the Government  
who have the power to decide the length of the Session.  
That is why it is only fair play for the Government,  
when they decide that a Session is to last for two years,  
to provide two years' worth of private Members' Bill  
days.

The hon. Gentleman says that there should be a  
second ballot. That might be a great idea, but only the  
Government can table an amendment to that effect—

**Philip Davies** *indicated dissent.*

**Chris Bryant:** No, no. If we had tabled such an  
amendment to today's business, it would not have been  
selectable. There is no way that we could have tabled it  
today. The only thing that is open to us is to table the  
extra 13 days.

To be absolutely clear, my amendment would add  
another 13 days and therefore give many hon. and right  
hon. Members a further opportunity to get legislation  
on the statute book. Why does that matter? The first  
thing that we get asked by every sixth-former is, “If you  
had a chance to change the law, what is the one thing  
that you would do?” We are all used to answering that  
question, and we sometimes getthatchance. Ijust think  
that more of us should have that opportunity. In this  
two-year Parliament, we could have ten-minute rule  
Bills or presentation Bills or Bills from people in the  
private Members' Bills ballot.

**Philip Davies:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Chris Bryant:** I am not going to give way, because I  
look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman just say  
yes on 20 October.

If the Government wanted, they could make a Session  
last five years. Would there be only 13 days for private  
Members' Bills then? In theory, yes, but according to  
the laws of moral justice in this House, I would say not.  
Why do I not trust the Government on this? The Leader  
of the House has said a couple of times on Thursday  
mornings that she is minded to look at adding extra  
days, but she then tabled a motion that allows for

1. days through to 23 November 2018. That does not  
   suggest to me that she thinks there should be the  
   proportionate number for two years. In this case, we are  
   not being given the argument straight. I tabled my  
   amendment for an additional 13 days, because if the  
   Government win the vote today, I do not believe that  
   the Leader of the House will come back with another  
   motion for any more days.

When Richard Crossman introduced the Standing  
Order that we are dealing with today, he allowed for  
22 private Member's Bill days a year, saying:

“This reflects the increasing importance which Private Members'  
Bills have assumed in the last year or two; and I am pleased to see  
from the reports so far published about the subjects likely to be  
selected by Members successful in this year's Ballot that hon.  
Members are still prepared to come forward with bold proposals  
for the solution of social problems of the day.”—[*Official Report*,

1. November1967;Vol. 754, c. 259.]

17 JULY 2017

649 Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

*[Chris Bryant]*

That was in 1967, when they had just passed, as my  
hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and Acton  
(Dr Huq) was right to say, a Bill that partially decriminalised  
homosexuality. It did not go the whole way, and it took  
a considerable period for that to happen. It was not  
until a Labour Government had to push it through the  
House of Lords using the Parliament Act that we ended  
up with an even and equal age of consent. However, it  
started as a private Member's Bill and then became a  
Government Bill. As my hon. Friend also said, the end  
of the death penalty came through because Members  
battled month after month, and votes for women happened  
because people tabled private Members' Bills year after  
year and made Parliament make up its mind. In the  
end, it was a Government Bill that allowed women the  
vote in 1918—100 years ago next year.

Tomorrow will be the 50th anniversary of the partial  
decriminalisation of homosexuality. Every single one of  
us would like to have done something as historic as that,  
and if we hung up our boots or the voters chucked us  
out at the next general election, that is absolutely fine.  
All we are trying to do today is say, “You know what?  
We could make private Members' legislation better.  
We could make good Bills that don't just depend on  
Ministers.” The Government Members I know are real  
parliamentarians and would desperately love to do  
something as significant as the things that we are talking  
about tonight, which is why I beg, urge and implore  
them to vote for my amendment tonight. They will  
know that they will have done a good thing.

9.28 pm

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab): In the previous  
debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris  
Bryant) talked about the power of the Executive not  
only over controlling the agenda, but over ensuring that  
laws that are in manifestos get through. However, we  
are in a unique position in this two-year Session of  
Parliament. As my hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth,  
Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard), for Ealing Central  
and Acton (Dr Huq) and for Rhondda said, the important  
thing is that private Members' Bill are sometimes big  
pieces of legislation that are too hot to handle—too hot  
for the Government to put through.

Many private Members' Bills have gone through this  
House that make a real difference to people's lives. I  
introduced the Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004, which  
means that large shops cannot open on Christmas day  
—the Act was good for shop workers who were forced  
to work on Christmas day. In the same Session,  
Jim Sheridan, the former hon. Member for Paisley and  
Renfrewshire North, introduced the Gangmasters  
(Licensing) Act 2004, which brought in tough regulation  
following the tragedy at Morecambe bay to try to  
protect people from being exploited by gangmasters.  
Private Members' Bills can make a real change to  
people's lives.

I am a bit concerned that the Leader of the House  
says she is minded to announce additional days. How  
many additional days would she like to propose, and  
what are the criteria for introducing them? The current  
logic is that 13 days will be spread over a two-year  
Session. The hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies)  
made the argument, with which I have some sympathy,

Business of the House 650

(Private Members' Bills)

that it is in the Government's hands to move an amendment  
if they wish to have another ballot for private Members'  
Bills in the second year.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and  
Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) said, in the 2015-16 Session,  
20% of successful private Members' Bills did not come  
through the ballot but came through the ten-minute  
rule procedure and other routes. The hon. Member for  
Shipley is arguing that, somehow, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Rhondda and others who have been successful  
in the ballot will have an unfair advantage, but I am not  
sure that will be the case. Other hon. Members will have  
a chance to get their private Members' Bills on the  
statute book.

The hon. Member for Shipley thinks of himself as a  
great filibusterer on a Friday, but he pales into insignificance  
compared with the former right hon. Member for Bromley  
and Chislehurst, the great Eric Forth, with whom I  
successfully did a deal to pass my private Member's Bill  
because he wanted to stop a Bill lower down the Order  
Paper.

The hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire  
(Pete Wishart) mentioned the proposal to move debates  
on private Members' Bills to Tuesday and Wednesday  
nights, thereby getting round the travel difficulties of Scottish  
National party Members on Fridays. Are private Members'  
Bills an area ripe for reform? Yes, they are. We must not  
only show our constituents that we are listening to them  
but must enact Bills that are relevant to them. Private  
Members' legislation is important.

I am not sure whether the Government have limited  
Friday sittings by mistake, or because they want to keep  
the decks clear or to ensure that nothing controversial is  
introduced in the next two years, as some Government  
Back Benchers might vote against the Government. My  
hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda made the  
fundamental point that there are few opportunities in  
this place to change legislation, but we can do it in Bill  
Committees.

My hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and  
Stocksbridge mentioned the decriminalisation of  
homosexual acts in the merchant navy, which was originally  
raised during the passage of the Armed Forces Act  
2016. We managed to get the discriminatory legislation  
on the merchant navy changed through a private Member's  
Bill with the Government's agreement. Again, the issue  
had been overlooked for many years, and it was only  
because of our scrutiny in this House that we could get  
rid of that discriminatory legislation on the military  
and the merchant navy. So I would support the amendments.  
It is nonsense to suggest that by giving these additional  
days the world is going to stop—it is not. It is going to  
allow Back Benchers, either through the ballot or through  
private Members' business, to ensure that their voices  
are heard and that they can make a real difference in  
trying to get some of those Bills past even the hon.  
Member for Shipley.

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The House divided:* Ayes 285, Noes 315.

Division No. 8] [9.35 pm

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **AYES** |
| Abbott, rh Ms Diane | Ali, Rushanara |
| Abrahams, Debbie | Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena |
| Alexander, Heidi | Amesbury, Mike |

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

652

651

17 JULY 2017

Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Austin, Ian

Bailey, Mr Adrian  
Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Betts, Mr Clive  
Blackford, Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blomfield, Paul  
Brabin, Tracy  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brown, Alan  
Brown, Lyn  
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris  
Buck, Ms Karen  
Burden, Richard  
Burgon, Richard  
Butler, Dawn  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Chapman, Jenny  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Clwyd, rh Ann  
Coaker, Vernon  
Coffey, Ann  
Cooper, Julie  
Cooper, Rosie  
Cooper, rh Yvette  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Coyle, Neil  
Crausby, Sir David  
Creagh, Mary  
Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Cunningham, Mr Jim  
Dakin, Nic

David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
De Piero, Gloria  
Dent Coad, Emma  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Drew, Dr David  
Dromey, Jack  
Duffield, Rosie  
Eagle, Ms Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Ellman, Mrs Louise  
Elmore, Chris

Esterson, Bill

Evans, Chris

Farrelly, Paul

Fellows, Marion

Field, rh Frank

Fitzpatrick, Jim

Fletcher, Colleen

Flint, rh Caroline

Flynn, Paul

Fovargue, Yvonne

Foxcroft, Vicky

Frith, James

Furniss, Gill

Gaffney, Hugh

Gapes, Mike

Gardiner, Barry

George, Ruth

Gethins, Stephen

Gibson, Patricia

Gill, Preet Kaur

Glindon, Mary

Godsiff, Mr Roger

Goodman, Helen

Grady, Patrick

Grant, Peter

Gray, Neil

Green, Kate

Greenwood, Lilian

Greenwood, Margaret

Griffith, Nia

Grogan, John

Gwynne, Andrew

Haigh, Louise

Hamilton, Fabian

Hanson, rh David

Hardy, Emma

Harman, rh Ms Harriet

Harris, Carolyn

Hayes, Helen

Hayman, Sue

Healey, rh John

Hendrick, Mr Mark

Hendry, Drew

Hepburn, Mr Stephen

Hermon, Lady

Hill, Mike

Hillier, Meg

Hodge, rh Dame Margaret

Hodgson, Mrs Sharon

Hollern, Kate

Hopkins, Kelvin

Howarth, rh Mr George

Huq, Dr Rupa

Hussain, Imran

Jardine, Christine

Jarvis, Dan

Johnson, Diana

Jones, Darren

Jones, Gerald

Jones, Graham

Jones, Helen

Jones, Mr Kevan

Jones, Sarah

Jones, Susan Elan

Kane, Mike

Keeley, Barbara

Kendall, Liz

Killen, Gerard

Kinnock, Stephen

Kyle, Peter

Laird, Lesley  
Lamb, rh Norman  
Lammy, rh Mr David  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Chris  
Lee, Ms Karen  
Leslie, Mr Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Lewis, Mr Ivan  
Linden, David  
Lloyd, Tony  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Caroline  
Lucas, Ian C.  
Lynch, Holly  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema  
Mann, John  
Marsden, Gordon  
Martin, Sandy  
Maskell, Rachael  
Matheson, Christian  
Mc Nally, John  
McCabe, Steve  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonagh, Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart

Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McDonnell, rh John  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McInnes, Liz  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Miliband, rh Edward  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Morden, Jessica  
Morgan, Stephen  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
O'Mara, Jared  
Onasanya, Fiona  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Osamor, Kate  
Owen, Albert  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pearce, Teresa  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pidcock, Laura  
Platt, Jo  
Pollard, Luke  
Pound, Stephen  
Powell, Lucy  
Qureshi, Yasmin  
Rashid, Faisal  
Rayner, Angela

Reed, Mr Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
Rodda, Matt  
Rowley, Danielle  
Ruane, Chris  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Ryan, rh Joan  
Shah, Naz  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Sherriff, Paula  
Shuker, Mr Gavin  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Skinner, Mr Dennis  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smeeth, Ruth  
Smith, Angela  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Eleanor  
Smith, Laura  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Owen  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Starmer, rh Keir  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stringer, Graham  
Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
Swinson, Jo  
Tami, Mark  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas, Gareth  
Thomas-Symonds,

Nick

Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Trickett, Jon  
Turley, Anna

Turner, Karl  
Twigg, Derek  
Twigg, Stephen

Twist, Liz  
Umunna, Chuka  
Vaz, rh Keith  
Vaz, Valerie  
Walker, Thelma  
Watson, Tom  
West, Catherine  
Western, Matt  
Whitehead, Dr Alan  
Whitfield, Martin  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Williams, Dr Paul  
Williamson, Chris  
Wilson, Phil  
Wishart, Pete  
Woodcock, John  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Zeichner, Daniel  
**Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Thangam Debbonaire and  
Jeff Smith**

653 Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

**NOES**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Afolami, Bim | Double, Steve |
| Afriyie, Adam | Dowden, Oliver |
| Aldous, Peter | Doyle-Price, Jackie |
| Allan, Lucy | Drax, Richard |
| Allen, Heidi | Duddridge, James |
| Amess, Sir David | Duguid, David |
| Andrew, Stuart | Duncan, rh Sir Alan |
| Argar, Edward | Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain |
| Atkins, Victoria | Dunne, Mr Philip |
| Bacon, Mr Richard | Ellis, Michael |
| Badenoch, Mrs Kemi | Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias |
| Baker, Mr Steve | Elphicke, Charlie |
| Baldwin, Harriett | Eustice, George |
| Barclay, Stephen | Evans, Mr Nigel |
| Baron, Mr John | Evennett, rh David |
| Bebb, Guto | Fabricant, Michael |
| Bellingham, Sir Henry | Fallon, rh Sir Michael |
| Benyon, rh Richard | Fernandes, Suella |
| Beresford, Sir Paul | Field, rh Mark |
| Berry, Jake | Ford, Vicky |
| Blackman, Bob | Foster, Kevin |
| Blunt, Crispin | Fox,rhDrLiam |
| Bottomley, Sir Peter | Francois, rh Mr Mark |
| Bowie, Andrew | Frazer, Lucy |
| Bradley, Ben | Freeman, George |
| Bradley, rh Karen | Freer, Mike |
| Brady, Mr Graham | Fysh, Mr Marcus |
| Brereton, Jack | Gale, Sir Roger |
| Bridgen, Andrew | Garnier, Mark |
| Brine, Steve | Gauke, rh Mr David |
| Brokenshire, rh James | Ghani, Ms Nusrat |
| Bruce, Fiona | Gibb, rh Nick |
| Buckland, Robert | Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl |
| Burghart, Alex | Girvan, Paul |
| Burns, Conor | Glen, John |
| Burt, rh Alistair | Goldsmith, Zac |
| Cairns, rh Alun | Goodwill, Mr Robert |
| Campbell, Mr Gregory | Gove, rh Michael |
| Cartlidge, James | Graham, Luke |
| Cash, Sir William | Graham, Richard |
| Caulfield, Maria | Grant, Bill |
| Chalk, Alex | Grant, Mrs Helen |
| Chishti, Rehman | Gray, James |
| Chope, Mr Christopher | Grayling, rh Chris |
| Churchill, Jo | Green, Chris |
| Clark, Colin | Green, rh Damian |
| Clark, rh Greg | Greening, rh Justine |
| Clarke, Mr Simon | Grieve, rh Mr Dominic |
| Cleverly, James | Griffiths, Andrew |
| Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey | Gyimah, Mr Sam |
| Coffey, Dr Therese | Hair, Kirstene |
| Collins, Damian | Halfon, rh Robert |
| Costa, Alberto | Hall, Luke |
| Courts, Robert | Hammond, rh Mr Philip |
| Cox, Mr Geoffrey | Hammond, Stephen |
| Crabb, rh Stephen | Hancock, rh Matt |
| Crouch, Tracey | Hands, rh Greg |
| Davies, Chris | Harper, rh Mr Mark |
| Davies, David T. C. | Harrington, Richard |
| Davies, Glyn | Harris, Rebecca |
| Davies, Mims | Harrison, Trudy |
| Davies, Philip | Hart, Simon |
| Davis, rh Mr David | Hayes, rh Mr John |
| Dinenage, Caroline | Heald, rh Sir Oliver |
| Djanogly, Mr Jonathan | Heappey, James |
| Docherty, Leo | Heaton-Harris, Chris |
| Dockerill, Julia | Heaton-Jones, Peter |
| Dodds, rh Nigel | Henderson, Gordon |
| Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M. | Herbert, rh Nick |
| Donelan, Michelle | Hinds, Damian |
| Dorries, Ms Nadine | Hoare, Simon |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 17 JULY 2017 *Business of the House* 654 *(Private Members' Bills)* | |
| Hollingbery, George | Mundell, rh David |
| Hollinrake, Kevin | Murray, Mrs Sheryll |
| Hollobone, Mr Philip | Murrison, Dr Andrew |
| Holloway, Adam | Neill, Robert |
| Howell, John | Newton, Sarah |
| Huddleston, Nigel | Nokes, Caroline |
| Hughes, Eddie | Norman, Jesse |
| Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy | O'Brien, Neil |
| Hurd, Mr Nick | Offord, Dr Matthew |
| Jack, Mr Alister | Opperman, Guy |
| James, Margot | Parish, Neil |
| Javid, rh Sajid | Patel, rh Priti |
| Jayawardena, Mr Ranil | Paterson, rh Mr Owen |
| Jenkin, Mr Bernard | Pawsey, Mark |
| Jenkyns, Andrea | Penning, rh Mike |
| Jenrick, Robert | Penrose, John |
| Johnson, Dr Caroline | Percy, Andrew |
| Johnson, Gareth | Perry, Claire |
| Johnson, Joseph | Philp, Chris |
| Jones, Andrew | Pincher, Christopher |
| Jones, rh Mr David | Poulter, Dr Dan |
| Jones, Mr Marcus | Pow, Rebecca |
| Kawczynski, Daniel | Prentis, Victoria |
| Keegan, Gillian | Prisk, Mr Mark |
| Kennedy, Seema | Pritchard, Mark |
| Kerr, Stephen | Pursglove, Tom |
| Knight, rh Sir Greg | Quin, Jeremy |
| Kwarteng, Kwasi | Quince, Will |
| Lamont, John | Raab, Dominic |
| Lancaster, Mark | Redwood, rh John |
| Latham, Mrs Pauline | Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob |
| Leadsom, rh Andrea | Robertson, Mr Laurence |
| Lee, Dr Phillip | Robinson, Gavin |
| Lefroy, Jeremy | Robinson, Mary |
| Leigh, Sir Edward | Ross, Douglas |
| Letwin, rh Sir Oliver | Rowley, Lee |
| Lewer, Andrew | Rudd, rh Amber |
| Lewis, rh Brandon | Sandbach, Antoinette |
| Lewis, rh Dr Julian | Scully, Paul |
| Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian | Seely, Mr Bob |
| Lidington, rh Mr David | Selous, Andrew |
| Little Pengelly, Emma | Shannon, Jim |
| Lopresti, Jack | Shapps, rh Grant |
| Lord, Mr Jonathan | Sharma, Alok |
| Loughton, Tim | Shelbrooke, Alec |
| Mackinlay, Craig | Simpson, David |
| Maclean, Rachel | Simpson, rh Mr Keith |
| Main, Mrs Anne | Skidmore, Chris |
| Mak, Alan | Smith, Chloe |
| Malthouse, Kit | Smith, Henry |
| Mann, Scott | Smith, Julian |
| Masterton, Paul | Smith, Royston |
| Maynard, Paul | Soames, rh Sir Nicholas |
| McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick | Soubry, rh Anna |
| McPartland, Stephen | Spelman, rh Dame Caroline |
| McVey, rh Ms Esther | Spencer, Mark |
| Menzies, Mark | Stephenson, Andrew |
| Mercer, Johnny | Stevenson, John |
| Merriman, Huw | Stewart, Bob |
| Metcalfe, Stephen | Stewart, Iain |
| Miller, rh Mrs Maria | Stewart, Rory |
| Milling, Amanda | Streeter, Mr Gary |
| Mills, Nigel | Stride, rh Mel |
| Milton, rh Anne | Stuart, Graham |
| Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew | Sturdy, Julian |
| Moore, Damien | Sunak, Rishi |
| Mordaunt, Penny | Swayne, rh Sir Desmond |
| Morgan, rh Nicky | Swire, rh Sir Hugo |
| Morris, Anne Marie | Syms, Mr Robert |
| Morris, David | Thomas, Derek |
| Morris, James | Thomson, Ross |
| Morton, Wendy | Throup, Maggie |

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

656

655

17 JULY 2017

Tolhurst, Kelly  
Tomlinson, Justin  
Tomlinson, Michael  
Tracey, Craig

Tredinnick, David  
Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie  
Truss, rh Elizabeth  
Tugendhat, Tom  
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward  
Vara, Mr Shailesh  
Vickers, Martin  
Villiers, rh Theresa  
Walker, Mr Charles  
Walker, Mr Robin  
Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
Warburton, David

Warman, Matt  
Whately, Helen  
Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
Whittaker, Craig  
Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
Wiggin, Bill  
Williamson, rh Gavin  
Wilson, Sammy  
Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
Wood, Mike  
Wragg, Mr William  
Wright, rh Jeremy  
Zahawi, Nadhim  
**Tellers for the Noes:**

**Nigel Adams and  
David Rutley**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Amendment proposed:* (b), leave out from ‘That' to  
end and insert:

‘, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14(8)  
relating to the number of Fridays on which Private Members' Bills  
shall have precedence over Government business, Private Members'  
Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 20 and  
27 October, 3 and 10 November, 1 and 8 December 2017, 19 and  
26 January, 2, 16 and 23 February, 16 March, 27 April, 11 and  
18 May, 15 and 22 June, 6 and 13 July, 19 and 26 October, 16 and  
23 November 2018, 18 January, 15 February and 15 March 2019.'.*—  
(Chris Bryant)*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The House divided:* Ayes 287, Noes 316.

Division No. 9]

[9.53 pm

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Alexander, Heidi  
Ali, Rushanara  
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena  
Amesbury, Mike  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Austin, Ian  
Bailey, Mr Adrian  
Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Betts, Mr Clive  
Blackford, Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blomfield, Paul  
Brabin, Tracy  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brown, Alan  
Brown, Lyn

Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris  
Buck, Ms Karen  
Burden, Richard  
Burgon, Richard

Butler, Dawn  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Champion, Sarah

Chapman, Douglas  
Chapman, Jenny  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Clwyd, rh Ann  
Coaker, Vernon  
Coffey, Ann  
Cooper, Julie  
Cooper, Rosie  
Cooper, rh Yvette  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Coyle, Neil  
Crausby, Sir David  
Creagh, Mary  
Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Cunningham, Mr Jim  
Dakin, Nic  
David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
De Piero, Gloria  
Dent Coad, Emma  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Drew, Dr David  
Dromey, Jack  
Duffield, Rosie

Eagle, Ms Angela

Eagle, Maria

Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive

Elliott, Julie

Ellman, Mrs Louise

Elmore, Chris

Esterson, Bill

Evans, Chris

Farrelly, Paul

Fellows, Marion

Field, rh Frank  
Fitzpatrick, Jim

Fletcher, Colleen

Flint, rh Caroline

Flynn, Paul

Fovargue, Yvonne  
Foxcroft, Vicky

Frith, James

Furniss, Gill

Gaffney, Hugh

Gapes, Mike

Gardiner, Barry

George, Ruth

Gethins, Stephen  
Gibson, Patricia

Gill, Preet Kaur

Glindon, Mary

Godsiff, Mr Roger

Goodman, Helen

Grady, Patrick

Grant, Peter

Gray, Neil

Green, Kate

Greenwood, Lilian

Greenwood, Margaret  
Griffith, Nia

Grogan, John

Gwynne, Andrew

Haigh, Louise

Hamilton, Fabian  
Hanson, rh David

Hardy, Emma

Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
Harris, Carolyn

Hayes, Helen

Hayman, Sue

Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Mr Mark

Hendry, Drew

Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
Hermon, Lady

Hill, Mike

Hillier, Meg

Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hollern, Kate

Hopkins, Kelvin

Howarth, rh Mr George  
Huq, Dr Rupa

Hussain, Imran

Jardine, Christine

Jarvis, Dan

Johnson, Diana

Jones, Darren

Jones, Gerald

Jones, Graham

Jones, Helen

Jones, Mr Kevan

Jones, Sarah

Jones, Susan Elan

Kane, Mike

Keeley, Barbara

Kendall, Liz  
Khan, Afzal  
Killen, Gerard  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kyle, Peter  
Laird, Lesley  
Lamb, rh Norman  
Lammy, rh Mr David  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Chris  
Lee, Ms Karen  
Leslie, Mr Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Lewis, Mr Ivan  
Linden, David  
Lloyd, Tony  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Caroline  
Lucas, Ian C.

Lynch, Holly  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema  
Mann, John  
Marsden, Gordon  
Martin, Sandy  
Maskell, Rachael  
Matheson, Christian  
Mc Nally, John  
McCabe, Steve  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonagh, Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McDonnell, rh John  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McInnes, Liz  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Miliband, rh Edward  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Morden, Jessica  
Morgan, Stephen  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Norris, Alex

O'Hara, Brendan  
O'Mara, Jared  
Onasanya, Fiona  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Osamor, Kate  
Owen, Albert  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pearce, Teresa  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pidcock, Laura  
Platt, Jo

Pollard, Luke

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

Business of the House

(Private Members' Bills)

658

657

17 JULY 2017

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pound, Stephen | Stevens, Jo | Davies, Mims | Hart, Simon |
| Powell, Lucy | Streeting, Wes | Davies, Philip | Hayes, rh Mr John |
| Qureshi, Yasmin | Stringer, Graham | Davis, rh Mr David | Heald, rh Sir Oliver |
| Rashid, Faisal | Sweeney, Mr Paul J. | Dinenage, Caroline | Heappey, James |
| Rayner, Angela | Swinson, Jo | Djanogly, Mr Jonathan | Heaton-Harris, Chris |
| Reed, Mr Steve | Tami, Mark | Docherty, Leo | Heaton-Jones, Peter |
| Rees, Christina | Thewliss, Alison | Dockerill, Julia | Henderson, Gordon |
| Reeves, Ellie | Thomas, Gareth | Dodds, rh Nigel | Herbert, rh Nick |
| Reeves, Rachel | Thomas-Symonds, Nick | Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M. | Hinds, Damian |
| Reynolds, Jonathan | Thornberry, rh Emily  Timms, rh Stephen | Donelan, Michelle | Hoare, Simon |
| Rimmer, Ms Marie | Dorries, Ms Nadine | Hollingbery, George |
| Robinson, Mr Geoffrey | **Trickptt Inn** | Double, Steve | Hollinrake, Kevin |
| Rodda, Matt | **1 1 L L, JUl 1**  Turley, Anna  **Ti irnnr Knrl** | Dowden, Oliver | Hollobone, Mr Philip |
| Rowley, Danielle | Doyle-Price, Jackie | Holloway, Adam |
| Ruane, Chris | **1 U 1 1 1 Cl, 1 \al 1**  Twigg, Derek | Drax, Richard | Howell, John |
| Russell-Moyle, Lloyd | Duddridge, James | Huddleston, Nigel |
| Ryan, rh Joan | Twigg, Stephen | Duguid, David | Hughes, Eddie |
| Shah, Naz | Twist, Liz | Duncan, rh Sir Alan | Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy |
| Sharma, Mr Virendra | Umunna, Chuka | Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain | Hurd, Mr Nick |
| Sheerman, Mr Barry | Vaz, rh Keith | Dunne, Mr Philip | Jack, Mr Alister |
| Sheppard, Tommy | Vaz, Valerie | Ellis, Michael | James, Margot |
| Sherriff, Paula | Walker, Thelma | Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias | Javid, rh Sajid |
| Shuker, Mr Gavin | Watson, Tom | Elphicke, Charlie | Jayawardena, Mr Ranil |
| Siddiq, Tulip | West, Catherine | Eustice, George | Jenkin, Mr Bernard |
| Skinner, Mr Dennis | Western, Matt | Evans, Mr Nigel | Jenkyns, Andrea |
| Slaughter, Andy | Whitehead, Dr Alan | Evennett, rh David | Jenrick, Robert |
| Smeeth, Ruth | Whitfield, Martin | Fabricant, Michael | Johnson, Dr Caroline |
| Smith, Angela | Whitford, Dr Philippa | Fallon, rh Sir Michael | Johnson, Gareth |
| Smith, Cat | Williams, Dr Paul | Fernandes, Suella | Johnson, Joseph |
| Smith, Eleanor | Williamson, Chris | Field, rh Mark | Jones, Andrew |
| Smith, Laura | Wilson, Phil | Ford, Vicky | Jones, rh Mr David |
| Smith, Nick | Wishart, Pete | Foster, Kevin | Jones, Mr Marcus |
| Smith, Owen | Woodcock, John | Fox,rhDrLiam | Kawczynski, Daniel |
| Smyth, Karin | Yasin, Mohammad | Francois, rh Mr Mark | Keegan, Gillian |
| Snell, Gareth | Zeichner, Daniel | Frazer, Lucy | Kennedy, Seema |
| Sobel, Alex | Freeman, George | Kerr, Stephen |
| Spellar, rh John | **Tellers for the Ayes:** | Freer, Mike | Knight, rh Sir Greg |
| Starmer, rh Keir | **Thangam Debbonaire and** | Fysh, Mr Marcus | Kwarteng, Kwasi |
| Stephens, Chris | **Jeff Smith**  **NOES** | Gale, Sir Roger Garnier, Mark Gauke, rh Mr David Ghani, Ms Nusrat | Lamont, John  Lancaster, Mark  Latham, Mrs Pauline  Leadsom, rh Andrea |
| Afolami, Bim | Brokenshire, rh James | Gibb, rh Nick | Lee, Dr Phillip |
| Afriyie, Adam | Bruce, Fiona | Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl | Lefroy, Jeremy |
| Aldous, Peter | Buckland, Robert | Girvan, Paul | Leigh, Sir Edward |
| Allan, Lucy | Burghart, Alex | Glen, John | Letwin, rh Sir Oliver |
| Allen, Heidi | Burns, Conor | Goldsmith, Zac | Lewer, Andrew |
| Amess, Sir David | Burt, rh Alistair | Goodwill, Mr Robert | Lewis, rh Brandon |
| Andrew, Stuart | Cairns, rh Alun | Gove, rh Michael | Lewis, rh Dr Julian |
| Argar, Edward | Campbell, Mr Gregory | Graham, Luke | Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian |
| Atkins, Victoria | Cartlidge, James | Graham, Richard | Lidington, rh Mr David |
| Bacon, Mr Richard | Cash, Sir William | Grant, Bill | Little Pengelly, Emma |
| Badenoch, Mrs Kemi | Caulfield, Maria | Grant, Mrs Helen | Lopresti, Jack |
| Baker, Mr Steve | Chalk, Alex | Gray, James | Lord, Mr Jonathan |
| Baldwin, Harriett | Chishti, Rehman | Grayling, rh Chris | Loughton, Tim |
| Barclay, Stephen | Chope, Mr Christopher | Green, Chris | Mackinlay, Craig |
| Baron, Mr John | Churchill, Jo | Green, rh Damian | Maclean, Rachel |
| Bebb, Guto | Clark, Colin | Greening, rh Justine | Main, Mrs Anne |
| Bellingham, Sir Henry | Clark, rh Greg | Grieve, rh Mr Dominic | Mak, Alan |
| Benyon, rh Richard | Clarke, Mr Simon | Griffiths, Andrew | Malthouse, Kit |
| Beresford, Sir Paul | Cleverly, James | Gyimah, Mr Sam | Mann, Scott |
| Berry, Jake | Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey | Hair, Kirstene | Masterton, Paul |
| Blackman, Bob | Coffey, Dr Therese | Halfon, rh Robert | Maynard, Paul |
| Blunt, Crispin | Collins, Damian | Hall, Luke | McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick |
| Bottomley, Sir Peter | Costa, Alberto | Hammond, rh Mr Philip | McPartland, Stephen |
| Bowie, Andrew | Courts, Robert | Hammond, Stephen | McVey, rh Ms Esther |
| Bradley, Ben | Cox, Mr Geoffrey | Hancock, rh Matt | Menzies, Mark |
| Bradley, rh Karen | Crabb, rh Stephen | Hands, rh Greg | Mercer, Johnny |
| Brady, Mr Graham | Crouch, Tracey | Harper, rh Mr Mark | Merriman, Huw |
| Brereton, Jack | Davies, Chris | Harrington, Richard | Metcalfe, Stephen |
| Bridgen, Andrew | Davies, David T. C. | Harris, Rebecca | Miller, rh Mrs Maria |
| Brine, Steve | Davies, Glyn | Harrison, Trudy | Milling, Amanda |

659

Business of the House

17 JULY 2017

660

*(Private Members' Bills)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mills, Nigel | Skidmore, Chris |
| Milton, rh Anne | Smith, Chloe |
| Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew | Smith, Henry |
| Moore, Damien | Smith, Julian |
| Mordaunt, Penny | Smith, Royston |
| Morgan, rh Nicky | Soames, rh Sir Nicholas |
| Morris, Anne Marie | Soubry, rh Anna |
| Morris, David | Spelman, rh Dame Caroline |
| Morris, James | Spencer, Mark |
| Morton, Wendy | Stephenson, Andrew |
| Mundell, rh David | Stevenson, John |
| Murray, Mrs Sheryll | Stewart, Bob |
| Murrison, Dr Andrew | Stewart, Iain |
| Neill, Robert | Stewart, Rory |
| Newton, Sarah | Streeter, Mr Gary |
| Nokes, Caroline | Stride, rh Mel |
| Norman, Jesse | Stuart, Graham |
| O'Brien, Neil | Sturdy, Julian |
| Offord, Dr Matthew | Sunak, Rishi |
| Opperman, Guy | Swayne, rh Sir Desmond |
| Paisley, Ian | Swire, rh Sir Hugo |
| Parish, Neil | Syms, Mr Robert |
| Patel, rh Priti | Thomas, Derek |
| Paterson, rh Mr Owen | Thomson, Ross |
| Pawsey, Mark | Throup, Maggie |
| Penning, rh Mike | Tolhurst, Kelly |
| Penrose, John | Tomlinson, Justin |
| Percy, Andrew | Tomlinson, Michael |
| Perry, Claire | Tracey, Craig |
| Philp, Chris | Tredinnick, David |
| Pincher, Christopher | Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie |
| Poulter, Dr Dan | Truss, rh Elizabeth |
| Pow, Rebecca | Tugendhat, Tom |
| Prentis, Victoria | Vaizey, rh Mr Edward |
| Prisk, Mr Mark | Vara, Mr Shailesh |
| Pritchard, Mark | Vickers, Martin |
| Pursglove, Tom | Villiers, rh Theresa |
| Quin, Jeremy | Walker, Mr Charles |
| Quince, Will | Walker, Mr Robin |
| Raab, Dominic | Wallace, rh Mr Ben |
| Redwood, rh John | Warburton, David |
| Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob | Warman, Matt |
| Robertson, Mr Laurence | Whately, Helen |
| Robinson, Gavin | Wheeler, Mrs Heather |
| Robinson, Mary | Whittaker, Craig |
| Ross, Douglas | Whittingdale, rh Mr John |
| Rowley, Lee | Wiggin, Bill |
| Rudd, rh Amber | Williamson, rh Gavin |
| Sandbach, Antoinette | Wilson, Sammy |
| Scully, Paul | Wollaston, Dr Sarah |
| Seely, Mr Bob | Wood, Mike |
| Selous, Andrew Shannon, Jim Shapps, rh Grant Sharma, Alok | Wragg, Mr William  Wright, rh Jeremy  Zahawi, Nadhim |
| Shelbrooke, Alec | **Tellers for the Noes:** |
| Simpson, David | **Nigel Adams and** |
| Simpson, rh Mr Keith | **David Rutley** |

Business without Debate

USE OF THE CHAMBER (UNITED KINGDOM  
YOUTH PARLIAMENT)

*Resolved,*

That this House welcomes the work of the United Kingdom  
Youth Parliament in providing young people with an opportunity  
to engage with the political process; recognises the positive contribution  
to such engagement provided by the annual meetings of the  
Youth Parliament in the Chamber of this House; and accordingly  
resolves that the UK Youth Parliament should be allowed to meet  
once a year in the Chamber of this House for the duration of this  
Parliament.*—(Andrea Leadsom.)*

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): On a point of order,  
Mr Speaker. Would it be in order for this place to record  
that as a result of Labour's filibustering tonight, this  
Chamber will not debate the appalling abuse that many  
women Conservative candidates endured during the  
general election from the hard left? Would it also be in  
order for this place to record that there are many  
Conservative Members who stood up for Labour women  
when they were abused by their hard-left leadership?

**Mr Speaker:** I can assure the right hon. Lady that her  
conduct on this occasion has been entirely orderly. It  
was open to her to raise that matter in the way that she  
did, and she has done so.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. Would it be in order for me to say  
that it has been suggested to me that I did not raise the  
point as to quite how useless Her Majesty's Government  
are during the last debate? I would like to put that on  
the record, if I may.

**Mr Speaker:** Not only is that cheeky, but it is evident  
from her rather guilty smile that the hon. Lady herself is  
aware of the nature and extent of the cheekiness. The  
hon. Lady advised me that she wished to raise a point of  
order to correct the record because she felt that she had  
misspoken, so I thought there was going to be an air of  
contrition, not an attempt to score a party political  
point. But what the hon. Lady has said is on the record.  
Let us now preserve an orderly atmosphere as the  
Secretary of State for Transport makes his way to the  
Dispatch Box to deliver his statement.

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Main question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government  
business on 20 October, 3 November, 1 December 2017, 19 January,  
2 and 23 February, 16 March, 27 April, 11 May, 15 June, 6 July,  
26 October and 23 November 2018.

661

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

662

HS2 Update

10.12 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**I am grateful to you for allowing this statement, Mr Speaker.  
I am pleased to be here in front of the House tonight.  
As you know, sometimes these things can happen as a  
result of cock-up rather than conspiracy.

Today marks a major milestone in the Government's  
plans to deliver High Speed 2. High Speed 2 will deliver  
economic growth across the United Kingdom. It will  
provide the rail network with the capacity we need for  
the next century, faster journeys and better connections  
between cities across the UK.

As announced to the House this morning, we will be  
awarding stage 1 of the main works civil engineering  
contracts for the phase 1 route from London to  
Birmingham. This stage primarily covers design and  
pre-construction activities, although it is worth saying  
that the initial works have already begun. We expect  
these contracts to be signed by the end of this month  
after the completion of the mandatory standstill period.  
The expected total value of these contracts covering  
stages 1 and stage 2, which is the full construction  
phase, is £6.6 billion. They will support around 16,000  
jobs across the country and are expected to generate  
around 7,000 contract opportunities in the supply chain,  
of which I expect around 60% to go to small and  
medium-sized enterprises. I have also confirmed the  
shortlists for the station design contracts and Euston  
master development partner procurements.

As well as that announcement, today I am introducing  
the phase 2a High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe)  
Bill to the House. This seeks the powers to construct  
HS2 from the west midlands to Crewe so that this  
important section, which links up to the west coast  
main line just south of Crewe, can open in 2027.

The design of the route set out in the Bill is largely as  
announced in 2015. However, there are three refinements  
I have decided to make, following consultation last year.  
I have decided to move the connection to the west coast  
main line and the start of a tunnel in Crewe further  
south. I have also decided to move the construction  
railhead, and subsequently the infrastructure maintenance  
facility for this part of HS2, from the Basford area near  
Crewe to a location near Stone. I am very sensitive to  
the impact that that could have on the local community,  
which my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William  
Cash) has diligently drawn to my attention, but I believe  
this site is a better location from which to construct and  
maintain phase 2a. The new location near Stone is  
strategically located midway along the phase 2a route,  
which means that it can support construction activities  
heading north and south simultaneously, offering significant  
programme and construction benefits. Of course, the  
site at Stone benefits from good transport links, with  
access to the M6 and the existing rail network right at  
that location.

In Crewe, moving the railhead from the Basford area  
avoids planned housing regeneration in that part of  
Cheshire. It also negates the need for maintenance  
loops at Pipe Ridware, thereby reducing impacts along  
the phase 2a route. It is worth saying that that area of  
Basford is one of Cheshire's most significant economic  
development and housing development sites, and I have

been very sensitive to that. The construction railhead  
and infrastructure maintenance facility have been carefully  
designed so as to minimise impacts locally, particularly  
on the community of Yarnfield. Having heard local  
concerns, I have made sure that Yarnfield Lane will  
remain open.

In preparing the Bill, HS2 Ltd has sought to minimise  
impacts on the environment and on communities. Following  
the deposit of the Bill, there will be a consultation on  
the scheme's environmental statement. That will provide  
the opportunity to comment on the environmental effects  
of the proposed phase 2a scheme and the reasonable  
alternatives considered and reported by HS2 Ltd. The  
process will result in a report from an independent  
assessor, which will be provided to all Members of the  
House before Second Reading.

Turning to Crewe, the HS2 business case has always  
included two trains per hour stopping at Crewe. The  
phase 2a Bill includes the interventions needed to support  
that, but I know that there is a strong ambition to  
achieve even more. Today, I am therefore launching a  
consultation on options to develop a Crewe hub. This  
work shows how such a service pattern could support  
an HS2 service to Stoke-on-Trent and bring benefits to  
places like Chester, north and south Wales, Shrewsbury  
and Derby. Future decisions will be subject to affordability  
and value for money. Funding the broader vision for a  
Crewe hub will require national and local government  
to work together, but I believe that there is the potential  
to deliver even more benefits.

Finally today, I am announcing my decision on the  
outstanding sections of the phase 2b route to Manchester  
and Leeds, which we consulted on last year. After  
carefully considering the responses to the consultation,  
I have decided to confirm the following changes to the  
route. The western leg rolling stock depot will move  
from a site near Golborne to a site north of Crewe. That  
site will be included in the full environmental assessment  
being undertaken for the whole route and I will look  
carefully at that assessment.

A 26 km section of the route in the Middlewich and  
Pickmere area of Cheshire will change and be raised as  
it passes through the Cheshire salt plains, to avoid  
brining and gas storage infrastructure. The approach to  
Manchester Piccadilly station will be adjusted to improve  
operational efficiency and reduce impacts on residential  
areas and a primary school. The route near East Midlands  
airport will now closely follow the eastern side of the  
A42. This avoids tunnelling under the airport and reduces  
the impacts on some communities. At Long Eaton,  
after much consultation with the local community, the  
route will pass through the town on a high viaduct.

The route in South Yorkshire will be the route we  
consulted on in 2016, which in part follows the M1 and  
M18, and serves Sheffield city centre via a spur from the  
HS2 line. I am also asking HS2 Ltd to take forward the  
provision of a northern junction back on to HS2, giving  
a city centre to city centre connection between Leeds  
and Sheffield in less than 30 minutes. That is very  
important for the development of Northern Powerhouse  
Rail. We will also continue to work on a possible  
parkway station.

Finally, I have decided not to proceed with the proposed  
change of route to the east of Measham. Instead, I am  
confirming a modified version of the 2013 preferred route  
to the west of Measham. In Measham itself, the route is

663

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

664

moved approximately 80 metres and the viaduct extended  
to mitigate commercial property impacts. I have heard  
the concerns raised by local communities about the  
proposed eastern leg rolling stock depot at Crofton.  
HS2 Ltd believes it has found a better option, on which  
I am now consulting, which is east of Leeds in the Aire  
valley, adjacent to the M1 on a brownfield site.

I intend to bring forward a third hybrid Bill for  
phase 2b in 2019. In preparation for that Bill, HS2 Ltd  
is today launching a consultation on the technical scope  
and methodology to be used in the environmental and  
equality impact assessments.

Today's decisions bring certainty for communities  
who have been unsure of the route for some years. I am  
updating the safeguarding directions for the phase 2b  
route to protect the land required for the construction  
and operation of the line. I can also confirm that the  
same range of property schemes currently operating for  
phases 1 and 2a will be available for phase 2b. This goes  
over and above what is required by law and gives  
assistance to those along the line of the route. I have  
also made amendments to some of the detailed urban/rural  
boundaries for phase 2b and to the treatment of properties  
around tunnel portals.

A report published today by property specialists Carter  
Jonas tells us that the particular circumstance of the  
Shimmer estate development in Mexborough, South  
Yorkshire means that this package may not allow some  
homeowners to acquire a similar property in their local  
area. In the light of the report's findings, I therefore also  
confirm that the Government will ensure that Shimmer  
homeowners can secure a comparable home, as referred  
to in my summary document “High Speed Two: From  
Concept to Reality”, which is also being published  
today. That is really important.

We need HS2. Since privatisation, the number of  
passenger journeys on our railways has doubled. It has  
nearly tripled on the key west coast inter-city corridor.  
We cannot continue to rely on the legacy of our Victorian  
forebears, far-sighted though they were. By providing  
new routes for inter-city services, HS2 will free up space  
on our existing railways. It will reduce overcrowding  
and allow options for more varied and frequent services,  
including for places that currently do not have a good  
connection to London. This released capacity could  
allow more freight trains. It could also more than  
double the current number of peak-time seats on busy  
services from Manchester Piccadilly towards Stoke and  
Crewe, and from Leeds towards Wakefield. It has the  
potential to almost double peak seats from London to  
Peterborough and east coast destinations further north.

Any significant investment needs to offer good value  
for money, as HS2 does. Today I am publishing the  
updated business case for phase 2, which shows that,  
including the wider economic benefits, the full HS2  
network will create £2.30 of benefit for every £1 spent.  
We want to make the most of our investment in HS2.  
When phase 1 becomes operational, HS2 trains will run  
to Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, Warrington, Wigan  
and Glasgow. Phase 2 will further reduce journey times  
between London and Glasgow and Edinburgh to around  
three hours and 40 minutes. To my Scottish colleagues,  
let me say that we will continue to work with Transport  
Scotland and Network Rail to look at the best ways  
of further reducing times, towards an ultimate ambition  
of a three-hour journey time between London and Scotland.

We are also looking at opportunities to use HS2  
to support Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands  
Connect.

Finally, I know that today's announcement will not  
be welcome news for those living along the line of the  
route. There will be concern about how HS2 will affect  
their homes, communities and businesses. That, sadly, is  
inevitable if we are going to do big projects of this kind  
for our nation, but I am determined that we will engage  
extensively with everyone affected and that we will show  
fairness, compassion and respect. All the products  
mentioned today are in the Libraries of both Houses.

Our plan for Britain is a plan to build a stronger,  
fairer country, with an economy that works for everyone—  
one in which wealth and opportunity are spread across  
the country and we are set up to succeed in the long  
term. Investment in economic infrastructure is a key  
part of this. HS2 will be the new backbone of the UK  
rail network. It will transform a rail network built for  
the 19th century into one designed for the 21st century.  
It will increase capacity and connectivity across our rail  
network, bring our country closer together and support  
economic growth. The benefits of HS2 will be felt  
across the whole of the United Kingdom. I commend  
the statement to the House.

10.23 pm

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): May I thank  
the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement?  
I also thank you, Mr Speaker, for hearing the point of  
order made earlier today by my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) about  
what could be done to encourage the Secretary of State  
to better inform the House of the crucial decisions that  
he has reached on one of the most significant and costly  
pieces of transport infrastructure that this country has  
proposed for many a year.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will be kind enough to  
explain what happened earlier today, given the widespread  
trailing of an oral statement on the anticipated  
announcement and the House's subsequent disappointment  
at initially being asked to settle for a written statement,  
until such time as the outcry seemingly reached the  
Transport Secretary's ears and his somewhat belated  
appearance in the Chamber tonight.

Labour has consistently supported HS2 and the attendant  
benefits it will bring—indeed, we were its initial proposer  
in 2009—but that support brings with it many questions.  
On the construction, there are concerns that companies  
selected to do the work were previously involved in the  
practice of blacklisting workers.What assurances can  
the Secretary of State give that no such practices will be  
tolerated in the delivery of HS2? Far too often in the  
case of significant projects in recent times, overseas  
contractors—and several have been awarded contracts  
here—have brought in their own labour, and have recruited  
exclusively from jurisdictions outside the United Kingdom.  
HS2 clearly represents huge employment and career  
opportunities for apprentices and established workers  
alike. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that the  
practices we have seen in the construction industry that  
have excluded British workers from UK projects will  
not be allowed to obtain in the construction of HS2?

There are also concerns about the financial health of  
Carillion. What measures has the Secretary of State put  
in place to ensure that any financial instability of any of

665

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

666

*[Andy McDonald]*

the contractors will not delay or add to the cost of the  
project? He said in evidence to the Treasury Committee  
that it was not his job to monitor conflicts of interest in  
the delivery of HS2, but given the revelations of the  
revolving door between HS2 and the engineering firm  
CH2M, does he accept that he does, in fact, have such  
an obligation if the public are to have confidence in the  
arrangements between HS2 and the contractors?

What assurances and guarantees can the Secretary of  
State give that the total overall cost will not exceed the  
stated £55.7 billion, and will not spiral, as has been  
alleged in certain quarters? In one of the many documents  
published today, we are told that in adopting the M18 route  
in south Yorkshire, although HS2 Ltd has included in  
the costs estimate the delivery of a junction north of  
Sheffield and back to the HS2 main line, it has not  
costed electrification of the midland main line between  
Clay Cross and Sheffield Midland, or from Sheffield to  
the north. Does the Secretary of State intend the line to  
be electrified in readiness for HS2—and if so, when—or  
is he working on the basis that trains to Sheffield will be  
bimodal, and the line will remain unelectrified?

Will the Secretary of State provide further and better  
particulars of his proposals and preferences in respect  
of potential parkway stations? Will he also provide an  
update on the progress of the northern east-west rail  
and the extension to the north-east—“Crossrail for the  
north”—and its connection with HS2, and on what  
discussions he has had with Transport for the North in  
that regard? Finally, will he reassure the House that his  
announcement about progress on HS2 will not be followed  
by an announcement of yet further delays to electrification  
of the trans-Pennine route?

**Chris Grayling:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for  
Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald) for the Opposition's  
continued support for the HS2 project. I hope that we  
shall be able to work on it together. I think that the  
House, or a large proportion of it, is united in believing  
that the project is necessary to the economic development  
of the future.

As I said a moment ago, I am very pleased to be here  
now. I should have preferred to be here earlier, but, as I  
said, it is sometimes a case of cock-up rather than  
conspiracy.

Let me begin by saying something about the construction  
contracts. We have contracted a range of significant  
British companies as part of the awarding of contracts  
today. A range of consortiums is participating, and  
many of them are already an integral part of Crossrail,  
which is our biggest engineering project—and the biggest  
in Europe. We have a good team of UK and international  
organisations that are used to working as a team to  
deliver big infrastructure projects. However, the assurance  
that I give the hon. Gentleman and the House is that, as  
I have made clear all along, the companies that win  
contracts for HS2—whether construction, design or,  
ultimately, rolling stock contracts—will be obliged to  
make a commitment to leave a lasting skills footprint.  
That means apprenticeship programmes and skills  
development, and I think the two high-speed college  
campuses that we have established in Birmingham and  
Doncaster will help to develop real expertise for the  
future.

The hon. Gentleman talked about Carillion. Carillion  
is a big UK construction business which is clearly going  
through a troubled time, and we all hope that it will pull  
through, because we want to see British business succeed.  
However, I can tell him that Carillion is part of a  
consortium in which all the organisations involved have  
committed to delivering their part of the contract, and I  
am confident that whatever the position in respect of  
Carillion, that consortium will deliver the results that  
we expect.

The hon. Gentleman talked about conflicts of interest  
and CH2M. As he is aware, it pulled out of that  
particular contract. I have every intention of ensuring  
that we have proper behaviour by companies in future;  
they will be unable to continue to work for us if they do  
not do the right thing.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the total cost of the  
project. Over the past 24 hours there have been some  
wild rumours about the cost, based on people who are  
not involved in the project putting a finger in the air. I  
simply remind the House that it is incredible, inconceivable  
and simply nonsense to suggest that HS2 will cost five  
times the amount of HS1 per mile. This project has a  
total cost attached of £55.7 billion. It is currently on  
time and on budget, and I expect it to stay that way. In  
this country we have experience of major projects, such  
as Crossrail and the Olympics, and we have been pretty  
good at delivering on time and on budget. I am sure  
that we will carry on doing so.

The hon. Gentleman asked about electrification of  
the M18 route. I can confirm that the route from  
Sheffield Midland north to Leeds will also be electrified  
to ensure that through services can run to Leeds. That  
link is also an important part of northern powerhouse  
rail. On parkways stations, work is continuing to look  
at the best options. With regard to the whole northern  
powerhouse rail project, I am waiting for Transport for  
the North to bring forward its proposals. With regard  
to trans-Pennine modernisation, nothing has changed.

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):  
I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Secretary of  
State for coming to the House to make a statement on  
this important project at this late time of night—I am  
willing to discuss HS2 with him any time of the night or  
day. He has put a great deal of confidence in the  
contractors he announced today, to which he is awarding  
£6.6 billion of taxpayers' money. However, just by glancing  
at recent news reports, we see that Strabag, an Austrian  
firm, is pulling out of a hydroelectric plant contract in  
Bosnia, having sought to increase the contract price.  
Skanska UK has revealed major project cost overruns  
and write-downs of £33 million. Costain has yet to  
reach a settlement for a private finance initiative project  
contract with the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal  
Authority, where it has already incurred £15 million of  
losses. Last December the Health and Safety Commission  
confirmed that Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Ltd  
was being prosecuted for three incidents that took place  
during the construction of the Crossrail tunnel. That is  
in addition to Carillion's well documented financial  
problems, which mean that it is having to restructure.  
Can he confirm that he knew about all those matters,  
that he has carried out due diligence on those companies,  
and that the taxpayer is not in reality carrying unacceptable  
risks on the construction of HS2?

667

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

668

**Chris Grayling:** We of course monitor the fitness for  
contracts of all the companies we award contracts to.  
The consortia to which we have awarded contracts  
today are groups of firms that have a track record of  
delivering major projects for this country, and they also  
include major British businesses that I want to see  
succeed. It is really important to ensure that we use the  
expertise that is already delivering for us and that we  
also champion British business. The awarding of the  
contracts does that job.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I  
thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his  
statement, and for his honesty in admitting that today's  
proceedings are yet another Government cock-up, which  
is quite the theme.

I have consistently spoken in favour of High Speed 2,  
so long as Scotland is not excluded. I therefore welcome  
the Secretary of State's restatement of the aspiration to  
have a three-hour journey time to Scotland. By contrast,  
my scheduled journey time today from Glasgow to  
London was four and a half hours—50% longer—which  
shows the real benefits that high-speed rail could bring.  
However, my understanding is that when high-speed  
trains run on the existing network north of Crewe they  
will actually run slower than my train did today. Can he  
confirm that, and if so, what will be done to look at the  
rolling stock to try to improve that speed?

Can the Secretary of State also advise on the estimated  
journey time of three hours and 45 minutes when  
high-speed trains start running to Glasgow, and how  
much that reduced journey time will be due to the  
reduced number of stops? Can he confirm in which  
investment periods upgrades to the west coast main line  
north of Crewe will take place? A previous KPMG  
report highlighted some possible negative impacts in  
Scotland, including a predicted £220 million drop in  
economic output in Aberdeenshire, if high-speed rail  
continues without including Scotland. Has he updated  
the review of those figures, and if not, why was the  
Secretary of State for Scotland able to tweet that today's  
announcements on high-speed rail will bring economic  
benefits to Scotland?

I want to reiterate the concerns about Carillion,  
which now has the prefix “troubled” when it is mentioned  
in the newspapers. What engagement has there been  
with Scottish companies for bids? Will the Secretary of  
State uphold his predecessor's commitment that offsite  
constructions will definitely be in Scotland? With regard  
to today's announcement about the Crewe hub, can he  
confirm that it will not be to the detriment of services to  
Scotland or the funding of upgrades north of Crewe?  
Finally, I offer the small reminder that the devolution of  
Network Rail to Scotland would allow the Scottish  
Government to progress upgrades north of the border  
much quicker.

**Chris Grayling:** As I said earlier, this project benefits  
the whole United Kingdom. It will reduce journey times  
to Scotland, and I am committed to looking at how we  
ensure those journey times come down on and beyond  
the HS2 network. I will work closely with my Scottish  
colleagues to see how best we can achieve that, to  
deliver what people in Scotland want, which is—  
*[Interruption.]* Well, I hate to say this to the Scottish  
National party, but actually we are the ones who just

made ground in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman will not  
be surprised if I listen to my Scottish colleagues, who  
seem to me to have their fingers firmly on the pulse of  
what people in Scotland want. Of course, we will deal  
with the Scottish Administration, but there is more  
than one voice for Scotland in this House now.

Service patterns for the future will ultimately depend  
on timetabling much closer to the time, but I expect to  
see genuine benefits for people across the network served  
by HS2 in Scotland, the north of England and north  
Wales. This investment will lead to better services all  
around the country. It will deliver better services from  
the east coast ports; I see my hon. Friend the Member  
for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) in his place, and  
there is a real opportunity to open new routes to those  
ports on the existing east coast main line. There is a real  
opportunity to improve the services to cities off the  
HS2 network that will be served by HS2 trains—Glasgow,  
Edinburgh, Newcastle, Preston, Liverpool. This will  
benefit people on a very widespread basis.

The hon. Gentleman talks about a drop in economic  
activity. This is a huge project that will feed the supply  
chain all around the United Kingdom. So this will be  
good news for Scottish business, good news for English  
business, good news for Welsh business and good news  
for Northern Irish business. This is good news for the  
United Kingdom as a whole.

The hon. Gentleman talked about Carillion. I would  
hope that everyone in this House would share my  
ambition that a British company going through a troubled  
period pulls through and has a stronger future, and I see  
no reason, when it is part of a consortium that has  
agreed collectively to deliver for us, why we should hold  
its current position against it and take away an opportunity  
that might help that business recover.

Lastly, I do not see how delivering on a Crewe hub  
that will help connections to north Wales, for example,  
should in any way disadvantage Scotland.

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): As my right hon.  
Friend knows, I am profoundly and deeply opposed to  
phase 2, which goes straight through my constituency  
from top to bottom. Will he confirm that Yarnfield  
Lane will be kept open, as he said in his statement, and  
reconfirm his personal assurance to me that he has  
instructed officials to prepare plans for a deeper and  
longer tunnel at Whitmore, Baldwin's Gate and Madeley,  
and that he will give renewed consideration to the  
introduction of property bonds, which I have pressed  
for in the past?

**Chris Grayling:** I pay tribute to my hon. Friend; I  
accept that it is never easy when a project like this  
comes through a constituency, and I respect the constructive  
way in which he has approached this on behalf of his  
constituents. I know he and his constituents feel strongly  
about it. I can give him an assurance in each of those  
areas. As he knows, I have been to his constituency and  
looked at the impact of the route and can confirm that  
Yarnfield Lane will remain open. I can also confirm  
that we are looking again at the tunnel issue and how we  
best deal with the issue of properties, as he discussed. I  
will continue to have discussions with him and seek to  
do the best we can for his constituents, whom I know do  
not welcome this development, necessary though it is  
for the country as a whole.

669

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

670

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): I welcome  
the Secretary of State's announcement today. Certainty  
about the route and the timetable for progressing the  
project is essential if businesses are to have the confidence  
to invest and create jobs in the region served by HS2.  
But, as he acknowledged, decisions also present huge  
challenges for those communities most affected, and  
HS2 Ltd has rightly been criticised for the way it dealt  
with communities on phase 1, so what specific action  
has he taken to ensure improved engagement and address  
the need to respond promptly, effectively and sensitively  
to community concerns?

**Chris Grayling:** I thank the hon. Lady for her support  
for the project as a whole. I accept her criticism; I met  
the HS2 leadership team this week and expressed my  
concern that that should change. I am absolutely clear  
that as we go through the process of the hybrid Bill for  
phase 2a, and the further process for phase 2b, I expect  
HS2 to do the right thing by the affected communities. I  
invite any Member of the House to come and see me or  
the Minister responsible if they feel that that is not  
happening, and we will seek to ensure that it does.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I do not wish to embarrass an  
hon. Member by naming the person, but one hon.  
Member in the Chamber is standing and seeking to  
catch my eye despite having just arrived, 21 minutes  
after the statement began, which is, to put it mildly, a  
tad cheeky.

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con): I thank  
my right hon. Friend for his statement. He has confirmed  
that there will be a major construction site just inside  
the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Stone (Sir William Cash). There are no exits to the  
M6 in that area, between Stone and Crewe, so the A525,  
which runs through my constituency—and particularly  
the village of Woore—will be affected. Does he have  
any idea at this stage of the volume of material that will  
be transported to the construction site, first by rail and  
laterally by cross-roads such as the A525?

**Chris Grayling:** One of the advantages of the site is  
that it adjoins the west coast main line, and I expect as  
much as is practical to be delivered and taken away by  
rail. There certainly will be a road impact, however, as  
we move towards the construction phase. As we go  
through the hybrid Bill process, we will discuss that in  
detail with the Members of Parliament representing the  
affected constituencies, and I am open to asking Highways  
England to look at any local amelioration measures  
that could be put in place to ensure the least possible  
trouble to the local communities.

**Edward Miliband** (Doncaster North) (Lab): I am  
afraid that the Secretary of State's statement will provoke  
deep anger among my constituents, not just because of  
the local impact on them but because they believe, as I  
do, that this is the wrong choice for jobs, for regeneration,  
for connectivity and indeed for the ambitions of HS2 for  
South Yorkshire. I want to ask him two questions in  
that context. First, the consultation came back 15:1 against  
the M18 route, so why did he ignore it? Secondly, can he  
honestly say that this is a better choice for Barnsley,  
Doncaster and Rotherham—towns that need to benefit  
from HS2?

**Chris Grayling:** I know how strongly the right hon.  
Gentleman feels about this—he and I have spoken  
about it—and I give him my personal assurance that I  
have considered the matter very carefully. The truth is  
that, when it comes to consultations, there are strong views  
against an option when it affects a particular community.  
There is no doubt about that at all. I have considered  
the regeneration issues around Meadowhall as compared  
with the current route, and I have considered the engineering  
challenge of building a large station in the Meadowhall  
corridor. I have also been mindful of the potential  
benefits of the direct connection between Sheffield Midland  
and Leeds for northern powerhouse rail. My judgment,  
after much consideration and listening to the advice of  
the HS2 leadership team, is that this is the best option. I  
accept that the right hon. Gentleman will not agree with  
my decision, but I give him my personal assurance that I  
have not taken it lightly. I have listened to what he and  
others have said and given the matter careful thought.  
He will disagree with me, but I want him to believe that  
this was a sincerely taken decision.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): In Broxtowe, many  
people support HS2—rightly, in my view—because we  
know that it will bring jobs and growth to the east  
midlands hub at Toton sidings. People in Trowell will be  
delighted that the rural scheme for compensation has  
been extended, and I really do thank the Secretary of  
State for that decision. However, there will not be the  
support for the scheme that there should be because of  
the proposed 60-foot viaduct through the village. Will  
he give an undertaking that he will look at that again? If  
he changes his mind about that, the scheme will have  
widespread support throughout the whole of Broxtowe.

**Chris Grayling:** As the hybrid Bill goes through its  
consideration in this House, there will be have to be  
debates about such issues, and I know that my right  
hon. Friend and the petitioners will make that point  
clearly to the Committee. The High Speed Rail (London  
- West Midlands) Act 2017 was modified in places in  
Committee, and it will be open to those who can win an  
argument with the Committee to secure change.

I also express my thanks to my right hon. Friend for  
the constructive way in which she has approached the  
discussions. She is right to say that the regeneration of  
the Toton site will make a real difference to the east  
midlands. It is a huge waste at the moment, and I hope  
to see the project breathe life back into it.

**Mr Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover) (Lab): The Secretary  
of State referred to the “good news”. This is not good  
news at all for people in Mexborough and various other  
places because of the vanity project idea of a station in  
Sheffield, which has resulted in the spur going straight  
through the middle of the Bolsover constituency. It is  
not good news in Newton, where 50 homes are likely to  
be affected. It is not good news at McArthurGlen in  
Ashfield, where they were going to increase the number  
of jobs by 1,000, which has now gone down the pan  
because of this new route—the so-called HS2 spur. The  
only decent news is for firms like Carillion, which has  
been involved in blacklisting. It is almost a mirror  
image of the current Tory party.

**Chris Grayling:** I know that the hon. Gentleman feels  
strongly about this project, which does affect his  
constituents. I have been clear in saying that it is not

671

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

672

possible to build a project like this without affecting  
someone—whichever route we chose. In fact, if we had  
chosen the Meadowhall route instead of the M18 route,  
more properties would have been demolished. The reality  
is that we have to take decisions and ensure that we treat  
the people affected decently. I know that the hon.  
Gentleman will not agree with me or us about this  
project, but I assure him that we will seek to treat his  
constituents fairly.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con):  
When I predicted in 2013 that the cost of HS2 would  
balloon to £100 billion, I was wrong. It is clear that the  
project will end up costing the nation an awful lot more  
than that. Does the Secretary of State share my constituents'  
concern? They would absolutely expect a Labour  
Government to wilfully and neglectfully waste taxpayers'  
money, but they despair at seeing a Conservative  
Government do exactly that with this project.

**Chris Grayling:** I know that my hon. Friend also feels  
strongly about this project, but I remind him that HS2's  
purpose is to deliver additional capacity in our transport  
system. It will create the opportunity to double the  
number of peak-time seats into Leeds, Manchester and  
Birmingham, and there will be a huge increase into  
London Euston. It will provide the opportunity for  
more freight to move off the roads and on to rail. That  
is what this is all about.

I have heard a lot over the past 24 hours about  
numbers. The project has a budget of £55.7 billion. This  
country has a decent track record of late of delivering  
projects on time and on budget, and I am confident that  
that is what will happen this time. As far as I can see,  
those who appear to be telling a different story have no  
involvement in the project and little direct knowledge  
of it.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)  
(Lab): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he has  
once again dismissed proposals for cut and over or  
other adjustments to the route around Normanton? For  
all the effort and energy that he has put into looking at  
alternatives for south Yorkshire, he has not looked at  
alternatives for West Yorkshire. We have no station  
between Sheffield and Leeds, and many people will see  
the costs of the development, but not the benefits. In  
Normanton, for example, despite being less than 20 minutes  
from Leeds, we have only one train an hour and will not  
benefit from any of the shift in capacity that he has  
talked about. Is he not concerned that his approach to  
HS2, because of its focus on cities, not on any of the  
links to towns, will only widen the serious gap between  
cities and towns in this country, which is becoming even  
more serious than the divide between north and south?

**Chris Grayling:** The first thing to say is that we have  
taken a lot of care to try to put mitigation measures in  
place, and the movement of the depot from Crofton is a  
case in point. I have looked to try to change the  
configuration of the route around Barnburgh, and I  
have been up there myself to look at the locations. I am  
sure that the right hon. Lady will make further  
representations to the Committee that considers the  
Bill. If she looks at the challenges facing the rail network  
in the north, she will see that it is not about the lines  
that have lots of stations; it is about the fact that the  
links between our major cities are caught up by slow trains.

A fast train from Leeds to Manchester across the Pennines  
is not possible because of all the stations in between,  
and councils and representatives in the north have been  
calling for better, faster links between our northern  
cities, and this project will do that job between Sheffield  
and Leeds. One reason why I am attracted to the link  
between Sheffield city centre and Leeds city centre is to  
provide fast connections between the two.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con) *rose—*

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Tatton or Shipley? Esther McVey.

**Ms McVey:** Good choice, Mr Speaker.

I appreciate that the Secretary of State is seeking to  
be decisive, but my constituents in Tatton are deeply  
concerned by what they hear in the media. Will he  
ensure that my constituents, and I as their representative  
in Parliament, will be fully involved in the decisions that  
will hugely affect them, and that he and High Speed 2  
will not ride roughshod over their legitimate concerns?

**Chris Grayling:** This is my first opportunity to welcome  
my right hon. Friend back to the House. I am delighted  
to see her, and she will know that, of all the constituencies  
in the country apart from my own, I know hers well. I  
used to live there, and I understand the impact on local  
communities. I give her an assurance that we will do  
everything we can to be sensitive to the concerns and needs  
of those communities. As I said earlier, such a project  
cannot be delivered without it impacting on some people.  
I know the route through her constituency very precisely,  
and I can assure her that I will continue to work with  
her to make sure we minimise the impacts to the maximum  
degree we can.

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): Between 2013  
and 2016, a station at Sheffield Meadowhall was preferred  
by HS2. Sir David Higgins told me at an MP consultation  
meeting a few months ago that the station did not go  
ahead because there was no consensus on Sheffield City  
Council to build it. The Secretary of State will have seen  
today's publication of the consultation on the M1/M18  
route that goes through three of my villages, which was  
15:1 against—a lot of people support Meadowhall.  
Why do we spend money on consultations if that is the  
case?

The Shimmer estate at Mexborough was mentioned  
earlier, and it is estimated that quite a number of houses  
there will have to come down. On the Broadlands estate  
at Bramley in my constituency—the estate I live on—at  
least 81 houses are within 100 metres of HS2, and on  
the other side is the M18 motorway. The route will be  
devastating for the constituency, yet HS2 always denies  
the number of houses that will be affected.

Secretary of State, if HS2 is saying that fewer houses  
will be affected on the Meadowhall route—I defended  
that route, which goes through my constituency, too—it  
is not the truth. I put it in Sir David Higgins's hands  
months ago, and he still will not give me a figure for  
what would happen at Meadowhall.

**Chris Grayling:** We worked through the decision between  
the two routes very carefully. It is the case that more  
houses would be demolished on the Meadowhall route  
than on the M18 route, but the key point is that I have

673

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

674

*[Chris Grayling]*

taken careful advice from the team working on this, and  
I have considered the different options. The towns and  
cities to the west of south Yorkshire prefer one route  
and the towns and cities to the east of south Yorkshire  
prefer another. We have tried to take a balanced decision  
based on what we think is in the best interests of the  
country. I have given an assurance to the people affected,  
and I echo it to the right hon. Gentleman's constituents,  
that we will seek to do the right thing by them. I  
understand that a project like this is difficult. We need  
to take decisions in the interest of the country, and we  
then need to do everything we can to look after those  
affected.

**Philip Davies:** There are many people, including in  
Yorkshire, who think that HS2 is a huge waste of  
money that could be better spent on infrastructure  
projects elsewhere in the region. He was bullish about  
the total figure that HS2 will cost. Will he therefore put  
a cap on the cost to make sure it does not overrun in the  
way some people think? At what point does he think  
HS2 will become too expensive? Or does he support this  
project whatever its ultimate cost?

**Chris Grayling:** As the Treasury is paying the bill—

**Mrs Gillan:** Taxpayers are.

**Chris Grayling:** The taxpayers are paying the bill, but  
believe me the Treasury keeps a pretty careful watch on  
public spending and I have no doubt that it will be  
keeping a very weather eye on those costs, as will all the  
various bodies that look at public procurement projects  
and public construction projects. We have a good recent  
track record in delivering major projects on time and on  
budget—people have only to look at Crossrail to see  
that. We should be self-confident as a nation and say  
that we can do this. Why would it be the case that other  
countries can deliver projects such as this and for us to  
think we cannot—I think we can.

**Mrs Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):  
The strength of HS2 is about expanding the capacity of  
the rail network as a whole, so will the Secretary of  
State give me an absolute assurance that Liverpool will  
be directly connected to a new high-speed line and also  
to Northern Powerhouse Rail?

**Chris Grayling:** As the hon. Lady knows, Liverpool is  
one of the cities that will be served from the start by  
HS2 trains. When we have finished the Golborne link, I  
expect that in the end to become part of the connection  
that becomes Northern Powerhouse Rail, but I am  
waiting for Transport for the North to bring forward its  
detailed proposals. My view is that Liverpool will benefit  
enormously through reduced journey times, but I also  
expect it to be part of Northern Powerhouse Rail. As  
she knows, I know the city well and I am keen to make  
sure it benefits from the investment we are putting in.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): Although I welcome  
the clarity that today's announcement brings to residents  
of Long Eaton, Sandiacre and Stanton Gate in my  
constituency, and the extension of the rural service to  
the south of Long Eaton, some of my constituents who

have lived in their homes for 40 years or more are being  
offered only two thirds of the value of their homes and  
cannot afford to buy another home. As HS2 will be of  
great benefit to the whole nation, does my right hon.  
Friend agree that nobody should be worse off as a result  
of it?

**Chris Grayling:** I do agree, and I am very grateful to  
my hon. Friend and to the people of Long Eaton; as she  
knows, we have had a long discussion about whether we  
should have a high-level embankment or a low-level  
one, and I hope the solution we have reached is one that  
her community will support. I am clear that I do not  
want people to lose out as a result of this, and I extend  
to the House the request that Members should come to  
tell me if there are any places where there is a danger of  
that happening.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)  
(PC): Both Scotland and Northern Ireland have been  
awarded 100% Barnett consequentials from HS2, whereas  
Wales has had a 0% rating. With independent experts  
predicting a £100 billion or more cost for HS2, does the  
Secretary of State not recognise the inherent injustice of  
denying Wales its fair share?

**Chris Grayling:** If Members look at what we are  
doing now, they will see that we are in the process of  
modernising the signalling on the north Wales line. I am  
very clear that one beneficiary of the construction of  
HS2 will be north Wales, which will suddenly have  
significant additional capacity for services to London,  
Birmingham and elsewhere. This investment benefits  
everyone, by freeing up the capacity to deliver the  
services that they want.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): May I say to  
the Secretary of State that my constituents in Wimboldsley  
and Winsford will be devastated by this decision? As he  
has found an extra £750 million, which has been identified  
by the TerraConsult report as being needed to build  
over the salt plains of Cheshire, will he confirm that the  
environmental impact assessment will consider salt  
subsidence, which is hugely prevalent in this area, and  
that he will also dedicate £750 million towards the  
mitigation that will be needed in respect of the effects of  
raising the height of HS2 throughout the constituency?

**Chris Grayling:** We will attempt to make sure that we  
deliver mitigations where we can. It is worth saying that  
one question that has been raised is about the cost of  
this route relative to what counterparts in other European  
countries would spend, but we are, up and down this  
route, spending additional money on mitigations that  
other countries perhaps would not necessarily spend.  
That is an important part of finding the right balance  
between investment in infrastructure and trying to do  
the right thing by the communities affected. I know the  
concerns my hon. Friend has raised and I assure her  
that I will continue to work with her and her communities.  
The environmental assessment must look at these issues  
and of course when the Bill comes before this House the  
Committee concerned will also look at them. She and I  
will carry on working carefully together to make sure  
we deliver the right outcome—the best possible outcome—  
for her constituency, which will undoubtedly have parts  
that do not like what we are doing.

675

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

676

**Helen Jones** (Warrington North) (Lab): The original  
justification for the Hoo Green to Bamfurlong spur was  
the siting of a stock depot at Golborne. The Secretary  
of State has confirmed today that that will be moved to  
Crewe and that he will develop the Crewe hub. The  
costs for that part of the line have been repeatedly  
questioned and the devastation it will cause to the two  
villages of Culcheth and Hollins Green in my constituency  
has not been taken into account in any economic  
assessment. Does he accept that this spur is now the  
whitest of white elephants and yet another example of  
the concentration of HS2 on big cities and the neglect  
of its effect on towns?

**Chris Grayling:** No, I do not, because the Golborne  
link is an important part of ensuring good connectivity  
for Preston, Lancaster, Carlisle and Scotland. If we are  
to deliver better connectivity to Scotland, we need the  
Golborne link so that the trains can use that route to  
reduce journey times as much as possible. I am afraid  
that I do not accept the hon. Lady's point. I understand  
the reluctance in parts of her constituency to have this  
piece of the line developed. We will obviously do the  
right thing by the people affected, but this is an important  
part of delivering connectivity to the northern part of  
the country that would not otherwise happen in the  
same way.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): My right hon. Friend  
is already well aware of my constituents and my concerns  
over the route over the Ingestre salt marsh, but will he  
also consider putting some tunnelling back into the  
route through my constituency? The only bit of tunnelling  
that was there has now been removed, yet there are  
plenty of kilometres that could be tunnelled to avoid  
the impact on my constituents in Hopton, Marston and  
other places, including the Staffordshire showground.  
Will he also consider the impact on transport links  
across the region as the route in my constituency cuts  
across the A34, the M6, the A51 and several other A  
roads that are important for both regional and national  
infrastructure?

**Chris Grayling:** On the latter point, I can give my  
hon. Friend the assurance that we cannot end up with  
principal routes cut off. The environmental work we are  
talking about and the hybrid Bill Committee will consider  
the issues he mentions. I am happy to carry on talking  
to him about those options, but now, with the Committee,  
my hon. Friend and others have the opportunity to  
make the case to parliamentary colleagues about changes  
that might be necessary. That worked for the phase 1  
Bill and the Committee will no doubt give careful  
thought to what he has discussed in the context of the  
phase 2 Bill. I will happily keep talking to him about his  
concerns.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Secretary of State might remember that I have been a  
consistent opponent of the project for a very long time.  
It was £20 billion as a Labour project, then it became a  
Conservative project and would cost £40 billion, and I  
was told that I was irresponsible for saying that it would  
reach £60 billion. It is very clear from the article in *The  
Sunday Times* only this Sunday that it will cost £100 billion  
and beyond. I believe that people who elected me and  
who vote for my party believe that that sort of national  
treasure should be invested in public services and the

national health service, not in a technology—I hope  
that he will listen to this—that by 2033 will be as out of  
date as the canals were by the time the railways arrived.

**Chris Grayling:** If we roll the clock back 30 years, we  
were being told that about the rail network, and large  
chunks of it were closed. I now have hon. Members  
from all over the place saying, “Can we reopen it?” I am  
afraid that I do not accept the argument that in 10 or  
15 years' time the railways will be redundant. If we are  
going to maintain a balance between our roads and rail  
system for transport around the country, we will need  
investment in both. That is what this is all about. I  
would simply say to the hon. Gentleman that I accept  
his view, but I thought the stuff I read in *The Sunday  
Times* yesterday about cost was absolute nonsense, coming  
from somebody with no involvement in the project.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): Lichfield has  
been blighted twice by HS2, first by phase 1 and now by  
phase 2a. Farms are facing devastation in my constituency,  
with quarries being planned for them under phase 2a.  
Will the Secretary of State confirm that they can appeal  
through a petition? His predecessor said that the whole  
rationale for HS2 was congestion, but is it not the case  
that most of the congestion is south of Birmingham? I  
do not believe that phase 2a and phase 2b are necessary.  
It would save this nation money and I can tell the  
Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend  
the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul  
Maynard), who is on the Front Bench, that this legislation  
certainly will not have my support when it comes to a  
vote.

**Chris Grayling:** My hon. Friend talks about congestion;  
he should see the communications that I receive from  
people in Manchester and Leeds saying, “Our trains  
and railway lines are full; we need more capacity.” And,  
for example, our new colleague, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), is  
keen to see additional services from Stoke to Birmingham.  
If we are to have new capacity to deliver new services,  
we need a bigger network; that is what this is all about. I  
am absolutely clear that people will have the right to  
petition and to express their views to the Committee;  
that is the right and proper process to follow.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary  
of State will have heard the concerns from across the  
House about the costs of this contract and the companies  
involved in the consortium, including Carillion, which  
has made its profits from the frankly over-inflated rates  
of return on private finance products. Can he confirm  
that the contract has been awarded under the auspices  
of the Private Finance 2 pipeline? Under whatever  
auspices it has been awarded, will he commit to publishing  
the guidance that his Department used to undertake the  
value-for-money assessment for this contract?

**Chris Grayling:** I can give the hon. Lady an absolute  
assurance that when it comes to letting contracts, we are  
not taking the same disastrous approach to private  
finance as the Labour party did, which led to the huge  
deficits that brought parts of our national health service  
into a state of financial chaos. We follow a value-for-money  
approach that is vetted by the Infrastructure and Projects  
Authority and the National Audit Office. These are  
value-for-money public contracts to deliver an essential  
project for the nation.

677

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

678

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Ah yes, the man in the cream suit:  
Mr Alec Shelbrooke.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** Bringing some brightness to this  
late hour.

May I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary  
of State that the jobs bonanza that will come with  
moving the depot to Stourton is hugely welcome to  
Leeds, the Aire valley and my constituents? On the  
conversation that I had with the Exchequer Secretary to  
the Treasury, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate  
and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones), and on the tunnelling  
that will take place under Woodlesford, has the Secretary  
of State given consideration to the site on which the  
depot will sit? Has he considered putting all the tunnelling  
equipment and the spoil on brownfield land, so as to  
minimise the disruption to my villages of Woodlesford and  
Oulton, and the traffic around them, during construction?

**Chris Grayling:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting  
suggestion that I will pass on to the HS2 team. I am  
very glad that he supports this alternative site; I think it  
is the right one, and that people further south will  
welcome the decision. I have sought, having visited all  
the route, ways of minimising the impact, but as I said  
earlier, there are inevitably consequences of a project on  
this scale.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): May I  
ask the Secretary of State for a clarification and about a  
point of omission? On the clarification, he referred to  
the electrification of the line north of Sheffield to  
Leeds. Will he confirm that the cost of that is provided  
for in the decision? Paragraph 2.7.62 of the Department's  
report talks about the possibility of bimodal trains  
operating north of Sheffield if the line is not electrified.  
On the omission, the biggest challenge to his decision is  
the lack of capacity at Sheffield Midland station. His  
departmental officials have confirmed that there is capacity  
for only two trains an hour, yet the proposal is for two  
HS2 trains from Sheffield to London, two from Leeds  
to Birmingham through Sheffield, and hopefully more  
trains from Sheffield to Manchester as part of Northern  
Powerhouse Rail. How will he deal with that lack of  
capacity? Where is the money coming from?

**Chris Grayling:** As we get towards the opening of this  
part of the route in 2033, we will have to make sure that  
the necessary capacity is available, but as the hon.  
Gentleman knows, this is the route that Sheffield City  
Council has argued for. I have accepted that argument.  
We will have an electrified route that links HS2 and  
Leeds via Sheffield; that is really important.

**Mr Speaker:** Andrew Percy.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): Thank you,  
Mr Speaker; again, a good choice. I am a huge supporter  
of HS2; it is absolutely needed for the north of England,  
as is HS3. However, as the Secretary of State knows, my  
preference has been for the Sheffield Meadowhall option,  
which would carry more regeneration benefits for south  
Yorkshire and the Humber. Given that that has been  
ruled out, when will we get a decision on the parkway  
station and its location, and how will we ensure that the  
rest of south Yorkshire outside Sheffield, and the Humber,  
benefit from this investment?

**Chris Grayling:** We are doing the work on the parkway  
station at the moment, and I am interested in getting the  
views of my hon. Friend and others on how that might  
best work. Regarding his constituency, I am waiting for  
Transport for the North to come forward with its proposals  
about how to create the connectivity that is in Humberside  
in the rest of Yorkshire. That is the essential part of the  
process.

**Laura Smith** (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): Will the  
Secretary of State please confirm to my constituents in  
Crewe and Nantwich that the hub will be situated at the  
current Crewe station? Will he also confirm how many  
stops there will be? Crewe will welcome this if Crewe  
and the workers in Crewe will benefit from the station,  
but we need to know that we are getting the right  
number of stops and that the hub will be in the centre of  
our town.

**Chris Grayling:** The answer is that I expect the Crewe  
hub to be at the current Crewe station. There is huge  
potential there to develop a much better centre, a much  
better station and much better capacity around the  
station. Service patterns will be sorted out in the future,  
but I expect there to be a regular service, and much  
better connections to north Wales and elsewhere.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mr Simon Hoare.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I stand as Hobson's  
choice, I think, Mr Speaker.

Huskisson and his predecessors will have heard many  
of the concerns about the Victorian railway network as  
proposed about this village, that village or the other. He  
and his colleagues wisely proceeded, and the benefits of  
economic growth and job creation from the Victorian  
rail network were very clear. Will my right hon. Friend  
reflect on the important statement made by the shadow  
Secretary of State? Notwithstanding the parliamentary  
arithmetic, he provided the support of the official  
Opposition for this project, understanding and realising  
the important economic benefits that the proposal brings  
to the whole United Kingdom. That is to be underscored  
and welcomed at any time, but particularly in a post-Brexit  
environment.

**Chris Grayling:** My hon. Friend is right. In the event  
that I am still Transport Secretary when the first train  
runs, I do not plan to emulate Mr Huskisson by standing  
on the track in front of the train as it arrives.

I am grateful for the cross-party support. I know that  
individual Members on both sides of the House have  
constituency problems or principled concerns about the  
project, but the fact is that the project was proposed by  
both parties back at the end of the last decade. It was  
first put on the table by the last Labour Government  
and has commanded cross-party support. I hope that  
will continue because both parties understand the benefits  
the project can bring to the whole country. I hope we  
can work together to ensure that we deliver this Bill, the  
next one and the whole project. I am grateful to the  
shadow Secretary of State for the support he has given  
to it.

**Paul Girvan** (South Antrim) (DUP): The Secretary of  
State has indicated that the project will generate jobs  
throughout the region, 60% of which will be in small

679

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

HS2 Update

680

and medium-sized enterprises. What practical measures  
are being given to small contractors in other regions—I  
am being a bit parochial—such as Northern Ireland?  
What opportunities could exist for them in such a  
project?

**Chris Grayling:** I have been very clear to HS2 and to  
our contractors that I expect them to work with small  
and emerging British companies, to develop apprenticeship  
programmes and to do the right thing by all our futures.  
That is an essential part of the project, which is an  
investment not just in our infrastructure but in our skills  
base. That skills base resides not just within the apprentices  
who will be working on the project, but in the small  
businesses that supply it. I want those small businesses  
to come from every part of the United Kingdom.

**Ruth Smeeth** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): The  
Secretary of State has talked a great deal about my  
great city of Stoke-on-Trent, but he said in his statement  
that the service pattern “could” support an HS2 service  
to my city. Can he guarantee that we will retain our two  
fast trains to London per hour, as well as any potential  
classic-compatible trains?

**Chris Grayling:** Let me be very clear—indeed, my  
hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South  
(Jack Brereton) has already been lobbying me hard on  
this—that Stoke-on-Trent will be served by HS2 services  
and will see additional services connecting to other  
parts of the region as a result of the development. I see  
the future of the train service in Stoke-on-Trent as very  
bright. People in that great city will have access to more  
services as a result of the investment.

**Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): In Chesterfield,  
we stand ready to take advantage of the opportunity  
created by the jobs at the new Staveley depot, which we  
welcome. We also very much welcome the suggestion  
that there will be a stop at Chesterfield. Will the Secretary  
of State build on the good news for us in Chesterfield by  
confirming that there will be stops at Chesterfield? The  
wording of the Bill is somewhat ambiguous. Will the  
project also necessitate the electrification of the midland  
main line south of Sheffield to Chesterfield and beyond?

**Chris Grayling:** I can confirm that Chesterfield will  
have a service on HS2. I can also confirm that the HS2  
route through Chesterfield and Sheffield to Leeds will  
have to be electrified so those trains can run through to  
Leeds. I also think that when Northern Powerhouse  
Rail is developed, the route north of Sheffield will  
become a very important part of it.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): At a  
line-of-route briefing last week with MPs from Yorkshire  
and the midlands and me, I was dismayed to see that the  
HS2 chief executive officer, Sir David Higgins, roundly  
dismissed all the genuine concerns about lack of engagement  
and the failure of project staff to empathise with residents.  
In fact, when I raised the issue of Wells House Road in  
my constituency, he said it should have been bulldozed  
at the start. I have heard what the Secretary of State has  
said to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham  
South (Lilian Greenwood) and others, so could he  
urgently step in and act as Relate, if necessary, to help  
repair what looks like a complete breakdown in relations  
between my constituents and HS2?

**Chris Grayling:** I cannot comment on the original  
individual conversations. I simply repeat the point I  
made earlier that my door and the Minister's door will  
be open to any Member from any part of this House  
who is concerned that their constituents are not being  
treated properly as part of this project.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): I welcome  
the focus of the statement on the Crewe hub and its  
importance to the wider area of Cheshire and the  
north-west, but may I press the Secretary of State on  
some details? In the statement, he talks about the  
importance of HS2 to the whole country, but he also  
talks about the Crewe hub requiring national and local  
government to work together, which suggests that we in  
Cheshire will have to make a contribution that other  
parts of the country will not. Since this is such an  
important part of the economic development plans of  
Cheshire, the wider north-west and the cross-border  
area, will he confirm that he will not be asking local  
authorities to contribute, because of the benefit the hub  
will bring to my area?

**Chris Grayling:** The Crewe station site has the potential  
to be much more than just a station. There is a big  
regeneration opportunity for Crewe around that site,  
and it goes far beyond the provision of rail access.  
Inevitably, that needs to be something we work with the  
local community and local authorities on. I am very  
excited about the potential for Crewe station: if we look  
at the redundant land, particularly to the west, we see  
huge capacity for a massive and really important  
redevelopment project for the whole town of Crewe.

**Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op):  
The Secretary of State will know that, in May 2015,  
HS2 Ltd decided that there was no credible business  
case for extending a dedicated high-speed rail link north  
of Manchester to Glasgow. Given the announcement  
today, will he consider the merits of extending a dedicated  
high-speed rail link to Glasgow, given that a classic-  
compatible train without tilting capability will actually  
increase journey times between Manchester and Glasgow?  
That is unacceptable.

**Chris Grayling:** As I said earlier, our goal is to work  
to deliver that three-hour journey time we talked about,  
and that has the effect of bringing high-speed rail to  
Scotland. We have to use taxpayers' money wisely, and  
we have to find the right balance in this project, but I  
want this project to work for Scotland as well, and I will  
do everything I can to make sure that happens.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): The Secretary  
of State will be aware that local authorities in north  
Wales have been very supportive of HS2, but please can  
he assure my constituents that there will be good train  
links between the Crewe hub and the Wrexham area,  
because that is very important for us all?

**Chris Grayling:** I absolutely expect that to be the case.  
Of course, the benefit of taking the current express  
trains off the main line is that it provides the opportunity  
for better services from north Wales to other parts of  
the country, so those services in north Wales are one of  
the potential real beneficiaries of this.

681

HS2 Update

17 JULY 2017

682

**Gareth Snell** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op):  
May I start by saying to the Minister—*[Interruption.]* I  
have not even got there yet. The Minister may feel the  
need to hand out party political trinkets to the new hon.  
Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), who  
is not in his place. In doing so, he does not cause a  
problem for me or my hon. Friend the Member for  
Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth), but he undermines  
the good work done by Sara Williams and the Staffordshire  
chamber of commerce, who have been lobbying on this  
matter for a number of years—long before any of us  
were elected to this place, and that belittles the Minister  
in this place this evening.

The Secretary of State has said that there “could be”  
support for having HS2 in Stoke-on-Trent. That is not a  
commitment that my constituents can base any real  
decisions on. Could he confirm that, as was asked by  
my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North,  
the number of fast trains running from Stoke-on-Trent  
to London—London, and not another part of the region  
—will not be diminished by this announcement? Could  
he also confirm that capacity for freight transport on  
the west coast main line will not be diminished through  
making space for classic-compatible trains? As the hon.  
Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) asked, could the  
Secretary of State make it clear that the pain that  
Staffordshire feels will have economic gains, because without  
that he will struggle to get our support in the vote?

**Chris Grayling:** I met my hon. Friend the new Member  
for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton) today to talk  
about the need to make sure that there is an HS2 service  
for Stoke-on-Trent, and I have given him that commitment.  
*[Interruption.]* Labour Members may chunter, but I  
remind them that my hon. Friend has been the transport  
spokesman for the ruling group on Stoke-on-Trent City  
Council, so he is eminently well qualified to make this  
case, and is already doing a first-rate job as representative  
of the Stoke-on-Trent South constituency. I have been  
pleased to give him a commitment about the services for  
Stoke. I am also pleased to give the hon. Member for  
Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) a commitment  
that the whole point about HS2 is that it frees up capacity  
for these extra freight services and extra local passenger  
services. That is one of the reasons we are doing it.

**Chris Williamson** (Derby North) (Lab): I am grateful  
to the Secretary of State for confirming in his response  
to my hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Toby  
Perkins) that the midland main line will be electrified,  
but we have been waiting for as long as I can remember  
for that to happen, and led up the garden path on  
numerous occasions. Will he therefore, for the record,  
give us a date when the midland main line south of  
Sheffield through into London will be electrified?

**Chris Grayling:** We are talking about the ability to  
run an electric train from London, up HS2, around the  
route into Sheffield Midland, and back up to Leeds. I  
have given a very clear commitment that that will be the  
case. As I have said in this House before, the next stage  
of electrification of the midland main line is currently  
under way. I have also said that my big priority is to  
deliver for the people on that line the service improvements  
they want as quickly as possible, and that is what I am  
seeking to do.

Acid Attacks

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House  
do now adjourn.*—(Chris Heaton-Harris.)*

11.22 pm

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): Thank you,  
Mr Speaker, for allowing this, as it turns out, extremely  
timely debate to discuss our response to the rapid rise in  
the number of acid attacks. I am pleased to see the  
Minister in her place.

Last month in Newham, Jameel Mukhtar and his  
cousin Resham Khan, a student, were attacked with a  
corrosive liquid while sitting in a car on the way to  
marking her 21st birthday. They were left with severe  
burns, and injuries described by the Metropolitan police  
as life-changing. A 24-year-old suspect has been charged.  
There was a wave of revulsion across our borough after  
that attack, with many residents, particularly women,  
questioning whether it was safe any longer for them to  
walk down the street. My hon. Friend the Member for  
West Ham (Lyn Brown), who is in her place, attended a  
vigil for the victims organised by Stand Up To Racism,  
along with the mayor of Newham, attended by more  
than 200 people. There was strong support for Government  
action to tackle the rise of acid violence. A petition  
calling for a licensing scheme for acid sales has attracted  
more than 360,000 signatures.

I want to press the Minister for two specific changes  
to the law: first, that carrying acid should be an offence  
in exactly the same way as carrying a knife is an offence;  
and secondly, that there should be a requirement to  
have a licence to purchase sulphuric acid.

I warmly welcome the Home Secretary's announcement  
yesterday of a review of the law and criminal justice  
response to acid attacks. I am pleased that she has  
undertaken to review the sentencing guidelines, as I  
called for last week.

**Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): I am grateful to the  
right hon. Gentleman for securing this debate, which  
comes at an extremely appropriate time. My constituent,  
Adele Bellis, was the subject of a horrific acid attack.  
She has shown tremendous strength and courage in the  
way she has rebuilt her life. In Adele's view, clearer and  
tougher sentencing guidelines are needed. It must never  
be forgotten that those who are victims of acid attacks  
carry a life sentence. Does he agree that it is right that  
the issue of sentencing is included in the Government's  
review?

**Stephen Timms:** I completely agree with the hon.  
Gentleman and his constituent. Katie Piper, an acid  
attack survivor and founder of the Katie Piper Foundation,  
which supports victims, has said:

“Tougher sentencing would surely act as a deterrent to further  
attacks”,

and I agree with her. We need greater consistency in  
sentencing as well.

I hope that the review announced by the Home  
Secretary will be carried out quickly, because we need  
urgent action, and I hope that in her response to the  
debate, the Minister will be able to tell us about the  
envisaged timescale.

683

Acid Attacks

17 JULY 2017

Acid Attacks

684

I want to say a little more about the two specific  
points that I raised earlier. First, carrying acid without  
good reason should be a criminal offence, as carrying a  
knife is already. Of course, there are wholly legitimate  
reasons for obtaining acid, as there are for obtaining a  
knife, but we do not want people carrying them around  
the streets.

The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 has created  
a minimum custodial sentence for those aged 16 and  
over convicted of a second or subsequent offence of  
possession of a knife or offensive weapon. The sentence  
for an offender aged 18 or above is at least six months  
imprisonment when convicted, and that for 16 and  
17 year olds is a detention order of at least four months.  
Comparable sentences for possession of acid could  
combat the apparently growing idea that it is a safe  
weapon for gang members and others wanting to commit  
violent crimes.

Secondly, a licence should be required for the purchase  
of sulphuric acid. Some have complained that that would  
be an excessive, knee-jerk response, but actually it has  
been proposed by the British Retail Consortium, whose  
members have agreed voluntarily to stop selling sulphuric  
acid products. It points out that, under the Control of  
Poisons and Explosive Precursor Regulations 2015—which  
amended the Poisons Act 1972 and were intended to  
restrict supply of items that could be used to cause an  
explosion—sulphuric acid is already covered but under  
the lesser “reportable substance” category. Its proposal  
is that sulphuric acid should be promoted to the “regulated  
substance” category so that a licence would be required  
to purchase it. Regulated substances require an explosives  
precursors and poisons licence. A member of the public  
needs to show a valid licence and associated photo  
identification before making a purchase.

The proposal is supported not only by members of  
the British Retail Consortium, but by the Association  
of Convenience Stores, which says:

“We support legislative action under the Explosive Precursors  
Regulations 2014; for example, reclassifying sulphuric acid from  
Reportable Substance to Regulated Substance. This will provide  
retailers clarity and certainty on their obligations for products  
which contain sulphuric acid.”

It is significant that the shopkeepers themselves are  
asking for that chance.

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): The whole  
country has rightly been shocked by the recent acid  
attacks in London and the increased number of such  
attacks throughout the country. Many constituents have  
contacted me because they are horrified by what has  
been happening and feel that action needs to be taken.  
It is also important that we acknowledge the bravery of  
Resham Khan and her cousin, Jameel Mukhtar, in coming  
forward and sharing their experience so that we can discuss  
it here. I hope that the Minister will listen to both of my  
right hon. Friend's suggestions, which I fully support.

**Stephen Timms:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend and  
agree with him on both points. I particularly endorse  
his point about the revulsion and wave of anxiety  
created by this spate of attacks. As well as shop sales,  
the issue of online sales will need to be addressed,  
including of substances other than sulphuric acid.

**Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): My right hon. Friend  
is absolutely right: we need to control online sales,  
because if substances cannot be bought at the corner

shop sales will move online. Does he agree that, despite  
the practical difficulties in extending regulations to the  
online sphere, it is no less important that we tackle that  
if we are to restrict the supply of corrosive chemicals to  
illegitimate users?

**Stephen Timms:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It  
is clear that part of the problem is online, and it will  
increasingly be so. That does need to be addressed as  
part of this initiative.

I have one other request for an outcome to the review  
that the Home Secretary has announced. In March, I  
asked a written question about the number of acid  
attacks in each of the last five years, and I was dismayed  
to receive this reply from the Minister's predecessor:

“The Home Office does not collect data on the number of acid  
attacks.”

Since then, through freedom of information requests, a  
good deal of data have been published. I hope that the  
Minister will be able to assure us that in future, given  
the increasing concern about the matter, her Department  
will collect and publish data on acid attacks.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I sought the right  
hon. Gentleman's permission to intervene. He has clearly  
outlined the acid attacks that take place in the United  
Kingdom. He and I are both members of the all-party  
group on international freedom of religion or belief,  
and he will know about the acid attacks perpetrated  
against people across the world. Is tonight an opportunity  
to raise awareness of acid attacks on persecuted Christians  
in Iran, where human rights and equality issues for  
women are also a concern? I know he has an interest in  
that issue.

**Stephen Timms:** The hon. Gentleman has found the  
opportunity and raised precisely that issue. He is absolutely  
right: the use of acid, in all sorts of ways, is quite  
widespread around the world. As far as I can tell, the  
incidents that we are increasingly seeing in the UK are  
not like those to which he refers in Iran or elsewhere in  
the world. It appears that gangs in the UK have decided  
that acid offers a less risky way of committing their  
violent crimes than other weapons. Of course, it is  
entirely appropriate for him to draw attention to this  
horrific problem elsewhere in the world.

Acid attacks are an abhorrent form of violence. Acid,  
or a similarly corrosive substance, is thrown on to the  
victim's body—usually their face—in order permanently  
to disfigure, to maim or sometimes to blind them. Acid  
causes the skin and flesh to melt, often exposing and  
dissolving even the bones below. I pay tribute to James  
Berry, the former Member for Kingston and Surbiton,  
who talked a good deal about this. He made the point,  
rightly:

“For the victim, an acid attack is far worse than the life  
sentence the perpetrator plainly deserves.”

There has been a very worrying increase in acid  
violence. Last year, there were 451 such crimes in London,  
up from 261 in the previous year. In 2016, almost a third  
of them, I am sad to say, were carried out in the borough  
of Newham, which my hon. Friend the Member for West  
Ham and I represent. Since 2010 there have been almost  
450 acid attacks in the borough. Constituents have  
suggested to me that there may well have been others  
that have not been reported, and so are not included in  
those statistics.

685

Acid Attacks

17 JULY 2017

Acid Attacks

686

*[Stephen Timms]*

I have referred to the worry that many feel since the  
attack on the cousins in Newham. One resident said:

“I live in Newham and residents in the borough are feeling  
really unsecure and unsafe. My family and kids are so scared that  
they think twice before going out.”  
Another wrote in an email:

“Having lived in Newham for 25 years I find myself considering  
whether I should move out of the area to ensure safety for my  
family.”

Metropolitan police statistics show only two attacks  
in the last year, and they are classified as hate crimes.  
There was the one on the cousins and another one  
somewhere else. The much greater worry, contrary to  
what some people think, is that acid is becoming a  
preferred weapon of gangs carrying out robberies. It is  
easy to obtain, cheap and hard to trace back to the  
perpetrator. While it is relatively hard to obtain a gun  
and knives are more tightly restricted, criminals seem to  
have concluded that acid is a less risky weapon when  
committing violent crimes. What we need to do, as I am  
sure the Minister will agree, is make acid more risky than  
it has been seen to be over the past two or three years.

I hope that the review will also look at how to equip  
the first responders to the victims of acid attacks. A  
number of people have contacted me ahead of this  
debate to pass on advice about how to treat victims  
most effectively at the scene of an attack and how to  
equip paramedics and first aiders who go to their aid.

A report compiled in 2014 by J. Sagar Associates of  
India for Acid Survivors Trust International points to  
what it sees as two main flaws in the UK's approach to  
acid violence. The first is that weak restrictions on sales  
of acid are failing to prevent its acquisition for criminal  
use. The second is the inconsistent approaches taken by  
the courts in considering mitigating factors when sentencing  
those found guilty of acid attacks. Jaf Shah, executive  
director of Acid Survivors Trust International, advocates  
an age restriction of 18 on purchases and the prevention  
of cash sales to aid tracking, so that sales can be made  
only with a credit card. He suggests research to establish  
whether substances could be made less concentrated,  
more viscous or possibly even crystalline so that they  
are less easy to use to cause harm.

Licensing and restrictions have the support of very  
many of my constituents and of the local authority.  
Newham Council has backed tougher licensing conditions  
and robust codes of practice on the sale of noxious  
substances, as well as measures to raise awareness of the  
issue among those who work with young people.

To conclude, I welcome the Home Secretary's  
announcement over the weekend of a review. I hope  
that the Minister is able to tell us something about the  
timescale for completing that work. I urge on her as  
outcomes of the review those two specific changes to  
the law: first, that carrying acid should be an offence,  
just as carrying a knife is; and, secondly, that there  
should be a requirement on those who purchase sulphuric  
acid to have a licence permitting them to do so. I look  
forward to the Minister's response.

11.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the  
Home Department (Sarah Newton):** I genuinely thank  
the hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) for

bringing this very important debate before the House  
today. How timely it is. I also thank colleagues who  
have made important contributions this evening. I thank  
the hon. Gentleman for the tone he set for us this  
evening. I agree with every point he made.

Even before the terrible events of last Thursday,  
which left five people injured, one with life-changing  
injuries, it was clear that the use of acids and other  
corrosives to attack people is a growing threat that must  
be addressed with urgency. Violence of any kind is  
unacceptable, but I think there is something particularly  
troubling about these kinds of attack. Corrosive substances  
cause severe burns and serious tissue damage. All too  
frequently, victims' lives are altered forever. Nobody  
should have to go through this kind of mental and  
physical trauma. We have heard from victims who say  
that the injuries have deeply affected their sense of self.  
The challenge of returning to a normal life can sometimes  
feel almost insurmountable.

Sadly, these disturbing acts of violence are not new.  
The use of acids goes back centuries. However, the  
increase in incidents in this country is undoubtedly very  
worrying. In April, there was the attack in a Hackney  
nightclub, which left a number of people with severe  
burns and serious eye injuries, and we have heard the  
hon. Gentleman speak so eloquently and movingly this  
evening about the two cousins who were attacked in his  
constituency. It is vital that we do all we can to prevent  
these horrendous attacks from happening. We must not  
let those behind such attacks spread fear through society.

The law in this area is already strong, with acid  
attackers facing up to a life sentence in prison in certain  
cases. Meanwhile, suspicious transactions involving  
sulphuric acid must be reported to the police. However,  
it is vital to ensure that we are doing everything possible  
to tackle this emerging threat. Earlier this month, the  
Home Office held a joint event with the National Police  
Chiefs Council, which I attended. The meeting brought  
together law enforcement, Government, retailers, the  
NHS, experts and local policing to discuss the acid  
attacks and build up a better evidence picture. The hon.  
Gentleman made the important point that we must  
have better data on the scale of the threat to help us to  
understand how we will tackle it. Last October, with the  
help of the National Police Chiefs Council, we got more  
information from the police, which we have put into the  
public domain—it is on the Home Office website. We  
will be repeating that exercise, so that we collect data  
more regularly and have a much better understanding  
of the scale of the threat.

That meeting provided the basis for the action plan to  
tackle acid attacks that was announced by the Home  
Secretary on Sunday. I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman  
—*[Interruption.]* I have been passed a useful note telling  
me that he has been made a right hon. Gentleman—it is  
richly deserved—so I apologise for not picking that up  
earlier. The action plan will include a wide-ranging  
review of the law enforcement and criminal justice  
response, existing legislation, access to harmful products  
and the support offered to victims. I want to reassure  
the right hon. Gentleman and all colleagues here tonight  
that the points he has raised are being actively considered  
as part of that review.

**Lyn Brown:** I genuinely thank the Minister for putting  
the review in motion. I welcome the breadth of the  
urgent issues that the Government have indicated will

687

Acid Attacks

17 JULY 2017

Acid Attacks

688

be under consideration, but I wonder whether she thinks  
it is a good time for the review to take a broader look at  
the safety of the changes made to the sale of substances  
such as sulphuric acid by the Deregulation Act 2015. I  
understand that the experts who sat on the former  
Poisons Board, who had real expertise in this area, had  
serious concerns and favoured alternative reforms.

**Sarah Newton:** As I say, this is a wide-ranging review.  
We are definitely looking at the Poisons Act 1972, and I  
will make sure the hon. Lady's point is taken into  
careful consideration. We are looking at the Crown  
Prosecution Service's guidance to prosecutors, to ensure  
that acid and other corrosive substances can be classed  
as dangerous weapons. In addition, we will look again  
at the Poisons Act and whether more can be done to  
cover these harmful substances.

We will make sure that those who commit these  
terrible crimes feel the full force of the law. We will seek  
to ensure that everyone working in the criminal justice  
system, from police officers to prosecutors, has the  
powers they need severely to punish those who commit  
these appalling crimes. As the Home Secretary has said,  
life sentences must not be reserved for acid attack  
survivors. Further work will also take place with retailers,  
including online, to agree measures to restrict sales of  
acid and other corrosive substances. Victim support  
needs to be at the very heart of our response. We need  
to make sure that victims get the support they need,  
now and in the years ahead.

We are working on this with great urgency. We are  
about to go into recess, but I want to reassure the right  
hon. Member for East Ham that when Parliament gets  
back in September I will make sure that I update  
colleagues who are interested and seek an opportunity  
to update the House on the considerable progress that  
we expect to be able to make over the summer.

**Stephen Timms** rose—

**Sarah Newton:** I have probably got a few seconds  
left, so I want to reassure the right hon. Gentleman—  
*[Interruption.]* I have obviously misjudged the amount  
of time I have, so I am happy to give way.

**Stephen Timms:** I am grateful to the Minister, and I  
look forward to the update in September, as, I am sure,  
do other Members. Is she able to tell us when she  
expects the review announced by the Home Secretary to  
conclude? When does she expect the final outcomes to  
be announced?

**Sarah Newton:** As I have said, we have already started  
work. We put a fair amount of it in motion last year  
during the build-up to last week's meeting. I cannot  
commit myself tonight to a particular time by which we  
will complete the work. As I think everyone will understand,  
it is so wide ranging that, while some elements will be  
relatively easy to bring to fruition, others will require a  
longer period. Some may require changes in legislation,  
in which case we will seek the earliest possible legislative  
opportunity. I can absolutely commit myself, however,  
to the seriousness with which we are taking this issue,  
and to the urgency, the vigour, and the resources that we  
are bringing to bear in the Home Office to co-ordinate a  
whole-system response. We are working with partners  
both outside and inside Parliament. Different agencies  
need to come together.

These are horrendous crimes, and I am very much  
aware of the fear that is spreading, not only in London  
but in other parts of the country. There is simply no  
place in 21st-century Britain for such hate-filled, utterly  
devastating attacks, and we will do absolutely everything  
we can to prevent them.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.46 pm

House adjourned.

689

18 JULY 2017

690

House of Commons

*Tuesday 18 July 2017*

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

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

MIDDLE LEVEL BILL

*Motion made,*

That the promoters of the Middle Level Bill, which originated  
in this House in the previous Session on 24 January 2017, may  
have leave to proceed with the Bill in the current Session according  
to the provisions of Standing Order 188B (Revival of bills).—  
*(The Chairman of Ways and Means.)*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*To be considered on Tuesday 5 September.*

RICHMOND BURGAGE PASTURES BILL [*Lords*]

*Lords message (11 July) relating to the Bill considered.*

*Resolved,*

That this House concurs with the Lords in their Resolution.—  
*(The Chairman of Ways and Means.)*

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL [*Lords*]

*Lords message (11 July) relating to the Bill considered.*

*Resolved,*

That this House concurs with the Lords in their Resolution.—  
*(The Chairman of Ways and Means.)*

MOUNCHER INVESTIGATION REPORT

*Resolved,*

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That  
she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid  
before this House a Return of a Paper, entitled Mouncher Investigation  
Report, dated 18 July 2017.—*(Graham Stuart.)*

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked—***Wages**

1. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):  
   What fiscal steps he is taking to help increase the  
   average level of wages paid by employers. [900546]

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**The key thing that we can do to increase productivity is  
to ensure that we invest in education and improve skills.  
We have more people going to university and doing  
apprenticeships, and we are investing in our rail and  
roads.

**Martyn Day:** Unlike the Scottish Government, the  
UK Government voted for the public sector pay  
cut. Moreover, this Government's so-called national  
living wage is not based on the cost of living. What new  
measures will this Government bring in to provide  
people with a wage that they can live on?

**Elizabeth Truss:** We have made sure that basic rate  
taxpayers are paying £1,000 less tax by raising the  
personal allowance. We are also introducing the national  
living wage, bringing in a £1,400 rise in take-home pay  
for the lowest earners.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): The important  
thing for ensuring that people get a wage from an  
employer is to make sure that they have a job. Will the  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury welcome the record fall  
in unemployment to a 42-year low, particularly among  
young people, which is giving them much better  
opportunities in Britain than those available in most  
other European Union countries?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My right hon. Friend is right. We  
now have the lowest levels of unemployment since 1975,  
thanks to the economic policies pursued by this Government  
to improve skills and infrastructure, and to take sensible  
decisions on public sector pay.

**Laura Pidcock** (North West Durham) (Lab): As has  
been clearly demonstrated, the Government are celebrating  
falling unemployment without any critical analysis of  
the nature of the employment being created. Many  
residents of North West Durham are in work that  
exacerbates their financial difficulties because their pay  
is low, their terms and conditions are poor, and they do  
not have regular hours. Will the Minister update the  
House on the number of people who are currently  
working on zero-hours contracts? Will she also accept  
that looking at employment figures in a vacuum does  
nothing to help us to understand whether people are  
any more secure or any better off ?

**Elizabeth Truss:** Fewer than 3% of people are on  
zero-hours contracts and, as Matthew Taylor recognised,  
many people want that flexibility so that they can  
combine their work with the other things in their lives.  
We need to ensure that people have the skills to get  
better jobs in the future, and that is exactly what this  
Government are investing in.

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): Will the Chief Secretary  
to the Treasury join me in welcoming the fact that  
75% of the 2.8 million jobs created since 2010 are  
full-time jobs, and that zero-hours contracts account  
for just 3% of all jobs?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
Is it not amazing that not one Labour Member has  
welcomed the fact that we have the lowest unemployment  
since 1975, or that we have lower youth unemployment?  
In fact, the Opposition model their policies on countries  
such as Greece, which has exceptionally high youth  
unemployment, and they take for granted the progress  
that we have made over the past seven years.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): First,  
let me welcome any increase in jobs in our society, but  
when it comes to commenting on wages, does not the  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury agree that it ill becomes  
a multi-millionaire earning £145,000 a year, admittedly  
in a temporary job, and living in two grace-and-favour  
properties at the taxpayer's expense to attack public  
sector workers—our hospital cleaners, nurses, teachers  
and firefighters—as being “overpaid”? Public sector

691

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

692

workers' pay has fallen on average by £4,000 in the first  
six years of this Government. One in five NHS staff are  
forced to take a second job, and teachers are facing a  
further cut to their salaries of £3,000 by 2020. Does she  
not think that the Chancellor should just do the right  
thing and apologise?

**Elizabeth Truss:** Yet again, the right hon. Gentleman  
is not giving the House the full picture of what is  
happening with public sector wages. Last year, teachers'  
pay went up by 3.3%. More than half of nurses and  
other NHS workers saw a pay rise of over 3%, and the  
armed services saw a pay rise of 2.4%. The cleaner he  
talked about was employed not by the public sector but  
by Serco. The right hon. Gentleman needs to get his  
facts right.

**John McDonnell:** That is true—the Government  
privatised the jobs.

I note that the Chief Secretary did not dispute the  
fact that the Chancellor said that staff were overpaid.  
The Chancellor tried to justify his attack on public  
sector workers by trying the classic divide and rule  
between public and private sector workers, citing public  
sector pensions. Is the Chief Secretary aware that those  
supposedly generous pensions across several professions  
pay on average the princely sum of just £5,000 a year,  
and that low pay has forced many public sector workers  
to opt out of their pension scheme? Eleven per cent. of  
those in the NHS have opted out; if that figure continues  
to rise, the whole scheme could be undermined. Will the  
Chief Secretary recognise the damage that the Chancellor  
is causing and lift the pay cap so that public sector staff  
can have some hope of a fair wage settlement—and,  
yes, a decent future pension?

**Elizabeth Truss:** The right hon. Gentleman still has  
not acknowledged the truth of the figures that I cited—the  
3% pay rise for over half of nurses and the 3.3% rise for  
teachers. He simply will not look at the facts. The reality  
is that public sector workers are, rightly, paid in line  
with the private sector to allow the public and private  
sectors to flourish so that we can create wealth in this  
country. In addition, public sector workers have a  
10% premium on their wages in pension contributions,  
and that is in the Office for Budget Responsibility  
report.

**National Debt**

1. **James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): What progress  
   is being made on reducing the national debt. [900547]
2. **Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): What progress  
   is being made on reducing the national debt. [900551]

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):**Debt has climbed steadily since 2009 as a result of the  
high levels of deficit. Since 2010, we have reduced the  
deficit by three quarters, so national debt will now peak  
at just under 90% of GDP this year. As the OBR's  
“Fiscal risks report” of last week makes clear, that level  
of debt—a legacy of Labour's recession—leaves us  
vulnerable to future shocks, which is why the Government  
have committed to eliminating the deficit and reducing  
the level of debt as a share of GDP. As a result of the  
actions taken to bring the public finances back under

control, the OBR now forecasts that debt will start  
falling next year and will be below 80% of GDP by  
2021-22.

**James Cartlidge:** Those figures are welcome, but will  
my right hon. Friend confirm that were the Government  
to pursue a policy of wiping all outstanding student  
debt, that would cost in excess of £100 billion and cause  
the national debt to surge? Will he also confirm that the  
biggest beneficiaries by far would be the top-earning  
graduates in the country?

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
He might have added that were anyone to suggest that  
they were able to do that, they could be accused of  
practising a deception on the people to whom they were  
offering that proposal. The cruelty of that would become  
apparent when it would have to be admitted that the  
proposal could not possibly be delivered. We face a debt  
challenge in this country, and we cannot borrow our  
way out of debt. The Opposition would do well to  
acknowledge that. Stronger growth and sound public  
finances are the only sustainable way to deliver better  
public services, higher real wages and increased living  
standards.

**Michelle Donelan:** Does my right hon. Friend agree  
that last week's OBR study shows that the debt level is  
89% of GDP, highlighting that we must continue to be  
responsible with the public finances to weather any  
future uncertainty and to ensure that the Wiltshire  
economy continues to thrive?

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is right to express  
concern about the vulnerability created by the high level  
of debt. As the OBR made clear last week, that debt  
means that if the economy were to face an external  
shock, we would not be in a position to respond in the  
way that we would ideally like. That is why we have to  
get debt down, and the only way to get debt down is to  
get the deficit down. That means responsible fiscal  
policy, not the kind of rubbish we hear from Labour  
Front Benchers.

**Mr Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op):  
Was it not clear from the OBR report last week that it is  
a hard Brexit that presents the biggest threat to our  
national finances? Just a 0.1% decrease in productivity  
could lead, over 50 years, to a 50% increase in the ratio  
of debt to GDP. If the reports are true that the Chancellor  
is prepared to champion a longer transition from the  
single market for the UK, such welcome news might  
secure a lot of support on both sides of the House.

**Mr Hammond:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman's  
contribution. On an issue as important to our nation's  
future as our exit from the European Union, I welcome  
any opportunity to build consensus across the House  
and the nation. He is right to draw attention to what the  
OBR said. Even a very small decline in our productivity  
performance would add huge amounts to the debt and  
would reduce, by significant amounts, our projected  
growth in GDP. That is why it is so important that we  
now act responsibly in maintaining fiscal discipline and  
ensuring that we reduce our debt over time.

**Mary Creagh** (Wakefield) (Lab): How is the Chancellor's  
consensus building around the Cabinet table going?  
Will he update the House on his assessment of the trade

693

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

694

deals that will be done after we leave the single market?  
He knows that Brexit is going to cause a fiscal shock. Is  
it true that he has challenged the Secretary of State for  
International Trade to disprove Treasury calculations  
that show there is no trade deal we can do after leaving  
the European Union that will make up for the huge loss  
of trade that Brexit will create?

**Mr Hammond:** The hon. Lady is assuming that we  
will lose trade with the European Union. It is clear to  
me that, all other things being equal, the ability to enter  
bilateral trade deals with third countries will be a positive  
for our economy. Of course, we also want to protect our  
trade with the European Union. My focus is on ensuring  
that we get a Brexit deal that protects our existing  
patterns of trade and commercial engagement with the  
European Union, as well as, over time, allowing us to  
explore new opportunities beyond the European Union.

**Rishi Sunak** (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con): The Chancellor  
will be aware that the current cost of Government  
borrowing is at a historical low, with gilt yields at 1%.  
Does he agree that, if markets lose confidence in our  
ability to live within our means, the cost of that borrowing  
would spiral, costing us billions of pounds? That would  
mean less to spend on our public services.

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is right to warn of the  
danger of a loss of market confidence in UK fiscal  
policy—I am looking very hard at the right hon. Member  
for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell). If markets  
lose confidence in UK fiscal policy, they will re-price  
lending to the United Kingdom. We already spend  
more every year on servicing our debt than on our  
armed forces and police services together. It would do a  
huge disservice to taxpayers in this country if we created  
conditions that would cause the cost of that debt to rise.

**Peter Dowd** (Bootle) (Lab): An enfeebled Chancellor  
has been forced to give a £1 billion bung to the Democratic  
Unionist party, to cough up £1.3 billion for a schools  
funding U-turn, to scurry around to find £2 billion to  
pay for his humiliating national insurance contributions  
debacle and to bail out his nightmare neighbour's social  
care retreat with £2 billion. Why should this House  
believe a word, a promise, a claim or a target on  
reducing the debt?

**Mr Hammond:** I was glad to see the hon. Gentleman  
smiling by the end of that little rant. I do not know  
which planet he lives on, but I do not feel particularly  
enfeebled. I do not know what the Labour Treasury  
team does all day, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary  
of State for Education made it clear in her statement  
yesterday that she has put extra money into the frontline  
schools budget by reprioritising the wider education  
budget and finding efficiencies across her Department.  
That is the way to do a fiscally prudent protection of  
our public services.

**Peter Dowd:** Yes, the Government have taken it off  
some children and given it to others.

The national debt has risen by £707 billion since 2010  
and is rising. It is barely a year since the Chancellor was  
given the keys to No. 11, and in that time public sector  
net debt has not been reduced. According to the Office  
for National Statistics and the OBR, it has increased by

£122 billion. Given that lamentable record, has he been  
given notice of eviction by the woman in the bunker  
next door? Perhaps they may leave Downing Street in  
the same removal van.

**Mr Hammond:** The hon. Gentleman will know—I  
say that, but perhaps he will not—that public sector net  
debt will continue to grow until the deficit is eliminated.  
That is a simple arithmetic fact. His Government pushed  
our deficit up to almost 10% of GDP, and we have spent  
the past seven years getting it down to 2.4% of GDP.  
We will carry on getting the deficit down so that this  
country's public finances get back into balance. We are  
a responsible Government, planning for Britain's future.

Infrastructure: Private Sector Investment

1. **Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): What steps he is  
   taking to incentivise private sector investment infrastructure  
   projects in the nations and regions. [900548]

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew  
Jones):** This Government are committed to supporting  
private investment, which finances about half our  
infrastructure. We have a trusted and stable regulatory  
system, and through the UK guarantees scheme we  
have supported projects worth more than £4 billion. We  
are also introducing innovative support such as the  
digital infrastructure investment fund, which will accelerate  
the roll-out of the ultrafast network.

**Ian C. Lucas:** The north Wales Mersey Dee region  
hosts world-beating businesses such as Kellogg's, Airbus  
and JCB, but we need competitive infrastructure in  
order to ensure that we remain competitive. For that  
reason, and in the absence of the public sector investment  
we are crying out for, may we please have the ability to  
deliver private sector investment? What are the Government  
going to do to deliver roads and rail?

**Andrew Jones:** I simply do not recognise what the  
hon. Gentleman says; investment in our infrastructure  
is at a record high. We are seeing investment in roads,  
rail and south-east air capacity—in all modes of transport.  
The point is how we deliver that investment, and it is a  
combination of public and private. He is clearly right to  
champion the requirement for infrastructure in his area  
and to highlight its impact on the economy, but to say  
we are not doing anything is just factually wrong.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): One  
disincentive for the private sector to invest in infrastructure  
is the delay that sometimes occurs in bringing major  
projects through to completion and commencement.  
The private sector is already committed to making a  
significant contribution to the funding package for  
Crossrail, but we have been waiting since March for a  
decision to take it forward. Will the Minister do all he  
can, across government, to speed up that regional and  
national infrastructure project?

**Andrew Jones:** I see significant merits in Crossrail 2,  
just as I see them in northern powerhouse rail and  
projects right across our country. I will of course take  
on board my hon. Friend's point and relay it to the  
Transport Secretary.

695

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

696

**Jonathan Reynolds** (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op):  
Private investment thrives on stability, but we have a  
Cabinet in a state of anarchy when it comes to the terms  
of our exit from the European Union. Do the Government  
agree with Labour Members that an early announcement  
on transitional arrangements is therefore essential? If  
the Minister does agree with that, will he tell us the  
Government's position on the latest date such arrangements  
could be announced—or are we more likely to see a  
transitional Chancellor than a transitional deal?

**Andrew Jones:** I am not going to speculate on the  
negotiations, as that would be way above my pay grade.  
I just refer the hon. Gentleman to the Chancellor's  
answer a moment ago on the merits of a Brexit deal that  
secures our economic future.

Infrastructure: Government Investment

1. **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): What assessment  
   he has made of the effect of Government investment in  
   infrastructure since 2010. [900549]
2. **Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): What assessment  
   he has made of the effect of Government investment in  
   infrastructure since 2010. [900552]

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew  
Jones):** Infrastructure is at the heart of this Government's  
economic strategy, and our investments will boost  
productivity and growth. Since 2010, more than a quarter  
of a trillion pounds has been invested by the public and  
private sectors, about 3,000 individual projects have  
been completed, we have almost completed Crossrail,  
and more than 4 million homes accessed superfast  
broadband for the first time.

**Vicky Ford:** Nearly 100 years ago, the world's first  
radio broadcast was sent out from Britain—from  
Chelmsford. Does my hon. Friend agree that the digital  
infrastructure investment fund will give a massive boost  
to fibre and superfast broadband so that the UK can  
continue to lead the world in the digital and communications  
sectors?

**Andrew Jones:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question.  
I have just learned something about Chelmsford and its  
history in the development of our digital and radio  
infrastructure. The investment will boost Britain's internet,  
making it more reliable and consistent and easier for  
people to live and work more flexibly, which will of  
course boost productivity right across the UK. Fibre is  
the technology of the future, just as radio was 100 years  
ago, and this fund will significantly assist small and  
medium-sized enterprises with capital to roll it out, with  
both Chelmsford and the UK benefiting.

**Mims Davies:** Investment and infrastructure projects  
are absolutely key to keeping our nation moving. As  
the Minister knows, Chickenhall link road and Botley  
bypass in my constituency were helped to do just that  
and to improve the quality of life of my constituents. I  
welcome road funding through the national productivity  
investment fund. Will Ministers meet me to discuss the  
delivery of those projects, which will affect my constituency  
in Eastleigh?

**Andrew Jones:** My hon. Friend is a great champion  
for her constituency and for these projects. I have absolutely  
no doubt about the importance of them locally. If  
nothing else, we have met on the subject a number of  
times, and she is very tenacious. These projects not only  
open up opportunities for development, but help to  
relieve the congestion in the heart of her constituency. I  
will of course ensure that she meets the Transport team  
as soon as possible to progress those projects.

**Chris Evans** (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): The electrification  
of the Great Western Railway between Paddington and  
Swansea was to provide huge economic benefits for  
businesses along that line. Unfortunately, the project  
has now overspent by £1.2 billion, and not a yard of the  
line has been electrified. What are the Government  
doing to ensure that projects such as this do not run  
over and waste taxpayers' money in future?

**Andrew Jones:** The efficiency in the way that we  
deliver our infrastructure is a critical consideration  
when the Government are putting in so much money to  
transform our infrastructure. The points that the hon.  
Gentleman makes about Network Rail will have been  
heard by my hon. Friends in the Transport team, and I  
will highlight his comments to them.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Last month,  
the Institute for Government produced a report on  
infrastructure spending that said that decision makers  
do not know whether projects deliver value for money.  
It also believes that Parliament and the public are  
misinformed. What action are the Chancellor and his  
Department taking to ensure that future infrastructure  
spend delivers value for money and that costs do not  
spiral out of control like they have for Hinkley Point C?

**Andrew Jones:** I simply highlight the extremely rigorous  
business case process, which every single project has to  
go through before it receives approval. The idea that  
these schemes are not considered is just wrong.

**Kirsty Blackman:** The Scottish Government have  
committed to delivering 50,000 affordable homes by  
2021. We recognise the calls that are being made by  
organisations such as Shelter Scotland and Big Issue,  
which believe in prioritising affordable housing. Why  
are the UK Government committing to build only  
40,000 affordable homes in the same period?

**Andrew Jones:** Again, that is a question that will have  
to go to colleagues in another Department. I will make  
sure that they hear the hon. Lady's comments.

**Corporation Tax**

1. **Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): What assessment  
   he has made of how to balance the needs of (a) business  
   and (b) the Exchequer in setting the corporation tax  
   rate. [900550]

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**This Government believe in a tax regime that is fair and  
competitive. Since 2010, we have reduced the headline  
corporation tax rate from 28% to 19%, allowing companies,  
big and small, to invest in expanding their business,  
boost wages, create jobs and lower prices. Onshore  
corporation tax receipts have also increased by over  
50% despite the rate being lowered.

697

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

698

**Bob Stewart:** Does the Minister agree that if we raise  
corporation tax, it is normally passed on by business to  
customers, and that if we lower it, we hope that prices  
will come down?

**Mel Stride:** My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is  
important to remember that the burden of corporation  
tax does not just fall on shareholders. If we were to  
follow Labour's policy of increasing corporation tax,  
we would see less investment, lower growth, lower  
productivity and, as the Institute for Fiscal Studies has  
said, lower wages and indeed higher prices.

**Mr Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op):  
Earlier, the Chancellor acknowledged that productivity  
is the key to economic growth and eliminating our  
public sector deficit. When manufacturing businesses  
invest, they often lose any benefits of corporation tax  
reduction because of higher business rates. That acts as  
a disincentive to invest and increase output and productivity.  
Why does he not cut business rates instead?

**Mel Stride:** This Government have done a great deal  
in terms of providing business rate reliefs, which were  
announced in previous Budgets and are, I think, well  
known to the House. There will be more to come on  
that in the Finance Bill.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Will the Minister  
tell the House by how much the corporation tax take  
has gone up since the corporation tax rate was cut?

**Mel Stride:** This is an important point. As the corporation  
tax rate has decreased to 19%—it will go down further  
to 17%—we have seen a 50% increase in the take, which  
is an amount in the order of £18 billion.

**Annaliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): Most  
economists prioritise building business confidence and  
improving infrastructure and skills over cutting corporate  
tax rates. Is the Minister aware that lowering corporate  
tax rates now presents the appearance of Britain trying  
to undercut countries with which we need to agree a  
decent Brexit deal—at a time when businesses are not  
confident in the Government's leadership, but are instead  
“aghast” and “confused” at their approach to Brexit?

**Mel Stride:** We have seen a huge increase in employment  
in this country to a record level, and a record drop in  
unemployment to the lowest level since the mid-1970s.  
A lot of that has been driven by business. If the hon.  
Lady is seriously suggesting that the recipe for increasing  
the confidence of business is putting up its corporation  
tax to 26%, she has, I am afraid, missed the point.

**Economic Growth**

1. **Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): What  
   assessment he has made of recent trends in economic  
   growth. [900553]

13. **Andrew Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)  
(Con): What assessment he has made of recent trends in  
economic growth. [900558]

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):**Short-term indicators of growth are volatile. Quarterly  
growth was 0.2% in the first quarter of this year, but  
this followed strong growth of 0.7% in the quarter  
before. The underlying economy is robust, thanks to

record employment levels. Although a recent rise in  
inflation, caused mainly by the depreciation of sterling  
last year, may temporarily dampen consumer spending—  
today's inflation figure for June is a little lower at  
2.6%—there are signs from surveys of business that  
export orders and business investment intentions are  
up.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Chair of the Select Committee  
on the Treasury, Nicky Morgan.

**Nicky Morgan:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the  
Chancellor not agree that a growing economy is necessary  
to pay for our essential public services? The Office for  
Budget Responsibility's “Fiscal risks report”, which has  
already been referred to, says that

“governments should expect nasty fiscal surprises from time to  
time”—

I am not referring to the shadow Chancellor there—and  
“plan accordingly”, but this Government also have to  
manage the uncertainties posed by Brexit. Should not a  
responsible Government not worsen uncertainties and  
risks by the decisions that they take?

**Mr Hammond:** Let me first congratulate my right  
hon. Friend; it was remiss of me not to do so in my first  
answer. I very much welcome her to her role on the  
Treasury Committee, and I look forward to being grilled  
or toasted by her, or whatever the correct expression is.  
She is of course exactly right: the only way to build  
resilience into the economy is to have strong public  
finances, and the only way to have a sustainably growing  
standard of living is to have rising productivity over the  
medium and long term, and that is what the Government's  
policy is focused towards.

**Andrew Bowie:** These are obviously still worrying  
times for many in north-east Scotland, with the continued  
low oil price still causing concern, but does my right  
hon. Friend agree that the strength of the United Kingdom's  
economy, now the second highest growing in the G7,  
has enabled this Government to provide over £2.6 billion  
of support to the industry, securing jobs in West  
Aberdeenshire and Kincardine?

**Mr Hammond:** Yes. The UK oil and gas sector has  
made a huge contribution to the UK economy, having  
paid over £330 billion in total in production taxes to  
date, and supporting over 300,000 jobs. In the next  
phase of the life of the North sea basin, as many fields  
come towards the end of their life, we are working with  
the industry to ensure that we extract every drop of oil  
and gas that it is economic to extract, that we enable  
decommissioning, and enable end-of-life fields to be  
operated in the most effective way.

17. [900562] **Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): Much  
of the growth is due to the fact that we are spending  
more on imports, due to the low cost of the pound. The  
latest figures from the Office for National Statistics  
reveal that our trade in goods deficit has risen by  
£2.6 billion over the past quarter and now stands at a  
staggering £34.4 billion. Does not the extra cost of  
imports have an impact on the cost of our exports and  
affect our productivity?

699

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

700

**Mr Hammond:** As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will  
know, the short-run effect of a depreciation in sterling  
would be expected to be a decline in our trade balance  
performance as we suck in more expensive imports, in  
sterling terms. But over time the economy will adjust—there  
are signs that this is happening now—with exporters  
increasing their output to take advantage of weaker  
sterling and their greater competitiveness in international  
markets, and indeed not just exporters, but those who  
would substitute imported products with domestically  
produced products, which is often the best way forward  
for smaller companies.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): One of the  
ways of reducing the deficit is by increasing economic  
growth, rather than increasing taxes or reducing spending.  
What steps is the Chancellor taking to produce economic  
growth, and how are his efforts being affected by those  
who continually talk the economy down and predict  
dire effects from Brexit, even though their predictions  
to date have been proved wrong?

**Mr Hammond:** The hon. Gentleman is exactly right;  
those who talk the economy and its prospects down are  
not doing the country any favours. It is not about  
borrowing more or taxing more; it is about growing our  
economy faster and increasing productivity so that we  
can have sustainable jobs and economic growth that  
produces the taxation to support our public services as  
well as rising living standards for our population.

**Youth Unemployment**

1. **Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con):  
   What progress is being made on reducing youth  
   unemployment. [900554]

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Stephen  
Barclay):** Youth unemployment is at a record low: 5.1%  
of 16 to 12-year-olds are unemployed or not in full-time  
education. That compares with 9.4% in 2009, under the  
previous Labour Government.

**Luke Graham:** Although I welcome the record  
unemployment figures that the Minister has given this  
morning, youth unemployment is still higher in my  
constituency and in Scotland than the UK average, so  
will he work with me and others across the House to  
encourage more investment in my constituency and in  
Scotland as a whole?

**Stephen Barclay:** I will be very happy to work with  
my hon. Friend, because we recognise that work is the  
best route out of poverty. Indeed, unemployed households  
are 13 times more likely to be in relative poverty than  
those with people in full-time work.

**Fiona Onasanya** (Peterborough) (Lab): I understand  
what the Minister says about less unemployment, but  
my concern is that this is not just about employment,  
but about retention. Does he agree that now is the time  
for hard-working, tax-paying public sector workers to  
get the pay rise that they have earned, and that he  
should scrap the cap?

**Stephen Barclay:** We can see the effects, were we to  
follow the hon. Lady's policy, by looking at youth  
unemployment rates elsewhere in Europe. In Greece it is  
45.9%, and even in France it is 22%. The best way of  
addressing poverty is by keeping young people in work.

18. [900563] **Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Government  
investment in Cheltenham's cyber-accelerator since 2015  
is now yielding results, with numerous cyber start-ups  
benefiting from local mentoring from experts at GCHQ.  
Does my hon. Friend agree that mobilising the UK's  
sovereign expertise in areas such as cyber boosts jobs  
for young people and opportunity in places such as  
Cheltenham?

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew  
Jones):** The GCHQ cyber-accelerator in Cheltenham is  
part of the Government's £1.9 billion cyber-security  
strategy. It allows business start-ups to gain access to  
GCHQ's world-class personnel and expertise, and the  
accelerator helps these businesses to expand, contributing  
to jobs and opportunities, including in Cheltenham,  
and it makes the UK a safer place online. I know that  
my hon. Friend has worked very hard on this for a  
considerable period of time. He makes an important  
point as he speaks up for his constituency, and how it is  
leading in the UK and across the world.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): How  
does the Minister expect to reduce youth unemployment,  
given the further education budget cuts across the country,  
particularly in Coventry, where the budget has been cut  
by 27%?

**Stephen Barclay:** Actually, we are seeing record numbers  
of people, in particular disadvantaged students, going  
to university. The situation will not be helped if people  
are conned with the idea that student debts will be  
written off.

**Mr Speaker:** Well, that was a first in this place,  
certainly during my time in the Chair: I have never  
known a ministerial swap to take place mid-answer. I  
assume that it was inadvertent; the Exchequer Secretary  
to the Treasury is nothing if not immaculate in his  
parliamentary manners. I put it down to error. But  
I hope that the Ministers know their own identities. I  
would be worried for them if they did not.

**Rooftop Solar**

10. **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What  
fiscal steps his Department is taking to incentivise  
businesses to invest in rooftop solar. [900555]

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew  
Jones):** Immaculate parliamentary manners, but not  
immaculate parliamentary procedure—sorry about that,  
Mr Speaker; I thought we had moved on from that  
question.

Solar is a UK success story. In 2013, solar capacity  
was expected to reach between 10 and 12 GW by 2020;  
we now expect Government support to bring forward  
about 13 GW by then. Feed-in tariffs provide an incentive  
for businesses to invest in rooftop solar.

**Christian Matheson:** The sun might be going  
down on the Chancellor's time at No.11, but it remains  
an important source of energy and income for  
44,000 microgenerators, including schools and hospitals.  
But since April they have seen their business rates  
increase by up to 800%, in some cases. Some major  
deployers of the technology are now pulling out of the

701

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

702

rooftop market. Will the Government reassess the business  
rate levy paid on rooftop solar, so that we can give real  
growth to this important environmental sector?

**Andrew Jones:** The Government are continuing to  
support the take-up of solar panels through business  
rates by maintaining the exemption for new installations  
of solar power generating less than 50 kilowatts of  
power; of course, we also have all the transitional relief  
schemes and the cut in business rates announced in the  
Budget last year, which cost nearly £9 billion. The  
Government have listened to the voice from solar. We  
are keen to see progress on solar, and these schemes will  
help that.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
Will not the roll-out of solar panels be greatly helped by  
Brexit, when the very high tariffs imposed on cheaper  
Chinese photovoltaic cells are removed and we will no  
longer be protecting the inefficient German industry?

**Andrew Jones:** I thought my hon. Friend was going to  
say that the sun may be shining more brightly post-Brexit.  
We are very keen to see the progress of solar as well as  
all other renewables. We will have to see what happens  
with pricing, but the key thing is that we will be supporting  
solar, as it is a key part of our power mix for the future.

**Mr Speaker:** There was I thinking that the hon.  
Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) was  
taking an interest in energy saving because he has six  
children. Apparently not.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Lab): Have not the  
Government actually cut support for solar because,  
together with new storage technologies, it threatens to  
become so successful that it would kill off any case for  
horrendously expensive nuclear?

**Andrew Jones:** The support for solar comes directly  
from people's bills. When the costs of installation and  
generation come down, through efficiencies and economies  
of scale and production, so should support. We are  
taking steps to control the cost of support schemes and  
putting solar on the path to delivery without subsidy.

**Tax Avoidance and Evasion**

11. **Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):  
What plans he has to introduce measures to tackle tax  
avoidance and evasion carried out through non-domiciled  
status and offshore trusts. [900556]

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**The UK has effective legislation to tackle avoidance  
involving offshore structures and we have announced  
our intention to legislate further, making it harder for  
non-doms to avoid paying tax on funds withdrawn from  
trusts. I am also pleased to say that we have been at the  
forefront of international work that has seen 100 countries  
commit to exchange financial information automatically.

**Catherine West:** The Conservative manifesto said  
that the Government would

“take a more proactive approach to transparency”.

Does the Minister believe that enough is being done to  
tackle companies that promote tax-avoidance schemes,

or is there still a tendency for the big four accountancy  
firms to regulate the big four, via the big four, in order  
to protect the big four?

**Mel Stride:** The hon. Lady asks if enough is being  
done to clamp down on tax avoidance. I can assure her  
that it certainly is. Since 2010, we have raised £160 billion  
by way of clamping down on exactly those behaviours.  
In the forthcoming Finance Bill there will be further  
measures to make sure that over the scorecard period  
we are bringing in between £7 billion and £8 billion in  
addition, in corporate tax avoidance measures.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): Will the Minister confirm  
that due to steps taken by this Government, the top  
1% of people now pay 27% of income tax, and that that  
is a higher proportion than under the previous Labour  
Government?

**Mel Stride:** My hon. Friend is entirely right. The  
Labour party would constantly have us believe that  
somehow we are being soft on the wealthy and hard on  
the less well-off when the precise opposite is true. The  
top 1% pay over 27% of tax, and the wealthiest 3,000 people  
in our country pay as much as the poorest 9 million.  
Under Labour, the poor paid more tax relative to the  
wealthy, not less. No wonder that under our policies  
income inequality is at a 30-year low.

**Income Tax/National Insurance**

12. **Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): If he  
will make an assessment of the potential merits of  
merging income tax and national insurance. [900557]

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**The Government are committed to simplifying the tax  
system. In 2015, we asked the Office of Tax Simplification  
to provide an independent assessment of the alignment  
of income tax and national insurance contributions. We  
have already taken action in a number of places highlighted  
by the report. However, alignment now would cause  
significant upheaval for millions. Now is not the right  
time for further reform in this area.

**Neil Parish:** I welcome my right hon. Friend to his  
new ministerial role. Last year the Office of Tax  
Simplification said that bringing national insurance  
and income tax closer together would create a simpler  
and fairer system for business and taxpayers. As national  
insurance and income tax revenues go into the same  
pot, would it not be simpler and clearer to merge the  
two and have one single income tax?

**Mel Stride:** As I said, we recognise the value of  
merging national insurance and income tax where that  
is practical and achievable, and there are some measures  
coming up in the Bills in the autumn that will address  
that in certain circumstances, but to do it right across  
the piece at this stage is perhaps a long-term aspiration  
rather than one we will be addressing in the short term.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Minister will know that as people go into the higher tax  
threshold they stop paying more national insurance, so  
would one of the impacts of merging the two be to  
reveal that the British tax system is not as progressive as  
people think, and make the case for those with the  
broadest shoulders to pay more?

703

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

704

**Mel Stride:** The hon. Gentleman needs to recognise  
that national insurance and income tax function in  
different ways and have different roles in the tax system.  
We have one of the most progressive tax systems in the  
entire country. If we look at, for example, those earning  
above—*[Interruption.]* Well, by raising the personal tax  
allowance we have taken 3 million to 4 million people  
out of income tax altogether. For those earning over  
£100,000, where we removed the allowance, that, plus  
national insurance, means that the marginal rates are up  
to 62% at that level of income.

Public Sector Pay

14. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
What assessment he has made of trends in the level of  
public sector pay since 2010; and if he will make a  
statement. [900559]

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**We hugely value the work of public servants—teachers,  
police and nurses. That is why they are paid in line with  
the private sector, and, in addition, receive a 10% increment,  
on average, for their pensions.

**Diana Johnson:** We all agree that MPs' pay  
recommendations are decided independently and go  
through automatically. However, other public sector  
pay review bodies take into account Treasury submissions  
but then find that their recommendations are vetoed by  
Ministers. If it is good enough for Members of Parliament,  
why is it not good enough for nurses, the armed forces,  
firefighters and teachers?

**Elizabeth Truss:** We do take notice of what the  
independent pay review bodies say. We have just approved  
the recommendations of the teachers pay review body  
and of the nurses pay review body. Listening to their  
recommendations, the pay review body for the NHS  
said:

“We do not see significant short-term nationwide recruitment  
and retention issues that are linked to pay.”

We followed that advice and gave the pay accordingly.

**Alan Mak** (Havant) (Con): Increases in the tax-free  
personal allowance since 2010 have put £1,000 into the  
pocket of each basic rate taxpayer, including those who  
work across the public sector. Will the Chief Secretary  
continue to help public sector workers to keep the  
money they earn, through lower taxes?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
The worst thing that we could do is to support the  
Labour party's policies, which would, according to the  
Institute for Fiscal Studies, lead to the highest levels of  
taxation in peacetime history.

19. [900564] **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP):  
I think the Treasury response today to the questions  
about the 1% pay cap are profoundly disappointing.  
This is the single biggest thing ensuring that inflation  
erodes living standards. It is impoverishing workers,  
and it is driving up consumer debt. When will the  
Treasury agree with the Foreign Secretary that the time  
has come to end this cap?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I point out to the hon. Gentleman  
that, in fact, teachers have seen a 3% pay rise, many  
nurses get progression pay and people in the armed  
forces get an X-factor supplement that is worth 2.4% a  
year. Their salaries are in line with private sector salaries.  
It would be wrong to have a significant differential  
between the public and private sectors, because we need  
businesses to thrive in addition to having well-funded  
public services.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Time is against us, but I want to hear a  
couple more of the Order Paper questions.

**Government Investment in Skills**

15. **Mrs Kemi Badenoch** (Saffron Walden) (Con):  
What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State  
for Education on the effect of Government investment  
in skills since 2010. [900560]

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Stephen  
Barclay):** Treasury Ministers have engaged on a regular  
basis with the Secretary of State for Education. We will  
double spending on apprenticeships over the decade to  
2020, allowing 3 million apprenticeship starts in England  
by 2020 and giving people the best start in their career.

**Mrs Badenoch:** Since 2010, the substantial increase in  
apprenticeships has helped many young people into  
work. Stansted airport in my constituency is a great  
provider of apprenticeships, and its employment academy  
placed 700 people into work in the last year alone. Does  
the Minister agree that apprenticeships have contributed  
to the record low level of youth unemployment?

**Stephen Barclay:** I very much agree with my hon.  
Friend. In fact, there are 55,000 fewer young people  
unemployed than there were a year ago, thanks in large  
part to the investment that this Government are putting  
into apprenticeships.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Is  
the Minister aware that if we are going to do anything  
about skills or productivity in our country and our  
communities, we have got to look to local further education  
colleges? Will he support, with money, resources and  
leadership, the introduction of a practical maths course  
to help young people who are waiting in colleges up and  
down the country, struggling to get apprenticeships?  
Will he talk to the Education Secretary about doing  
that, to get these young people on their way?

**Stephen Barclay:** The hon. Gentleman will welcome  
the Government's record investment of £500 million  
in T-levels, to tackle exactly the issue that he has  
raised in technical education. The Government's  
commitment can also be seen in apprenticeships. Whereas  
under the last Labour Government there were just  
280,000 apprenticeship starts, there were more than half  
a million last year under this Government.

**Corporation Tax: Receipts**

16. **Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): What effect the  
reduction in corporation tax rates has had on receipts  
from that tax. [900561]

705

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

706

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**Since 2010 the headline corporation tax rate has been  
cut from 28% to 19%. Despite that, onshore corporation  
tax receipts have increased by more than 50%, from  
£36.2 billion in 2010-11 to £55.1 billion in 2016-17.

**Jeremy Quin:** According to KPMG, we have the  
second-most competitive tax regime anywhere in the  
G7. Does my hon. Friend agree that that encourages  
businesses to locate here and boosts our tax receipts?

**Mel Stride:** My hon. Friend is entirely right. The  
OECD has made it very clear that corporation tax  
increases are the most harmful tax increases for economic  
growth. By keeping business taxes down, in 2015-16 we  
saw a record number of inward investment projects  
creating more than 1,600 jobs per week.

Topical Questions

T1. [900536] **Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con):  
If he will make a statement on his departmental  
responsibilities.

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):**My priority is to ensure that the economy remains  
resilient as we negotiate our exit from the European  
Union. That means building on this Government's  
achievements in reducing the deficit by two thirds,  
delivering record levels of employment and getting  
unemployment down to the lowest rate since the mid-1970s,  
while continuing to tackle the long-term challenge of  
productivity enhancement and making steady progress  
towards balancing the budget

**Mr Wragg:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that  
reply. Raising the personal tax allowance has been a key  
achievement of this Government. What recent assessment  
has he made of the number of my Hazel Grove constituents  
who have benefited from that policy?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** I agree with my hon. Friend.  
The UK will have increased the tax-free personal allowance  
by over 90% compared with 2010, completing a decade  
of sustained tax cuts for working people. Over 31 million  
taxpayers will pay less tax in 2017-18, including 3 million  
taxpayers in the north-west. Since 2010, more than  
4 million taxpayers have been taken out of income tax  
altogether.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): Personal contract  
purchase plans for financing cars have gone up by 394%  
in the past five years, and the Governor of the Bank of  
England has said that we are failing to learn the lessons  
of the past when it comes to easy credit. What action is  
the Chancellor taking to ensure that lending is affordable  
and does not pose a risk to the wider economy?

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Stephen  
Barclay):** May I first congratulate the hon. Lady on her  
appointment as Chair of the Business, Energy and  
Industrial Strategy Committee? As she will be aware  
from her Bank of England days, this is a matter for the  
Financial Policy Committee. Indeed, the FPC noted in  
its recent report that consumer credit is growing at a

lower rate than it was under the previous Labour  
Government, but loss rates on lending remain low, as  
they are at present.

T2. [900537] **Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling)  
(Con): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will know  
from his time in the Foreign Office that one of the great  
strengths of our great kingdom is the perception of  
fairness we enjoy around the world. Will he talk a little  
about fairness in financial transactions, as the hidden  
taxes imposed by many companies on investment are  
grossly unfair on those who are saving in pensions for  
the future?

**Stephen Barclay:** There is a theme here, because I  
should congratulate my hon. Friend on his election as  
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee. The Government  
are committed to the principles of transparency. He will  
have noted the recent Financial Conduct Authority  
report on the asset management market study. Indeed,  
we are seeing technology—in particular, through  
FinTech—driving the sort of transparency to which he  
refers.

T9. [900544] **Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab):  
As chair of the all-party group on refugees, I am told  
by refugees that they are desperate to work once they  
have achieved such status, but are hindered by various  
fixable problems in the system. Will the Minister tell us  
what the Government are doing to make it easier for  
refugees to have bank accounts?

**Stephen Barclay:** The hon. Lady will be aware that  
when the Home Office grants refugee status, it includes  
the biometric residence permit as proof of the holder's  
right to stay, but I am very happy to discuss with the  
hon. Lady any further measures that she feels would be  
helpful.

T3. [900538] **Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con):  
To promote the drive towards world free trade, will  
the Chancellor of the Exchequer assure the House  
that he is absolutely, personally and enthusiastically  
committed to following our manifesto commitment to  
leave not just the EU at the end of 2019, but the single  
market and the customs union?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** Yes, I have made it clear on  
many occasions that when we leave the European Union  
on 29 March 2019, we will also leave the single market  
and the customs union. Those are matters of legal  
necessity. My focus is on ensuring that thereafter we put  
in place the closest and deepest possible partnership  
with our European neighbours that will allow us to  
continue the patterns of trade and business, patterns of  
security co-operation and patterns of educational exchange  
and scientific and research collaboration that we enjoy  
now. That is the best way to protect Britain's prosperity.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): Unsecured borrowing  
has rocketed, and lenders warn that default rates on  
credit cards and other products this summer will be at  
their highest level at any point since the height of the  
financial crisis. Instead of simply passing the buck to  
the Financial Policy Committee, what are the Government  
going to do in public policy to alleviate the serious risk  
of a household debt crisis?

707

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

708

**Stephen Barclay:** The hon. Gentleman misstates the  
position. It is an independent responsibility of the Bank  
of England to address that—*[Interruption.]* Itis.Itisof  
course an area where there will always be frequent  
discussions with the Treasury, but it is a Bank of England  
matter.

T4. [900539] **Paul Masterton** (East Renfrewshire) (Con):  
The UK Government have a strong record of supporting  
Scottish businesses, and the British Business Bank has  
provided nearly £1.5 million of support to small businesses  
in East Renfrewshire. However, many businesses in my  
constituency are disadvantaged compared with competitors  
and counterparts in England due to the Scottish  
Government's approach to business rates. Will my right  
hon. Friend join me in calling for the Scottish Government  
to reverse their decision to double the large business  
supplement, restore rates parity on both sides of the  
border and allow Scottish businesses to compete on a  
level playing field?

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**My hon. Friend is entirely right. The large business  
supplement is a devolved tax matter and the supplement  
in Scotland is double that in England. The consequences  
were best summed up by Liz Cameron, the chief executive  
officer of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce:

“Here in Scotland, we must ensure that we are seen to be the  
best place in the UK to do business and that will require a  
fundamental reassessment by the Scottish Government of its tax  
policies.”

**Heidi Alexander** (Lewisham East) (Lab): The Chancellor  
will know from his own officials' analysis that the  
difference between staying in the European economic  
area and a Canadian-type deal, which is essentially  
what the Government are now aiming for, is a hit to  
GDP of £16 billion, which is equivalent to a 4p rise in  
the basic rate of income tax. How can it not be right to  
stay in the EEA, at least for transition?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** The hon. Lady is now asking a  
different question. The Prime Minister has been very  
clear that Britain is a very large economy in relation to  
our European neighbours and we would expect to have  
a bespoke arrangement with the European Union as  
our long-term future status quo, and indeed a bespoke  
arrangement for any interim period that is agreed. The  
hon. Lady is quite right that as we go forward with this  
process, we need to deliver on our commitment to leave  
the European, but to do so in a way that protects the  
British economy, protects British jobs and protects Britain's  
prosperity, and that is what we will do.

T5. [900540] **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and  
East Thurrock) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend, for  
the benefit of the House, confirm the cost to the economy  
of cancelling student debt, say whether that is affordable  
and explain what effect it would have on the work we  
have done to reduce the deficit?

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**As the Labour party admits, cancelling student debt  
would cost £100 billion. The Opposition made that  
reckless promise, which would see the debt soar, during  
the election campaign, but now they say it is just an  
“ambition”. Are they going to say sorry to the people

they made their promise to, and are they going to say  
sorry to the British public for threatening to bankrupt  
the economy?

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): Further to  
the questions asked by my hon. Friends the Members  
for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) and for Lewisham East  
(Heidi Alexander), will the Chancellor confirm, as he  
failed to do before, that the cost to us of Brexit will be  
as described by my hon. Friends some moments ago?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** The hon. Lady, I think, knows  
that there can be no definitive answer to that question.  
We do not yet know what the form of our agreement  
with the European Union will be and we do not yet  
know what arrangements will be in place for any kind of  
interim or transition period, so she is speculating. What  
I can tell her is that the Government are 100% focused  
on getting the best deal for Britain and delivering it in a  
way that protects British business and British jobs.

T6. [900541] **Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): Several  
of my Beckenham constituents have suggested that the  
winter fuel allowance might be a taxable benefit. Is that  
being considered?

**Mel Stride:** We have no plans to tax the winter fuel  
allowance.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): One of the  
best boosts to economic growth is Government  
infrastructure spending, so will the Chancellor look  
down the back of the sofa where he found the £1 billion  
for the deal with the Democratic Unionist party and  
find more change to sign the Edinburgh city growth  
deal?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** At the autumn statement, I  
made a conscious decision to borrow an additional  
£23 billion for investment in economically productive  
infrastructure projects—a conscious decision to address  
one of the challenges we face in improving Britain's  
productivity. The Government will continue to combine  
a prudent fiscal approach with investment in our future  
through productivity-raising measures.

T7. [900542] **Mr Simon Clarke** (Middlesbrough South  
and East Cleveland) (Con): The new Conservative Mayor  
of the Tees Valley, Ben Houchen, is setting up the first  
mayoral development corporation outside London on  
the former SSI site in Redcar. The regeneration of the  
site and the attraction of inward investment are obviously  
vital. Will my hon. Friend work with me and the Mayor  
to deliver the best outcome for the site and the local  
economy?

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew  
Jones):** The South Tees Site Company is currently  
undertaking ground investigations to assess the levels of  
any contamination on the SSI site. The mayoral  
development corporation is leading on the development  
of plans for the future of the site. I look forward to  
working with my hon. Friend, the Mayor of the Tees  
Valley and others to promote the economy of the area.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): In the  
Budget, the Chancellor promised a consultation on  
business rates, but we have not yet seen that. Businesses

709

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

710

in York are really struggling and some are leaving the  
city because of the astronomical business rates. When  
will we have that consultation—what is the date?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** We have to deal with two issues.  
One is the process by which we uprate business rates,  
and we all saw earlier this year that long periods followed  
by dramatic revision are not good for anyone. They  
cause disruption to business, so we are looking at how  
we can smooth the process. Secondly, we need to look  
more broadly at the way in which we address the perceived  
unfairness that companies that operate in bricks and  
mortar are effectively treated differently from companies  
that do not. That is not an easy challenge, because  
many of the digital companies operate internationally  
and it requires international co-operation.

The consultation that the hon. Lady asks for will be  
issued by the Department for Communities and Local  
Government and I will pass on to the Secretary of State  
her concerns about the date.

T8. [900543] **Bill Grant** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock)  
(Con): Noting that the unemployment rate is at a 42-year  
low, may I inquire of my right hon. Friend what the  
effect has been on average personal incomes for workers  
in Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock—and, indeed, the rest of  
the UK—of increases in the minimum wage and the  
national living wage?

**Elizabeth Truss:** The increase in the national living  
wage to £7.50 an hour means that a full-time worker on  
minimum wages has had a pay rise of £2,800 since 2010.  
More than 150,000 low-wage workers in Scotland are  
benefiting from that extra money.

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North)  
(Lab): The Tyne and Wear Metro is in urgent need of  
investment if we are to see the new rolling stock rolled  
out by 2021. What conversations has the Chancellor  
had with the Transport Secretary about funding that  
vital piece of infrastructure for the north-east?

**Mr Philip Hammond:** As the hon. Lady may know, I  
take a clear view about the confidentiality of conversations  
between Cabinet Ministers—*[Laughter.]* While I have  
had many conversations with my right hon. Friend the  
Secretary of State for Transport, I make it a rule that it  
is for departmental Secretaries of State to make  
announcements when appropriate.

**Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): Does my  
right hon. Friend agree that lowering corporation tax to  
19% has incentivised business investment in North  
Warwickshire and Bedworth by companies such as Aldi,  
which has its headquarters there, and throughout the  
UK?

**Mel Stride:** My hon. Friend is right, and he is rightly  
a champion of business in his constituency. There is no  
doubt that lower taxes create wealth and in turn pay for  
the public services that we all desire—contrary to the  
party opposite. I share one exchange with the House—when  
my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset  
(Mr Rees-Mogg) asked the shadow Chief Secretary if  
he was

“aware that tax as a percentage of GDP is going to be at its  
highest level since Harold Wilson was Prime Minister?”,

his response was:

“Let me put it like this: if we had a Labour Government, the  
percentage would be even higher.”—[*Official Report*, 18 April 2017;  
Vol. 624, c. 579.]

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): The TUC  
estimates that nurses, firefighters and border guards  
face losing more than £2,500 in real terms by 2020. For  
ambulance drivers, who earn significantly below the  
UK average wage, the figure is more than £1,800. Does  
the Minister agree that it is about time that we gave  
hard-working public sector workers the pay rise they  
deserve?

**Elizabeth Truss:** The hon. Lady should be aware that  
more than half of nurses and NHS workers saw a  
3% pay rise last year. She needs to check her facts.

T10. [900545] **Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con):  
Last night, I met a major financial institution. Does my  
hon. Friend agree that for London to retain its place as  
the leading financial centre we need a regulatory  
regime based on mutual recognition and an early-  
agreed transitional phase to provide certainty?

**Stephen Barclay:** My hon. Friend rightly champions  
that key sector which provides £71 billion of tax to fund  
public services. It is in the interests of the UK and the  
EU to avoid fragmentation because that will increase  
costs, and the Prime Minister has made it clear that we  
are ambitious, in terms of the trade deal that we reach  
with the EU, to come to an arrangement that delivers  
regulatory equivalence.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): Does the Chancellor  
accept that the confusion and conflicting ambitions of  
the Government's policy on Brexit are already having  
an impact on investment? In the long run, that will be  
massively damaging to the economic prospects of this  
country.

**Mr Philip Hammond:** No, I do not accept that. However,  
I readily agree with the hon. Gentleman that, as I have  
said many times in the Chamber, the process of negotiating  
our exit from the European Union and then executing  
that exit is bound to create uncertainty, and uncertainty  
is always unwelcomed by business. The challenge for us  
is to secure as much certainty as possible as early as  
possible for business, and that is our focus.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): On a  
point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I am advised that the point of order  
flows from Treasury questions, and I will therefore take  
it, but if it turns out to be just a continuation of the  
debate, I will be pretty intolerant of it; so I hope it is  
pithy and something approaching a genuine point of  
order.

**Kirsty Blackman:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I very  
much appreciate your taking my point of order.

During Treasury questions, I asked the Exchequer  
Secretary to the Treasury, the hon. Member for Harrogate  
and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones), a question that  
specifically concerned an announcement in the Chancellor's  
autumn statement. He did not answer it, saying that it

711

Oral Answers

18 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

712

was not within the remit of his Department. May I ask  
for your guidance, Mr Speaker? Whom should I ask  
questions about Treasury documents, if not Treasury  
Ministers?

**Mr Speaker:** If memory serves me correctly, the Minister  
indicated that he would pass the matter on to the  
relevant departmental Minister. These are matters not  
of precise fact but of judgment, and also of some  
discretion so far as the Minister answering questions is  
concerned. Of course, when the Chancellor delivers  
either his Budget or an autumn statement, he inevitably  
makes announcements that concern expenditure covering

all sorts of different Government Departments. If  
subsequently a Treasury Minister is asked a question  
relating to expenditure in a particular area to which,  
because of his or her natural self-effacement and  
modesty—in the case of the hon. Member for Harrogate  
and Knaresborough—he feels that another Minister  
would be better equipped to provide an informative  
answer, there is nothing disorderly about that. It may be  
disquieting for the hon. Lady, but that is not the same as  
the Minister's behaviour being disorderly. I hope the  
hon. Lady will accept that for now—and I see that the  
Minister is beaming with contentment, although it has  
to be said that there is nothing new there.

713

18 JULY 2017

Free Childcare

714

Free Childcare

12.42 pm

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)  
*(Urgent Question)* To ask the Secretary of State for  
Education to make a statement on the process for  
applying for free childcare hours from September 2017.

**The Minister of State, Department for Education  
(Mr Robert Goodwill):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for  
allowing the urgent question. It gives me an opportunity  
to highlight the Government's determination to invest a  
record amount in childcare, supporting early education  
and helping parents financially. That amount will total  
£6 billion annually by 2020.

My Department is committed to ensuring that three  
and four-year-olds have access to free early education.  
All parents, regardless of income and employment status,  
are entitled to 15 hours of free early education for their  
three and four-year-olds, and for parents who are working  
we are providing access to an additional 15 hours of  
free childcare from September 2017. Parents who want  
to take up 30 hours of free childcare can apply through  
the digital childcare service. They can access the application  
via the Childcare Choices website, which provides  
information on all the Government's childcare offers.  
The application process takes about 20 minutes. I have  
recently had a walk-through of the service myself; it is  
straightforward, and the format will be very familiar to  
parents who have used other Government digital services.

The childcare service is a complex IT system, which  
checks parents' eligibility in real time by interfacing  
with other Government IT systems. The vast majority  
of parents will receive an instant eligibility response,  
but there will be a delay for some parents whose eligibility  
is not immediately clear—for example, for some self-  
employed people. The service has also experienced technical  
issues which have meant that it has been unavailable to  
parents on a small number of occasions. Her Majesty's  
Revenue and Customs, which has developed the service,  
has been working hard to resolve those issues, and as a  
result the customer experience has improved.

The application has been open to the parents of  
under-fours since 21 April, and today my Treasury  
colleagues will make a written ministerial statement  
informing the House that the service has been further  
rolled out to the parents of under-fives, the so-called  
summer babies. Parents whose application is successful  
will receive a 30 hours eligibility code to take to their  
provider in order to claim their childcare place. As of  
today, more than 145,000 codes have been generated  
from successful applications. That is an increase of  
almost 5,000 codes since Friday 14 July and an increase  
of almost 25,000 since Friday 7 July. Increasing numbers  
of parents are successfully applying. It is great news  
that so many families will benefit from 30 hours in  
September because, as we have seen from our early  
implementer and early roll-out areas, the support can  
make a positive difference to the lives of hard-working  
families.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Before we proceed to the hon.  
Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran)  
and to subsequent questioners, I must make it clear that

I granted the urgent question because of the narrow  
and specific focus on the issue of the accessibility, or  
otherwise, of the Government's website. This is not an  
occasion for a general debate about childcare policy. If  
Members want just—this is not unknown in politics—to  
score political points and to ask rhetorical questions,  
that is not what this exchange is about. It will run for  
20 minutes and it will focus on the particular issue that  
the hon. Lady identified in her application.

**Layla Moran:** I thank the Minister for his response,  
but as some may be reading in their end-of-year reports  
due this week, “Good effort; just not good enough.”  
The process for applying for free childcare is confusing  
both for parents and nurseries. As one parent said to  
me:

“getting the code was the most complicated process that I have  
ever endured. I would imagine that many parents would give up!”  
They explained that

“you get passed from pillar to post between different areas of the  
website, each asking you for a different password, sent to you by  
SMS or email. Is this really necessary?”

As Members will attest, setting up two-factor authentication  
on our phones was difficult enough, and we have a  
well-resourced IT department. Who is helping the parents  
at home who are juggling this with jobs and caring for  
their young children? As a result, parents have not been  
able to open accounts to pay their nursery, playgroup or  
pre-school. Even some of the providers, particularly in  
the voluntary sector, cannot register.

The Government's roll-out of 30 hours of free childcare  
is welcome, but only if it is of high quality and if  
parents can access it readily. Therefore, I ask the Minister:  
why is the Department for Education website still sending  
parents a holding response when they finally submit an  
online application? How long is the Department taking  
to confirm eligibility? What proportion of children  
eligible for the free childcare have been able to access it?  
Moreover, with the end of the school term rapidly  
approaching, how can nurseries plan for the upcoming  
year if parents cannot provide them with their voucher  
details? What support can the Government provide to  
nurseries to plan and budget effectively for an as-yet-  
unknown number of children who will be joining them  
on 1 September? Finally, what will the Government do  
to review the matter and the accessibility of the online  
registration process so that this does not happen again  
next year?

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Lady asks some reasonable  
questions. I reassure her that, at the moment, 2,850 parents  
are registering per weekday and we are on track to  
reach, we think, about 200,000 by the end of the month.  
I encourage parents to get on with it. We do not want  
everyone to leave it until 11.30 pm on 31 August. As I  
said, the vast majority of cases are processed fairly  
simply, but because we need to check that the person  
meets the eligibility criteria on income, sometimes there  
are complications. I have mentioned self-employed people  
and people who change jobs, so occasionally it is more  
complex. I reassure the hon. Lady on the point about  
people who cannot use the online system. We have an  
offline process for any parents who experience persistent  
technical difficulties. I encourage anyone who has those  
problems to take up the matter.

715

Free Childcare

18 JULY 2017

Free Childcare

716

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): I congratulate the  
Minister on his new appointment. What resources are  
being given to those from disadvantaged backgrounds  
to ensure that they have access to the 30 hours of free  
childcare?

**Mr Goodwill:** Obviously, disadvantaged children are  
eligible for free childcare at the age of two and that  
continues for 15 hours through to the age of four. That  
additional funding and that additional 15 hours are for  
people in work. Some of those people may be on low  
incomes. A person who is working 16 hours at the  
national minimum wage qualifies. I have already mentioned  
that there is an offline system for people who may have  
problems and who cannot use the online system because  
of sight or other difficulties. However, the evidence so  
far is that the applications are coming in. They are now  
being presented to their providers and they will come  
back to us via the local authorities. May I make the  
point that some local authorities have been a bit tardy  
in passing the codes back to us? If anyone goes back  
over the recess, do ask them whether they are getting on  
with it, because that is another area where we need to  
see some improvement.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): Thank  
you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question.  
What a shame it is that, when we could be weeks away  
from a great breakthrough for providers, parents and  
most importantly children, we are instead discussing a  
policy that is riddled with holes—and, my word, are  
there questions to answer!

Just yesterday the Minister's colleagues in the Treasury  
admitted in response to one of my written questions:

“It is not possible to provide a definitive number of applications  
not completed due to technical issues”.

Will the Minister give us his estimate of just how many  
parents suffered these “technical issues”? What steps  
are being put in place to fix the system, and what  
guarantees can he make to parents that, as the August  
deadline approaches, the system will work for them?

How many calls has the hotline received? Of the  
30,000 people who applied and were rejected, what were  
the reasons for those rejections and can the Minister  
guarantee that those rejections were correct and not due  
to system errors? What about the parents on zero-hours  
contracts who are simply unable to guarantee that they  
will work over the minimum weekly hours: how many  
of them will be refused the childcare they were promised?

Finally, as the Minister will be aware, there are huge  
problems with this offer and there are many other  
questions to answer. As the Minister likes to refer my  
written questions to those at the national provider,  
Childcare Works, with implementation weeks away will  
he accept my request to meet them as soon as possible?

**Mr Goodwill:** In welcoming the hon. Lady to her  
place, I have to say she is very much not a glass half full  
person. This is a great childcare offer. Yesterday morning,  
I was in the city of York, one of the pilot areas, meeting  
providers and parents who were benefiting, and I heard  
from people who said, “This is a great offer. It means no  
longer do I have to pass my husband in the hallway as I  
go out to my evening job and he comes in from his  
daytime job.” We heard of eight people in York who are  
now accessing employment because of the childcare  
being available. So it is a great offer and I am very proud

that it has been delivered. We have ironed out the  
glitches in the software, and people are registering; as I  
have said, we are on track for 200,000.

The hon. Lady asked how many people we expect to  
register, and the short answer is that we do not know,  
because it is a voluntary system to which people will opt  
in. Also, of course, there will be three tranches. It will  
not all happen with a big bang in September; there will  
be another tranche of parents who qualify in January  
and another tranche after Easter. It is great news for  
working families—something this Government are  
delivering on.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Given  
the amount of my time that was taken, the amount of  
time that my constituent had to give up, and indeed the  
amount of time given by the technical support people in  
the Minister's Department, all as a consequence of the  
fact that my constituent had an apostrophe in her name,  
can the Minister speculate why on earth we were not  
told that there was a manual workaround?

**Mr Goodwill:** I have made that clear today. There  
have been a number of outages, several of which were to  
fix some of the glitches to which my right hon. Friend  
draws attention. The most recent one was due to a  
power supply issue between 6 pm and 10.20 pm last  
night, 17 July. That has now been fixed and the system  
is up and running again.

**Mr Speaker:** Very reassuring.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla  
Moran) on securing this urgent question, and given that  
this is largely a devolved matter, I will be brief.

Ensuring affordable, flexible and secure childcare is  
one of the best ways to narrow the gender pay gap, by  
helping parents back to work when it suits them, and  
also to prepare children best for school. In Scotland,  
the Scottish Government are trialling childcare funding  
following the child by investing £1 million to make sure  
that, when we expand free childcare to 1,140 hours,  
parents have the choice to decide what is best for them  
and for their children. We are also going further than  
the UK Government by helping the most vulnerable  
two-year-olds in Scotland, to ensure that all children  
can have the best start in life. That is quite a contrast to  
the issues being faced by parents south of the border. If  
disadvantaged parents are not able to apply for childcare  
by the deadline due to the Minister's website problems,  
how will they will be supported thereafter?

**Mr Goodwill:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the  
party election broadcast on behalf of the Scottish National  
party. The website is up and running and, as I have said,  
2,850 parents per day are registering and getting their  
confirmation codes; we encourage people to do so as  
soon as possible, rather than leave it to the last minute.  
Indeed, I am very pleased that we are now on track.  
Some 143,000 valid 30 hour contract codes have been  
generated and we are on track to reach our target of  
200,000 by the end of next month.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): As a mother  
with three children, I have been through a raft of  
different child support schemes. There were none initially,  
which is why I welcome the fact that this support is in

717

Free Childcare

18 JULY 2017

Free Childcare

718

place; we must not forget that. Obviously, it is essential  
that parents have confidence that they can apply. Will  
the Minister reassure those who are struggling—not  
just parents but nurseries; I understand the difficulties—that  
we will help them? I have met people from many nurseries  
in my constituency. We are relying on them to deliver  
this service, so can we have assurances that it will work?

**Mr Goodwill:** That is why we ran the scheme through  
12 development areas. Indeed, 15,000 children are already  
enjoying it, including those in the families I met in York  
yesterday. It really is a good offer. Of course there is  
flexibility in the system: one can use a childminder, a  
pre-school playgroup, or a formalised nursery setting  
and mix and match the hours. So it is a great opportunity.  
Indeed, the hours can be spread over the holidays;  
currently, 30 hours a week for 38 weeks are available,  
but that can be spread over the year for those who wish  
to cover the holidays as well.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Minister says that 120,000 codes have now been issued  
and that he expects that to rise to 200,000 by the end of  
the month, but given that the Government's own estimate  
of the number of eligible families is in excess of 390,000,  
by my maths that means that only just over a quarter of  
those eligible have now got their codes. Given that we  
had warning after warning from providers that the  
scheme would be unaffordable to them and that they  
worried about there being sufficient places, how are  
they supposed to plan for September when only just  
over a quarter of families have registered for this scheme  
to date?

**Mr Goodwill:** I am afraid that the hon. Lady is  
making a fundamental error. The total number will  
come in three tranches: one in September, one in January  
and one after Easter, as children reach the eligible age.  
This will be an ongoing system, and therefore—  
*[Interruption.]* The children starting in September need  
to apply by the end of August. There is no rush for  
parents whose children turn three in time for starting in  
January. We are on track to deliver 200,000 by 1 September.  
Subsequent tranches of children will come in after  
Christmas and Easter.

A number of concerns have been raised about providers  
being able to deliver for the funding we have provided,  
and we have put additional funding in. I am pleased to  
say that in the city of York, where I was yesterday,  
despite the fact that some of the private sector providers  
expressed disquiet, 100% of providers are delivering on  
the scheme. Indeed, in contrast to the numbers projected,  
we have 117% delivery.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): Dorset was one of the pilot areas for 30 hours of  
free childcare. Will my hon. Friend update the House  
on the performance of those pilots, specifically in relation  
to the online system?

**Mr Goodwill:** Those in the pilots did not participate  
in the online system we have in place now; there was an  
all manually based system. I can assure the House,  
however, that 4,000 parents were involved in testing the  
service and valuable lessons have been learned from  
Dorset regarding the operation of the service and provision  
of free places.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): In light of these additional  
difficulties in bringing in what is a very welcome policy,  
what additional support will the Government give to  
nurseries that are preparing to deliver the scheme? We  
need to make sure that the resources are there for  
delivery.

**Mr Goodwill:** As I have said, we increased the funding  
to allow for it to be delivered; an average funding of  
£4.94 for each hour is now being provided. That was in  
direct response to the concerns of some providers about  
the level of funding, but I have to say that even the  
providers who said that the funding was not sufficient  
have now managed to deliver at this price. Indeed, the  
nursery I visited yesterday said it had surplus places  
before the pilot scheme was introduced, but is now full,  
which is great news for it in terms of its overall funding.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Small, community-led  
pre-schools, such as the one in Hedge End in my  
constituency, are not necessarily groups, and they are  
worried about the process for them and for local parents.  
Will my hon. Friend tell us what the Government have  
done to ensure that all early-years providers are able to  
deliver the 30 hours for those families and to retain the  
positivity around this programme?

**Mr Goodwill:** Parents have a choice about where to  
deploy their 30 hours of care. It can be with a childminder  
or in a nursery school, but it can also be with one of the  
many excellent voluntary sector providers, including  
pre-school playgroups. My wife used to run a pre-school  
playgroup, so I have been briefed on this issue. It is vital  
that people have a choice about where to send their  
children that suits their lifestyle, their work and the  
logistics of getting their children to that setting.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The  
Minister will know that I was Chair of the then Children,  
Schools and Families Select Committee when the Labour  
Government set us on this path, and I am sure that  
most Labour Members will welcome this good news. I  
have a vested interest in this subject, having 10 grandchildren  
and, I hope, more to come. However, many people in  
my constituency are struggling with access and are not  
very computer literate. Will he consider enabling the  
National Day Nurseries Association, which is based in  
my constituency, and the other marvellous children's  
charities to help by being the interlocutors between the  
Government and our constituents?

**Mr Goodwill:** In the short time that I have had this  
portfolio, I have met a number of organisations and I  
particularly look forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman's  
own locally based organisations. That is very much on  
my bucket list. We certainly wish to engage as widely as  
possible with representatives of providers and of the  
families who are benefiting from this programme. Also,  
I have to say that we could not deliver this £6 billion a  
year of funding without the successful economy that  
this Conservative Government are delivering.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): As the parent of a  
one-year-old, I am very grateful for this scheme as I find  
my way through the challenges of parenthood. I am  
sure that many others will feel the same. Will the Minister

719

Free Childcare

18 JULY 2017

720

*[Robert Courts]*

please tell the House what testing was carried out prior  
to the launch of the system, and how many parents were  
involved?

**Mr Goodwill:** As I have said, there were two aspects  
to the testing. We had pilot areas in which we tested the  
delivery, working with the providers, and that was very  
successful, particularly in the city of York and North  
Yorkshire, where I was yesterday. In relation to the  
system, we had 4,000 parents involved. Indeed, I had a  
run-through to demonstrate how the system works.  
However, there are sometimes complications when people  
change jobs or when self-employed people's accounts  
have not been submitted. In such cases, the telephone  
service can be used as a back-up.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): It is clearly  
important to resolve the problems as quickly as possible.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and  
Abingdon (Layla Moran) asked a number of factual  
questions, along with some others, which the Minister  
has not been able to answer directly today. Will he write  
to all those who have participated in the urgent question  
by the end of business on Thursday, so that we may  
have a full understanding of the picture?

**Mr Goodwill:** I will certainly be happy to give updates.  
As I have said, we have now passed 143,000 valid  
applications—not 120,000, as the hon. Member for  
Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) suggested earlier—and  
I would be more than happy to give the right hon.  
Gentleman ongoing updates on that.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the Minister and to  
colleagues. In a moment, I will call the hon. Member for  
Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) to make an  
application for leave to propose a debate on a specific  
and important matter that should have urgent consideration  
under the terms of Standing Order No. 24. The hon.  
Gentleman has up to three minutes in which to make  
his application.

Unaccompanied Child Refugees

*Application for emergency debate (Standing Order  
No. 24)*

1.3 pm

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I  
seek leave to propose that the House debate a specific  
and important matter that should have urgent  
consideration—namely, the acceptance of unaccompanied  
asylum seeking children into the UK.

Baroness Williams revealed in a recent response to a  
question in the other place that under the Dubs scheme  
only 200 unaccompanied asylum seeking children had  
so far been transferred to the United Kingdom from  
mainland Europe. The Government stated before the  
general election that before closing the scheme they  
would take 480 children, which in itself was the cause of  
outrage to many of us who had championed the Save  
the Children campaign to give sanctuary to 3,000 children  
in the UK. The Government's choice to take a figure as  
low as 480 was mean-spirited, blatantly politically motivated  
and not worthy of this House or this country—and yet  
the number of desperate children we have actually  
received is less than half that measly target.

The Government cannot use a lack of capacity or of  
resources as an excuse. Recent freedom of information  
requests have shown that local councils have voluntarily  
offered to accept 1,572 more children than they were  
supporting. Be it Syrian children, survivors of the Nazi  
death camps, Ugandan refugees or those fleeing genocide  
in the Balkans, this country's values of openness and  
tolerance dictate that we have a moral duty and  
responsibility to be a land of sanctuary. Our history  
shows that we are stronger and more successful because  
of our willingness to take in desperate refugees, who go  
on to become proud Britons. So why do the Government  
seem committed to turning their back on the world?

Our actions in this House directly affect the lives of  
the many hundreds of children who have a legal right to  
come to the United Kingdom but who are currently  
scattered across Europe, scared and alone. I and many  
others feel strongly that this issue must be debated  
before the House rises for the summer recess. In the  
summer, migrants make more trips to Europe in unsuitable  
boats, and I fear that all over again we are likely to see  
more news of people drowning while trying desperately  
to reach safety. Put bluntly, by the time October comes  
around there will be many more children alone, orphaned  
and living a hand-to-mouth existence in continental  
Europe.

We must examine our consciences. The Government  
made an unambitious commitment that had to be dragged  
out of them. They then cancelled that agreement before  
managing to meet even half of its terms. I ask the  
House to take this opportunity to address this outrage  
and to help these desperate children.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman asks leave to propose  
a debate on a specific and important matter that should  
have urgent consideration—namely, the acceptance of  
unaccompanied child refugees into the UK. I have  
listened carefully to his application, and on this occasion  
I am not persuaded that the matter is proper to be  
discussed under Standing Order No. 24. Ordinarily, I  
am exhorted to say nothing more than that, but I will

721

Unaccompanied Child Refugees

18 JULY 2017

722

say to the hon. Gentleman that I am not insensitive to  
the strong concern that he and others have on this  
matter. There is a limitation on time—we do not have  
unlimited time between now and the recess—but if he  
wants to seek other opportunities to air his concerns on  
this matter tomorrow, on Thursday or indeed both—  
who knows?—he may be successful in his quest.

In a moment, I will call the shadow Education Secretary,  
the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner),  
to make an application for leave to propose a debate on  
a specific and important matter that should have urgent  
consideration under the terms of Standing Order No. 24.  
The hon. Lady has up to three minutes in which to  
make such an application.

Tuition Fees

*Application for emergency debate (Standing Order  
No. 24)*

1.7 pm

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I seek leave  
to propose that the House debate a specific and important  
matter that should have urgent consideration—namely,  
the Government's proposed increase in tuition fees with  
regard to the Higher Education (Basic Amount) (England)  
Regulations 2016, statutory instrument No. 1205, and  
the Higher Education (Higher Amount) (England)  
Regulations 2016, statutory instrument No. 1206.

On 30 March, the then Leader of the House—now  
the Justice Secretary—stood at the Dispatch Box and  
promised a debate and a vote on the Government's  
plans to increase tuition fees. The debate was scheduled  
for 19 April, but on 18 April the Prime Minister announced  
her plan to go to the country in an early general  
election. That meant that the debate was cancelled.  
Oddly, the Government have been determined not to  
grant the House a vote on the matter since the election.

Since then, the shadow Leader of the House raised  
the issue at Business questions on 22 June and on 6 and  
13 July. She finally received a letter from the Leader of  
the House stating that the Government currently have  
no plans to schedule these debates in Government time.  
What a contrast that was with the words of the Secretary  
of State for Exiting the European Union who said last  
week that  
“if a statutory instrument is placed in front of the House of Commons,  
then the Commons decides if it debates or votes on it.”  
A statutory instrument is indeed before the House, but  
we are not being allowed to decide whether to debate or  
vote on it. How can he expect the Opposition to trust  
the Government with the sweeping powers that he wants  
under the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill?

Only two weeks ago, the First Secretary of State  
called for a national debate on tuition fees and student  
debt, but that national debate will apparently not include  
this House. Universities and thousands of students  
across the country are now uncertain about the rate of  
tuition fees that can be charged. With neither Government  
nor Opposition time to debate the matter, we have no  
choice but to use Standing Order No. 24—so 109 days  
since it was first promised by Ministers I ask leave for  
an emergency debate on their plans to raise tuition fees.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady asks leaves to propose a  
debate on a specific and important matter that should  
have urgent consideration, namely the Government's  
proposed increase in tuition fees with regard to the  
Higher Education (Basic Amount) (England) Regulations  
2016 and the Higher Education (Higher Amount) (England)  
Regulations 2016. I have listened carefully to the application,  
and I am satisfied that the matter raised by the hon.  
Lady is proper to be discussed under Standing Order  
No. 24. Has the hon. Lady the leave of the House?

*Application agreed to.*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady has obtained the leave of  
the House. I can therefore advise colleagues that the  
debate will be held tomorrow, 19 July, as the first item of  
public business. It will last for up to three hours and  
arise on a motion that the House has considered the  
specified matter set out in the hon. Lady's application.

723

18 JULY 2017

724

Points of Order

1.11 pm

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP):  
On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The BBC is our public  
sector broadcaster and is paid for by all of us through  
the licence fee. It will announce tomorrow the details of  
presenters' salaries over the threshold of £150,000. The  
campaign to get that transparency has gone on for  
around 10 years, and some of us have been heavily  
involved in it. The BBC initially avoided the matter and  
then dragged its feet before eventually agreeing to publish  
the information, which the general public, as its paymasters,  
have a right to see. However, the BBC is publishing said  
information the day before parliamentary scrutiny ends  
for the summer recess—tomorrow. Have you been informed  
by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media  
and Sport of her intention to come to the House to  
outline the unacceptable nature of the timing of the  
announcement?

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman,  
both for his point of order and for his characteristic  
courtesy in giving me notice of his intention to raise it.  
The short answer on the last, key point in his remarks is  
that, no, I have received no indication from any Minister  
of an intention to make a statement. I understand the  
hon. Gentleman's concern and appreciate that it may be  
shared by many Members. That said, it is not a point of  
order for the Chair. The decisions made on the timing  
of announcements or disclosures by the BBC do not  
fall within the aegis of the Speaker. It is also fair to say  
that, strictly speaking, those judgments do not to any  
significant extent fall within the responsibility of Ministers.  
Ministers can have views on such matters, which is  
perfectly proper, but they are not matters for ministerial  
decision.

The hon. Gentleman has succeeded in putting his  
concern on the record, and I feel sure that it will have  
been heard not only by the occupants of the Treasury  
Bench but by the broadcasters themselves. He is an  
assiduous denizen of this House, and I feel sure that he  
will be in his place tomorrow and, indeed, in all likelihood  
on Thursday. I dare say that he will want to get back to  
Northern Ireland at some point, but I am sure he will be  
in his place on Thursday and springing from it with a  
view to giving the House the benefit of his views in the

summer Adjournment debate. That might be a suitable  
opportunity for him to expatiate further on this important  
matter.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): On a point  
of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your guidance and advice.  
As you are aware, it is regular and customary for the  
Government to give a written response to Select Committee  
reports within two months of publication. The Foreign  
Affairs Committee published reports in March, in the  
previous Parliament, on Russia and Turkey. Given the  
topicality of the anniversary of the attempted coup in  
Turkey, I was hoping to read a Government response to  
the report on Turkey. I know we have had a general  
election and that the period of two months was not  
continuous, but the period between March and Parliament  
resuming is more than two months. I would therefore be  
grateful if you advised me on what I can do to ensure  
that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides  
the long-overdue responses to those Select Committee  
reports.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very sorry to disappoint the hon.  
Gentleman, whose interest in and knowledge of such  
matters are well known and respected throughout the  
House, but the short answer is that the best way to  
guarantee a timely—or at least less untimely—response  
to the Select Committee reports will be to reconstitute  
the Foreign Affairs Committee as soon as possible. He  
is absolutely right that there has been a long delay.  
Ministers can take the view that they are responding to  
a report from a Committee and that the Foreign Affairs  
Committee currently does not exist and needs to be  
reconstituted.

I think the hon. Gentleman might have been present  
when I volunteered some thoughts with some asperity  
on the merit of getting on with the reconstitution of  
Select Committees. Although the Chairs have been elected,  
I am saddened that members have not been elected  
across the House—it is a pity if some have not got  
round to doing that. Frankly, however, there is not  
much that I can do other than say that I am always  
looking out for the hon. Gentleman. If he bobs up and  
down with a view to raising the matter, I will try to  
accommodate him. *[Interruption.]* It is always a delight  
to hear the views of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw  
(John Mann), to which I have been accustomed for the  
past 30 years. It is always better when they are offered  
from him on his feet, rather than from his seat, but I  
heard him chuntering from a sedentary position.

725

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

726

Drugs Policy

1.17 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the  
Home Department (Sarah Newton):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered drugs policy.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to open this  
debate on drugs policy because, as many Members will  
know, the Government have just published an ambitious  
new drug strategy, which sets out a range of new actions  
to prevent the harms caused by drug misuse. The  
Government's previous drug strategy, launched in 2010,  
balanced action against three strands: reducing the  
demand for drugs; restricting the supply of drugs; and  
supporting individuals to recover from drug and alcohol  
dependence. Since the 2010 strategy was published,  
local communities have been placed at the heart of  
public health, giving local government the freedom,  
responsibility and funding to develop its own ways of  
improving public health in local populations, including  
action to reduce drug and alcohol use and to support  
those recovering from dependence.

We have already taken concerted action to tackle new  
threats, such as the supply of so-called legal highs,  
through the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, and  
there are positive signs that the Government's approach  
is working. Compared with a decade ago, drug misuse  
among adults and young people in England and Wales  
has reduced from 10.5% in 2005 to 8.4% in 2015-16.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Drug  
and alcohol abuse is a difficult issue to address. What  
consultations has the Minister had with the various  
groups and communities that are rightly concerned  
about the mental health problems related to such abuse?  
Has she had any discussions?

**Sarah Newton:** We have consulted widely with a range  
of experts and academics, and we are well served by the  
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, but we have  
also consulted communities, users and people with frontline  
experience of addressing these issues. I totally agree  
that we have to consider the complexity of the challenges  
facing individuals who are drawn into substance misuse,  
and we must ensure that we have tailor-made recovery  
solutions, which will often include support on underlying  
vulnerabilities or mental health issues. The strategy, as I  
will outline in some detail, seeks to take a multifaceted,  
joined-up approach so that people right at the heart of  
it can make a sustained recovery, which is what we all  
want to see.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): The Minister  
says there are signs that the policy is working, but does  
she ever pause for thought when she sees the significant  
increase in the number of people dying from drug  
misuse in the past three years? That picture is not  
mirrored in other European countries that take a more  
enlightened approach.

**Sarah Newton:** There is no complacency in my approach,  
or in the Government's approach. In setting out the  
context of the new strategy, it is worth reflecting on  
some of our past successes—we have a good evidence  
base upon which to build for the future. Like the right

hon. Gentleman, I am concerned by that increase in the  
number of deaths, often of people with long-term substance  
misuse problems. If he stays for the debate, I hope he  
will hear about our approach to prevent those deaths,  
which is a key part of our new strategy. I will welcome  
further interventions at that point. A speech from the  
right hon. Gentleman, who served so well as a Health  
Minister in the coalition and who played such an important  
role in some of the Department's successes, would be  
carefully listened to and taken into consideration in our  
work in the years ahead.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
The rate of drug mortality started to rise in 2013, when  
the ring fence was removed and local authorities became  
responsible for drug and alcohol treatment. Does the  
Minister regret her Government's decision to remove  
that ring fence?

**Sarah Newton:** I will address how more people with  
long-term substance misuse problems are dying, but I  
remind the hon. Lady that the public health grant  
remains ring-fenced. It is for local authorities, working  
with partners in their communities, to come up with the  
best ways of tackling people's serious and long-term  
substance misuse problems.

We have seen a phenomenal improvement in our  
understanding of the overlap between mental health  
problems and substance abuse problems. Councils not  
only have the public health grant and their partnerships  
in local communities; they also have the significant  
additional funding that the Government have made  
available for mental health services and community  
mental health services, as well as the homelessness  
prevention and troubled families funding. As I will  
hopefully have an opportunity to say, what is different  
about the strategy, in part, is the partnership working  
that we see as being at the heart of driving further  
improvements.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Parents will welcome  
the Government's focus on an updated and joined-up  
strategy. The mental health impacts associated with  
cannabis use, particularly by teenagers and young people,  
are one of the most upsetting issues raised in my  
constituency surgeries. Does she agree that this joined-up  
approach to local access is vital to the affected families?

**Sarah Newton:** My hon. Friend makes an important  
point. I doubt there is a single Member who has not had  
either a family member or a constituent come to speak  
to them about their huge concern about the harrowing  
effect on young family members who get involved in  
drugs. There is a growing evidence base and deep concern  
about the impact of cannabis on the development of  
young minds. A lot of concern is being raised about  
how psychosis can be brought on by even modest  
exposure to cannabis. It is essential that we consider  
mental health and substance misuse together. I assure  
her that that is at the heart of what we will be doing.

Although we have all far too frequently come across  
these heart-breaking cases of young people who have  
faced the terrible consequences of taking drugs, including  
losing their life, it is worth noting that, overall, fewer  
young people are taking drugs. Reliable data show that  
drug use among 11 to 15-year-olds peaked in 2013, and

727

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

728

*[Sarah Newton]*

there has since been a continual decline. Again, we are  
not at all complacent, and we will be doing more work  
to educate young people about those harms.

Not only are fewer people taking drugs in the first  
place, but those who enter treatment services are having  
a good experience. The average waiting time to access  
treatment remains three days, and within two days for  
under-18s. Some 80% of young people who enter treatment  
leave successfully, so we have good foundations on  
which to work.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): The Minister is  
making good points about the seriousness of this issue.  
Does she agree that, although total drug use figures  
may be coming down, we all see a small number of  
high-profile incidents in our communities—often  
murders—involving drugs and drug dealing? That unsettles  
our communities. Does she have any hints on what we  
can all do to try to improve the situation? On the  
business of curing people, has she had a chance to look  
at the programmes introduced in Gloucestershire by the  
Nelson Trust, which takes a tough-love approach that  
seems to be working well?

**Sarah Newton:** I have not visited the Nelson Trust in  
my hon. Friend's constituency, but perhaps in a subsequent  
intervention he will invite me to come along. It is  
important that we continue to build the evidence base  
on what works. We have an open mind on innovation  
and on new ways of helping people give up their addiction.

My hon. Friend raises a good point on the overlap  
between crime and substance misuse, and of course  
there is a strong correlation. The modern crime prevention  
strategy identifies substance misuse—both alcohol and  
drug misuse—as a key driver of crime, so law enforcement  
has a critical role to play in our drug strategy's joined-up  
solution.

We want to ensure that law enforcement has all the  
tools it needs. The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016  
has had a positive impact, and hundreds of retailers  
across the United Kingdom have closed down or are no  
longer selling psychoactive substances. The police have  
arrested suppliers, and action by the National Crime  
Agency has resulted in the removal of psychoactive  
substances from sale by UK-based websites. The first  
offenders have been jailed, and we are seeing the police  
use their new powers, with more people going through  
the criminal justice system.

**Richard Graham:** I would be delighted if the Minister  
cared to visit Gloucester to see the county council's  
Families First troubled families programme, to look at  
the Nelson Trust's drug rehabilitation programme and  
to meet the Hollie Gazzard Trust, which is doing a lot  
to educate people in schools about the dangers—Hollie  
Gazzard herself was murdered.

**Sarah Newton:** My hon. Friend illustrates well that in  
a local community what is needed is a joining up of  
services, whereby everything from prevention in schools  
right the way through to the criminal justice system and  
recovery services is working well. Of course I will be  
delighted to visit his constituency to see how those  
different services are joining up so well in Gloucestershire.

**Mims Davies:** Police and law enforcement issues have  
also been raised in my constituency. Will the Minister  
be prepared to consider legislation to deal with situations  
where prolonged cannabis use is having an impact on  
neighbours, with long-term users having an impact on  
the daily lives of children and babies next door?

**Sarah Newton:** My hon. Friend makes an important  
point. What I would be prepared to do is write to her  
setting out the range of powers that already exist. I  
know from my constituency that the police are not  
always aware of all the civil powers they have, in addition  
to the criminal powers, to tackle some of the antisocial  
behaviour associated with persistent drug use. I understand  
and recognise the challenge she is portraying. The troubled  
families programme is designed in part to help those  
families where a drug user has substance misuse problems  
and, in so doing, help the children living in those  
households.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): We have already had  
more mentions in the first 10 minutes of the police than  
we have police officers in Bassetlaw. Will the Minister  
confirm that we remain the only country in the world,  
other than the United States, where the Government  
lead for drugs is in criminal justice, as opposed to  
health? If the approach is evidence-based, why is that  
the case?

**Sarah Newton:** I am sure there are many more police  
officers in Bassetlaw than there are Members in this  
Chamber this afternoon. I am proud that our drugs  
strategy is world-leading, and is recognised to be so,  
because we take this cross-government approach. This  
is not a simple issue. Tackling substance abuse and  
preventing people from taking drugs is not a simple  
thing to do, which is why we take this whole-government,  
joined-up approach. Our colleagues from the Department  
of Health are firmly involved in our activity, as is  
almost every Department.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Sarah Newton:** If colleagues do not mind, I am going  
to make a bit more progress as I think I will then be able  
to answer some of the questions.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Sarah Newton:** Okay, I will take a few more interventions.

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): Greater  
Manchester police would argue that since the Psychoactive  
Substances Act 2016 supply has shifted to the streets,  
and the product was more consistent in the headshops,  
whereas now it is constantly changing. Does the Minister  
agree that that shift is part of the reason for the epidemic  
of Spice use in Manchester, which is causing huge  
problems?

**Sarah Newton:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comment.  
We were all really concerned when we saw those images  
of people on this kind of new zombie Spice in Manchester,  
but I was pleased that the 2016 Act proved itself in the  
case of Spice, because as soon as we saw those dangers  
emerging we were able to take action to ban it through  
that Act. As we did the testing to understand the

729

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

730

chemical components and how serious they were, we  
were then able to shift them into the Misuse of Drugs  
Act 1971, which gave them a proper classification. Just  
this Friday I was pleased to see that in Manchester the  
whole community got together with other cities—there  
were people there from Nottingham and Wrexham.  
Law enforcement, the mayor, civil society and local  
authorities all came together to do exactly what we are  
proposing in the drugs strategy, which is to take a  
multi-agency approach, so that the issues that brought  
about those awful scenes we saw, where vulnerable  
homeless people in Manchester were so wickedly targeted  
with that type of Spice by drug dealers, are now being  
properly managed. This allows homeless people to get  
the support they need so that they do not fall prey to  
that activity. The more stringent measures and sentencing  
available under the Misuse of Drugs Act mean that the  
police in Manchester have the full range of tools they  
need to take action there.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): The Netherlands  
has had a pragmatic, intelligent policy of drug  
decriminalisation for 50 years. It now has a serious  
prison problem, because there are not enough prisoners  
to fill its prisons. Is that not a problem we would like to  
have here?

**Sarah Newton:** I accept that some Members and  
some people in our country think that we should  
decriminalise drugs. I do not agree, because we are  
evidence-based policy makers and all the evidence shows  
the awful harms caused by the drugs that we ban and  
restrict. Our primary job is to keep people safe, and the  
way to do that is to prevent them from taking drugs in  
the first place.

**Norman Lamb:** I note the point about this being  
“evidence-based”, but the evidence clearly shows that  
the most dangerous drug in terms of harm is alcohol.  
So will the Minister explain the different approaches the  
Government take to alcohol, the most dangerous drug,  
and to cannabis?

**Sarah Newton:** I would not agree that alcohol is the  
most dangerous drug, as we can see if we look at the  
substances we are restricting. There are people who take  
alcohol to such a harmful degree that it is devastating  
for them, and for their family members and the wider  
community. I fully accept, as the Government do in the  
modern crime prevention strategy, that the misuse of  
alcohol has dramatically harmful effects and contributes  
to crime, but alcohol taken in moderation is not a  
harmful drug. The Department of Health constantly  
keeps this under review and is doing research all the  
time to understand the health impact of alcohol, and it  
revisits what it considers to be safe drinking guidance.  
Public Health England has only recently updated the  
guidance, which suggests that people should be consuming  
less alcohol.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Last  
week, I visited Path 2 Recovery, which does the drug  
recovery work in my constituency. It expressed concern  
about the effectiveness of the drug rehabilitation  
requirements, feeling that they did not have enough  
teeth, took up a lot of staff time and were not very  
effective. I note that page 23 of the strategy says that the

Government are evaluating the framework pilots. Will  
the Minister say something about her thinking on the  
current effectiveness of drug rehabilitation requirements,  
and whether we can do anything differently and better?

**Sarah Newton:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
that question. He takes a deep and sustained interest in  
this policy area. We are very much hoping that when we  
have the recovery champion up and running, they will  
take a key role in looking at best practice and developing  
our evidence base as to what works. We have set out  
clearly in the strategy that we see sustained abstinence  
over a 12-month period, getting back into work and  
playing a full part in society as key outcomes of recovery.  
That will address some of my hon. Friend's concerns  
about how in the past too many drug recovery programmes  
have really just been a revolving door, where people  
came in and were there for too short a time, and  
although they may have got clean, what they needed  
was support on housing, jobs or education so that they  
could sustain their recovery. Those programmes were  
not incentivised to enable that. So we are looking at  
outcome frameworks over a longer period which make  
sure people have the best possible chance of recovery,  
with mental health services and recovery services involved  
in this.

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): I wish to refer  
back to the point about alcohol abuse, with which I  
agree. Alcohol is consumed throughout this House; we  
have 15 bars and restaurants in this place, all selling us  
alcohol. Some 90% of recreational drug users are not a  
problem—they consume their drugs and get on with  
their life—and only about 10% are a problem, so I  
cannot see why the Minister wants to take alcohol as  
one problem and drugs as another.

**Sarah Newton:** Our published drugs strategy definitely  
recognises the relationship between those who take  
drugs and those who drink alcohol, and understanding  
that relationship will be a key part of our recovery  
programmes. In our modern crime prevention strategy,  
we have a whole series of actions around alcohol.  
Public Health England and the NHS do a lot of work in  
that area as well. We are very understanding of the hon.  
Gentleman's point, and it will form part of our joined-up  
integrated approach. Is there a further question I can  
take before making some progress?

**Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): An enormous part  
of the harm that is done by drugs is when people,  
particularly young people, do not know what it is that  
they are taking. If we are considering a harm prevention  
strategy, should we not be trying to ensure that we can  
protect people and help them to know what they are  
taking? Does that not include making drugs available  
legally so that we can test them and properly protect  
people?

**Sarah Newton:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question.  
We need to be really clear here: we do not ban substances  
without an evidence base that shows that they are  
harmful to people's health. The reason why we put in  
those protections—whether it is through the Psychoactive  
Substances Act 2016, or the Misuse of Drugs Act  
1971—is that the evidence base clearly shows that these  
substances are harmful. There is no safe way that people

731

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

732

*[Sarah Newton]*

can take these products. It would be terrible to confuse  
young people by saying that they can, somehow, safely  
take a legal high. I know how difficult it is to have these  
conversations with young people; I have three children  
in their 20s. I understand the world in which they live  
and the temptations with which they are faced, but that  
is why it is so important that we have very clear messages  
and effective education tools for teachers, which we are  
investing in now. We will be legislating to make personal,  
social, health and economic education statutory in schools  
so that every young person understands the risks of  
taking alcohol and drugs, which will make them more  
resilient and more able to resist the temptations. I have  
said to my own children, “If you can't go into Boots or  
any other reputable pharmacist and buy something,  
then it will not be good for you.” It is really important  
that we have very simple and clear messages for young  
people.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): I thank  
the Minister for generously giving way so many times,  
but I must challenge her. She said a moment ago that  
there is such a thing as a safe level of consumption of  
alcohol, but that is not what the National Institute for  
Health and Care Excellence guidelines say. The NICE  
guidelines are clear and accurate: there is no safe level  
of consumption of alcohol. We allow it to be consumed  
legally and we provide information, treatment and recovery,  
but we do not criminalise people who are consuming  
alcohol. Why will she not consider the graph that I can  
show her—*[Interruption.]* No, I am not supposed to do  
that. Evidence is available that shows just how much  
more harmful alcohol is than any other drug.

**Sarah Newton:** This debate today is about the drugs  
strategy. I have been very generous in answering questions.  
We understand that there is a relationship between  
drugs and alcohol, but I will not be drawn into a wider  
debate about the current legal framework around alcohol,  
because we are here today to talk about our drugs  
policy. *[Interruption.]* May I just finish my point? Look,  
our policy is based on independent evidence, and is  
informed by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of  
Drugs. The vast majority of academic and medical  
research backs up our position.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Sarah Newton:** No, I will not give way as I wish to  
make some progress. I will answer some more questions  
later.

Let me remind everyone that we are not at all complacent  
about this. We definitely recognise the scale of the  
threat that drugs continue to pose to our society. They  
do destroy lives and have very serious impacts on families  
and communities. The cost to society is about £10 billion  
a year, half of which is related to theft and criminal  
activity around drug usage.

I wish to go back to this very serious point about  
drug-related deaths and how they have increased by  
10% in the past year. Again, using the best available  
evidence, we understand that there is a cohort of people—  
and of older people—who have been taking heroin and  
crack cocaine for some time, which has had a very

significant impact not only on their mental health, but  
their physical health. That is a driving factor in our  
strategy. Using the evidence base, we are able to segment  
better the treatment and the recovery programmes. We  
will be doing that with the firm hope that, by tailor-making  
the support that they need, we will see fewer people die  
and more people—even if they have been taking drugs  
for some time—being able to get off drugs and have the  
independent and fulfilled life that we want everyone to  
enjoy.

We are also very concerned about the way that synthetic  
cannabinoids—commonly known as Spice—have been  
so ruthlessly targeted at the homeless population. We  
are working on that, alongside our homelessness reduction  
programmes, with mental health services. In particular,  
we are looking at young people who might be vulnerable  
to these types of substances. We want to ensure that  
everybody has access to the best possible recovery  
programme.

The strategy builds on the three strands of the previous  
strategy—reducing demand, restricting supply and building  
recovery—by embracing a smarter, partnership-based  
approach, both locally and nationally, and recognising  
the links between different Government Departments  
and different Government ambitions. Clearly, we want  
to reduce crime, improve people's life chances, promote  
better health, tackle homelessness and protect the most  
vulnerable people in our society. The strategy sets out  
key actions covering the wide range of partners critical  
to tackling drug misuse successfully, including those in  
education, health, safeguarding, criminal justice, housing  
and employment.

The strategy also introduces a new fourth strand on  
global action to bring out the critical importance of  
international co-operation. We want to reduce the demand  
for drugs by acting early to prevent people, especially  
young people, from taking drugs in the first place and  
then preventing escalation to more harmful use. This  
starts with universal action to give all young people the  
resilience and confidence they need to make positive  
choices about their health and well-being, including  
resisting drugs. For example, we will be legislating to  
make PSHE statutory in schools and expanding the  
Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Information  
Service for young people. That will be complemented  
with more targeted action to prevent drug misuse among  
vulnerable groups, including young people who are not  
in education, employment or training, looked-after children,  
offenders and the homeless. There will also be a targeted  
approach for emerging and evolving threats such as  
performance-enhancing drugs, so-called chemsex drugs  
and, sadly, the misuse of prescription drugs.

Tough enforcement is also a fundamental part of our  
drug strategy and we will continue to bear down on  
those who seek to benefit from the misery caused to  
others. We will take a smarter approach to restricting  
the supply of drugs, adapting our approach to reflect  
changes in criminal activity. For example, we have taken  
action to close down the mobile phone lines being used  
for drug dealing and other dreadful exploitation such as  
the trafficking of young people to sell drugs. Those  
mobile phone lines will be closed down. We will also use  
innovative data and technology to disrupt supply over  
the darknet. Our Serious Organised Crime Agency and  
the National Crime Agency have a very important  
role to play.

733

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

734

**Diana Johnson:** Let me take the Minister back to  
investment and the idea that if this matter was treated  
as a health issue, there would be more investment in  
drug treatment services. Is it not the case that in France,  
where this is treated as a health issue, the investment is  
less than it is here where we have treated it as a criminal  
justice issue and a health issue combined?

**Sarah Newton:** I just do not accept the premise of  
what the hon. Lady is saying. We do not take it in the  
way that she describes. We see this very much as a  
partnership or a joined-up whole Government approach.  
Of course health and recovery is at the centre of our  
strategy. It is not a fair interpretation to say that this is  
led by justice. It is about a joined-up whole system  
approach. Recovery remains a vital part of the  
Government's approach.

**John Mann:** Will the Minister give way?

**Sarah Newton:** I will make a bit more progress. We  
are absolutely determined to improve support for those  
dependent on drugs by raising the quality of treatment,  
and to improve outcomes by ensuring that people get  
the right interventions for their needs. That means  
ensuring that they can access the full range of services  
to help them rebuild their life, which may include mental  
health, housing, employment and training services, and  
a lot of support for a stable family life, free from crime.  
I am pleased that we will appoint a national recovery  
champion, who will drive progress by visiting different  
parts of the country to identify good practice and  
ensure local collaboration. We will also encourage  
partnership working and transparency by developing a  
new set of outcome measures to give local areas further  
support through Public Health England.

For the first time, we are setting out global action. We  
are already taking a global lead on our psychoactive  
substance work, encouraging data exchange to give us a  
richer picture of international trends, and bringing in  
global bans on the most harmful new psychoactive  
substances. We will continue our work through the  
United Nations. We have a balanced, evidence-based  
approach to drugs. Collaborating with partners around  
the world will help to give us a better intelligence base  
and enable us to take better action.

I hope that Members will see that this is a truly  
cross-Government strategy that requires the commitment  
and coming together of many Departments. The Home  
Secretary will establish a new drugs strategy board, of  
which I will be a member. It will include people from all  
the key Government Departments, Public Health England,  
and national police leads. Then we can all plan together  
to implement the strategy and hold each other to account.  
I am confident that the strategy is grounded in the best  
available evidence. We consulted extensively with key  
partners working in the drugs field, and I am sure that  
the strategy will make a lasting difference, but we know  
that there is no easy way to tackle drugs and the harms  
that they cause, and we need to do much more. Our  
strategy is flexible enough to enable us to respond to  
emerging threats.

Finally, by working together across government, locally  
and nationally, we can genuinely deliver the safer, healthier  
Britain, free from the harm of drugs, that we all want.

1.52 pm

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)  
(Lab): Everyone in this Chamber knows that drug abuse  
casts a long shadow over our society. Whether it is the  
many thousands of crimes committed by drug users  
seeking to fund their habit—fully 45% of acquisitive  
crime is committed by regular heroin or crack cocaine  
users—the chaos caused in families and communities  
by drug use, or the lives ruined or cut short by it, the  
scale of the problem is truly shocking. We have the  
highest recorded level of mortality from drugs misuse  
since records began. There are record numbers of deaths  
from morphine or heroin, and from cocaine abuse.  
Under this Government, the UK has become the drugs  
overdose capital of Europe.

According to the European Monitoring Centre for  
Drugs and Drug Addiction, one in three of Europe's  
overdose deaths—they are mainly related to opioids—  
occurs in the UK. That is roughly 10 families a day  
bereaved as a result of illegal drugs—more than are  
bereaved in traffic accidents. We have an overwhelming  
economic, moral and public health case for examining  
this country's drugs policy.

Labour Members welcome the publication this month  
of the 2017 drugs strategy, even though it comes two  
years after the Government's self-imposed deadline.  
However, having waited nearly two years for it, we have  
to confess to being a little disappointed. Let us remember  
what has happened along the way. Drug rehabilitation  
centres have been closed; budgets to tackle drug abuse  
have been cut; key services such as the NHS are under  
increasing pressure; and there have been cuts to police  
officers and Border Force guards by the thousand. In  
the light of these constrained resources, it is not clear  
how much impact this strategy, in which there is much  
to welcome in principle, will have.

Official drug strategies always include reducing demand,  
increasing awareness and education, restricting supply,  
tackling organised crime and improving treatment and  
recovery, so those elements, although important, are  
not new. The Government's recognition of the importance  
of evidence-based treatment, recovery and harm reduction  
is welcome, but what stakeholders, and families and  
communities up and down the country who are suffering  
from drug abuse, want to know is whether the strategy  
is not just old methods in a shinier package. We frequently  
use the term “war on drugs”; I ask the Minister how  
exactly we expect to win a war with reduced forces and  
resources on the frontline.

Responsibility for drug and alcohol treatment was  
transferred from the NHS to local authorities in 2013,  
which was undoubtedly a good idea in principle; local  
authorities are much better placed than central Government  
to facilitate co-operation between drug and alcohol  
services, local police, those involved in social and youth  
work, education and housing and other stakeholders,  
but sadly local authorities gained those new responsibilities  
at a time of bone-crunching pressure on their budgets,  
and this transfer of responsibility meant an end to  
ring-fenced budgets for drug treatment.

**Diana Johnson:** I agree exactly with my right hon.  
Friend, but does she think that when the Government  
transferred that responsibility to local authorities, they  
missed a trick by not making it clear that police and  
crime commissioners and representatives from the criminal

735

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

736

*[Diana Johnson]*justice system should sit on health and wellbeing boards,  
so that they could provide input on drug and alcohol  
treatment services?

**Ms Abbott:** My hon. Friend is exactly right, because  
the purpose of transferring responsibility to local authorities  
was that they should bring together all the stakeholders,  
including police and crime commissioners and the local  
police.

**John Mann:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in  
condemning the vast number of Labour local authorities  
that, in 2013, took their drug service out of the NHS  
and gave it to private providers? That includes mine in  
Nottinghamshire. Should we not have a Labour party  
position that would stop them doing this?

**Ms Abbott:** It is unfortunate that many authorities,  
including many Labour authorities, privatised these  
services. Privatising them necessarily makes it harder to  
achieve the co-ordination and co-operation that was the  
whole point of having these services sit in the local  
authorities.

Local councils face unprecedented cuts to their  
funding—anything from 25% to 40% of their entire  
budget. Is it any wonder that drug-related deaths are  
increasing when local authorities do not have the funds  
necessary for comprehensive treatment programmes?

**Norman Lamb:** The right hon. Lady has talked about  
the war on drugs, and how it has been undermined by a  
lack of resources, but does she favour simply increasing  
the resources in that war, or a more enlightened approach  
that involves decriminalisation and, potentially, the  
regulation of cannabis markets so that we take the  
criminals out of the market altogether?

**Ms Abbott:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman  
for his intervention. We cannot have a meaningful strategy  
on drug abuse without looking at the question of resources,  
but I would be the first to say that it is more complex  
than simply providing more money.

To give an overview of what local authorities are  
facing, Barnsley cut its drug and alcohol service by  
more than a third between 2015-16 and 2016-17. Some  
services will be unavailable and key drugs practitioners  
will be made redundant. Staffordshire County Council  
was forced to make cuts of 45% to its drug and alcohol  
treatment budget over the past two years, due to its  
local commissioning group pulling the expected £15 million  
of NHS funding. Middlesbrough Council, which sadly  
has one of the highest rates of death from heroin  
overdoses in the country, cut its budget by £1 million  
last year.

When the Home Office announced those policies, it  
correctly said that for every £1 spent on public health,  
£2.50 is saved. However, instead of helping local authorities  
to follow that logic, the Government have obliged them  
to pursue short-term cuts. Some local authorities have  
tried, and some have been particularly innovative in  
seeking efficiencies in their public health budgets, but  
the reality is that too many are looking at significant  
reductions in services, and some are even privatising  
services. When it comes to public health, the Government

talk a good talk but do not follow through with the  
resources. I note with dismay that the strategy includes  
no mention of providing more resources to local authorities,  
which after all are on the frontline of any strategy  
against drug use.

**Ruth George:** Bearing in mind the figures that my  
right hon. Friend has set out—for every £1 spent on  
public health, £2.50 is saved for the public purse—does  
she agree that the overall cuts of £85 million to local  
authorities' public health budgets are a false economy  
that are not serving our communities, or even the  
Exchequer?

**Ms Abbott:** I think that the public health cuts were  
disastrous. The Treasury, in an extraordinary example  
of short-term thinking, clawed back the funds that had  
been promised. The King's Fund has shown that local  
authorities in England are being forced to spend more  
than 5% less on public health initiatives this year than in  
2014, and tackling drug misuse in adults will face a  
5.5% cut of more than £22 million. Until the Government  
put their money where their mouth is on the drugs  
strategy, they will have to accept that some stakeholders  
remain sceptical.

There was an interesting discussion about alcohol  
earlier in the debate. Ministers seem to struggle with the  
notion that alcohol is actually a drug, but the truth is  
that in absolute terms alcohol causes more harm than  
any illegal drug. It is shocking that the strategy managed  
only two paragraphs on alcohol, which is a major killer  
in Britain today. Professor Ian Gilmore, chair of Alcohol  
Health Alliance UK, has said that

“we also need a dedicated strategy on alcohol which recognises  
the breadth of harm done by alcohol. In the UK alcohol is  
responsible for over 26,000 deaths per year, over 1 million hospital  
admissions per year, and...alcohol cost the UK economy between  
£27—£52 billion in 2016.”

In 2015, there were 8,000 casualties caused by drink-driving  
alone. Professor Ian Gilmore continued:

“The time has come for the Government to take an evidence-based  
approach to controlling the supply of and reducing the demand  
for a legal drug which is sold on virtually every street corner,  
sometimes at pocket money prices.”

**Paul Flynn:** Portugal de-penalised drug use in 2001  
and, as a result, halved the number of heroin users in  
the country, and the number of deaths has fallen from  
80 a year to 16 a year. In the 30 years in which my right  
hon. Friend and I have been in the House, can she think  
of any initiative by any Government that has reduced  
drug harm so spectacularly?

**Ms Abbott:** My hon. Friend is a passionate proponent  
of decriminalisation, and I think that he makes his own  
case.

The strategy claims that the Psychoactive Substances  
Act 2016 has been hugely successful in stopping the  
proliferation of legal highs. It is true that in the first six  
months since the Act came into force nearly 500 people  
were arrested. However, as various drug charities suspected,  
despite those measures demand for the substances continues  
to increase. So-called legal highs have simply been pushed  
into the black market or on to the internet, which I  
suspect is why the Government have in the same breath  
claimed that they will focus on eliminating the vast  
range of problems that these substances cause. That exposes

737

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

738

something that the Opposition made clear during the  
passage of the Act: legislation is effective only if there is  
a wider strategy in place.

The strategy has now been produced, but meanwhile  
legal highs are more dangerous than ever, affecting the  
poorest and most vulnerable in society. It remains the  
case that too many people, particularly women, go to  
prison without a drug habit and leave with a drug habit.  
I believe that Ministers, working with the Ministry of  
Justice, could do a great deal more to make our prisons  
drug-free zones. It is an elementary issue, but one that  
the Government continue to fail to address.

I am sure that most Members were as alarmed as I  
was last year by CCTV footage of a drone making  
deliveries to a prison. That is the favoured manner of  
getting contraband, in the form of mobile phones,  
weapons and drugs, into our prisons. There are no easy  
answers, but if there are not enough guards to guard the  
prisoners, I find it hard to believe that they could devote  
much time to searching one another or taking down  
drug-mule drones. My hon. Friend the shadow Secretary  
of State for Justice has repeatedly said that the decimation  
of prison officer numbers under the Conservatives is a  
key reason for the Government's inability to stem the  
growing influx of drugs into prisons. What specific  
extra staffing resources will be given to prisons to  
enable officers and prison authorities to meet the objectives  
of the new drugs strategy?

The Minister referred to global issues and to the  
international war on drugs, but she will be aware that it  
is largely regarded as failing. We would like to hear how  
Ministers plan to make the international war on drugs  
more successful than it has been. There are some aspects  
of the strategy that we welcome. For example, it is  
excellent that greater efforts will be made to provide  
young people with effective, evidence-based drug prevention  
education. As a parent, I think that most parents are  
unable to keep up with the kinds of drugs that young  
people are discovering nowadays. As I said earlier, it is  
very important that prisoners are given more help to get  
into recovery and that their progress is monitored closely.  
We need far clearer and more explicit guidelines on the  
value of opioid maintenance treatment which, if properly  
implemented, allows many people with opioid dependence  
to live their life and, crucially, prevents overdoses.

Another important aspect of the strategy is its recognition  
that people can slip through the cracks of dual diagnosis  
of mental health problems and problem substance use. I  
am glad that the strategy, at least in principle, wants  
those people to be better catered for, rather than shunted  
between services that are reluctant to take on complex  
and demanding cases.

There is a tendency to regard drug use and abuse as a  
personal failure. We in the Opposition would rather  
regard it as a societal failure. We say that any drug  
strategy has to look at the broader picture, including  
what is happening in society and the resources available.  
Although we welcome the drug strategy in principle, we  
question whether the resources or the will is there to  
make its worthy aims real and manifest.

2.9 pm

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): I suspect that the right  
hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) and  
I will have sympathy with my hon. Friend the Minister,  
given the bounds within which she has had to present

this strategy to the House. She presented the strategy  
with candour; my only concern is whether she really  
believes in it. As I will discuss, the evidence from around  
the world is that the approach within the strategy is  
profoundly mistaken and simply not working.

I rather suspect that the speech made by the right  
hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington  
(Ms Abbott) will have disappointed those behind her  
the most: here was an opportunity really to engage in  
thinking on this issue and to persuade us to consider  
the actual evidence from around the world. I fear that  
the right hon. Lady opted for the “safety first” routine:  
she will have avoided disagreeable headlines about the  
Opposition's drug policy in the *Daily Mail*. As I shall  
come on to say, we need a space in which we can  
properly consider the issue. The kernel of my argument  
is that we need a royal commission to assess our drugs  
policy, to get it to the right place.

President Nixon declared a war on drugs in 1971.  
Nearly half a century later, I defy anyone to disagree  
that it has been a global public policy catastrophe. We  
desperately need a new approach and a completely  
different strategy. Although I welcome the emphasis  
that the Government strategy puts on improving treatment  
and recovery for users, it also rehearses the same failed  
arguments for prohibition and criminalisation that have  
patently failed. The measure of that failure is spelt out  
in the strategy itself: it tells us that in England and  
Wales the number of deaths from drug misuse registered  
in 2015 increased by 10.3% to 2,479. That follows an  
increase of 14.9% in the previous year and 19.6% the  
year before that. Deaths involving heroin—about half  
the total—more than doubled from 2012 to 2015, as the  
right hon. Lady mentioned. The strategy also informs  
us that, each year in the United Kingdom, drugs cost  
society £10.7 billion in policing, healthcare and crime,  
with drug-fuelled theft alone costing £6 billion a year.

I am delighted that the Government have published  
these figures. When I was the criminal justice Minister,  
between 2010 and 2012, the Ministry of Justice would  
not provide the numbers to me, directly or otherwise. In  
the end, I got Bob Ainsworth, a former drugs policy  
Minister, to table a written parliamentary question to  
me as a way of eliciting the numbers from the Government.  
I am fine about their being on the public record now: we  
can see the cost of our failure of public policy in this  
area.

**Stephen Pound** (Ealing North) (Lab): The hon.  
Gentleman is noted for his candour on this subject and  
the House respects him for it. Until 1968 we ran what  
was widely known throughout the world as the British  
system: GPs prescribed diamorphine hydrochloride and  
cocaine hydrochloride. We had nothing like the number  
of deaths today because of the purity of the product.  
Now the cause of death is impurity and differentiated  
supplies.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it has been  
almost impossible to have a rational, sensible and sane  
debate on this subject? The 1968 legislation was a  
panicked reaction, fuelled by the most reactionary forces.  
As a humble individual on these Benches, I ask the hon.  
Gentleman to accept my wholehearted support for his  
excellent idea that a royal commission should consider  
this issue. Frankly, there is not a country in the world  
that does not have a drug problem, and there is certainly  
no victory in the so-called war on drugs.

739

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

740

**Crispin Blunt:** I wholly agree. If the evidence of  
failure is clear in the United Kingdom, the problem is  
dramatically worse in other countries of the world.  
However, even in the UK, as page 16 of the strategy  
makes clear, drugs are

“a significant threat to our national security.”  
There is a way of dealing with the problem.

Ever since prohibition or criminalisation of illicit  
drug use was enshrined in the 1961 UN convention on  
narcotic drugs, we have been fighting a losing battle to  
stem the global drugs trade. As is increasingly recognised—  
especially in Latin America, where many leaders are  
crying out for their societies to be rescued from the  
malign fall-out from a multi-billion dollar criminal  
industry—eradication, interdiction and criminalisation  
of consumption have failed. We have left the manufacture  
and supply in the hands of organised criminals and  
treated their victims—many of whom are vulnerable  
members of our society and many of whom have mental  
illnesses—as criminals, and they are unable or unwilling  
to seek medical help due to the illegality, exclusion and  
stigma.

I hope that hon. Members will reflect on this simple  
statistic: between 2006 and 2013, 111,000 people died  
in the Mexican drug war—as a result not of drug  
consumption, but of the wars over the control of this  
vast industry. Building on the work of the Latin American  
Commission on Drugs and Democracy, convened by  
former Presidents of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, the  
Global Commission on Drug Policy has opened a public  
discussion about the association between the drug trade,  
violence and corruption.

**Norman Lamb:** I agree with everything that the hon.  
Gentleman has said. He has talked about the number of  
people who have lost their lives through violence in  
Latin America. Does he agree that the policy engenders  
violence in our own communities—particularly poor  
communities—in this country? The only way in which  
the supply to a particular community can be maintained  
is through the use of extreme violence. Does that not  
add to the case for much needed reform?

**Crispin Blunt:** Unsurprisingly, I agree entirely with  
the right hon. Gentleman.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): I am  
extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I  
declare an interest: I used to prosecute national-level  
drug barons. We are talking about gun-toting criminals,  
who think nothing of shooting each other and the  
people who carry their drugs for them. What on earth  
does my hon. Friend think their reaction will be to the  
idea of drugs being regulated? Does he really think that  
these awful people are suddenly going to become law-  
abiding citizens?

**Crispin Blunt:** I shall come to my hon. Friend's point  
directly. We have set up the business model that those  
people use. The value of that business model is why  
people go to the lengths they do to kill so many in  
trying to maintain control.

I come back to commending the work of the Global  
Commission on Drug Policy, which has advocated a  
balanced, comprehensive and evidence-based debate on  
drugs, focusing on humane and effective solutions to

reduce the harm caused by drugs to individuals and  
societies. Last year, it succeeded in getting the issue back  
on the international agenda at the United Nations General  
Assembly special session. Tragically, however, the regressive  
voices upholding prohibition and criminalisation stopped  
the endorsement of a new approach. All the while,  
however, more and more countries are starting new  
policies, while we lag behind.

Decriminalisation of personal possession is proving  
to have significant effects in reducing harm where it has  
been tried. In Portugal, where the possession of small  
amounts of drugs has been de-penalised since 2001,  
there is now a clear political consensus behind the  
policy. The data show that decriminalisation has not led  
to increased drug usage rates—in fact, in numerous  
categories, Portuguese usage rates are now among the  
lowest in the EU, particularly in comparison with states  
with stringent criminalisation regimes. Drug-related  
pathologies, such as sexually transmitted diseases and  
deaths due to misuse, have decreased dramatically as  
the Government are able to offer treatment programmes  
without having to drag users into the criminal justice  
system, where it becomes even harder to manage addiction  
and abuse. The focus is public health; penalties are used  
only if considered necessary and productive.

**Victoria Atkins:** My hon. Friend is being generous in  
allowing me to intervene. I refer again to my experience  
in the criminal courts. We tried that experiment in this  
country, when David Blunkett downgraded the classification  
of cannabis. The impact of that on the ground in  
magistrates courts up and down the country was terrible.  
Young people were coming to court with very severe  
mental health problems because of their use of cannabis.  
We tried the experiment and it failed.

**Crispin Blunt:** It has not failed. If we adjust one part  
of the system and move from a categorisation of B to C,  
as we did with cannabis, then that sends a message  
about usage and the rest. However, if the supply of  
cannabis is in the hands of people who are not going to  
tell people what is in it, or educate them as to the effect  
it is going to have on their mind, it is hardly surprising  
that we see a massive increase in schizophrenia caused  
by the use of these drugs, because people do not know  
what they are buying and we are not in a position to  
educate them properly about the consequences of their  
use. That is why there is a public health issue about  
getting a regulated supply into place whereby we could  
educate people at the point of purchase. I will come on  
to talk about the relationship between the dealer and  
his interest in how he deals with his client base in a  
regulated and licensed system.

**Paul Flynn:** Having been in the House at the time of  
David Blunkett's change in the category of cannabis,  
and very much involved with it, I remember that everyone  
predicted an increase in cannabis use when the classification  
was changed. That did not happen. In fact, there was a  
reduction in the use of cannabis when the penalties  
were less. Contrary to all the expectations, and the great  
argument we hear in this place, it is not the drugs that  
are killing people—it is prohibition that is killing people.

**Crispin Blunt:** While I am obviously minded to agree  
with the hon. Gentleman, the arguments that my  
hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle

741

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

742

(Victoria Atkins) and the Government are putting forward  
in trying to send a message should be considered somewhere  
so that we can go through the evidence. That is very  
difficult to do in a charged environment where the  
tabloid press will be seeking to send a message if we are  
perceived to be weak in this area of public policy. Yet  
hundreds of thousands of people across the world are  
dying because this policy is in the wrong place globally.  
I rather hope that a royal commission here in the  
United Kingdom could assist us in getting to a place  
where, based on evidence, we can begin to lead the  
international debate.

As well as the decriminalisation of personal possession,  
we ought to consider the merits of a legal, regulated  
market taken out of the control of organised crime. A  
recent report by the drugs policy think-tank Volteface  
makes the case for a legal, regulated cannabis market in  
the UK to improve support, guidance and access to  
treatment for people experiencing problematic cannabis  
use. It found that the current illegal and unregulated  
market means that cannabis users are hidden from  
health practitioners, leaving them  
“fumbling around in the dark trying to find them”.

Among people showing signs of cannabis dependence,  
only 14.6% have ever received treatment, help or support  
specifically because of their drug use, and 5.5% had  
received it in the previous six months. The report says a  
regulated market would provide

“opportunities for more public guidance, packaging controls,  
products which vary in potency, research into cannabis culture  
and consumption to improve interventions, and reduced stigma  
to enable access to services.”

I am sorry to say that the drug dealers reading the  
strategy and watching this debate will simply laugh at  
us. We are doing nothing to undermine their basic  
business model. By ensuring that supply is criminal, we  
have created a highly lucrative, criminal black market  
for the distribution and sale of drugs, worth an estimated  
£4.6 billion per year in the United Kingdom—and the  
UN Office on Drugs and Crime and Europol estimate  
that the global market is worth $435 billion a year. That  
is an astonishing amount of money, and it is hardly  
surprising that people arm themselves, and fight and  
kill, to try to maintain their share of that market.

Drugs are believed to account for some 20% of all  
crime proceeds, with about 50% of all organised crime  
groups believed to be involved in drugs, and about half  
of transnational organised crime proceeds derive from  
the drugs trade. Profit margins are enormous, with  
100-fold increases in price from production to retail.  
Exploited customers, trapped in addiction—indeed, having  
been encouraged and incentivised there by the criminal  
dealer—turn to crime to pay the inflated prices. Those  
using heroin, cocaine or crack cocaine are estimated to  
commit between a third and a half of all acquisitive  
crime. Drug dealers vie with one another to gain market  
exclusivity in their domains, leading to further appalling  
gang violence.

Yet that is only part of the story, as the uncomfortable  
truth is that respect for our laws is diminished when  
large swathes of the population can see no difference  
between their recreational drugs of choice and their  
recreational use of alcohol and tobacco. Alcohol prohibition  
was an acknowledged public policy disaster when it was  
tried in the United States in the 1920s. If the state or its  
licensed agents became a benign, regulated monopoly  
supplier instead, that would smash the drug dealer's

business model. Proceeds from sales or taxation of sales  
would pay for treatment and public health education.  
We would protect people because they would know  
what they were buying.

Instead of more of the same, we should be brave  
enough to be at the forefront of international thinking.  
Legalisation, licensing and regulation may be radical  
ideas for the United Kingdom, but forms of  
decriminalisation are already being widely put into  
practice in Europe and in North America and Latin  
America. The merits of other countries' approaches,  
and the extensive work of the Global Commission on  
Drug Policy, warrant proper consideration in British  
public debate and policy making. A royal commission  
would be able to do that. It would be the most appropriate  
way to consider fully and carefully the complex issues  
involved and all the policy options, exploring best practice  
abroad and responding to increasing calls here and  
internationally for a truly new strategy.

2.26 pm

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): It  
is a pleasure to take part in today's general debate on  
drugs policy—a very important issue that affects every  
community, class and creed in the country. The scourge  
of drugs misuse and its associated criminal and antisocial  
behaviours has been a blight on too many of our cities,  
towns and villages for far too long.

Only last week, I conducted a home visit to a distraught  
family who were coming to terms with the tragic loss of  
a young man from drug misuse—a thoroughly decent  
family who had tried to get help for their loved one, but  
sadly were not successful in time. I will not go into the  
specific details, but a grieving mother and sister explained  
about the physical and behavioural changes they observed,  
and about their loved one stealing from other family  
members and the general antisocial behaviour that ensued.  
This story is not uncommon across any of our communities.

That set of circumstances brought home to me why  
we need aggressively to tackle the forces of organised  
crime, who are making millions from human misery—  
effective enforcement against the dealers is a key factor  
in the war against drugs—while sympathetically addressing  
the health and safety of users, and with greater emphasis  
on prevention and harm reduction rather than punitive  
punishments. Once criminalised, these victims can often  
face further life challenges and stigmatisation, all of  
which can result in users finding it harder to recover  
and to move on from drug problems and addiction, in  
some cases even trapping them in a self-destructive cycle.

As right hon. and hon. Members will be aware,  
health and justice, which are key areas in any joined-up  
drugs policy, are devolved to Scotland. The regulation  
of all proscribed drugs remains a reserved issue, and the  
policy is set by the UK Government. There is a strong  
argument that drugs policy should also be devolved to  
Scotland. The Minister herself referred to a joined-up,  
whole-policy approach, and that would be easier to  
achieve in a Scottish context if we had all the levers of  
policy. However, the Scottish Government continue to  
work with the Home Office to implement a series of  
actions against drug misuse in Scotland.

It is estimated that drug misuse costs society in  
Scotland £3.5 billion a year. That is very similar to the  
impact of alcohol misuse, which is estimated to cost  
£3.6 billion a year. Combined, this amounts to about  
£1,800 for every adult. In 2008, the SNP Government

743

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

744

*[Martyn Day]*

published the current national drugs strategy for Scotland,  
“The Road to Recovery”, which set out a new strategic  
direction for tackling drug misuse based on treatment  
services promoting recovery. The strategy continues to  
receive cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament.  
Evidence has shown that drug taking in the general  
population is falling, with misuse among young people  
at its lowest in a decade. However, drug deaths are  
currently at their highest. The approach taken recognises  
the importance of supporting families, and the number  
of family support organisations across Scotland is growing.  
In addition, several national organisations have been  
established or commissioned to support delivery of the  
strategy. They include the Scottish Recovery Consortium,  
which was established to drive and promote recovery  
for individuals, family members and communities affected  
by drugs, as well as Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol  
& Drugs and the recently launched Partnership for  
Action on Drugs in Scotland.

The Scottish Government also work with Scotland's  
38 alcohol and drug partnerships, which bring together  
local partners, including health boards, local authorities,  
police and voluntary agencies. They are responsible for  
developing local strategies for tackling problem alcohol  
and drug use, and promoting recovery, based on an  
assessment of local needs. A good example is the current  
Glasgow city health and social care partnership proposals  
for a pilot safer drug consumption and heroin assisted  
treatment facility in the city centre. The latest iteration  
of its business case was presented to the HSCP on  
21 June 2017. The facility is designed to service the  
needs of an estimated 400 to 500 individuals who inject  
publicly in the city centre and experience high levels of  
harm. In particular, it is anticipated that the facility will  
significantly reduce the risk of further outbreaks of  
blood-borne viruses.

In 2015 there were 157 drug-related deaths in the  
Glasgow City Council area—up from 114 the previous  
year—and 132 of them involved an opiate or opioid.  
The recent rise in deaths is concerning and not unique  
to Glasgow. I am grateful to the Transform Drug Policy  
Foundation for its briefing, which informed me that  
around a third of Europe's drug misuse deaths occur in  
the UK. We all need to do something to address this  
challenge. The British Medical Association and the  
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs have indicated  
their support for pursuing safer drug consumption proposals  
to promote harm reduction. Although that remains a  
matter for authorities in Glasgow to take forward, the  
Scottish Government will subsequently consider any  
formal proposal that is brought to their attention for  
consideration.

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is reserved legislation,  
so any proposal is dependent on authorities in Glasgow  
making a formal request to the Lord Advocate to vary  
prosecution guidance. It would make sense to devolve  
all drugs policy to Scotland, to allow the Scottish  
Parliament to legislate on it and other issues.

**John Mann**: The Scottish Government have followed  
entirely the Tory Government's approach on recovery-based  
treatment, as opposed to NHS treatment. Why would  
devolving power make a ha'pence of difference, when  
all the SNP has done is to adopt Tory policies and their  
consequential failures?

**Martyn Day:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for making  
that point, but I am saying that it would be another tool  
in our armoury that might allow future drugs policy to  
go in a different direction. We can only work within the  
current constraints. At its conference last year, the  
Scottish National party backed the decriminalisation of  
cannabis for medicinal use, but that is another issue  
currently reserved to Westminster, so we cannot go down  
that line.

A few years ago, a survey conducted by Scottish  
Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs found that peer  
support was an important part of the recovery process.  
It also found that despite the pressures most families  
wait at least two years before seeking help—a delay that  
can prove fatal, as evidenced by the constituents I  
mentioned earlier. Their loved one had been using for  
about six months, by their own reckoning, prior to his  
death.

In my area we have a wide range of support services.  
In Linlithgow, the 1st Step Cafe is run by people who  
are in recovery, and who now help others living with the  
effects of addiction. Across West Lothian, the social  
work addictions team—known as SWAT—supports those  
affected by drugs or alcohol to plan for recovery, and  
promotes goal-focused work to make positive changes.  
In the Falkirk and Forth valley area, Addictions Support  
and Counselling assists with community rehabilitation  
and recovery.

Undoubtedly for the users, their families and local  
communities, recovery is the key, but it cannot work on  
its own. It has to be coupled with education about the  
dangers and about harm reduction, and with public  
health measures—improving access to treatment and  
reducing waiting times. In short, the issue is no longer  
simply one of law enforcement, although tackling the  
supply of drugs and drug-related anti-social behaviour  
will, I suspect, remain a permanent feature of our societies  
for some considerable time.

2.34 pm

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): I very much welcome  
the strategy, with its emphasis on effectively treating  
and, even more importantly, preventing substance misuse  
problems. I welcome the acknowledgement that national  
and local government have a clear responsibility to  
improve public health with regard to addictions. Indeed,  
because such problems often affect the most vulnerable  
in society, thisis amatterof social justice. I welcome the  
strategy's recognition of that, and of the clear and very  
sad links between substance misuse and a range of  
other issues: underperformance at school and later exclusion  
from the job market, domestic abuse, mental ill health,  
sexual exploitation, homelessness and imprisonment.

I welcome the recognition of the need for a joined-up,  
partnership approach to address those issues. I implore  
local government to ensure that, as some local authorities  
do, individuals receive support from one lead caseworker  
rather than from a confusing mix of social workers and  
agencies. I heard of one family who had to cope—yes,  
cope is the right word—with 26 different local agencies  
trying to help them.

I particularly welcome the strategy's focus on helping  
the most vulnerable young people, such as those in care,  
those on the streets, those in the criminal justice system  
or at risk of entering it, those in troubled families and  
young girls at risk of entering prostitution. We know

745

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

746

how pimps use drugs to enslave young girls, particularly  
those who have been trafficked. I welcome the strategy's  
prioritisation of helping those young people, many of  
whom have never had a first chance in life. The strategy's  
approach is designed to give them the chance they need  
to live a life of self-worth, free of the devastating impact  
of substance misuse.

I particularly welcome the Minister's statement that  
we must look at mental health and substance misuse  
together, and the recognition of the key role that parents  
and families can play in the treatment and prevention  
of substance misuse. Family breakdown—or, if not  
breakdown, chaotic or dysfunctional family relationships  
—must surely be one of the key reasons, if not the key  
reason, for young people seeking comfort in drugs.  
I welcome the inclusion in the strategy of the need to  
support families in their own right, with the suggestion:

“Evidence-based psychological interventions which involve family  
members should be available locally and local areas should ensure  
that the support needs of families and carers affected by drug  
misuse are appropriately met.”

That echoes a comment piece that I wrote for this  
week's *The House* magazine about young people's mental  
health problems, in which I said that we need to do  
much more to strengthen family relationships and offer  
holistic family support, engaging parents, carers or  
wider family members. If we are to do that, there needs  
to be substantial growth in the number of people in  
local authority services trained to provide relationship  
and family support, and to provide appropriate counselling  
and help for young people in such difficulties. I am glad,  
too, that the strategy recognises that the reality of harm  
experienced by substance abusers' families is significant,  
and that families need help as well.

I am chair of the all-party group on alcohol harm. I  
recognise that the strategy contains recommendations  
for joined-up action on alcohol and drugs, and that  
areas of the strategy apply to both. As we have heard  
this afternoon, however, we need to do more. Statistics  
illustrate the extent of the harm caused by alcohol. In  
2015 there were 2,479 deaths from drug misuse. In the  
same year, there were 23,000 alcohol-related deaths. Drug  
deaths equate to only 10% of the number of deaths caused  
by alcohol. We must rise to the challenge of providing  
sufficient resources and setting out a clear Government  
alcohol strategy. The current strategy is more than five  
years old, and much has changed in that time—yet,  
sadly, much has stayed the same.

I would particularly like the Government to address  
the impact of alcoholic parents or carers on children.  
An estimated 2.5 million children in this country live  
with problematic drinkers. In a debate on alcohol harm  
that I secured on 2 February, Members gave deeply  
moving accounts of living as children with alcoholic  
parents and carers. Those of us in the Chamber very  
much welcomed the response of the then Under-Secretary  
of State for Health, the former Member for Oxford  
West and Abingdon, who said that she would look into  
the matter. I ask the Minister to take back to her  
successor, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester  
(Steve Brine), a request for further progress, because the  
very important and specific issue of children living with  
problematic drinkers has not been sufficiently addressed.

Evidence shows that spending money on treatment is  
effective, with every £1 invested generating £2.50 of  
savings for society. Yet only 6% of dependent drinkers

in this country actually access treatment. It is vital that  
we recognise the need to review the alcohol strategy.  
The current level of alcohol harm illustrates the need to  
do so urgently. If Members will bear with me, I want to  
go into this in a little more detail. The harm caused by  
alcohol consumption extends not just to the families of  
the individuals involved but to wider society. It often  
harms innocent bystanders, such as those injured in  
road traffic accidents or patients needing treatment for  
serious illnesses who have to wait because precious  
NHS resources are being used to tackle the issue. It  
affects us all as taxpayers through the tax bills we pay,  
and it affects the emergency services.

Just a few months ago, our all-party group produced  
a report, “The Frontline Battle”, on the impact of the  
misuse of alcohol on those who serve us in the emergency  
services. Some of the stories about emergency services  
staff being assaulted are heartrending. I therefore welcome  
the private Member's Bill, which I understand will be  
presented by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris  
Bryant) tomorrow, to address assaults on emergency  
services staff. However, we cannot address that without  
also looking at the fact that so many of those attacks  
are caused by alcohol abuse.

There has never been a greater need for robust  
Government action to tackle the massive problem resulting  
from alcohol consumption. That has been evidenced by  
the Public Health England report, which has already  
been mentioned, that was published in December 2016  
at the specific request of the former Prime Minister  
David Cameron. It paints a bleak picture: 10 million  
people are currently drinking at levels that are increasing  
their risk of health harm. Devastatingly, it finds that for  
those aged 15 to 49 in England—those of working  
age—alcohol is now the leading risk factor for ill health,  
early mortality and disability. There are now over 1 million  
hospital admissions relating to alcohol each year, half  
of which involve those in the lowest three socioeconomic  
deciles. Alcohol-related mortality has increased, particularly  
for liver disease, which has increased by 400% since  
1970. We need a strategy because 167,000 years of  
working life were lost to alcohol in 2015. Alcohol is  
more likely to kill people during their working lives  
than many other causes of death—in other words, it  
causes premature deaths. Alcohol accounts for 10% of  
the UK's burden of disease and death, and in the past  
three decades there has been a threefold rise in alcohol-  
related deaths.

**Norman Lamb:** I very much share the hon. Lady's  
concerns about the danger of alcohol and the damage  
it causes to society. Does she support the case for a  
minimum unit price for alcohol? It could act as a  
deterrent, particularly to prevent young and disadvantaged  
people from ending up with all the consequences that  
flow from excess alcohol use.

**Fiona Bruce:** I agree. In fact, the introduction of  
minimum unit pricing was the very first recommendation  
in the 2012 strategy. The most recent review states that it  
“is a highly targeted measure which ensures tax increases are  
passed on to the consumer and improves the health of the  
heaviest drinkers. These people are experiencing the greatest  
amount of harm.”

Increasing the price of alcohol would save lives, but  
would not penalise moderate drinkers, so I entirely  
agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Public Health

747

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

748

*[Fiona Bruce]*

England very clearly states in its report that affordability  
is the lead factor in addressing health problems resulting  
from alcohol harm.

If I may, I will mention the issue, which again relates  
to cost, of white cider products, such as Frosty Jacks.  
They are almost exclusively drunk by the vulnerable, the  
young, the homeless and dependent drinkers—just the  
kind of people who, as I have said, need help. Just £3.50  
buys a large bottle of white cider that is the equivalent  
of 22 shots of vodka. Time and again, homeless hostels  
tell us that that is what the people there drink and what,  
because of its high strength, causes their deaths. One of  
the most heartrending meetings I have attended in the  
House was when a mother came to talk to our all-party  
group about her teenage daughter. This happy, carefree  
young girl had gone out one night, but when she got  
back she told her mum that she did not feel very well.  
Her mum said, “Well, have a drink of water. I'll put you  
to bed, and we'll see how you are in the morning.”  
When her mum went into her room in the morning, she  
was dead. She had drunk three bottles of white cider,  
which means that she had drunk well over 60 shots of  
vodka in one evening. That is the devastation this drink  
can cause.

Ciders of 7.5% alcohol by volume attract the lowest  
duty per unit of any product, at 5p, compared with  
18p per unit for beer of equivalent strength. There  
simply is no reason not to increase the duty on white  
cider and so save some of these young lives. Some  
66% of the public support such a policy. It is a matter of  
social justice, so I ask the Minister to go back to the  
Treasury. I know that the former Member for Battersea  
looked at the issue in the last Parliament, and I ask the  
Minister to go back to her successor and ask for progress  
to save these young lives before any more families suffer  
as the one I have described did.

Another key intervention for an alcohol strategy is to  
improve the training of GPs and other people working  
in clinical centres, so that they can give very brief  
additional advice on how to prevent alcohol harm. For  
example, just during the few moments when someone is  
having their blood pressure tested, they can have a short  
conversation about how much alcohol they are drinking  
and suggest that a couple of days off a week to rest their  
liver would not be a bad idea. We need to pursue such  
improvements to prevent the kind of damage suffered  
by so many people in the country through excessive  
alcohol drinking. No one that I am aware of in our group  
is saying that people should not drink alcohol; this is  
about drinking alcohol responsibly.

I want to close by borrowing the words of our former  
Prime Minister in his foreword to the 2012 alcohol strategy:

“We can't go on like this.”

He was right, but insufficient action has been taken  
since. Things have not improved—rather the opposite—so  
I call on the Government to save lives and reduce harm  
for us all by revising the alcohol strategy. We cannot  
have a successful long-term approach to substance misuse  
without looking at both alcohol and drugs.

2.48 pm

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab): Thank  
you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing me the  
opportunity to make my maiden speech within such an

important debate. I commend the previous speakers,  
hon. Members, for the eloquence with which they have  
delivered their strong message on the drugs debate.

I first wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Fiona  
Mactaggart, for her two decades of determined and  
dedicated service for our constituency. She, along with  
her predecessors, are very fondly remembered by the  
people of Slough for their honourable service. I will try  
to emulate them by becoming a hard-working MP for  
my constituents, because that is what Slough deserves.

Slough is a major cultural and creative hub, with one  
of the highest numbers of corporate and start-up companies  
and headquarters anywhere in the country. Slough trading  
estate, for instance, is the largest singly owned industrial  
estate, providing more than 17,000 jobs. Having run my  
own small start-up construction business, I appreciate  
how hard businesses need to work to succeed and  
become the engine of our economy. Home to some of  
the top-performing state schools in the country and  
with superb infrastructure links, I think hon. Members  
will agree with me that Slough has a very bright future.  
I am from the silicon valley of England.

We have a vibrant and diverse community, with  
Kashmiris living harmoniously side by side with Punjabis  
and those with Irish, Polish and African-Caribbean  
ancestry. Indeed, it is the world in microcosm.

However, juxtaposed with this idyllic scenario of low  
unemployment is the fact that we have some of the highest  
levels of homelessness, child obesity and malnutrition  
in the country. There is a lack of affordable and social  
housing, and that is why I need to work closely with  
Slough's Labour-run council to help deliver for our  
residents. But we need to achieve that economic progress  
for all, while caring for our environment.

Slough is a town of firsts. It elected the UK's first  
ever black lady mayor and now, more than three decades  
later, it has elected the first ever turbaned Sikh to the  
British Parliament—indeed, I believe, the first ever to  
be elected to any European Parliament. A glass ceiling  
has truly been broken. I sincerely hope that many more  
like me will follow in the years and decades to come.

The enormity of what has been collectively achieved  
has not escaped me. The hand of history—the huge  
excitement, anticipation and sheer expectations—weigh  
heavily on my shoulders. Among the literally thousands  
of good-will messages from around the globe, one  
individual very succinctly put it:

“I feel really happy, because finally there is someone that looks  
like me, sitting in Parliament.”

However, I was most overwhelmed during a recent trip  
up north, when an elderly gentleman walked up to me  
with tears streaming down his eyes and said, “I'm proud,  
son, because I didn't think that I would see this in my  
lifetime.”

It is about a sense of belonging—when you get bullied  
at school for looking different, when you stand out  
from the crowd. It is a case of being respected and  
embraced by your fellow countrymen and women, including  
within the highest echelons of the establishment. What  
could demonstrate greater embrace than being elected  
to serve and sit on these green Benches in this august  
House in the mother of all Parliaments?

In addition to human rights abuses elsewhere in the  
world, forget being embraced, even acceptability is still  
a huge problem, for example in our neighbouring France.

749

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

750

I find it extremely disappointing and incredibly ironic  
that more than 80,000 turbaned Sikh soldiers died—yes,  
died; not injured—laid down their lives to liberate the  
very country where their descendants cannot even have  
their ID photos taken without having to remove their  
turbans, and cannot even send their children to most  
state schools without removing their turbans. This same  
warped interpretation of secularism precludes Muslims  
from wearing their hijabs and niqabs, Jews from wearing  
their skull caps and Christians from wearing their crosses.  
Acceptability is still a problem in advanced nations,  
such as our close ally the United States, where several  
Sikhs have been shot dead because of mistaken identity—  
mistaken for being terrorists.

The only way to fight such ignorance, to overcome  
the politics of hate and division, including the Islamophobia  
that is so prevalent in certain sections of our society and  
media, is to call it out and condemn it, and to espouse  
the politics of integration. These are not just hollow  
words; I believe strongly in community cohesion and  
integration. When I served as mayor in 2011, integration  
was my mayoral theme. The message that I consistently  
took out to our schools, our various faith groups and  
the wider community was that we should all be proud of  
our own distinct identity, whatever that may be, but that  
we should also be proud of our shared heritage, and for  
those of us who were born and brought up in Britain,  
are British nationals, we should also be proud to be  
British. I thought it was particularly pertinent that  
I should deliver that message, because I belong to a  
“minority” community.

None the less, being distinct or standing out from the  
crowd has its own distinct advantages. I, for one,  
Mr Speaker, am very much hoping that these brightly  
coloured turbans will act as a magnet as you repeatedly  
point towards the Member for Slough to make his  
invaluable contributions to proceedings in this House.  
[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”]

Whilst I am proud to be a Sikh, I will be serving in  
the true Sikh spirit of “sarbat da bhalla”—working for  
the betterment of all, regardless of background, or  
colour or creed. As I stand here today, I do feel immensely  
proud to be British; to be part of the most diverse  
Parliament ever, wherein more women MPs, more ethnic  
minorities, more lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  
people, and more people with disabilities have been elected  
than ever before. While further work of course needs to  
be done by the political parties, the British public can  
rightly be proud of this, their achievement.

While faith, family and community have been central  
to my life, there is one more thing that has been pivotal  
in my life and will no doubt continue to guide me in the  
coming years—Labour values: of equality and social  
justice; of delivering high-quality public services; of  
being part of a society where we are truly in it together,  
looking out for and sharing with others; of solidarity,  
as expressed by unions of hard-working people; of  
co-operative and internationalist values; of free quality  
education, including higher education, for all; and of  
free quality health and social care for all, free at the  
point of need, the zenith of which was the formation of  
the NHS.

My grandfather, a retired teacher and committed  
socialist, explained to me at a very young age what  
Labour did for him and his family: “They treated us as  
equals and just because we have a few bob in our pockets,  
it does not mean that we'll now abandon them.”

While others were busy making speeches on “rivers of  
blood” and trading with an apartheid Government,  
Labour was speaking up for people like him and standing  
in solidarity with black South Africans. It is very easy to  
pay platitudes to Nelson Mandela, a personal hero of  
mine, when the whole world regards him as a hero, but  
to stand in solidarity with him and his people when the  
chips are truly down takes immense courage. That is  
what Labour does best.

To conclude, having been born locally, when my father  
worked at the Langley Ford factory and my mother  
worked for a local petrol pump company on Farnham  
Road, little could they have imagined that their son—the  
son of immigrants—would go on to serve as the town's  
MP. Indeed, little could I have imagined that my  
constituency office would be just a stone's throw away  
from where I spent my early years on Lorne Close in  
Chalvey. From such humble beginnings, it is with great  
humility that I take on this august office. After the faith  
they have placed in me, I really hope to make the people  
of Slough proud of their MP, as I seek to serve my  
constituency and my country.

2.59 pm

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): I  
commend the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi)—or,  
should I say, for the silicon valley of Europe?—on his  
excellent maiden speech. It was thoughtful and thought-  
provoking, and I am sure that I am joined by colleagues  
on both sides of the House in looking forward to his  
contributions in the future.

I must first declare an interest, because my husband  
works for a company that has a Home Office licence to  
grow non-psychoactive versions of cannabis to treat  
epileptic conditions in children. It is groundbreaking  
work, but I thought I should declare it, given that I will  
be talking about the psychoactive version of cannabis  
in due course—a very different substance.

I welcome the new strategy and the joined-up approach  
by Government to tackling the problem of drugs in our  
local communities and on a national and international  
scale. Although my hon. Friend the Minister and others  
were good enough to take interventions from me about  
my experience in the criminal courts, I share with them  
the hope that we can find more international solutions  
to tackling the problem of drugs. It is not just a problem  
in the United Kingdom: sadly, it is a problem that  
pretty much every country faces. We will have to improve  
our relations internationally if we are to have any  
chance to tackle the growers and dealers on an international  
scale.

As I have mentioned, before my election I worked as  
a criminal barrister. In my early days, that meant that I  
often used to defend young people afflicted with drug  
addictions in youth courts and magistrates courts. As I  
rose up the ranks, I began to prosecute high-level drug  
cases—the sorts of cases that are stories in the newspapers,  
with international drug barons who supply the first tier  
of the market in this country, which then disseminates  
the drugs regionally and eventually down to the street.  
It goes without saying that the tonnes of cocaine,  
heroin and cannabis that featured in the cases on which  
I worked were of a very different purity from the  
substances that would be bought on the street. Like any  
efficient—I hesitate to use that word—business model,  
criminals diversify. They pad out the product as much  
as they can to try to increase their profits.

751

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

752

*[Victoria Atkins]*

One of the most fascinating witnesses I have ever  
called in a criminal trial was the Metropolitan police's  
expert witness on the business of drugs. The idea that  
the drugs industry is run by anything other than  
consummate professionals—ruthless and evil, but none  
the less professionals—cannot be gainsaid. Like legitimate  
companies, these people have branding, and send out  
testers to their best purchasers. They are utterly ruthless  
in the way they sell their product, and that is why I do  
not share the optimism of others about tackling the  
problem through regulation—I will say more on that  
later.

The high-level criminal gangs that operate in these  
markets do not only import drugs. Having a method of  
importing drugs means having a way of importing guns  
and ammunition and, sadly, smuggling people in. Those  
drug gangs have a host of criminal behaviours to try to  
spot flaws in law enforcement across the European  
Union. They find the holes and they exploit them to  
make huge profits.

Other hon. Members have talked about alcohol, which  
creates its own harms, and I understand that. However,  
I urge a note of caution when comparing class A drugs  
to alcohol. When a drinks company legally makes an  
alcoholic drink, it is an efficient process with factories,  
licensing and so on. The reality of the drugs market—and  
one I fear cannot be changed—is that by definition the  
drugs that cause the most harm, heroin and cocaine,  
cannot be grown in this country, which means that they  
must be grown overseas in nations that tend to be  
poorer, such as Mexico, Colombia and Iraq.

Those drugs then have to get into this country. That  
happens in a variety of ways, but the most distressing  
for me—and it is one we should perhaps educate our  
young people more about—is the use of swallowers.  
There are various drug routes from Colombia and  
Mexico, and they usually pass through the Caribbean.  
Young people, and sometimes children, are persuaded  
or forced to swallow condoms full of cocaine or heroin.  
They are sent by air to major airports in Europe and  
then bounced into the United Kingdom. One has to  
hope beyond hope that those young people are caught  
by customs officials at Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton or  
wherever they end up, because that is their best chance.  
If they are caught by customs, they are taken to a  
customs facility with special—I am phrasing this carefully,  
because I am conscious this is a public sitting—lavatory  
facilities to enable the condoms of cocaine to leave the  
human body. They are watched as that happens by  
customs officials because, for evidential reasons, we  
need to know which evidence came which person.  
Obviously, they are in great pain as the condoms leave  
their bodies, because the human body is not made to  
pass such objects.

The lucky swallowers are caught by customs and  
dealt with officially—protected, I have to say—by customs  
officials. The worst-case scenario for the swallowers is  
to pass customs, meet the dealers and be taken to their  
headquarters. In unsanitary and unpleasant conditions,  
they are forced to try to pass the condoms. If they do  
not pass them, the dealers have a decision to make.  
They have as much as £50,000 of profit in a swallower's  
stomach—how are they to get it out? It is not pretty.  
They are ruthless and violent, so they use a knife to get  
the profit out of that person's stomach. That fact is not

often reported, which surprises me because if we could  
communicate to people who use cocaine that that is  
how it ends up in that wrap in their club or wherever  
they buy it, they might pause for a moment.

I know that some hon. Members will say that is why  
we need to regulate and take the criminals out of that  
market. I can understand that view, but my experience  
from the courts means that I do not see how we will  
persuade people who are ruthless enough to gut another  
human being like a fish to follow a law-abiding existence.  
Forgive me for being a beacon of pessimism, but I just  
do not see how we can do it.

**Ronnie Cowan:** What is the alternative? Do we allow  
them to continue to behave in that way, or stand up  
against them?

**Victoria Atkins:** That is a perfectly proper question.  
The only solution I have come up with—and I am a  
person, not a think-tank or a Home Office official—is  
to continue and increase our pressure on criminal gangs.  
We are getting better at it, but we need to work  
internationally with other countries. We could do more  
in some of the countries I have mentioned to try to  
remove the financial attraction of giving a field over  
to opium poppies.

I take that approach rather than the “let's regulate it”  
approach—apart from my cynicism that the dealers will  
withdraw from criminal activity—because of the nature  
of addiction. When I used to mitigate for young people  
in the criminal courts, I would try to explain the addiction  
in the following way. I think that it takes three forms.  
There is the physical addiction, in which the body craves  
the next fix. There is also the mental addiction: “How  
can I cope? How can I get through the day, the week,  
without my next fix, my few fixes?” But there is also the  
social addiction.

If you are in such a dark place that you are addicted  
to a class A substance, you will probably not be hanging  
out with people who are not also addicted. We know  
that people gather to share instruments, substances and  
so on. That is a social addiction, and it must be challenged.  
I hope that that will happen, and I am very encouraged  
by what I have seen in the drugs strategy. At present,  
when a prisoner is released from a certain prison in  
south London—I will not name it—the dealers line up  
on the avenue outside the prison saying, “Oh, hello, old  
friend, you are back, would you like a fix on me?” If we  
can break that social addiction, it will help such people  
to break the addiction overall.

I welcome the idea of a national recovery champion,  
and all the other ideas in the drugs strategy, because we  
are finally looking properly at the ill effects of addiction  
as well as the law enforcement side. However, I still  
strongly believe that we must focus on the criminal  
aspect. It is possible that, in the event of regulation or  
decriminalisation, some addicts would be able to make  
the journey to the local chemist, or wherever it might  
be, to pick up their doses, but I fear that the social  
addiction and the pressure of the dealer would still play  
a part. The dealer would say to the addict, “Oh, well,  
you may be getting your fix from the chemist or wherever,  
but you really want to buy your fix from me, don't you?”

Given the mental and the social addiction and the  
threats that dealers are quite prepared to use, I fear that  
there will be a black market, and there is evidence to

753

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

754

suggest that that would happen. We know that, sadly,  
when heroin users are prescribed methadone, they are  
not always able to withstand the enticements of their  
dealers. That may be partly because they want to carry  
on using heroin, but I worry that the regulation/  
decriminalisation strategy will allow the dealers to carry  
on dealing on the streets.

**Jeff Smith:** There is a black market in tobacco and  
there is a black market in alcohol, but most people do  
not obtain their tobacco and their alcohol from the  
black market. Is it not the case that there would be less  
temptation, and that over time there would be a reduction  
in the number of people using dealers?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for making that point, because the subject of counterfeit  
cigarettes was next on my list. Again, I speak from  
personal experience. I prosecuted a criminal gang who,  
at the time, controlled the counterfeit cigarette market  
in the north of England. When the customs knocked  
out that gang—they did fantastically well: they got the  
guy at the very top as well as the distributors at the  
bottom—that knocked out the counterfeit cigarette market  
in the north of England for six months. After that,  
however, another gang came in and filled the vacuum. I  
do not have to hand the figures on usage of counterfeit  
cigarettes, but it is a fact that many people seek them  
out, not least because cigarettes are generally priced  
very highly—and rightly so, because we want people to  
stop smoking. Although I do not have the figures now, I  
remember reading them when I was dealing with that  
case. It is compelling to see many people use counterfeit  
cigarettes.

We know that there is also a growing market in  
counterfeit alcohol. In the last six months, corner shops  
have been warned that they need to be aware of very  
good reproductions of certain brands of vodka. The  
vodka that people may be buying in good faith from  
their local shop is, in fact, far more alcoholic than they  
would expect. I hope that, if nothing else, I am explaining  
my worries about how complex the position is, and  
demonstrating that we cannot just rely on the idea of  
regulation and decriminalisation.

**Paul Flynn:** Is the hon. Lady not impressed by the  
simple fact that, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend  
the Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound), in 1971  
fewer than 1,000 people in this country were addicted to  
heroin and cocaine, and there were virtually no deaths  
because those people were receiving their heroin from  
the health service? After 46 years of the harshest prohibition  
in Europe, we now have 320,000 addicts. Is it not true  
that prohibition creates the drug trade, creates the gangsters,  
and creates the deaths?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am extremely grateful to the hon.  
Gentleman. He has a long history of campaigning on  
this subject, which I respect. However, I am afraid that I  
must disagree with him. A very great deal has changed  
since 1971. Criminal gangs come to the United Kingdom  
from all over the world because the UK is much more  
densely populated than other countries, and they come  
here to sell drugs. I am sure that some Members sometimes  
want to turn the clock back to 1971, but I do not think  
we can do that. We now have to deal with the international  
movement of criminals and so on as it happens.

The hon. Gentleman has referred to other countries  
that have decriminalised drugs, and the impact that  
that has had on addiction rates. I know that in  
various American states that have decriminalised  
cannabis—which, obviously, is a different substance  
from heroin—there is evidence of a growing backlash  
against that decriminalisation. People may like the idea  
in principle, but when it comes to practicalities such as  
where the shop that sells the cannabis will be located in  
their towns—will it be the post office?—and whether  
advertising will be allowed near a school, they feel  
uncomfortable.

We need look no further than my own county. The  
city of Lincoln celebrated the Government's introduction  
of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 because it was  
fed up to the back teeth with having headshops all over  
the city. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman and I will  
never see eye to eye on this, but I do not think we can  
turn the clock back to 1971.

The hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn)  
cited Portugal and the number of drug deaths there. I  
assume that he took his figures from the European  
Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction,  
which I think contains the latest statistics. It turns out  
that Romania has the lowest rate of deaths through  
drug use, followed by Portugal, and that Bulgaria and  
Turkey have the third and fourth lowest rates. I do not  
know, but I suspect that Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey  
do not have liberal policies on such matters as drug  
use decriminalisation. I urge Members to exercise a bit  
of caution when looking at those statistics, because  
decriminalisation may not be the whole answer.

We know that the potency of the psychoactive substance  
in cannabis has increased from an average of about  
1% in the 1960s to about 11% in 2011. What on earth  
does that mean? According to my research, it is equivalent  
to an increase from one low-alcohol beer a day to a  
dozen shots of vodka a day. That is quite a jump in  
potency. Sadly, as we know, skunk can be even stronger,  
with up to 30% of tetrahydrocannabinol potency. As I  
mentioned earlier, we see the real impact in the criminal  
courts: we see young offenders with mental health issues  
who have also used skunk on a regular basis. Those are  
the people I want to protect. If we can persuade fewer  
young people to smoke dope or take drugs, that has a  
benefit for them and their families, and it has a huge  
benefit for the local community. We all know of the role  
that drugs play in onward crimes, committed to fund  
the next drugs purchase.

I am conscious that I have taken a long time and  
we have a very exciting maiden speech on its way.  
Although the international debate on how to deal with  
drugs continues, it is essential that the Government set  
out a strategy for what we do at home. I am really  
impressed by this drug strategy. I welcome in particular  
the introduction of a national recovery champion. It  
is a good idea to have someone looking over good  
and not so good practice. We may not agree on  
decriminalisation, but I am sure we all agree that healthcare  
must form part of the drug strategy. We have to be able  
to look after addicts to help them to get rid of their  
addiction. None the less, I am still a firm believer that  
law enforcement plays a vital role here and internationally  
in stopping the drug barons profiting from this terrible  
industry. I will support the Government in their efforts  
to stop it.

755

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

756

3.21 pm

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): May I  
congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Slough  
(Mr Dhesi) on a really excellent speech? It was a privilege  
to be here for the first maiden speech by a brightly  
coloured turbaned Sikh. I am looking forward to a  
number of maiden speeches today. In my own maiden  
speech two years ago, I said among other things that I  
looked forward to arguing for reform of our drug laws.  
There has been very little chance to do so since then, so  
I welcome the debate today. However, unfortunately,  
the Government's new drug strategy is a massive missed  
opportunity.

We do not get a new strategy very often. There is  
always the hope that it might contain some radical  
thinking. This strategy, sadly, offers little that is new. It  
is more of the same approach that is not working, that  
has seen an increase in drug-related deaths in the UK  
and that sees the UK responsible for nearly a third of  
Europe's drug deaths.

My friend Cara's son is five tomorrow. It will be his  
third birthday without his father Jake, who died of a  
heroin overdose. Cara wants to legalise drugs to end the  
stigma around drug use and to end the unnecessary  
criminalisation of drug users that made it so hard for  
her family to deal with Jake's addiction, and makes it  
more difficult for people to seek help with drug problems.

The day after tomorrow, Thursday, will be the fourth  
anniversary of the death of 15-year-old Martha Cockburn,  
who died after taking ecstasy that turned out to be  
91% pure; as a result, she died of an accidental overdose.  
Martha's mum, Anne-Marie, who I think is in the  
Public Gallery, now campaigns for the legalisation and  
regulation of ecstasy, among other drugs. Martha died  
because there was no controlling measures on the substance  
that killed her and no way for Martha to check the  
safety of the substance she was using. Martha was failed  
by our approach to drug policy.

Many people who have been touched by the loss of  
loved ones want a more measured debate and a more  
rational approach to drug policy. Fifty people a week  
are dying of drug-related deaths in the UK—50 Marthas  
and Jakes. Our first duty in this place has to be to try to  
keep people safe and we are failing. The biggest missed  
opportunity in this strategy is the fact that we have not  
even considered decriminalisation or legalisation of some  
drugs as a solution to the problem. We have heard a  
number of times about Portugal, which decriminalised  
the use of drugs in 2001. Its drug-induced death rate is  
five times lower than the EU average. It had 16 overdose  
deaths last year and there has been a massive reduction  
in HIV infections.

In an article last week on the publication of the  
strategy, the Home Secretary said:

“We owe it to future generations to work together for a society  
free of drugs.”

Talk of a society free of drugs is a dangerous fantasy.  
Humans have taken drugs for thousands of years and  
are not going to stop because the Home Secretary  
produces a new strategy. It is a dangerous fantasy  
because it diverts attention and resources from the real  
challenge, which is how we make drug taking safer, how  
we educate users, how we reduce the consumption of  
dangerous drugs, how we take control of the drug trade  
from the criminals who want to exploit vulnerable

users, and how we stop criminalising thousands of  
people unnecessarily. Many people are being criminalised  
because they have a medical or psychological problem.  
We need to recognise the link between early childhood  
trauma, including abuse, and addiction in later life. It is  
a closer link than that between obesity and diabetes.  
Drug addiction is often a psychological or biological  
problem, and criminalising people who have those problems  
is not the answer. In other cases, we are criminalising  
people unnecessarily for using a relatively harm-free  
intoxicant.

The best example is cannabis. It is surely wrong  
that we criminalise people for using a substance less  
dangerous than tobacco or alcohol—a substance that  
the overwhelming majority of people find pleasant,  
relatively harm-free and even a rewarding experience to  
take. We have all-party parliamentary groups that extol  
the virtues of beer, wine and whisky, but when we talk  
about a substance that is less harmful than alcohol, we  
are not allowed to say that it can be a positive experience.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): The hon. Gentleman  
is making a powerful speech, but I regret to say that he  
is wrong in one particular regard. The Royal College of  
Psychiatrists has made it crystal clear that cannabis is  
an extremely dangerous drug that can be a gateway to  
mental health difficulties. Does he not agree that, if we  
were to decriminalise it, it would send a dangerous  
message to young people that cannabis is somehow  
safe? Nothing could be further from the truth.

**Jeff Smith:** No, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman,  
because I do not think that is the evidence and I do not  
think that is the message. There is a host of evidence  
through the years that cannabis is far less dangerous  
than alcohol.

**Norman Lamb:** Is not the problem that when one is  
buying in the criminal market one has no idea what one  
is buying? One could be buying a very heavy strain,  
whereas if we regulate we have control over the potency  
of the substance that we are trying to control.

**Jeff Smith:** That is absolutely right. We talked earlier  
about the use of skunk, which has very high THC  
content. If one were to regulate the cannabis market,  
one could balance the THC and CBD elements of the  
product and make it safer for people.

**Stephen Pound:** My hon. Friend is making an informed  
statement. Does he agree that cannabis sativa and cannabis  
indica are totally different from the skunk that we have  
discussed? The experience in the western United States  
is that one can have a perfectly civilised purchasing  
system for cannabis sativa and cannabis indica. May I  
possibly appeal to the more avaricious elements on the  
Government Benches, as that is a vast revenue stream of  
taxation, which surely should delight even their dark  
hearts?

**Jeff Smith:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.  
He knows it, and I suspect that very many Members in  
this House know it—far more than are represented here  
today. I think plenty on the Government side know it,  
too, and perhaps even the Home Secretary knows it but,  
because of the toxic climate of the debate around drug  
policy, we are not able to say so.

757

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

758

If we legalised and regulated cannabis, we would take  
it out of the hands of the dealers, and reduce the  
opportunities for them to tempt users into experimenting  
with more dangerous drugs. We would also regulate the  
product, so users know with confidence what they are  
getting, so people who are worried about high levels of  
THC do not have to take whatever they can get on the  
street. There is a bonus too: we would raise many  
millions of pounds for the Exchequer to spend, if that is  
what we desire, on drug education or the NHS.

Around the world, countries recognise that cannabis  
prohibition is failing, and many of them are regulating.  
Uruguay was the first to do so. Eight states in the US,  
representing 20% of the population, have now legalised  
and regulated. Next year, Canada should become the  
first G7 country to do it. It is time we did the same. My  
personal belief is that this is going to happen. It is  
inevitable that it is going to happen in this country; we  
just need to grasp the nettle and do it.

We desperately need to change the terms of the  
debate. We need more openness and honesty in discussion  
of drug policy, and we need to reduce the stigma  
around taking drugs so that families find it easier to  
discuss the problem and find help. We need to stop the  
pretence that everyone's experience of illegal drugs is  
negative.

In my previous life, I worked as a DJ and an event  
manager in the music industry, so I spent a lot of time  
working and socialising in nightclubs, being around  
people who used recreational drugs. Many thousands,  
probably hundreds of thousands, of ecstasy pills are  
taken every week in the UK, and we cannot pretend in  
our public discourse that people who are taking drugs  
do it because it is a terrible, miserable experience; people  
will not believe us, and it will destroy the credibility of  
the message. We need an honest and rational debate  
around drug policy if users, especially young people, are  
going to take us seriously.

Most of all, we need to focus on policies that minimise  
harm and risk to users, and that requires looking at  
different approaches to harm reduction. That is where  
this strategy is disappointing. The Government have  
ignored the chance to do that by looking at interventions  
that can save lives—at drug consumption rooms for  
heroin users, at heroin prescribing, at pill testing—and  
we need a much stronger emphasis on educational  
solutions if people are caught breaking what is currently  
the law.

If I get caught speeding in my car, I am sent on a  
course to teach me to drive more carefully. Those courses  
have a high success rate. If I am driving a speeding car, I  
have the potential to do much more harm to society  
than if I am caught in possession of cannabis or ecstasy  
for personal use, but the latter is a criminal offence, with  
the potential for a damaging criminal record, and the  
former a civil offence. There is no reason not to treat  
drug possession for personal use in the same way.

I want to say a few brief words about medicinal  
cannabis. Although it is not really covered in this strategy,  
we looked at it last year in the all-party group for drug  
policy reform. There is overwhelming evidence that  
cannabis is a useful treatment for a range of conditions.  
In some cases, people find relief in cannabis, having  
exhausted treatments that have failed. Some people may  
have seen an article in the *Daily Mail* recently that asked  
whether a woman should be criminalised for medicating

with cannabis. When even the *Daily Mail* accepts that  
there is an argument for change, that surely illustrates  
how far behind public opinion the House is on the issue.  
We should follow many countries, as well as half the  
states in the USA, and legalise cannabis for medicinal  
use.

Finally, I want to mention resourcing. As my right  
hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary said earlier,  
passing responsibility for drug treatment to local authorities  
was a good idea in practice. However, there is a huge  
problem for local authorities that commission addiction  
services because of the massive cuts to local authority  
budgets.

Some drugs are dangerous, and we need to get drugs  
under control, but I do not want those words to be  
misinterpreted; I do not mean that we need to ban the  
use of drugs. The production, retail and use of some  
drugs needs to be controlled, so people can use drugs  
safely if they choose to do so. Prohibition is not working  
in the UK or around the world. We need a new approach.  
We need to treat addiction as a health issue. We need to  
stop criminalising people unnecessarily. We need to  
begin considering proper, evidence-based strategies. We  
certainly need to move towards legalising cannabis, and  
I believe that that is only a matter of time. We also need  
to look seriously at the decriminalisation of other drugs.

I have spoken today not because I think I am going to  
secure a massive change in the Government's drug  
policy; indeed, I do not expect any quick progress on  
drug policy. I just think we need to start reframing the  
debate. There are a limited number of us who are  
prepared to speak up on this issue at present, but I hope  
the numbers will gradually increase, because we need a  
serious debate on this issue, not more of the same  
approach, which has failed.

3.34 pm

**Jack Brereton** (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I have  
been very pleased to listen to some excellent and well-  
informed speeches today, particularly the maiden speech  
of the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi). It is an  
absolute honour to be able to make my maiden speech  
and to represent the people of Stoke-on-Trent South in  
this place. Stoke-on-Trent is the city that I grew up in  
and where I have lived my whole life. Nothing could  
make me prouder than serving the people of Stoke-on-Trent  
South in Parliament.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to  
my predecessor, Mr Rob Flello. I thank him for his  
commitment to Stoke-on-Trent South over the past  
12 years. He will be remembered as a dedicated community  
activist in Stoke-on-Trent and was respected here for his  
campaigning on a number of national concerns, particularly  
those relating to the road haulage industry, in which he  
played an active role.

Stoke-on-Trent is a unique place with a strong cultural  
identity. It is a city founded on its industrial heritage,  
with those industries now resurgent and a hotbed of  
innovation. The potteries were born out of industry  
and our culture flows from that. Stoke-on-Trent is also  
known well for its unique cultural dialect. I thought  
about giving my maiden speech in a traditional potteries  
dialect, but I feared that it might prove impossibly  
challenging for *Hansard* and for hon. and right hon.  
Members. However, I hope that they will indulge me for  
just one short line. It is time that this question was

759

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

760

*[Jack Brereton]*

asked in the House: cost kick a bow agen' a woe, y'ed it  
back an bost it? I know that, in answer to that question,  
the players of Stoke City football club—whose home is  
the bet365 stadium in my constituency—would have no  
problem t bost a bo.

Stokies are especially known for their friendliness,  
and many visitors to the city remark on how welcoming  
the local people are. What makes us most distinctive,  
however, is our geographical make-up, following the  
coming together in 1910 of six different, individual  
towns to form one body. Two of those towns, Fenton  
and Longton, are in my constituency. However, we did  
not gain city status until 1925, in what was a rare  
modern occurrence of royal intervention in which the  
monarch countermanded the Government. Having initially  
been refused city status by the Home Office, Stoke-on-Trent  
made a direct approach to His Majesty King George V  
and became a city on 4 June 1925.

Surrounding the pottery towns of Fenton and Longton,  
my Stoke-on-Trent South constituency includes a diverse  
slice of north Staffordshire. We have the only grade 1  
listed building in Stoke-on-Trent, the Trentham Mausoleum,  
which is the final resting place of the Dukes of Sutherland.  
They were significant philanthropists in the area, particularly  
in Longton, Normacot and Dresden, giving land and  
paying for many of the important public buildings and  
facilities that we see today. They include the fantastic  
Queen's Park, the first public pleasure park in the  
potteries, which was opened to commemorate Queen  
Victoria's golden jubilee. It was once a lone oasis in an  
otherwise smog-filled urban area, but today we are one  
of the greenest cities in the country, with more than  
1,380 hectares of parks and open space. One of the  
most important natural sites, Park Hall country park, is  
in Weston Coyney in my constituency. It is a site of  
special scientific interest and the only national nature  
reserve in Stoke-on-Trent.

Where once stood thousands of bottle ovens in Stoke-  
on-Trent, only 47 now remain. They are protected, of  
course, and I am pleased to say that half of those iconic  
structures are in my constituency, with the largest number  
in Longton. My constituency has no shortage of first-rate  
architectural gems, both old and new. Many of these  
important historical sites have now been converted,  
with a number becoming enterprise centres to host  
thriving small businesses. They include the Sutherland  
Institute, St James's House, CoRE and now also Fenton  
Town Hall, which has been reborn as a centre for  
business and industry by the grandson of the original  
builder and benefactor, William Meath Baker. There is  
a tremendous spirit of resourcefulness and renewal in  
my constituency, and it gives me great optimism that so  
many of our heritage landmarks will continue to find  
new uses in a new age.

My constituency is well connected by road and rail,  
as well as being within an hour's drive of four international  
airports. Sadly, the Meir aerodrome is no longer in  
operation. It opened in 1934 as Staffordshire's first  
municipal airport and closed in the 1970s. It has now  
been redeveloped to form the Meir Park residential  
estate. When the aerodrome was still in use, people  
might have seen my constituency from above, stretching  
from the regenerated industrial heartlands of Longton  
and Fenton, right across to the surrounding suburban

communities of Trentham, Blurton, Weston Coyney  
and Meir—a mixture of different communities that  
I am so proud to represent.

Stoke-on-Trent has been a global city, designing wares  
and products to fit every taste and market. We have  
been exporting and trading products around the world  
for centuries, and that has never been more true and  
important than it is today. We have some of the most  
advanced steel manufacturing in the world. Just like  
pottery, steel manufacturing has strong roots in Stoke-  
on-Trent. Goodwin International, which is based in my  
constituency, is a world leader in mechanical engineering,  
producing some of the most intricate steel components,  
both large and small. It works in partnership with  
Goodwin Steel Castings in neighbouring Stoke-on-Trent  
Central, which has been producing machined castings  
since 1883—one of the 10 oldest companies listed on  
the stock exchange. Goodwin's products are of the  
highest standard and are used right around the world in  
energy production, bridge construction and armed forces  
equipment.

Today in Stoke-on-Trent our industries are becoming  
more diverse and more innovative than ever before.  
Rated nationally as the second-best place to start a new  
business, it is the No. 1 city for business survival and the  
ninth-fastest growing economy in the UK. Productivity  
has increased by over 25% since 2010. It is ranked  
fourth for employment growth and has one of the  
fastest-growing housing markets, and our big ceramics  
businesses have increased production by over 50%.

People are waking up to what Stoke-on-Trent has to  
offer as one of the best connected places. We have kept  
ahead of the digital curve with some of the best broadband  
connectivity, and we are rated as having the best 4G  
download speeds in the country, not only making Stoke-  
on-Trent a key hub for some of the leading brands in  
distribution and logistics, but putting the city at the  
forefront of a revolution in digital and advanced  
manufacturing.

Our clay-based industries in particular have become  
more diverse and are expanding into new sectors. Whether  
healthcare, tourism, high-tech materials or construction,  
ceramic products are becoming ever more essential in  
the modern world. That has been exemplified by recent  
investment in the Wedgwood factory and visitor centre  
in my constituency. The fully refurbished factory site  
manufactures some of the finest wares in the world, and  
the World of Wedgwood visitor centre is a must see for  
any tourist. Most recently, we have seen the opening of  
the brand-new Valentine Clays facility in Fenton, which  
is continuing the growth of the industry and supplying  
clay and raw materials to potters around the country.

Our growing economy and industry are supported by  
strong academic institutions. Staffordshire University is  
now rated one of the best nationally for some of its  
digital courses, such as gaming. We also have Keele  
University—I should declare an interest in that my wife  
and I are both Keele graduates—which is renowned  
nationally for its academic strength and has won numerous  
awards for the quality of its academia, including being  
ranked top nationally for student experience and student  
satisfaction and most recently being awarded gold in  
the teaching excellence framework. Importantly, the  
universities play an active part in the community and  
economy of north Staffordshire and have a critical role  
in the innovation and development of our local industries.

761

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

762

The businesses and people who have invested in Stoke-  
on-Trent South are rightly proud of what we have  
achieved. As their strong voice in Parliament, I am  
determined to work to create better jobs that will spread  
the net of opportunity wider. Critical to that will be  
securing the best possible deal from leaving the European  
Union, guaranteeing trade and ensuring ease of access  
to markets throughout the world. That is what people in  
Stoke-on-Trent South overwhelmingly voted for in the  
referendum and what people were saying to me on the  
doorstep during the general election campaign. I will be  
calling on the Government to advance trade agreements  
around the world as part of a more global Britain that  
supports businesses in Stoke-on-Trent South to sell  
their products abroad. This is about creating prosperity  
for every household in Stoke-on-Trent South, driving  
up skills and increasing local people's wages. We need to  
see not just more jobs in Stoke-on-Trent South but  
better jobs that pay higher wages and take full advantage  
of the talent that Stokies have.

In my time in the House I will be a strong advocate  
for measures that support industry and fulfil the promise  
of the Government's industrial strategy to rebalance the  
national economy. This includes the development of a  
place-based industrial strategy that works for the potteries.  
We need to see investment in our infrastructure that  
ensures businesses in Stoke-on-Trent can continue to  
thrive and local people are not blighted by sitting in  
daily traffic jams. It will mean improving our transport  
network to be fit for the future, improving rail and road  
connections to my constituency to help address congestion  
and ensuring that we see better local rail services to  
Longton station and improved connectivity to Stoke-on-  
Trent from across the country.

For our industries to grow and create the jobs we  
need locally, we must also ensure greater energy security,  
with infrastructure that matches the needs of our  
manufacturing sectors. As a city made up of towns, we  
need to ensure that our town centres are healthy and  
that our high streets remain relevant to the local  
communities they serve. I want to see Longton and  
Fenton town centres become stronger, with new housing  
and businesses moving in. Those are my priorities as  
Member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent South.

I began by speaking of our heritage and culture in  
Stoke-on-Trent. I could not be more delighted that our  
city has been shortlisted for UK city of culture 2021.  
Stoke-on-Trent is the world capital of ceramics, which  
is an industry and art that has not only shaped my  
constituency but has left its stamp on our national  
culture. Many Stokies, like me, are proud of the products  
we see around the world that are back-stamped “Made  
in Stoke-on-Trent” and “Made in Britain.” A Stokie  
can often be spotted apart turning over a plate or a mug  
to check where it was made.

The Palace of Westminster, like many of the greatest  
buildings across the country, is filled with products  
manufactured in Stoke-on-Trent. From the tableware to  
the Minton tile floors, each piece is an ambassador for  
Stoke-on-Trent. I was a little disappointed to find that  
the ongoing floor restoration works in Central Lobby  
are using tiles manufactured in Jackfield, Shropshire.  
However, I was reassured to discover that the powder  
used to produce these fantastic tiles is sourced from  
Stoke-on-Trent.

I can think of no city that better celebrates its culture  
and heritage, or whose cultural identity and ambition

are so closely bound up with its industry and commerce.  
I think of the multitudes who flock to the many museums  
and factory shops to learn about our industries and buy  
Stoke-on-Trent products. Gladstone Pottery Museum  
in my constituency gives the true experience of a Victorian  
pottery factory.

I think of the unparalleled collection housed at the  
Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, including one of only  
four surviving vases thrown by Josiah Wedgwood in  
1769 on the first day of opening his factory, which  
started the industrial revolution in the potteries. Recently  
rescued from private sale and export, the vase will now  
be on display again for people to visit and enjoy.

I think of our several locally and nationally important  
theatres; I think of our music venues, our restaurants,  
our parks, canals and open spaces; I think of a city of  
culture and picture Stoke-on-Trent, where creativity and  
culture have always been critical to our economic and  
social progress; and, of course, I think of the famous  
Staffordshire oatcakes, which I encourage all hon. and  
right hon. Members to try from one of the many local  
oatcake shops when they get the chance to visit.

There is so much that is culturally unique about  
Stoke-on-Trent, and winning this bid would help continue  
the revival of Stoke-on-Trent as a vibrant and innovative  
core of the UK economy. It will be an absolute pleasure  
to back the city of culture bid as Stoke-on-Trent South's  
MP and to campaign for my constituents to win that  
recognition in 2021.

This debate is about drugs policy. The use of psychoactive  
substances in particular is increasing, which is ruining  
lives and is a significant cause of crime on our streets.  
That not only affects police services but puts pressure  
on our national health service, which has to deal with  
much of the human cost of drug abuse.

Far too many ordinary people in my constituency  
have felt the impacts of drug use and told me they do  
not feel safe in our communities. I will be working with  
Staffordshire police and Matthew Ellis, our police and  
crime commissioner, to ensure that we continue to see  
drug use decline and we act against the associated  
crimes. Much progress is being made by local partners  
and communities; putting in place a public space protection  
order in Longton has made a big difference. I have  
particularly seen the fantastic work put in by volunteers  
such as Street Chaplains locally in my constituency.  
Significant work has been done to help ensure people  
feel safe and welcome when visiting the town centre,  
and in directing people who need help to get the right  
support.

Often the misuse of drugs can be linked to mental  
health problems, and I have been pleased to see Staffordshire  
leading the way to ensure that people with mental  
health problems get better support. Local services, the  
police and the voluntary sector continue to work more  
closely in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to help people  
get better support to tackle addictions and change their  
lifestyles. I want to play my part in ensuring that we  
continue to tackle these issues in our communities, so  
we continue to see drug-related crimes reduced and  
people with addictions get the right support.

3.50 pm

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): I congratulate the  
new hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton)  
on his excellent maiden speech. He told of the multitude

763

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

764

*[Ian C. Lucas]*

travelling to Stoke. The last multitude to travel to Stoke  
from Wrexham was for the FA cup match a few years  
ago. Wrexham led for a glorious five minutes, but  
unfortunately it did not end well. His was a wonderful  
speech that did end well, and I wish him the best for his  
future in the House.

This debate is about the Government's new drugs  
policy. I have considered in detail the drugs strategy that  
was published last week. I found it rather disappointing.  
I was pleased that it was produced and I am glad the  
Government are looking at the issue seriously, but we  
face a real crisis in our drugs strategy. Interestingly, we  
heard from the hon. Gentleman about new psychoactive  
substances, which are a major issue in my constituency.  
The shadow Home Secretary made an apposite point  
earlier, because it is clear that the decline in resources  
available for both our police service and our local  
authorities has had a major impact on the problem of  
drugs in our communities. In 2010, I saw a police service  
working with local authorities to provide an excellent  
law and order policy—one that the Labour party had  
built up in the 13 years from 1997 to create true community  
policing. It created a safety valve so that when issues  
arose they were identified early and we began to address  
them. In the past seven years, there has been a real  
decline in the quality of our criminal justice system and  
in drugs policy on the streets.

I do not have the certainties on decriminalisation of  
many speakers in this debate, and in many respects I  
envy them. Before I was a Member of Parliament, I was  
a solicitor and in the 1980s I worked in Birkenhead. As  
a defence solicitor, I represented many young heroin  
addicts. That convinced me profoundly of the danger of  
drugs and the horrific impact they can have on not only  
the individuals concerned, but their families. I tread  
very warily indeed if any sort of message is presented  
that it is okay to take drugs, because I have seen the very  
negative impact.

I understand what the hon. Member for Reigate  
(Crispin Blunt) said in his very eloquent speech. I also  
listened carefully to the many interventions that have  
been made and to the speech of my hon. Friend the  
Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith), but I  
am struggling to know the right way ahead. I would not  
be resistant to a royal commission because NPS is out  
ofcontrolinmycommunity.ItaffectsnotjustWrexham,  
but Manchester and many towns up and down the country.  
The legislation is not working properly.

In discussions with police officers, I have been told:  
that it is not possible effectively to arrest people for  
taking NPS because it is not clear what substance they  
have taken; that it is too expensive to have the substances  
tested; and that people are receiving penalties for possession  
of a class B drug that have no effective outcome and no  
impact on preventing reoffending. That is creating a  
major public order problem in our constituencies. It is  
currently not being addressed, and I cannot see how  
this document and this strategy will either solve the  
problem or stop it getting worse.

**Paul Flynn:** Does my hon. Friend recall the passage  
of the Psychoactive Substances Bill last year? It was  
said to be modelled on similar Bills that had been  
passed in Ireland and in Poland? In both countries,  
prohibition of psychoactive substances increased use—

in Ireland from 16% to 22%—and increased harm. Is it  
not true that, in this country, it is very easy to close the  
headshops, but that we increase the problem, increase  
the number of users and increase the number of deaths?

**Ian C. Lucas:** Yes, it is a continuing and increasing  
problem, but it was a problem before the Act was  
passed. This is a difficult issue with no easy solution.  
The Act has already had to be amended to reclassify the  
drug, and to make possession an offence. Initially, that  
was not the case, and there were problems with effective  
enforcement. People who had clearly taken these substances  
and were in a poor condition as a result could not be  
arrested because they had not committed an offence;  
they were simply in possession of the drug in question.  
The law has already had to be amended. I believe a  
review is due under the Act at the beginning of 2018,  
but it should be done immediately. I raised this with the  
Minister at questions a couple of weeks ago, and she  
said that the measure was working well, when clearly it  
is not. I was really worried by that response.

On Sunday, I was contacted by a constituent who had  
been terrified in the centre of the town because of the  
conduct of some people affected by the drug. It is an  
urgent issue that must be addressed now. As it stands,  
the drugs strategy is not addressing the matter properly.  
Part of the reason is that local authorities and the  
police do not have the capacity and understanding to  
deal with it. I am not sure that they are really clear  
about the correct approach. We need an intelligent  
conversation about the nature of the problem.

We also need to find out about the individuals who  
are taking these substances, because each one has their  
own story and their own life. It is clear that they have  
chosen to take these substances, but that choice is  
having a massive impact on other people and other  
communities because of the way that they behave. I  
would like to know how they pay for these items, and to  
understand the role of the Department for Work and  
Pensions, because some people are using their benefits  
to buy these substances. I see a lot of people in my  
constituency office who are having their benefits taken  
away from them, but who cannot walk into the surgery.  
A sanction seems to be applied to them, but not to  
people who choose to take substances in the centre of  
my community. The Department for Work and Pensions—  
thelargest-spendingDepartment—hasnotbeenmentioned  
so far, but it needs to be involved, so that we can find  
out what role it plays when individuals to whom it pays  
benefits take these substances.

I wanted to restrict my observations to new psychoactive  
substances, but before I stop I should like to mention  
the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Slough (Mr Dhesi), which I found deeply moving. The  
first Sikh I remember as a child was Bishan Bedi, who  
had even better turbans than my hon. Friend, but my  
hon. Friend can try harder. I was touched by his reference  
to his parents; I do not know whether they are still with  
us, but they will be very proud of his achievements. In  
my maiden speech, I talked about a boy of 14 who was  
in court with 24 burglaries against his name because he  
was a heroin addict. I represented him in 1988.

My speech has a lot more questions than answers, but  
I do not think that we have made much progress on  
drugs policy since I came to the House in 2001. We have  
had an interesting debate today. We very much needed

765

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

766

to look at the issue again, but there is a real, immediate  
problem with NPS that the Government need to address  
urgently, and I implore them to take it more seriously.

4.1 pm

**Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)  
(Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving  
me the opportunity to make my maiden speech during  
this important debate.

Since arriving in Parliament, I have spent the past few  
weeks being greeted with the now familiar phrase, “Ah,  
so you're the new Alan Johnson, are you?” Despite the  
obvious and not quite so obvious differences between  
us, that is something that I am very proud to be. Alan  
Johnson was the MP for Hull West and Hessle for over  
20 years, and he built a formidable and proud reputation  
as a national political figure, but, most importantly for  
the people of Hull West and Hessle, Alan was a well-  
respected local MP who worked hard to represent the  
people who elected him to this House. Notably, Alan  
worked tirelessly to rectify the appalling injustice and  
hardships suffered by the trawlermen of Hull and their  
families. This righting of wrongs earned him the ever-lasting  
respect and admiration of the city.

Alan's life story is a journey from absolute poverty to  
high office. It is a story of triumph over adversity. This  
is all well documented in his autobiographies. He would  
not want me to miss an opportunity to mention that if  
hon. Members are interested in reading more about his  
life, his three autobiographies are available in all good  
bookshops.

My path has been different from Alan's, but I am  
incredibly proud to have also come from a strong trade  
unionist background. I am proud to have been a primary  
teacher. I have never worked for an MP and I have not  
come from a family of politicians. My journey has been  
paved by my desire to right wrongs. Every one of us has  
made sacrifices to be here, and so have all our families—  
particularly my two wonderful daughters, Olivia and  
Isabelle. But it is a sacrifice that must be made because  
politics cannot be the preserve of the rich, powerful and  
privileged.

Back in 2011, when I first started campaigning against  
the changes to education, I was told that my opinion  
was unimportant because I was only a part-time infant  
school teacher, but in the words of the Dalai Lama,

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try  
sleeping with a mosquito.”

I am honoured to be a patron of The Warren in Hull,  
which gives support to marginalised and vulnerable  
young people. I would love it if my legacy was to have  
encouraged and inspired many other people who had  
also been told that their opinion did not matter to get  
involved in politics, because everybody matters equally.

I have heard many maiden speeches in which people  
have talked of the beauty of their constituency, but  
what makes a place is not the rolling hills, the lakes or  
the skyscrapers. What makes a place beautiful is the  
people who live there, and that is why Hull West and  
Hessle is the best place to live, and why I am so  
honoured to be their Member of Parliament and represent  
them.

It is not a stereotype to say that people from the  
north are friendly and compassionate; it is quite simply  
a statement of fact. But never mistake friendliness and  
compassion for weakness. Charles I learned not to

underestimate the people of Hull when he was turned  
away from the city in 1642, leading to the siege of Hull,  
which was a major step on the road to the English civil  
war. Nor did anyone underestimate one of Hull's other  
famous sons, William Wilberforce, in his tireless fight  
to end slavery; or, more recently, the “headscarf  
revolutionaries,” a group of women from Hull who took  
on the establishment in the 1960s to improve safety in  
the trawler industry.

This is an incredible year for Hull, because we are the  
city of culture. Let me take this opportunity to extend a  
welcome to everybody to come back to ours and experience  
it for themselves. As an infant teacher, I used to give my  
pupils an historical tour of the city, pointing out the  
evidence of our fishing heritage, our magnificent 13th  
century minster and our beautiful architecture, so if  
Members come up I'll even throw in a free tour. This  
weekend Hull is hosting the national UK Pride event,  
and I am delighted to be involved. Good luck to the  
hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton)  
in his task of trying to get Stoke-on-Trent the city of  
culture.

I am also incredibly proud to represent Hessle, which  
is the town where I live and where my girls attend  
school. It is most famously known for the Humber  
bridge, which just this week has been given grade I listed  
status, but I also highly recommend the Hessle feast.

Since it was as an infant teacher that I became  
politicised, it will come as no surprise to anyone that I  
want to focus the House's attention on education and  
speak during this important debate on drugs. There  
must be a drugs education programme as part of a  
wider personal, social and health education to keep our  
children safe. But PSHE, like so many arts subjects, is  
being pushed out because of the high-stakes accountability  
in our schools. There is no point having a drugs education  
programme if there is no time to teach it. Some parents  
can compensate for the narrowing of the curriculum by  
paying for music, dance, art, drama or sports clubs, but  
many cannot. We are wasting the talents and abilities of  
so many of our children because of the failed way we  
judge schools.

That pressure that schools face is manifesting itself as  
pressure on our children. Now, the Prime Minister  
thinks that schools can solve the mental health crisis  
facing our children, but it has been contributed to by  
her Government's system of educational assessment.  
We should not be making our schools into learning  
factories that churn out compliant, unquestioning units  
for work. We want our children to be creative, to  
question, to inquire, to explore and to think independently,  
especially in this era of fake news. We are discussing the  
reform of drugs law without asking ourselves: if we  
only ever teach our children to obey adults unquestioningly,  
how can they ever understand when they should not?

Education provided my father with his route out of  
poverty, and it was the route for his three brothers too.  
My dad left education with next to nothing in the way  
of qualifications, and it was through evening classes  
and further education that he went on to become a local  
primary headteacher. The under-investment in FE is  
denying people that second chance. Some 31% of children  
in Hull live in poverty, and I do not think that it is right  
for any child's life story to be determined by birth. But  
with the cuts facing Hull College, Sure Start and all of  
education, how can we say that we are giving our young  
people today those same opportunities and second chances?

767

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

768

*[Emma Hardy]*

It is not just the FE sector that is suffering; it is all of  
education. While I welcome the recent announcement  
of extra funding, it is not enough. Inflation and other  
factors mean that schools still face real-terms cuts to  
their budgets, and those cuts are driving up class sizes,  
reducing the number of teaching assistants, increasing  
the number of unqualified teachers and reducing the  
curriculum options available.

One of the crucial lessons in life, which everyone  
across all these Benches has learnt, is that when you fall  
down, you have to pick yourself back up again. But I  
know that I can do that because I am lucky: I have two  
brilliant parents who are always there for me. But we are  
selling a lie if we do not acknowledge how much harder  
it is for some people. It is like telling them that it is a fair  
fight, when they start with both hands tied behind their  
backs and already on the ground.

That is why I am fighting for fairer funding for Hull  
City Council, which has seen its core spending power  
cut by 32% since 2010. It cannot invest in those services  
to really help people have that fair start and equal  
chance, when all it is doing is managing year-on-year  
cuts. All these drugs education programmes need proper  
funding too, if we want them to be successful.

This Government's political choices to cut benefits—  
especially to disabled people—to under-invest in education  
and our NHS and to deny our public sector workers a  
pay rise are making people in Hull West and Hessle  
suffer. I am here to represent everyone in Hull West and  
Hessle: not just those who voted for me and not just  
those on the electoral roll. I want to be the voice for  
everyone, and I will hold the Government to account  
for their decisions. I stand here with my colleagues on  
the Opposition Benches to say that there is an alternative.  
Austerity is a political choice—one that I will always  
choose to oppose.

4.10 pm

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and  
Hessle (Emma Hardy) on an immensely impressive  
maiden speech. I confess that I am quite a fan of her  
predecessor's—I have not said that until now—but I am  
now also clearly a fan of the hon. Lady, who, like the  
other two Members who have made maiden speeches  
today, spoke incredibly powerfully. The hon. Member  
for Slough (Mr Dhesi) gave a powerful and moving  
speech, and I am just glad I was here to witness it. I  
thank him.

This has been a fascinating debate, in which there  
have been more voices for reform than I have heard  
before; I am particularly encouraged by what the hon.  
Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) said.  
I will come to my thoughts on reform in a moment, but  
I want to start by acknowledging that there are important  
things in the Government's drugs strategy.

I welcome the shift away from an over-emphasis on  
abstinence, which in many respects was damaging. I  
also welcome a focus on evidence-based drug treatment  
programmes and on addressing the underlying causes  
of addiction, whether poor housing or mental health  
issues. I acknowledge those good things. I also welcome  
the references to drug rehabilitation requirements as a  
sentencing option along with alcohol rehabilitation  
requirements and mental health treatment requirements.

That is a sensible innovation. I note the preparation of  
a protocol to ensure good access to treatment and the  
potential for a maximum waiting time, which all make  
sense.

However, although the mental health treatment  
requirements, introduced by the last Labour Government,  
were a very good policy response, they were virtually  
never used across the country. Organising mental health  
treatment services alongside the criminal justice system  
has proved to be beyond most parts of the country, and  
I do not want the same to happen with drug and alcohol  
orders. It is really important that the Government focus  
on making sure that all three of those sentencing options  
are available everywhere to ensure that when it comes to  
offences of which the underlying cause is an addiction  
or mental health problem, the person gets access to  
treatment and not just punishment. That is incredibly  
important.

I want to focus on two key objections. The first has  
been mentioned by other hon. Members: the cut in  
public health funding. Frankly, that makes no sense at  
all. If we are to ensure that the NHS as a whole is more  
sustainable, we have to shift resources to prevention,  
not cut the funding available, which is completely counter-  
productive. In a report published just last week, the  
King's Fund highlighted the fact that across the country  
councils have planned expenditure cuts to really important  
public health programmes: sexual health clinics as well  
as programmes reducing harm from smoking, alcohol  
and drugs. A total of £85 million is involved. The spend  
on tackling drug misuse for adults involves a planned  
cut of £22 million, or 5.5%. It totally undermines the  
Government's strategy, which, in any case, I disagree  
with, to be cutting funding from the treatment programmes  
that can help people to recover. Unless the Government  
seek to address that, they will fail in their objective.

My second objection is far more fundamental: it  
relates to the philosophy behind the Government's approach  
to drug use. Instinctively, I am hostile to drugs. As the  
father of two boys, now in their 20s, I get really anxious  
at the thought of my children—our children—taking  
drugs, or, indeed, engaging in excessive use of alcohol  
or smoking. Let us remember, in all the talk about harm  
from drugs, that smoking, which involves a legal product,  
kills 100,000 people in our country every year. There is  
no consistency in Government policy at all, and that is  
simply not good enough. My starting point is not to  
advocate a free-for-all but to find an effective approach  
to the use of drugs that seeks to reduce harm. Surely  
that is what we should all be searching for. However,  
the Government's approach and that of successive  
Governments—indeed, that of much of the western  
world—amounts to a monumental failure of public  
policy. We need a fundamentally new approach.

The Royal Society for Public Health, in its response  
to the Government's strategy, says that it

“falls far short of the fundamental reorientation of policy towards  
public health and away from criminal justice needed to tackle  
rising drug harm. Decriminalisation of drug possession and use is  
a critical enabler that would enable drug treatment services to  
reach as many people as possible as effectively as possible. Instead,  
the Government still continues to lead with unhelpful rhetoric  
about ‘tough law enforcement' that contributes to the marginalisation  
and stigmatisation of vulnerable drug users”.

If the Government are interested in ensuring that they  
follow the right approach, surely they should be listening  
very carefully to those experts in public health.

769

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

770

The *British Medical Journal* editorial from November  
last year makes an incredibly important point, saying that  
“the effectiveness of prohibition laws, colloquially known as the  
‘war on drugs', must be judged on outcomes”—  
what is actually achieved. It continues:

“And too often the war on drugs plays out as a war on the  
millions of people who use drugs, and disproportionately”—  
this is a really important point—

“on people who are poor or from ethnic minorities and on  
women.”

If the effect of the Government's policy is as it says in  
the *British Medical Journal*, then surely the Government  
need to think again. The editorial also says:

“All wars cause human rights violations, and the war on drugs  
is no different. Criminally controlled drug supply markets lead to  
appalling violence—causing an estimated 65 000-80 000 deaths in  
Mexico in the past decade”.

That is an extraordinary death toll that surely we should  
not ignore.

I want to focus on the number of people who die  
through drug misuse. We heard earlier that a third of  
such deaths in Europe are in the UK. Ten families are  
bereaved every single day as a result of drug use. That  
could be a loved one of any of us in this Chamber. If we  
think that official Government policy is perhaps  
contributing to that—and I argue that it is—we need to  
think again. In 2015, the number of deaths was up by  
more than 10%. The previous year it had risen by more  
than 14%, and the year before that by nearly 20%. That  
is a shocking failure of official policy. Deaths from  
heroin doubled between 2012 and 2015.

**Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op):  
One interesting way of reducing harm from intravenous  
drug use—particularly heroin, which the right hon.  
Gentleman just mentioned—is the use of safe and  
hygienic facilities for intravenous drug users in a non-  
stigmatic environment. Glasgow is piloting that solution  
in the city, and perhaps it is worth noting as an option  
that we should look at and consider the results of with  
interest.

**Norman Lamb:** I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman,  
and I was going to mention that solution in a moment.  
Let me quote Anne-Marie Cockburn—she has been  
mentioned in the debate—from the Anyone's Child  
project:

“I invite the Prime Minister to come and stand by my daughter's  
grave, and tell me her approach to drugs is working.”

That is a parent who lost their daughter as a result of  
the current approach to drug policy.

The claim in the strategy that the increase in the  
number of deaths relates to a problem of ageing drug  
users simply will not wash. The same demographic is  
replicated across Europe, including in Portugal, but the  
increase in deaths is not, and we have to ask why. The  
number of deaths per 100,000 of population in the UK  
is 10 times that in Portugal. I appreciated the Minister's  
statement that she would listen carefully to what I said,  
and I hold her in high regard as well, but when our  
death rate is 10 times that of Portugal, which has  
chosen, incidentally, an approach that commands cross-  
party support in the country, from left to right, surely  
she should stop and listen. Surely she should investigate  
further Portugal's approach, which has resulted in such  
a reduction in the number of deaths from drug use.

In 2015, 1,573 people died of a heroin overdose in  
this country. That is shameful. In the past, those people  
might have been dismissed as victims of their own  
stupidity, but we can no longer accept such thinking.  
These are people. They are citizens of our country, and  
they are losing their lives. They would not have died if  
they had had access to the treatment rooms that the  
hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney)  
referred to. So why are the UK Government resistant,  
as I understand they are, to the project proposed in  
Glasgow, which has the potential to save lives? Surely  
that should be part of the strategy, but it does not even  
mention drug use rooms of that sort. Why on earth not,  
given that all the evidence points towards significant  
reductions in the number of deaths? No one dies of an  
overdose when they take their drugs in such safe rooms.  
Why are we not moving towards that? It is a disgrace,  
frankly, that we are not.

**John Mann:** Is not the right hon. Gentleman overstating  
his case? I have visited quite a number of safe rooms  
across the world and studied the academic research into  
them. Is it not an overstatement to suggest that nobody  
dies there? The question of safe injecting is one of the  
aspects of death, but, as all the Dutch surveys demonstrate,  
the fundamental determinant of how long someone  
with an opiate addiction will live is whether they come  
off heroin and stop injecting.

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention. The briefing from Transform states:

“No one has died from an overdose, anywhere in the world,  
ever, in a supervised drug consumption room”.

If Transform has made a mistake, I apologise.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I am  
grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way,  
because he is making such a powerful case about the  
importance of evidence-based policy. Is it not the case  
that drug consumption rooms allow us to reach people  
who would otherwise be very hard to reach and, over  
time, build up trust and bring them into recovery? The  
purpose of drug consumption rooms is not simply to go  
on handing out drugs to people, day after day. It is to  
reach those hard-to-reach people and bring them into  
recovery, over time.

**Norman Lamb:** I totally agree, and I applaud the hon.  
Lady for the work she has done in arguing the case for  
reform. Trials of this type of approach have shown  
huge reductions in acquisitive crime resulting from illegal  
drug use and in the small-time dealing indulged in to  
pay for the habit, but the Government withdrew the  
funding for these trials in April 2016. How short-sighted!  
The strategy stresses the importance of listening to the  
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, but it  
recommends the use of rooms where drugs can be taken  
safely, heroin prescribing and, in effect, the decriminalisation  
of the use of drugs, and the Government are doing  
none of those things. If the Government say they  
should listen to the council, they should please listen to  
what it is arguing for.

It seems to me there is a dishonesty to this debate. In  
the foreword to the strategy, the Home Secretary says:

“By working together, we can achieve a society that works for  
everyone and in which every individual is supported to live a life  
free from drugs”.

771

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

772

*[Norman Lamb]*

Incidentally, does that mean “free from drugs” other than  
the most dangerous drug, alcohol, which we of course  
allow to be sold and take the tax from? The objective or  
ambition of a world free from drugs is unachievable, as  
other hon. Members have pointed out, so let us just get  
rid of this fantasy at the heart of the so-called war on  
drugs, which has been a stupid and catastrophic failure.  
Such an international policy approach has had extra-  
ordinary consequences. It has massively enriched organised  
crime, to the tune of billions of pounds every year. It  
has also criminalised young people in particular, and it  
has had a disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities.

Illegal drug use is actually lower among black and  
minority ethnic groups than in the white population in  
this country, but black people are six times more likely  
to be stopped and searched for drugs than white people.  
Our son, who is in the music business, was driving in  
London in the middle of the night, on his way back  
from a recording at the BBC, when he was stopped in  
his car. He happened to have a black artist with him,  
who said, “This is just a fact of life in London for us.  
This is what happens to us.” They were all pinned up  
against a wall as they were searched for illegal drugs.  
There were no illegal drugs in the car, but this is too  
often what black people in our inner cities have to cope  
with week in, week out, and it is not acceptable. Black  
people in London are five times more likely to be charged  
for the possession of cannabis than white people. This is  
extraordinary discrimination.

We criminalise people with mental health problems.  
We know that there is massive comorbidity: if people  
are suffering from mental ill health—depression, anxiety  
or obsessive compulsive disorder—they may well end  
up taking drugs as an escape from the pain that they are  
suffering, and then we prosecute them and give them a  
criminal record. How cruel and stupid! There is hypocrisy  
in that the former Prime Minister famously took cannabis  
when he was at Eton and many members of this  
Government have probably taken drugs in their time,  
yet they are happy to see the careers of other citizens  
blighted by criminal convictions for what they did in  
their younger years. Surely that is intolerable.

The strategy addresses the issue of decriminalisation  
and refers to the evidence of harm, yet we know that the  
most dangerous drug for causing harm is alcohol, as I  
have already said, to which the Government take a  
completely different approach. They still use the language  
of having a tough approach to enforcement, yet the  
Home Office's own report from a couple of years ago  
showed that there is no link between the toughness of a  
regime and the level of drug use in society. The illegal  
market also causes extreme violence in our communities.  
To control the market in a particular community, all  
people can do is resort to extreme violence to protect it;  
they cannot have resort to the courts, as other capitalists  
do. It has always been disadvantaged communities that  
suffer the most.

I recommend to anyone here who is interested in this  
subject the book by Johann Hari, “Chasing the Scream”,  
which refers to the extraordinary spikes in violence—  
particularly in America, where there is ever a legal  
clampdown on the suppliers of drugs to communities—  
when new suppliers come into a community and seek to  
gain control of the market. The only way they do that is  
by using extreme violence.

As I have said, in Portugal, after initial resistance,  
there is political unity across the spectrum. In the  
United States, more and more states are moving towards  
regulated markets for cannabis. In Canada, a Liberal  
Government are legislating to introduce a legal regulated  
market. In the UK, I commissioned an expert panel  
that included a serving chief constable, Michael Barton  
from Durham. Its recommendation was that in the  
interests of public health—not despite public health,  
which is an important point for the Minister—we should  
move towards a regulated market where we control  
potency, who grows it and who sells it. That protects  
those at risk of psychosis and memory impairment  
because potency is controlled. If people buy from a  
criminal, they have no idea what they are buying. The  
criminal has no interest in people's welfare; they simply  
want to make a fast buck from them. If people buy from  
a regulated seller, there is a chance to avoid the sort of  
harm that we see so often at the moment.

I make this plea: do not claim that the case for change  
is irresponsible, but bring about change because it will  
save lives, it will reduce HIV and hepatitis C infection, it  
will protect people better, it will end the ludicrous  
enriching of criminals, it will cut violence in our poorest  
communities, it will end the self-defeating criminalisation  
of people who have done exactly the same thing as  
successful people in government, in business and in all  
sorts of walks of life, and it will raise vital tax revenues.  
Follow the evidence. Do not perpetuate the stigma and  
the fear. End this catastrophic approach to drugs policy.

4.32 pm

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): It has been a  
splendid afternoon. May I offer my congratulations to  
all those who have made maiden speeches? How refreshing  
it is and how grateful we all are to the Prime Minister  
for organising this fresh injection of new Members into  
the House—and so many of them are women. Goodness,  
there has been a great change in this place since I came  
in with my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney  
North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), who is on  
the Front Bench. It was thought remarkable then that  
there were four Members from ethnic minorities here. It  
was a place that was crude and macho because it was  
dominated by males. We have seen it civilised and  
become more sensible and more representative of society.

We heard the passion and sincerity of my hon. Friend  
the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle  
(Emma Hardy), who is depriving education but enriching  
us. I am sure she will go far. What a joy it is to see a  
member of the Sikh community here, with their great  
history and their marvellous contribution to this country.  
Are we not coming to a stage where Parliament represents  
the nation more fully than it ever has before? Many  
congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for  
Slough (Mr Dhesi).

I also congratulate the right hon. Member for North  
Norfolk (Norman Lamb). The Liberal Democrats have  
done so much to introduce sanity into the drugs debate.  
I will not say too much about the Minister, who has the  
misfortune of presenting the nonsense that civil servants  
have been writing, in my experience, for the past 30 years  
on this subject. I remember two people who have had  
that job with great affection. Mo Mowlam would send  
me letters with a little handwritten note on the bottom

773

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

774

saying, “See you in the Strangers tonight to tell you  
what I really think.” When we got together after she  
stood down, she intended to write a book urging the  
end of drug prohibition. She could not do it in office  
and, sadly, she died before the time came. Bob Ainsworth  
was another person who had the hideous job of trying  
to defend the failing policy that is the prohibition of  
drugs. As soon as he stood down, he was campaigning  
on the other side.

The House has been marred by culpable cowardice  
for the last 46 years on this subject and countless people  
have died or suffered as a result. I had an email last  
night to tell me about a drama documentary to be based  
on the life of Elizabeth Brice. I gave a little whoop of  
joy at the news. Elizabeth campaigned under the name  
of Clare Hodges. She was a wonderful, vibrant woman,  
a television producer who translated the “Noddy” tales  
into Latin, among her many achievements. She suffered  
severely from multiple sclerosis, and she came to the  
House and collaborated with me in a terrible crime on  
the Terrace. I supplied her with a cup of hot water, with  
which she made and drank cannabis tea. According to  
the rules of the House, and the policy approved by the  
Government—and, sadly, the Opposition too—she would  
have been liable to go to prison for seven years, and I  
would probably have been accompanying her.

We have to call on those who put up with the barbaric  
stupidity and cruelty of a Government policy that  
denies seriously ill people their medicine of choice to  
perform acts of civil disobedience. Elizabeth Brice spoke  
to the Parliament in Belgium and within months it  
changed its policy. Most other countries allow the use  
of this most ancient of medicines—it has been used for  
5,000 years on every continent—for medicinal purposes.  
I know that Members are not supposed to do this, but I  
call on people to break the law, to come here and use  
cannabis and see what happens—to challenge the authorities  
to arrest them. That is the only way to get through to  
the Government's mind, which is set in concrete. The  
law is evidence free and prejudice rich.

In another example of the fact that the Government  
are in denial, I tabled a simple question to ask how  
many prisons were free of drug use last year. The  
answer came back that 83 were free of drug use for one  
month. That was not the question. I asked again how  
many were free for a whole year, and the answer came  
back, “One”. Which one? It was Blantyre House. How  
many prisoners were in that prison? None—it was closed.  
The Government have cracked the problem—the answer  
to drug use in prison is to get rid of the prisoners, not  
the drugs!

If anything mocks the stupidity and futility of our  
drugs policy, it is the fact that there are more drugs in  
prison than outside. There is not a drug-free prison in  
the whole of the United Kingdom. We also fool ourselves  
about how the drugs get in—it is not through the  
visitors or drones. If we look at discipline in prisons and  
the poor wages paid to many staff, we can quickly work  
out how drugs get in. There is conspiracy and corruption  
there.

We need to learn the mountainous lessons of prohibition,  
which only happened in 1971, with Jim Callaghan following  
what the United Nations had done under the influence  
of President Nixon. The world said it would get rid of  
all illegal use of drugs, but they were not a problem  
here. There was virtually no use of marijuana/cannabis  
in this country. Some people had become addicted

through morphine to heroin, but there were no deaths.  
We had fewer than 1,000 users. Every year since then,  
under harsh prohibition, we have created an empire of  
crime and ended up with 320,000 addicts in this country.  
That is an enormous burden.

We cannot ignore what has happened in the rest of  
the world. I despair of any change in Government  
policy, because the Government are stuck in the foolish  
idea that prohibition works, as was clear when we  
debated what is now the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.  
The thinking is that psychoactive substances are a hideous  
problem, and anyone is very foolish to put anything in  
their body that has never been ingested by a human  
being before. The nearest to an intelligent policy came  
from New Zealand, which said that it would license  
psychoactive substances if the producers could establish  
that they were safe. Otherwise, it is just a jungle out  
there.

Last year, when we debated the Psychoactive Substances  
Bill, the Government fell into the old trap of saying that  
“something must be done”, which is the greatest error  
in politics. Governments cannot think of anything that  
is going to work, but they have to seem to do something.  
That was the argument then, and that is where we have  
ended up with this damaging Act. It was said that  
Poland and Ireland had virtually the same Bill. Those  
countries closed the headshops, and the result was not a  
decrease but an increase in drug use. When the drug  
trade is on the streets, people have a vested interest and  
can get more money out of it. In Ireland the use of what  
were then called legal highs among young people rose  
from 16% to 22%, and the same thing is happening here.  
Why on earth do the Government not recognise that  
prohibition does not work? In America, 13 years of  
alcohol prohibition did not work for the same reasons.

I have never taken an illegal drug in my life, but I  
consider the medical use of cannabis to be of immense  
benefit, and that should be our first step. I believe that  
the rest of the world will leave us behind; they are  
laughing at us now. Canada is leading the way, but there  
is no doubt that the system works in Portugal. The  
people in Portugal to whom I have spoken did not have  
the support of any great number of Members of their  
Parliament, and they did not have the support of the  
press, but they charged ahead, in a very courageous way,  
and said, “This is going to work.” That was 16 years  
ago, and there is every indication, given the number of  
deaths and the incidence of disease since then, that it  
has been successful in every respect.

I think that we will follow—as, indeed, we must—the  
example of half the states in America, and of Uruguay  
and other countries in South America, and legalise  
drugs, because that is the only way in which to reduce  
harm and reduce the number of deaths.

4.43 pm

**Eleanor Smith** (Wolverhampton South West) (Lab): I  
am proud to address the Chamber as the newly elected  
representative of the people of Wolverhampton South  
West. Whether they voted for me or for the Conservative,  
Liberal Democrat or Green party representative, I will  
endeavour to represent them in the House to the best of  
my ability. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Rob Marris,  
who stood down when the general election was called.  
He was a conscientious and much-liked Member of  
Parliament.

775

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

776

*[Eleanor Smith]*

Wolverhampton, in common with other cities throughout  
the United Kingdom, has a drug problem. Drug use  
brings with it a set of associated problems: crime,  
antisocial behaviour, and other social problems associated  
with addiction such as broken homes and damaged  
people, all of whom are in need of support from our  
increasingly underfunded and overworked social services.  
A recent BBC report highlighted the use of so-called  
legal highs in the city, and in that context I welcome the  
latest legislation reclassifying those substances.

However, what most addicts need is help. They need  
rehabilitation programmes to help them to come off  
drugs, because substance abuse and addiction are problems  
that do not go away on their own. We need a properly  
funded system to help those people because, if more  
people can access drug rehabilitation services providing  
education and employment opportunities, addicts can  
more easily find a way out of addiction and abuse. The  
scourge of drug use is associated with an underlying  
lack of opportunities for young people in Wolverhampton.  
We should look to European models of how best to do  
this, rather than reach for American-style punitive solutions,  
which only drive the problem into our prisons, where it  
becomes endemic, with hardened drug users returning  
to our streets to become another thing our hard-pressed  
NHS staff and police officers have to deal with.

I will now talk about Wolverhampton itself. The  
Wolverhampton South West constituency was created  
in 1950. It is repeatedly a marginal and one of three  
constituencies covering the city of Wolverhampton.  
Within its boundary is the retail and business core of  
the city centre, Bank's brewery, universities, schools and  
Molineux stadium, home of Wolverhampton Wanderers—  
and please God, may I say that right. The largest  
employer in Wolverhampton is local government. The  
constituency fans out from the city centre to include the  
western and south-western parts of the city.

Wolverhampton South West is a microcosm of modern  
Britain, a jigsaw of places, names and postcodes. It is a  
bellwether constituency, moving from Tory to Labour,  
with shifts in the economic and political moods. There  
are huge inequalities of income. There are rich, poor,  
privileged and under-privileged, living only a few miles  
apart. There is a diversity of culture: white British,  
Asian British, West Indian, Africans, eastern Europeans  
and Kurdish, each with their own faith—Muslims, Sikhs,  
Buddhists, Hindus and Christian, which is my strong  
faith.

Although Wolverhampton South West has existed  
for only 67 years, it has a surprisingly rich political  
history, one which is relevant today. It is associated by  
some with Enoch Powell, its first MP, from 1950 until  
1974. His inflammatory rivers of blood speech in 1968,  
warning of civil unrest if immigration went unchecked,  
was set there. Its second MP was Nicholas Budgen,  
known as one of the Maastricht rebels, who first mooted  
the idea of a referendum on the European single currency  
and who opposed all further integration in Europe.

In 1997, Labour won the seat for the first time and it  
continued to hold the seat until 2010, when Paul Uppal,  
a prominent Sikh businessman, won it back for the  
Conservatives. It is a testament to the people of  
Wolverhampton South West that their actions at the  
ballot box demonstrated how far they had come from  
the racial legacy of Enoch Powell in electing a Sikh MP,

and now they have taken another historical step forward  
by electing the first black woman to represent a west  
midlands constituency in Parliament.

In electing me, a nurse from a working-class background,  
a trade unionist and a first-generation immigrant, the  
people of Wolverhampton South West are saying that  
they want change. They are saying that they liked the  
Labour manifesto and that they have had enough of  
austerity. They do not want any more cuts to public  
services. They want properly funded education and  
social services protecting the old and caring for the  
weakest in our society. They said, “Give us a Brexit that  
works for all.” The young people said, “Give us something  
so we can improve our lives and give us hope”—and  
they all said, “Save our NHS.”

I hope that I will be able to play my part in the coming  
years in making a difference to youth unemployment  
and homelessness in my constituency. They are a blight  
on our society. Wolverhampton has one of the highest  
jobless rates for 16 to 24-year-olds: according to studies  
published in 2016, youth unemployment in Wolverhampton  
was 27%, among the highest in the country. I pledge to  
work with all those in Wolverhampton who want to  
help and care for those who have dropped through the  
increasingly threadbare safety net this country offers.

The other issue that I will be involved with I have  
been working on for my entire working life of 40 years  
in the NHS: the conditions of the low-paid workers.  
The one-line Government statement on the NHS in Her  
Majesty's Gracious Speech was short on detail with no  
real ideas on how to improve the NHS and rescue it  
from the position they have put it in. It would be bad  
enough if that had resulted merely from ignorance and  
mismanagement, but that is not the case; these are the  
results of the policies they have been pursuing for the  
last seven years. This Government should read the recent  
Labour party manifestos to learn what the NHS urgently  
needs. It is all in there: investment, planning, education  
and training, and much more.

I also need to make a statement about a row that has  
broken out concerning my comments about a Black  
country flag created in 2012 after a competition organised  
by the Black Country Living Museum. This flag has a  
link of chains as its primary image. I have had two  
concerns about the connotations of this image; its historical  
association with the slave trade, and whether it should  
be the only brand image for the Black country. An  
article appeared in the local press saying that I thought  
that the flag was racist and should be scrapped. My  
comments had been misrepresented. I believe in a free  
press, but its reporting must be done responsibly, in a  
fair and honest way. I have received many abusive  
messages, and I am on the receiving end of the kind of  
threatening behaviour that many of my colleagues in  
this House have also received and have recently discussed,  
and I have learned the hard way how difficult being an  
MP is.

But, on a much happier note, I am proud of the social  
culture and industrial and economic heritage of  
Wolverhampton and the wider Black country. I am  
proud of the contribution made by the Black country's  
industry to begin the industrial revolution, which  
revolutionised the lives of people all around our planet.  
Above all, I am proud of the tolerance, equality and  
social cohesion that the people in the Black country and  
Wolverhampton South West, and in the wider UK,  
enjoy.

777

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

778

As a Member of Parliament, I will endeavour to  
work to promote and elevate these great aspects of the  
people of Wolverhampton South West and the Black  
country. I stand by them and for them. Thank you for  
allowing me to speak today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

4.52 pm

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): May I add my  
congratulations to the hon. Members for Slough  
(Mr Dhesi), for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton),  
for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy)—  
which apparently is one constituency—and for  
Wolverhampton South West (Eleanor Smith) on their  
maiden speeches? I am sure they are already aware that  
the next time they speak they will not be listened to with  
such reverence. *[Interruption.]* I will do my best.

On drug policy reform, there are two problems we are  
trying to address: first, the crime surrounding illegal  
drugs, and, secondly, the harm done by addiction to  
drugs. The first technically looks quite easy. We could  
look to decriminalise and legislate for drugs; overnight  
we would take away all the power from the criminals.  
The second problem is harder, but would be easier when  
the victims are not being stigmatised and driven into the  
arms of criminals.

The Government report launched last Friday failed  
to address those core issues. Despite the few nods in the  
direction of healthcare, the UK Government have  
fundamentally missed the point again. The Home Secretary  
says she wants a strategy to deliver a drug-free society,  
and that, in a nutshell, is why it is seriously flawed,  
because the drugs are not the problem. We should be  
asking: why do people take drugs and why do some  
10% of users develop an addiction? What leads people  
to abuse drugs? That is the issue. If Ministers think that  
coming down hard on criminals will remove drugs from  
society and therefore end the need for them, they are  
delusional. We have been trying that for years, and the  
situation has only got worse.

The latest figures show the highest number of fatalities  
since comparable records began 24 years ago, with 50 a  
week across the UK and deaths from heroin doubling in  
three years, yet the Government have brushed aside the  
testimonies from the Anyone's Child campaign. Anyone's  
Child represents people who have lost relatives to drugs,  
and they now bravely argue for legalisation and regulation  
to prevent others from having to share their agony.

I welcome the talk about a renewed focus on the  
importance of evidence-based drug treatment services,  
and moves to address underlying factors such as inadequate  
housing, unemployment and mental health problems,  
but the Government's big message is still about tough  
law enforcement. When are they going to comprehend  
that drug reform is a health issue, and that the war on  
drugs that has been waged for the past 100 years has  
failed? They will never bring it to an end when their  
primary focus is on stamping down on dealers and  
users. In continuing to do that, we marginalise the very  
people we should be seeking to help. It is a cowardly  
report and an opportunity lost.

We could be learning from certain events in history,  
but we seem to be ignoring them. We have already  
mentioned the fact that the USA banned alcohol, but  
the people there still wanted alcohol. The US Government  
could have licensed alcohol manufacturers, established

a state-enforced quality control system with a recognised  
distribution network, and licensed premises in which to  
sell alcohol, all of which would have paid taxes to the  
Government. Instead, they introduced prohibition. That  
encouraged criminals to produce substances of dubious  
integrity that they sold at whatever price they liked in  
establishments that were unfit for purpose. Those activities  
were all fiercely protected by unrestrained violence.  
Crime rates soared, people died from consuming the  
product, addiction increased and rivals died in violent  
turf wars. Corruption was rampant and communities  
lived in fear. Does that sound familiar? Today's war on  
drugs mirrors those processes, except that they are now  
being carried out on a far larger scale because we have  
encouraged them to grow over a far longer period of  
time. Stamping down hard on the criminals who control  
the growth, harvesting and distribution of drugs has  
only increased the levels of violence, fear and corruption  
that they use to hold on to and grow their marketplace.

Once we have started a war that we were never going  
to win, ending it becomes increasingly difficult. The  
onus is on us to justify the time, the cost in human lives,  
the misery and the taxpayers' money involved, and to  
justify why we started the war in the first place. If we  
cannot do that, the only option seems to be to plough  
on, doggedly proclaiming that we were right all along  
and steadfastly refusing to listen to alternative strategies  
aimed at resolving the issue. That is where we are now in  
the war on drugs. Rather like the generals in the first  
world war ordering tens of thousands of conscripts  
over the top in a futile show of strength, we cannot see a  
way out that would justify the losses and sacrifices that  
have been made. We therefore continue to make the  
same mistakes over and over again. We should note that  
when prohibition ended in 1933, the crime rate and the  
addiction rate plummeted.

Transform has published a report in response to the  
latest offering from the UK Government in which it  
points out that, according to the United Nations Office  
on Drugs and Crime,

“taking a criminal justice-led approach to drugs creates a vast  
criminal market, siphons resources away from health, shifts drug  
dealing and trafficking around, switches users between drugs, and  
stigmatises and drives people who use drugs from seeking help.”  
In other words, prohibition is a discredited and deadly  
way of making drugs stronger and more dangerous  
while funding organised crime.

The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse  
estimates that the combined cost to society of substance  
abuse is £15.4 billion a year. The cost in human lives  
and the suffering of addicts, their friends and families  
can never be quantified. As the war continues, we are  
seeing more addicts, more cost, more pain and no sign  
that things will improve. The current approach is not  
working, and we need a fundamental change of philosophy.

A growing body of well-informed people say that it is  
time to decriminalise and legalise drugs. These people  
are not lily-livered do-gooders or hippies left over from  
the '60s; they are ex and current law enforcement officers.  
They have seen the problems up close and personal.  
They have spent decades locking people up, but they  
have come to the conclusion that their actions did not  
make a blind bit of difference. It is a tough call to  
recognise that they had it wrong, so the people from  
Law Enforcement Against Prohibition—LEAP—should  
be listened to.

779

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

780

*[Ronnie Cowan]*

A week ago, I hosted a dinner in the House of Commons  
with 24 people around the table from the Royal Society  
for Public Health, the British Medical Association, *The  
British Medical Journal*, the Academy of Medical Royal  
Colleges, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College  
of Physicians, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine,  
the Faculty of Public Health, the University of Cambridge,  
Transform, the Buchanan Institute, the Labour party,  
the Liberal Democrats and the House of Lords. Most of  
us self-administered psychoactive substances while we  
were there. All representatives spoke openly and honestly  
and the general consensus was that the current drugs  
policy is not working and that the war on drugs should  
be led by health, not criminal justice. Why is self-administrating  
a drug illegal? Technically, the answer is because we  
made that particular drug illegal and put it on a list. As I  
said, most of us self-administered psychoactive substances,  
but alcohol is not on the list. We have created a problem  
and now we cannot fix it—unless, of course, we decriminalised  
and controlled the production, quality and distribution  
of drugs. We could then tax them and use the money to  
providebettertreatment,rehabilitationandharmreduction  
services—rather like we do with alcohol, but hopefully  
much more effectively.

We have not always had our current attitudes towards  
drugs, and we have not always seen the violence and  
crime that surrounds drugs. A good few years ago, there  
was a regular annual festival of music and arts, and  
drug taking was a big part of the festival—it was  
acknowledged and accepted. The festival was frequented  
by many people, including a few celebrities. We probably  
know a few of their names: Sophocles, Aristotle, Plato,  
and Cicero—those kind of dudes. A hundred years ago,  
UK pharmacies would sell many products made from  
derivatives of heroin or cocaine. Cough mixtures contained  
opiates, and department stores sold heroin tins. In 1971,  
when the Misuse of Drugs Act was passed, 13,000 people  
had a problem with drugs. After 46 years of the war on  
drugs, we now have 380,000, and yet the Government  
still want to pursue that policy.

If we decriminalised or legalised drugs, the one issue  
we would be left with is the one that we should be  
addressing right now: why do some people become addicts?  
If we can solve that, we will go a long way to winning  
the war on drugs. So what do we know? Professor Bruce  
Alexander was used to performing experiments on rats  
and was familiar with the Skinner box, which was seen  
as a good place to study drug addiction. Scientists had  
perfected techniques to allow rats to inject small doses  
of a drug into themselves by pressing a lever. That  
required tethering the rat to the ceiling of the box and  
implanting a needle into their jugular veins. The drug  
passed through the tube and the needle into the rats'  
bloodstreams almost instantaneously when they pushed  
the lever. Under appropriate conditions, rats would  
press the lever often enough to consume large amounts  
of heroin, morphine, amphetamine, cocaine and other  
drugs. Then, along with his colleagues Robert Coambs,  
Patricia Hadaway and Barry Beyerstein, he created  
“Rat Park”. It was heaven for rats, with areas to move  
freely, dig, socialise and breed. He gave those rats two  
water bottles, one of which was laced with morphine.  
None of the rats developed an addiction. The environment  
that the rats lived in was clearly a factor—not the only  
factor, but a major one.

The obvious question is whether we have tried this  
experiment on humans, and the answer, unfortunately,  
is yes. We gave it a name: the Vietnam war. Hundreds of  
thousands of young men were shipped thousands of  
miles from home and dropped into a hell hole. The US  
military quickly realised that a large percentage of them  
were smoking pot, so they clamped down. The men  
turned to heroin, as it was harder for the authorities to  
find and confiscate. At the end of the Vietnam war, with  
a large number of heroin addicts about to be repatriated  
to their home towns and cities, the authorities expected  
a massive problem, but it did not happen. Once back  
home among their family and friends, the vast majority  
kicked their habit within a year. Those who did not were  
among those living in the poorest conditions or who  
had other issues that had led to their addiction in the  
first place.

We see the same behaviour of increased addiction  
where indigenous people were forced off their land and  
into reservations and camps by white settlers in the  
USA, Canada and Australia, so what can we do? As we  
talked about earlier, some countries have recently pursued  
alternative policies involving the decriminalisation of  
drug possession. Argentina, Estonia, Australia and Portugal  
have all taken a health-centred approach to the issue.  
Portugal decriminalised drug use, and drug addiction  
declined when the penalties for personal possession  
were removed. Rather than being criminalised, people  
are passed on to a “dissuasion committee”—I am not  
fond of the term, which sounds a bit Orwellian—consisting  
of members of the health, social work and law professions.  
Those considered to be addicts or problematic users are  
forwarded to treatment and rehabilitation programmes.  
According to the Royal Society for Public Health, within  
10 years of implementing those policies the number of  
drug addicts in Portugal has halved. If the UK achieved  
the same success, the Buchanan Institute estimates that  
the financial saving would be around £7.7 billion a year.

For the record, I do not take illegal drugs—that is my  
choice—but if I chose to take them within the privacy  
of my home, I honestly do not see what harm it would  
do to society at large. How would arresting me improve  
anything? Yet we regularly prosecute people and, it has  
to be said, primarily poor people.

We seem to have one approach to law enforcement for  
rich city slickers sniffing a line of cocaine in their  
penthouse suite, and quite another for a kid smoking a  
joint on a council estate. It is no coincidence that the  
areas of the UK with the highest levels of social deprivation  
are the areas with the highest numbers of drug-related  
deaths. According to the Prison Reform Trust, one in  
10 people in custody today is there because of a drugs-  
related offence. Some of our prisons have had serious  
problems with synthetic drugs, or Spice, in recent years.  
Those with the least access to money and lawyers, those  
who are less socially mobile, will always be more vulnerable.

Our attitude to drug consumption has to change.  
Only then can we see that the issue is addiction, and  
addiction is a health issue, not a criminal one. We must  
look to decriminalise and legislate. By doing so, we will  
take the power away from criminals and put the money  
into education, rehabilitation and reducing drug harm.

5.7 pm

**Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): I declare an interest as  
a Suffolk county councillor.

781

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

782

Like many towns of its size, Ipswich would be seriously  
improved by society dealing more effectively with the  
scourge of hard drugs. Ipswich has a low level of crime  
for its size, but there is too much violent crime, and that  
crime is rising. Much of the violence in our town has  
been carried out by drug dealers, targeted against drug  
dealers, motivated by arguments over drugs, fuelled by  
drugs or, in the murders of the women on London Road  
in 2006, targeted against young people whose lives have  
been dominated by their need to get money to pay for  
drugs.

One of my most passionate ambitions is to find ways  
to bring the marginalised in our town back into some  
sort of social life, to help them end their addictions, to  
support them to find housing and employment, and  
ultimately to give them the greatest gift of all—self-  
respect—so that they no longer need to feel dependent  
but can hold their head up and say proudly that they are  
contributing to our town.

I am immensely proud to have been chosen by the  
people of Ipswich to represent them in the House and,  
at the same time, humbled by the responsibility that  
places upon me. Ipswich is an exciting, vibrant yet  
unpretentious town. Although there was a pre-Roman  
settlement on the site and it became a substantial town  
during the Saxon period, winning its royal charter in  
1200, we do not dwell on our history.

Ipswich is what it is and where it is because it was the  
borough that served the rural county around it. It  
started as a port, exporting agricultural produce. It  
grew rapidly in the 19th century, building the ploughs,  
seed drills, reapers and other modern agricultural machinery  
of the time that transformed the productivity of our  
farms, not just in Suffolk, but throughout the UK and  
indeed the empire. We developed artificial fertiliser on  
the back of our initial base as the centre of the coprolite  
industry, making a good living out of a load of old squit!

In the late 19th industry, Ipswich's heavy engineering  
grew, almost all of which is now gone. The world's first  
lawnmower was built in Ipswich in 1832, and Ransomes  
Jacobsen still builds lawnmowers in Ipswich today, but  
we have not hung around or tried to revive dead businesses.

In the 1960s and 1970s, roads were reconfigured and  
areas cleared to enable the building of large office  
blocks to house the insurance industry, which is still one  
of the major employers in our town. The BT research  
and development headquarters just down the road is  
one of the most important local employers, and the  
East of England Development Agency invested significant  
sums in the first decade of this century in providing the  
accommodation needed for the IT spin-off companies  
that have grown out of BT.

Ipswich has immense potential. To his credit, I believe  
my predecessor, Ben Gummer, could see that. We have  
higher unemployment than the rest of Suffolk but many  
people with skills just waiting to be called upon. We  
have the space to expand and adapt, even in the very  
heart of the town. We have a beautiful and sophisticated  
focus on the waterfront, and the affordable housing and  
commercial space for new people and businesses to  
move in. We are only just over an hour from the City of  
London by train, but very much not just simply a  
commuter town. Ben Gummer put a lot of effort into  
trying to improve the rail link with London and into the  
regeneration of the waterfront, and I certainly intend to  
continue that work.

I also want to give credit to the previous MP for  
Ipswich, Chris Mole, and all that he achieved for Ipswich.  
Chris has been a good friend of mine for more than  
20 years, and I was delighted when he was elected to  
represent Ipswich in a by-election in 2001. Much was  
built or started in Ipswich during his time as MP, and I  
know that a lot of that was due to his championing of  
our town: a new accident and emergency department at  
the hospital; a new sixth-form college on the outskirts  
of the town; a completely new set of buildings for the  
further education college; and a commitment from the  
Government to build a complete flood defence system,  
including a tidal barrier to protect the town from sea  
level rise—I am glad to say that that commitment is  
now reaching fulfilment. When he was leader of the  
county council, he told me that his No. 1 ambition was  
to achieve a university for Suffolk, and he had already  
put in place the commitment from the pre-existing  
further education college, the county council and the  
borough council necessary to achieve a united bid for a  
new university. As MP for Ipswich, he was able to steer  
that to completion, and I do not believe he has ever had  
the full credit he deserves for that achievement. As a  
town with a brand new university, as the fulcrum around  
which our waterfront turns, Ipswich is undergoing a  
change every bit as radical as occurred in the 19th century  
when we started building machinery. We are entering a  
new and exciting phase of our development, where the  
imagination and intellectual skills of our young people  
will be the building blocks of our prosperity. Thank  
you, Chris.

Ipswich is, of course, a unique town, but many of the  
problems our residents face are national ones, shared  
with citizens across the UK. I have contributed in my  
own small way to helping with the governance and  
funding of voluntary organisations in Ipswich that work  
with people to help them to avoid marginalisation. I  
refer to organisations such as the citizens advice  
bureau; the Ipswich Disabled Advice Bureau; the Ipswich  
and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality, which is now  
also bidding to set up a law centre; and, recently, The  
Oak, an independent drug and alcohol rehabilitation  
centre, which is taking people on that final step between  
renouncing an addiction and actually gaining the  
personal self-confidence and self-worth needed to want  
not to relapse. All those organisations are struggling  
financially because of reductions in local authority  
funding.

We need to decide what sort of society we want to live  
in. What possible sense can it make to increase the  
availability of prison places at enormous cost but not to  
reduce re-offending rates, not to support preventive  
measures such as personalised job seeking for people at  
risk, and not to fully fund drug rehabilitation programmes,  
alcohol dependency programmes and hospital provision?  
How can we expect people to take care of what they are  
doing to themselves if they are unable to get a job, feed  
themselves properly, get the psychiatric help or counselling  
they need or even have somewhere safe and private to  
sleep the night? It is shocking to see increasing numbers  
of people—women as well as men, young as well as  
old—sleeping in shop doorways, in underpasses or in  
cemeteries in what is still the fifth largest economy in  
the world. How can we as a society say to those people  
with a straight face, “You must not take hard drugs?”  
when we are not offering them any way to escape from  
the half-life that they are leading?

783

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

784

*[Sandy Martin]*

We do need to clamp down on drug deals and to  
ensure that the supply of hard drugs is curtailed, but,  
ultimately, we will not build a better society, free from  
the scourge of hard drugs, unless we can build a society  
where everyone feels valued and able to contribute. Let  
us make sure that all our citizens can have the education  
that they deserve, the counselling and the psychiatric  
help that they need, when they need it, the employment  
that makes the best use of their talents, access to a full  
and vibrant social life, safe, adequate and affordable  
housing and a healthy environment. People will then  
have lives that they value, and that they know others  
value, and will not want to turn to hard drugs to escape  
from their lives.

5.16 pm

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): May I congratulate my  
hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin) on  
a brilliant maiden speech? It was one of five exquisite,  
eloquent, factual and well-informed maiden speeches  
that we have heard today. I have visited all those towns  
other than Ipswich, although I do hope that, at some  
stage, I will visit his football club and make it five out  
of five. I congratulate all five new Members on those  
speeches.

Interestingly, the facts provided by each one so eloquently  
are not matched—as is ever the case in a debate on drugs  
—by the so-called facts provided in many contributions.  
It always saddens me that, when it comes to debates on  
drugs, people quote from other people's briefings rather  
than do their own empirical research. I could give very  
many examples of that, but I will confine myself to just  
one—safe injecting rooms.

I have been to safe injecting rooms in many places  
across the world. I have been to them in this country.  
Yes, they do exist in this country—not officially—and  
they can be effective in some situations for some people.  
They also have many downsides. The debate about the  
downsides and the upsides among the very people who  
run them are part of the larger debate. One of the  
problems is that they tend to be most effective in the  
heart of big cities, normally in so-called red light areas  
with significant amounts of street prostitution. That is  
where they tend to be most effective for some of the  
most vulnerable in society. Safe injecting in those places  
certainly saves lives, but what is found every time is that  
the majority of clientele who come in are passing tourists.  
That is because these places are known, they are visible  
and they are in the middle of big cities—of course those  
kind of zones are in the middle of big cities.

Sydney provides us with a good example, but there are  
many others places where that debate on their effectiveness  
has been a big problem. The ones in the Netherlands,  
which are not called safe injecting rooms, are not officially  
designated and are not public, are actually very effective.  
I call them retirement homes, because that is what they  
are. Cups of tea are available and the people there are  
very much of the same age profile—slightly younger—as  
those in retirement residences or social projects in this  
country. Clean needles, cups of tea, biscuits and advice  
are provided if required. The spaces are safe, they work  
and they save lives.

If we want, when it comes to injection, to save lives in  
this country, introducing Naloxone for paramedics would,  
overnight, have far bigger consequences, as has been

demonstrated; there are thousands of medical tracts on  
drugs. The Australians have used Naloxone in dealing  
with overdoses for the past 15 years; that is why they  
have far fewer deaths from overdoses. Its introduction  
in this country would be a major step forward in dealing  
with deaths.

I came to this subject in 2002, when 13 of my constituents  
died from heroin overdoses in one year. After a year of  
research, in which I went around the world with GPs to  
see what worked and what did not, I overwhelmingly  
came to the conclusion that what works is not politicians  
telling each other whether cannabis is good, bad, strong  
or weak, or what to do with this or that drug; it is  
trusting the experts—the medical experts.

All the debate today has been about illegal drugs, but  
probably the biggest single problem in this country, in  
terms of addiction and the number of people misusing  
drugs, is legal drugs—prescription and over-the-counter  
drugs; volume-wise and, I suspect, death-wise, that is a  
bigger problem. I could not have disagreed more with  
the Minister when she said that her test for her children—I  
am trying to quote her exactly—was whether the drug  
was available at Boots. No; what is available over the  
counter at Boots or any other chemists is a problem in  
the war on drugs. The over-prescription of drugs, and  
the illegal sale of prescription drugs in our communities,  
is a massive problem that, volume-wise, far outweighs  
the other problems.

When we talk about drugs, we are not talking about  
one thing. It is like talking about food; I suspect that a  
vegetarian would not want to be provided simply with  
“food” for a meal, if they visited one of us; they would  
probably want a certain type of food. We should trust  
medical expertise. In my area, after a battle, I got a  
system set up whereby if someone had a substance  
misuse problem—heroin being the biggest one—they  
went in through the front door of their GP's practice. It  
took me six months of battling to make sure that every  
GP's practice took part in that, and six months to  
ensure that it was the front door, not the back door. It  
took me three months to make sure that it was a GP,  
rather than a drug worker. Anyone can be a drug worker  
—there is no qualification for being one—but not anyone  
can be a GP; the standard, in my view, is satisfactorily  
high in this country.

Guess what we found? There has been a lot of talk of  
rehabilitation, but I will tell hon. Members the biggest  
rehabilitation that someone on heroin can get: it is  
going through the front door of their GP's practice, like  
everybody else in the community—like their mother,  
father, brother, sister, and sometimes their kids. It is  
going through the same door and seeing the same GP.  
Strangely, that is rehabilitating and normalising. It takes  
people back into society—and it is dirt cheap: the  
biggest single cost of this in my area is from the dental  
treatment, because those with a significant substance  
misuse problem do not tend to go to dentists. They go  
into treatment; I do not know what the treatment is,  
though I know some of the modalities, but the treatment  
is not my decision, or the decision of a politician, a  
councillor, the police, the criminal justice system, or a  
drug worker; the GP decides on the treatment. Strangely,  
these people wanted dental treatment; that was the  
highest single cost. Strangely, people who have had  
dental treatment have a far better chance of getting  
through a job interview than those who have had no

785

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

786

treatment for five or 10 years. A job means a bit more  
rehabilitation, and if the local council has its act together  
it can provide proper housing.

What happens when people have better teeth, the  
ability to go to their GP through the front door, a job  
and secure housing? What we found was that people  
stopped dying. There were 13 deaths in 2002, and over  
the next 11 years there were two. Vast numbers of  
people got back into work; they paid taxes—they were  
inrehabilitation.ForgetthestatisticsthattheGovernment  
give out about who is in treatment and who is not—I  
will talk in a moment about how the system has fiddled  
the figures since 2010—because a good statistic is the  
number of people paying taxes.

What is the saving? It is hard to quantify, but I can  
certainly quantify one thing. In 2002 the yearly average  
for the number of overdose admissions to Bassetlaw  
hospital was 170, each of which cost £4,000. That  
yearly average was immediately reduced to under 40,  
and it stayed like that for the next 11 years. That meant  
a saving of £500,000 a year for a small hospital. Some  
people were worried that the hospital would need security  
staff and cameras, to guard against all the drug addicts  
coming in, but there were far fewer drug addicts, far  
fewer overdoses andfar fewerhospital admissions. That  
meant a direct saving. Remind me, Mr Deputy Speaker,  
which constituency had the biggest fall in acquisitive  
crime in the whole of the United Kingdom?

**Hon. Members:** Bassetlaw!

**John Mann:** Mr Deputy Speaker, you are ever wise, ever  
accurate and ever factual. Bassetlaw saw a 400% reduction  
in acquisitive crime. Why? Because it was the drug  
addicts committing most of the crime.

For 11 years people could go through the front door  
of their GP's surgery. Not everyone was happy. I have  
read the medical advice—not all of it, but hundreds and  
thousands of papers—and basically there is a two-thirds  
success rate for chronic relapsing illness, meaning that  
two thirds will be sorted, wherever the illness is, and a  
third never will be. There is a cohort of people who will  
always have problems, and they tend to go in and out of  
prison regardless, buttherearefarfewerof them because  
we have reduced the number by two thirds, leading to  
huge savings.

That does not totally solve the problem, but it allows  
the rest of the community to get on with their lives  
without being plagued. Pensioners were not having  
their windows smashed every five minutes by people  
who stole a fiver—the normal heroin theft is to break a  
pensioner's window and grab the first thing in sight.  
The fear and the cost of repairing the window is far  
bigger. Frankly, I think that if most pensioners knew  
they would just leave the fiver outside. That is what life  
was like.

What do the Government do? Two things. First—this  
is a big improvement in this new drugs strategy—they  
say, “Recovery, recovery, recovery. We are not going to  
bother maintaining anybody.” That change is vital.  
That is what they did in the Netherlands, France, Sweden,  
Australia and New Zealand—in fact, in every country  
I went to. They all left it to the doctors.

In 2002 only three countries did not have health  
authorities in charge of drugs policy: the United States—  
obviously—us and Iran. When I went to Iran to talk  
about drugs policy, I found that they had just changed it.

They had done that—this is my assessment, not what  
people there said—because, basically, all the drug addicts  
had been sent to be looked after by the religious leaders,  
who would put them in recovery. But it did not work,  
which was undermining the religious leaders. So those  
at the top in Iran sent people over to Australia to study  
the medical system there, and they came back and  
introduced it in Iran, which therefore now has a medicalised  
system—and there are big improvements. You see, doctors  
are rather good at treating people because they know  
whattheyaredoing.Yes, they sometimes use methadone  
or buprenorphine treatments, and sometimes they bring  
in mental health therapies, but the system worked well  
through the NHS.

What have we done? In 2010, we threw all that out the  
window and gave it to the local councils, and all of  
them—including Labour councils—in their great stupidity  
privatised it. What do those Labour councillors say?  
“We know better than the GPs and the NHS. It's got to  
be joined up. It's got to be more than the NHS.” So they  
took it away from the NHS and, since 2013 in my  
constituency, people have not been able to walk through  
the front door of their GP practices.

Guess what has happened? I had a meeting on Saturday,  
in Retford. There have been hardly any burglaries in  
Retford in the last 100 years, but there are record  
numbers this year. Who is committing them? The  
druggies—people who are drug addicted but cannot go  
through the front door of their GP practice as they  
could before. I cannot get them in. I used to guarantee  
to every family: “I'll get you an appointment within a  
couple of days.” And I did, and it was easy. They went  
in and saw their GP. They engaged with their GP, and it  
was hugely successful.

My recommendation to the Government and to my  
own party—perhaps my right hon. Friend the Member  
for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott)  
will pass this on to my leader—is to put this portfolio in  
health. That is what the Labour party policy review  
that I chaired in 2009 recommended, and it had  
4,000 submissions. The leader at the time and the one  
after him ignored it. Third time lucky. Put the portfolio  
in health and say that a critical part of the policy is that  
the NHS—primary care GPs—will manage the patients.  
Say that people in this country have the right to be  
treated by their GP. Yes, more is needed from other  
services—absolutely: getting people into jobs, keeping  
control of crime and getting people into stable housing,  
but the NHS is at the heart of the issue.

By the way, why on earth have the Scottish Government  
moved away from their successes a few years ago in  
places like Glasgow towards this nonsense of people  
coming out of the recovery system after six months?  
The Government said, “Six months and that's it—out  
you come.” That appears to have changed.

**Sarah Newton** *indicated assent.*

**John Mann:** If it has, that is brilliant, but we should  
never have gone back to that nonsense in the first place;  
I am sure the Minister will blame the Liberals. That is  
what we had in 2002: the revolving door. “Oh, you're  
out—you're clean.” “Who says I'm clean?” “Well it's six  
months. You have to be.”It was a bit like howit is in the  
prisons: strangely, someone has some Naltrexone and  
“Oops! You're clean!” That is the stats fiddled. Frankly,  
I could fiddle those stats. It is the system that does it.  
Totally meaningless.

787

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

788

*[John Mann]*

Let us have a bit of honesty. We would still have a  
problem. We would not get rid of it all. Dealing with  
Spice is not as straightforward as dealing with heroin,  
and the GPs do not have all the answers. But if someone  
with an addiction goes to a GP, the GP pulls in mental  
health services, and that does work. Across the world,  
people have found that. So let us not misquote what  
happened in Portugal, where I have been, because what  
I am talking about is the key to that system. Let us not  
misquote what happens in the Netherlands, where they  
have kicked out most of the coffee houses and they  
specifically demonise heroin—very sensibly at the time,  
in my view. The position for quite a while was, “Our  
problem is heroin. Do what you want, but you're not  
doing heroin”, and they got on top of it. We are not in  
that situation, so we do not need that kind of overly  
crude approach. We can look at what the Swedes do  
and what the French do. In France, the GPs will not do  
it. With single-practice GPs working from their own  
home, it is easy—go to the local chemist and get the  
prescription, and do not even bother supervising it. Do  
not complicate it, that is my advice, and then we will get  
better results.

I can only give it as I see it. I have got the documents—the  
research is there. To new colleagues in all parts of the  
House, I say, “Read the assessments of what has happened,  
because there is a plethora of materials that demonstrate  
this.” We will not get rid of the problem, but we can  
significantly be on top of the problem. There are some  
improvements, but frankly not enough. Yet again, the  
Home Office is the wrong Department. Of course the  
police advisers all want to decriminalise drugs, because  
it gets crime down. I have heard this for 15 years: “If we  
decriminalised and didn't arrest, crime would come  
down and the problem would be solved.” No, that is not  
the answer. Lots of good stuff could be done in terms of  
how we police and do not police. There are lessons we  
could learn from abroad.

The starting point is to shift the portfolio to health.  
We should be bold enough to say, “It doesn't fit in with  
how this place works, but we're doing it anyway. When  
we're in power the portfolio will be in health.” That in  
itself would transform the situation in this country  
because then we would have to make sure that primary  
care is funded and would be able to stop wasting money  
elsewhere. Local councils: love them or loathe them,  
they haven't got a clue—big error. We should tell our  
Labour councils, “Stop privatising and give it back to  
the NHS.”

5.36 pm

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): What a  
pleasure it is to follow my hon. Friend the Member for  
Bassetlaw (John Mann). I agree with him on doing one's  
own research and reading the papers, but also on respecting  
professional expertise. Although I am afraid I come to  
slightly different conclusions on some aspects, there is a  
lot of agreement between us, particularly on locating  
the problem in the Department of Health.

I pay particular tribute to the hon. Members who  
have made their maiden speeches today. My hon. Friend  
the Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi), the hon. Member  
for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), and my hon.  
Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull West and  
Hessle (Emma Hardy), for Wolverhampton South West

(Eleanor Smith) and for Ipswich (Sandy Martin) all  
made wonderful, inspiring and rousing speeches. They  
set a very high bar for themselves, as well as their  
colleagues, over the coming years.

I thank the hon. Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt)  
for his suggestion that there should be a royal commission  
on drugs that looks carefully, thoroughly and objectively  
at the evidence. My hon. Friend the Member for  
Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) provided very moving  
examples of how our legal structure is currently failing  
people. The right hon. Member for North Norfolk  
(Norman Lamb) and my hon. Friend the Member for  
Newport West (Paul Flynn) also gave inspiring and  
helpful speeches.

Over the past six months, following the advice of my  
hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw, I have had the  
great privilege of being exposed to a range of different  
experts, specialists, academics and interventions in my  
own constituency and beyond as I have been part of the  
process of making a BBC documentary on the use of  
drugs. I have been involved as an MP and as a citizen of  
a city with above-average rates of drug use and drug  
misuse, and with exceptionally forward-thinking, effective  
drug misuse services, including, but not only, GPs. The  
makers of the documentary have followed me around—  
veritably stalked me at times. They assessed the impact  
of the abuse and misuse of alcohol and other drugs—I  
am going to keep using that phrase—on my constituents  
and facilitated meetings between me and people with  
specialist knowledge and skills. The results will be broadcast  
in three parts this autumn. I have not seen it. Other  
documentaries may well be available, but I urge hon.  
Members to see what they made.

As part of that process, I have met local organisations  
commissioning or providing services to people with  
drug problems. I particularly pay tribute to the Bristol  
Drugs Project and DHI—Developing Health and  
Independence—along with commissioners in Bristol  
City Council. They have been extremely generous and  
patient with their time to educate and inform me, and  
also in being willing to listen to questions and ideas  
with which they did not necessarily agree, and vice  
versa—that is, ideas that I did not initially agree with  
but have been able to see the point of.

I have met people in support groups and programmes  
who are in the process of desisting from alcohol and  
other drug misuse. I have visited Horfield prison, which  
is in my constituency. I have been briefed on the nature  
of drug use—particularly the use of Spice—and its  
impact on the prison, the staff and the prisoners. I have  
met specialists including Sir David Nutt, the leading  
psychologist,pharmacologistandpsychiatrist,whoformerly  
chaired the Advisory Committee on the Misuse of  
Drugs, and Dr Ben Sessa, consultant child and adolescent  
and addiction psychiatrist at Imperial College, to discuss  
the research and evidence base for and against our  
current drugs policy.

I met a specialist drug safety tester from the Loop  
project, which provides free and confidential drug  
counselling and testing of substances—without, hon.  
Members may be pleased to hear, returning those  
substances. I was puzzled to hear that, but the testers  
cannot return substances to the people who have asked  
to have them tested, because that would be classed as  
drug dealing. I do not think that that is helpful, but it  
does at least provide people with information about the  
quality of what they might be about to take.

789

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

790

I was told by the Loop project that, as a result of its  
work, not only are people better informed about what  
they might be taking—whether or not it has been cut  
with impurities, including concrete—but if they discover  
that a substance is unsafe to take, they hand in quantities  
of drugs voluntarily. It is a way of cleaning up the  
supply of very unsafe drugs, as well as giving people the  
information they need to make a well-informed choice  
about whether, when and how to consume drugs. I  
discussed with Loop the purpose and function of drug  
consumption rooms. I take on board what my hon.  
Friend the Member for Bassetlaw has said, because he  
has far more experience in this matter than I have, but I  
am interested to know more about the various pilots  
and the research that he mentioned.

I met homelessness organisations and homeless people  
who have compounding problems on top of drug and  
alcohol problems. I discussed with my campaign volunteers,  
staff and local residents their concerns about drug  
misuse, which are many and varied. I did various drug  
impact walks through my own constituency, looking  
around me, talking to people and identifying the problems  
that have both a visible and an invisible impact on local  
people.

I have analysed my own experience, as a long-term  
resident of the area, of how the use and misuse of drugs  
has affected the local area over the years, and how and  
why it has changed. I have, as a consequence, made  
many reports to the local drugs litter cleaning services.  
That is one of the consequences of the current regime  
that we would do well to address, and we should at least  
consider the use of drug consumption rooms because it  
would reduce nuisance to other people. I have also had  
to respond to extremely unpleasant side effects of alcohol  
and drug misuse on my own doorstep, both at home  
and in the entrance to my constituency office.

I have done a great deal of reading of the research on  
the impact of our current legal system and support  
services on the use and misuse of alcohol and other  
drugs. I thank everybody who has given me their time  
and attention during this process, which has been hugely  
educational, influenced my thinking and informed my  
beliefs. I particularly thank the BBC team, Bart, Ae,  
Poppy and Hugo, for making me part of such an  
interesting process.

To inform my response to the drug strategy, I contacted  
many of the people I have mentioned, and I analysed  
the findings of various papers by the Advisory Council  
on the Misuse of Drugs and other evidence against the  
scope and detail of the strategy. As a result of that  
review, although I applaud aspects of the strategy—I  
will mention them shortly—I have the following criticisms.  
The strategy does not include an explicit aim of reducing  
or, ideally, eliminating premature deaths caused by drug  
use. I would really like to see that front and centre. The  
strategy virtually, although not completely, ignores the  
most harmful drug. I say respectfully to the Minister  
that alcohol is a drug, and one that is entirely legal; I  
will come back to that shortly. The Government's welcome  
acceptance of evidence-based treatments for drug misuse  
and mental health problems is a step forward, but it is  
undermined, as colleagues have said, by the lack of a  
funding strategy to support it. The strategy fails to take  
on key recommendations from the report published last  
year by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs  
on preventing opiate-related deaths.

Finally, I must add my voice to those of others who  
have said that the strategy represents a wasted opportunity,  
when the Government could have reviewed the entire  
legislative framework surrounding alcohol and other  
drugs and made it consistent, evidence-based and focused  
on harm reduction for all drug use. I echo the suggestion  
made by the hon. Member for Reigate that a commission  
should do what I believe the Government could have  
done over the last two years.

The strategy opens with the ambition

“for fewer people to use drugs in the first place”,  
and for those who do, to

“help them to stop and to live a life free from dependence.”  
However, that ignores the fact that many people take  
drugs recreationally, free from dependence and free  
from the harm caused to other people that results from  
some drug use. They are at risk of causing some harm  
to themselves, and such harms tend to arise from the  
criminal justice framework that we wrap around them.  
We should have the ambitions to reduce harm and  
prevent deaths—I support the aim to reduce harm, and  
I want to increase recovery from dependence—but I also  
want to take us as a country towards a fully evidence-based,  
open-minded approach to both.

Most of the means of preventing death in the “Reducing  
Opioid-Related Deaths in the UK” report by the ACMD  
last year, which I mentioned earlier, have been ignored  
in the strategy. For instance, drug testing—I mean not  
testing of people to see if they have taken drugs, but of  
drugs to see what they have in them—as well as the  
provision of drug consumption rooms and a wider  
examination of forms of treatment have all been ignored  
either partially or wholly. The strategy ducks the fact  
that much of the use of alcohol and other drugs takes  
place with comparatively little or no harm identified by  
the user, and frequently with great pleasure, which  
therefore undermines some of the messages given in the  
strategy. If users do not themselves experience their  
drug taking in a way described by the strategy, they are  
likely to dismiss all of the good stuff in it. Harms arise  
from the unregulated nature of the market. The organisation  
Loop has shown me one of the huge life-saving benefits  
of being able to test drugs such as ecstasy in clubs and  
festivals. I want the full protection of regulation, education,  
testing and a licensing regime to be given to all my  
constituents, not just those whose drug of choice is the  
legally available one of alcohol.

I must say that there are some aspects of the strategy  
that I very much welcome, such as the emphasis on  
prevention and the use of compulsory personal, social  
and health and economic education, which is now part  
of the curriculum, to increase the awareness and  
understanding of young people. By the way, I say to the  
Government, “You're welcome”. It took us a while to  
convince the Government that this needed to happen,  
but Opposition Members are always pleased when the  
Government realise we have got something right. I am  
also very pleased that the drug strategy recognises the  
limitations of some educational approaches, such as the  
format of lectures by the police or reformed addicts.  
Such approaches tend not to have a good evidence base,  
and I am glad the Government have recognised that.

I also want to say that the two drugs that have  
arguably caused me the greatest personal harm are two  
legal drugs—alcohol and tobacco. I am sure everybody

791

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

792

*[Thangam Debbonaire]*

in the House knows about the link between tobacco  
consumption and lung cancer and many may also know  
about the link between alcohol consumption and liver  
cancer, but it was not until I was diagnosed with breast  
cancer that I learned about the causal links between  
alcohol consumption and other cancers. While I was  
being treated, I was contacted by a publican about the  
new NICE guidelines on alcohol consumption. He claimed  
that they were biased and in favour of teetotalism, and  
he was very angry about what he said was an unnecessary  
and unwelcome bias, given that the guidelines say that  
there is no “safe” level of alcohol consumption. I therefore  
read the guidelines and all the research review papers  
informing the guidelines—I was on sick leave, so I had  
time to do so—and I came to the carefully considered  
conclusion that the guidelines were both accurate and  
helpful.

It was helpful to me to know that there is no safe level  
of alcohol consumption, and reading the research papers  
helped to convince me that the abstemiousness, as far as  
I could possibly manage it, that I had fallen into during  
chemotherapy was something I wished to keep to for  
the sake of my own health after the treatment ended.  
This was all news to me: I did not know until I had  
breast cancer that alcohol was so closely linked to it.  
Since then, I have realised how many other people are  
not aware of the wide, many and varied risks associated  
with alcohol, which is a completely legal drug. Alcohol  
is available on these very premises, and no doubt somebody  
somewhere is in the process of consuming that legal  
drug right now. At the risk of sounding like Nana from  
“The Royle Family”, I have—with the exception of a  
very small glass of bubbly at weddings and perhaps a  
sweet sherry at Christmas—stuck to my non-consumption  
of alcohol, and I have to say that I feel all the better for  
it. That is a good example of how providing accurate  
information about a drug can inform someone's decision  
making.

Alcohol is at the top end of the most harmful substances  
both to the user and to others—it is more harmful than  
heroin, in fact—but if I fall off the alcohol-free wagon  
by going into a shop or a pub and buying some alcohol,  
I at least know that it will not have been cut with  
something much more poisonous. I know that I am not  
risking my job by breaking the law and I know that I  
will be picked up afterwards if dropping off the wagon  
causes me problems. I believe that the regulatory,  
information and licensing systems for alcohol provide a  
great template for reforming the law on other drugs. I  
am not knocking anybody else's right to choose to  
drink alcohol; I just want parity for my constituents  
who use other drugs.

I want to say quickly that I am not sure where the  
money will come from for everything, because money  
was conspicuously absent from the strategy. Other Members  
have drawn attention to that and perhaps others who  
are still to come will do too. That is a big omission.  
Whether it is in interventions purely in the health service,  
which my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw referred  
to, or in drug treatment programmes, specialist programmes  
or mental health services, the cuts by this Government  
in local government, the health service and elsewhere  
have been felt across the board. There is no good way to  
carry out any of the very good proposals in the strategy

without adequate funding. Mental health services and  
drug and alcohol services all need to be properly funded.  
As I am sure the Government are aware, there is a  
2.5 return on investment. I hope that the Minister will  
address that point in her closing remarks.

Something that is very personal to me is the prevention  
of drug-related deaths, particularly those from heroin.  
People in my life have lost theirs to drug addiction,  
including addiction to heroin and alcohol. That is why I  
want to be clear that when I talk about reforming our  
laws, I am not saying that these drugs are good to take; I  
am just saying that if we are clear that alcohol is not  
good for us and yet it is legal, well-regulated and  
licensed, we at least ought to look at why we are failing  
people with a heroin addiction, people who use drugs  
recreationally and do not have an addiction problem,  
and the people around drug users. The hearts that are  
broken through heroin-related deaths go much wider  
than the people who use the drug.

The number of opioid-related deaths has gone up  
year on year since 2010. I thoroughly applaud the  
Minister for saying that she wants an evidence-based  
approach, but she appears to have ignored the conclusions  
and findings of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of  
Drugs that came out just last year. It reminded us that  
there were 2,479 drug-related deaths in 2015 alone, so  
keeping drugs illegal is clearly not preventing death.

Among the report's findings was this:

“That the UK has high-quality systems for the recording of  
opioid-related deaths,”—  
which is good—

“but that more could be done to improve national information,  
especially on toxicology and prescribing, as well as on the contribution  
of opioid use to levels of mortality from other causes.”

Data collection is partially addressed by the Minister in  
the strategy, but I would like further information, if  
possible.

The report also states that

“a probable cause of the recent increases in drug-related deaths...is  
the existence of a prematurely ageing cohort of people who have  
been using heroin since the 1980s and 1990s.”

It states that other contributory causes of those recent  
increases are

“multiple health risks. among an ageing cohort of heroin or  
opioid users, deepening of socio-economic deprivation since the  
financial crisis of 2008, and changes to drug treatment and  
commissioning practices.”

The paper goes on to make some very sensible  
suggestions, which I urge the Minister to remind herself  
of. I will remind her of some of them now. It states:

“There are a number of evidence-based approaches that can be  
used to reduce the risk of death among people who use opioids.  
The strongest evidence supports the provision of opioid substitution  
treatment (OST) of optimal quality, dosage and duration.”  
I know that the Minister is aware of that. However, the  
report goes on to say:

“Other substance misuse treatment options could be further  
developed in order to reduce the risk of death including broader  
provision of naloxone,”—

for hon. Members who do not know, that is a substance  
that can be used to halt and then reverse the effects of  
overdoses, thus saving lives—

“heroin-assisted treatment for those for whom other forms of  
OST are not effective, medically-supervised drug consumption  
clinics, treatment for alcohol problems, and assertive outreach to  
engage heroin users who are not in treatment into OST (especially  
for those who are homeless and/or have mental health problems).”

793

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

794

We are all harmed by a failure to address those issues.  
We are harmed when we are troubled by the homeless  
person on the street who is clearly suffering; by the  
relative or friend of a friend who goes without the  
treatment that they need; or by someone who dies  
needlessly of an overdose when it could have been  
prevented by safe use in a drug consumption clinic,  
accompanied by counselling to try to engage that person  
in drug cessation. I want us to notice that we are all  
harmed by that, not just those who are using drugs.

The strategy recognises the record high levels of deaths  
and drug misuse and it makes some recommendations,  
such as that all local areas should have appropriate  
naloxone provision in place, but the Bristol Drugs Project,  
which has such a distribution system, tells me that it is  
unable to get to everyone who is at risk of heroin  
overdose. I would like it to have the funding it needs to  
reach more people and prevent more deaths. The Advisory  
Council on the Misuse of Drugs also recommended the  
drug consumption clinics that I have mentioned, and  
discussions with people in the sector and with other  
specialists lead me to believe that investing in drug  
consumption spaces, where drug users can have their  
drugs tested, receive counselling and, above all, consume  
drugs safely and with no associated harms to the rest of  
us, would be money well invested or at least worth  
exploring further. We would gain in the reduced cost to  
emergency services, local council cleaning services and  
the prevention of drug-related deaths.

I turn to the obvious contradictions in our laws on  
alcohol and other drugs. On criminalisation, the ACMD  
has mixed views, but the Government are unequivocal—  
they are opposed to reforming the Misuse of Drugs  
Act 1971. The strategy states:

“We have no intention of decriminalising drugs. Drugs are  
illegal because scientific and medical analysis has shown they are  
harmful to human health”—  
I do not disagree. It continues:

“Drug misuse is also associated with much wider societal  
harms including family breakdown, poverty, crime and anti-social  
behaviour.”

Those I would qualify. As others have said, and I  
reiterate, that argument simply does not hold water.  
The research review carried out by Professor David  
Nutt for *The Lancet* shows that alcohol is by far the  
most dangerous drug in the UK for harms to others  
and harms to the user. It is far more harmful to other  
people than any other drug, including heroin, crack,  
methamphetamine, cocaine, cannabis and tobacco, but  
it is regulated, with licensing conditions and ways to  
protect users if it is their drug of choice.

The hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria  
Atkins) mentioned the awful people who deal in drugs  
and use violence. I agree: I want to protect my constituents  
from falling prey to that violence and abuse. She also  
mentions the harms that vulnerable people suffer when  
they are forced to traffic drugs. I agree, and I want to  
avoid those harms, but I respectfully disagree with her  
—it is the criminal nature of the drugs trade that causes  
those harms. That is my interpretation of the evidence,  
and I urge hon. Members to consider the suggestion by  
the hon. Member for Reigate of a royal commission to  
examine that further.

If we are to take an approach of making a substance  
illegal because scientific and medical analysis has shown  
it is harmful to human health, we need to make alcohol  
and tobacco illegal. Are the Government proposing that?

No, they are not, and I do not want them to. I would  
simply invite them to consider that their entire rationale  
for maintaining the legal status quo is undermined by  
that. It would be far more effective to tackle the harms  
done to others and to the user to review the entire  
criminal law associated with alcohol and other drugs,  
and to consider reforming it to make it truly evidence  
based.

Before I conclude, I want to add some comments and  
caveats on the wider social rationale. Some people think—  
and some hon. Members have implied it today—that  
drug harms are the responsibility of the individual and,  
if people choose to use drugs, they should be left to take  
the consequences without the taxpayer having to pick  
up the tab. I know that the Minister does not agree with  
that approach and I am glad about that. To those  
people, I say that we are all picking up the tab anyway—in  
the huge costs of policing drug use, accidental overdose  
and so on. We are also picking up the tab when people  
in our own lives are harmed by drugs. It is no use saying  
that it is always someone else's child, parent or sibling.  
Many sober people who have never taken any drugs are  
affected by a relative or friend's drug use, whether cash  
is stolen from them to pay for drug use or in having  
to deal with the impact of overdoses or the health  
consequences of substances added to drugs.

The social and economic cost of drug supply in  
England and Wales is estimated to be £10.7 billion a  
year, just over half of which—£6 billion—is attributed  
to drug-related acquisitive crime. Would that we could  
reform that—and I think the Minister should take this  
opportunity to consider that there are ways of reforming it.

I want all Members to take a moment to be quite  
imaginative. I want them to imagine the nature of the  
shops that currently exist for people to buy drugs if they  
wish to. Those drug shops are already all around us, but  
they are dangerous, they are illegal, they are unregulated,  
they are untaxed and they are unlicensed, unless your  
drug of choice is alcohol.

Why do we not decide to do something different with  
that £10.7 billion a year? Why do we not decide that we  
will treat drug misuse as a health and social problem  
rather than a criminal problem, and direct the funds  
towards treatment and recovery for those who need it?  
Why do we not also recognise that the harms done by  
legal drugs are in excess of those done by illegal drugs,  
and decide to reduce or even end the harms caused by  
the illegal nature of some of those drugs? I want Members  
to focus their minds on the harms done by the drugs  
rather than by a legal situation which could be reformed.

Why do we not acknowledge that some people are  
consuming both harmful illegal drugs and legal drugs  
right now, but at least those consuming legal drugs will  
be doing so in the knowledge that the strength and  
purity of the substance that they are consuming is  
regulated, so they can make informed choices? Why do  
we not become really brave, and decide that if we are  
going to treat alcohol and tobacco in a certain way—and  
yes, rightly provide education and information to help  
people to make those informed choices, and treatment  
for those whose consumption has started to harm them  
or others—we should provide parity of protection,  
information and education in relation to other drugs?

Let me very clear about this. There is no safe level of  
consumption of any drug, be it legal or otherwise. The  
only way to be completely safe from the harms of

795

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

796

*[Thangam Debbonaire]*consumption of any drug, including alcohol, is not to  
consume it at all. Having access to good-quality information  
gives people the opportunity to make evidence-informed  
decisions for themselves about whether and how to  
consume alcohol or other drugs. Relying on the law to  
inform decision-making is not working, It skews the  
decision entirely in favour of the most dangerous drug.  
I am sure that many people have no idea of the links  
between alcohol consumption and cancer, for example.

I am not suggesting that we should jump straight to  
full legalisation of all drugs. I am simply raising the  
importance of considering whether and how to revise  
the legal framework for all drugs. If we are to have an  
evidence-based system of response to the consumption  
of alcohol and other drugs, it must focus on harm  
reduction. It must treat the harms as social and health  
harms when they are social and health harms, and as  
criminal only when it is necessary to treat them as such.

We urgently need the royal commission referred to by  
the hon. Member for Reigate, and we need to be able to  
have a well-informed, honest and open debate about the  
regulation of alcohol and other drugs in order to reduce  
avoidable harm, increase informed decision-making,  
and end the deaths caused by alcohol and all other  
drugs.

6.2 pm

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD):  
One of the joys of being called so late in the debate is  
being able to hear the arguments on both sides. I have  
found it genuinely informative, and I thank everyone for  
their contributions, especially those who made maiden  
speeches today. As a newbie myself, I can only tell them  
that it does get easier.

We have a very special person in the room with us  
today—so special, indeed, that she and her campaign  
have been mentioned at several points during the debate.  
She is a constituent of mine called Anne-Marie Cockburn,  
and she is the mother of a child whose name may also  
be familiar to Members, because she too has been  
mentioned today. The story is so poignant, and so  
relevant to everything that we are talking about, that I  
hope the House will indulge me and allow me to tell it  
more fully so that everyone can understand why so  
many Members included it in their speeches, albeit in  
passing. It is the story of Martha Fernback.

Martha died four years ago this week, on 20 July 2013,  
from an accidental drug overdose. She was 15. That  
fateful day, she was out with her friends on a Saturday  
morning to go to a kayaking club; she was too young  
for the other sort. She took—because it was so readily  
available—half a gram of Ecstasy powder, and almost  
immediately started to react. At first, her friends did  
not know what to do. They were worried that they  
would get into trouble, so they hesitated in ringing the  
ambulance when it was clear that Martha was struggling.  
But they did. Then Anne-Marie got the call that every  
parent dreads. An unrecognised number came up on  
her mobile phone screen; she was called to go to the  
John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford. Just two hours after  
first taking the drug, Martha, her beautiful baby girl, died.

What is most extraordinary about this story is that  
the drug was 91% pure—way above the national average  
at the time. Martha thought that she was being safe.

She tried to protect herself. After her death, Anne-Marie  
looked at her online history. Martha knew that she  
wanted to experiment and she knew that there were  
risks, so she did her research. She had some of the  
information, which said beware of impurities, but that  
was not the whole story, as the information was not out  
there about safe dosage. Besides, she had no idea what  
she was taking. In a sense, the drug was almost too  
pure. So she accidentally took too much.

Anne-Marie was a wonderful mother. Martha was  
her only child—her world. They were close. In fact,  
Martha confided to her mum that she wanted to  
experiment—as a teacher, I can tell Members that that  
is very rare—and Anne-Marie did exactly what we all  
tell parents to do. She told Martha to “Just say no”.  
With hindsight, Anne-Marie is clear, and she argues, as  
part of the Anyone's Child campaign, that, had Martha  
taken something legally regulated, with labelled dosage  
and clear safety information, she could have made a  
fully informed choice—not a partially informed choice—  
and, who knows, may even have decided not to do it.

Martha wanted to get high. She did not want to die.  
Perhaps if she had had all the information, she could  
have done for herself what her mother could not, and  
still be with us today.

The story is heart-breaking—I am sure that is why so  
many Members have referred to it today—but it makes  
an important point. Ecstasy is already banned, yet such  
stories still happen. The blanket ban approach is just  
doing more of the same. It fixes nothing of the core  
issue and is the wrong approach. Rather than banning  
and punishing, we should be regulating and educating.  
Taking drugs should be a public health issue, not a  
criminal offence, and I am so happy to hear so many  
Members make that point in the House today. Stories  
such as Martha's happen because we refuse to accept  
that teenagers will always want to take risks. We talk  
about sending a clear message. How do we best get a  
teenager to do something? It is by telling them not to do  
it. I am a teacher and I have educated more than a  
thousand teenagers. Believe me, if I could wrap every  
one of them in a protective blanket and shield them  
from the harm of this world, I would, but if they will  
not do as you say—and they frequently do not—at least  
let them be safe in what they do.

Martha's story is terrifying. It is natural to want to  
clamp down and stop it happening to anyone at all ever.  
I have immense sympathy for those who believe that  
that is the right approach. To hear the Home Secretary  
say that she wants a drug-free world is laudable, but I  
am afraid that I believe it is naive and it fundamentally  
fails to understand how teenagers really think and  
behave.

One of the reasons the Liberal Democrats argue for  
decriminalising drugs for personal use is that we want  
to encourage a proper debate and to encourage users to  
seek help. Our priority should not be to punish people  
caught with drugs—perhaps Martha's friends would  
have called the ambulance earlier had they not felt that  
that was a problem. Our priority should be to increase  
access to treatment for anyone who is suffering from  
drug dependency.

It is time for us to recognise that our old approaches  
have not worked and to stop repeating the same mistakes  
of the so-called “war on drugs” time and again. We  
need a more constructive and evidence-based approach:

797

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

798

one that focuses on education and, when it is needed, on  
rehabilitation and treatment; and one that will finally  
take meaningful steps to reduce the harms that drugs  
have done to too many families across the country.

I urge the Government: let us be brave and open up  
this debate. We need to wake up and face the facts.  
Prohibition does not work; all it does is make a natural  
instinct taboo. It puts up barriers between children and  
their parents, and it drives the problems underground,  
and into the hands of drug dealers and gangs who,  
frankly, could not care less about children like Martha—  
their customers.

I urge the Government to think again. This is the  
wrong approach. It did not help Martha then and it will  
not help others like her now, or in the future.

6.10 pm

**Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): This has been a  
powerful and moving debate, and I am proud to be a  
part of it. I congratulate all my fellow new Members  
who have made their maiden speeches today. We are  
fresh-faced people from the outside coming into this  
place, bringing our experience as part of our communities,  
and, I am afraid, that experience will always include  
drugs.

My initial interest in drugs policy came about from  
my work over 18 years for the shop workers' union  
USDAW. That was not because shop workers are selling  
drugs, but because they are suffering from them. Our  
drugs policy is failing, and it is not just drug users and  
their families who suffer from our failure.

Behind the statistic of £6 billion of losses from crime  
and antisocial behaviour due to drugs, there are thousands  
of innocent people working on the frontline who suffer  
far worse than economic loss. I welcome the fact that we  
now have a drugs strategy, and the commitment to  
better drugs education in our schools. I say that as a  
parent of four children.

I live in the beautiful rural constituency of High  
Peak: small market towns and villages, lovely houses,  
picturesque countryside. But even in beautiful High  
Peak, we have a problem with drugs. We see it when we  
are out in the evening, in our parks, on street corners, or  
even in the mornings when our children are on their way  
to school. I was even approached when out canvassing  
last month.

It is such a widespread problem that we do not have  
the police to deal with it, even before the huge cuts to  
our police numbers, let alone the necessary number of  
courts or prison places. That way of proceeding is not  
only impractical, however; it is also expensive and ineffective,  
and creates criminals out of people who need help, not  
harm.

The associated antisocial behaviour from drug and  
alcohol abuse in our towns and cities is affecting the  
quality of life of all our residents, shoppers and retailers.  
No one agency is able to tackle this problem alone, so  
they feel they have nowhere to turn. Derbyshire police  
and crime commissioner is leading multi-agency working  
of enforcement agencies, local authorities, businesses  
and voluntary organisations, so they are working in  
partnership. There have been positive outcomes already,  
and all sectors will benefit from the work they do. Drug  
services have joined up with those delivering alcohol,  
mental health and homelessness services, and have  
welcomed the intervention by the PCC, who has helped

to set up specialist drugs workers in a local charity, with  
financial contributions from partner agencies, and soon  
from local businesses as well.

So many of us are affected, and that means that there  
is support from all quarters—from communities, parents,  
young people, shop workers, emergency service workers  
and businesses—for effectively tackling our drugs problems.  
Like other Members, I urge the Minister to be bold, and  
not to be tied to the policies of the past or to think that  
there is not support for funding drug policies. When  
there is £2.50 of benefit for every pound of spending on  
tackling our drug problem, people see the need, as well  
as the sense and the benefits, of an effective policy. The  
cuts to drug treatment budgets of up to 50% in some  
areas are a false economy. Drug policy needs ring-fenced  
funding and we need policies that work. This is too  
urgent and widespread a problem for us to tiptoe around  
it any longer.

I urge the Government to be bold in accepting the  
well-researched scientific evidence from their own Advisory  
Council on the Misuse of Drugs. Its evidence shows  
that many drug users need to be persuaded to accept  
treatment. Most drug users do not see their using as a  
problem, and do not see the need for treatment. I am  
afraid that treatment is not everything, however.  
Independent research from the University of Manchester  
shows that those who leave treatment drug-free are just  
as likely to die of an overdose as those who do not. Risk  
of fatal overdose is at its highest in the four weeks after  
leaving opiate substitute treatment—almost four times  
the risk while in treatment. Treatment does not work for  
everyone, and it is sometimes more damaging than no  
treatment. Although there are tragedies, many people  
manage to get by while using drugs, and they often get  
by quite well, especially if they are supported. I therefore  
very much welcome the Government's support through  
housing policy in the drug strategy.

There was not much that I supported in the last  
Conservative manifesto, and I was not alone in that.  
However, I do support the proposal for national insurance  
holidays to support small and medium-sized businesses  
in taking on people in hard-to-reach groups, especially  
those who are users or ex-users of drugs. People who  
are in employment are twice as likely to manage their  
drug use as those who are not. I applaud this forward-  
thinking policy, which has the support of the Federation  
of Small Businesses, and I will support the Government  
in bringing it forward.

Drug taking is a serious problem in every corner of  
our land, from the picturesque rural villages of High  
Peak to our city centres, and we need to work together  
to maximise our effectiveness and the funding available.  
I hope that there will be a representative of the Treasury  
on the new drugs council that the Minister mentioned,  
and that the council can persuade the Treasury of the  
cost-effectiveness of ring-fenced funding. We can afford  
to adopt a decent, far-thinking, science-based policy for  
harm reduction from drugs. We cannot afford not to.

6.17 pm

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): I would like  
to thank hon. and right hon. Members for this incredibly  
wide-ranging, well-informed and thoughtful debate on  
this important issue. The Government's strategy was so  
packed with Home Office jargon and an avoidance of  
any real commitment that the debate has been helpful in  
determining what exactly they intend to do. I will come

799

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

800

*[Louise Haigh]*

back to that point shortly, but first I want to congratulate  
those hon. Members who have spoken out so bravely  
today on an issue that is often toxic and difficult to  
debate honestly. The hon. Member for Reigate (Crispin  
Blunt) made that point eloquently, and that is why his  
idea for a royal commission has been seized on so  
fervently by Members on both sides of the House. That  
would allow us the space to develop a truly evidence-based  
policy and to take the heat out of the debate and shed  
some light on it instead.

I particularly want to congratulate the five Members  
who have made their maiden speeches today. It has been  
an honour and a privilege to sit and listen to them. I  
cringe when I compare my maiden speech two years ago  
with those of the warriors for their constituencies who  
have spoken today. My hon. Friend the Member for  
Slough (Mr Dhesi) made a particularly inspiring maiden  
speech as the first turbaned Sikh to represent any  
constituency in this Parliament. He will be a beacon of  
hope not only for those who look like him but for all the  
others who do not see faces that represent them in  
Parliament at this time. He talked about the glass ceiling  
that has been shattered by his election, and I look  
forward to many more glass ceilings being shattered in  
the months and years to come.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull  
West and Hessle (Emma Hardy)—who is not yet back  
in her place—made an inspiring, witty and entertaining  
speech. I am confident that she will have no less an  
impact on her city than did any of her predecessors. As  
a former primary school teacher, she spoke with a  
passionate voice about the education system, which is  
so important and welcome in the House. My hon.  
Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South West  
(Eleanor Smith) gave a compassionate speech about the  
victims of the drug policies of successive Governments  
and spoke bravely about her experience as an MP. It is  
so important that others join her in calling out the kind  
of abuse that she talked about today. I welcome the  
hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton)  
from the Government Benches. He gave us an enjoyable  
history and, indeed, language lesson, but I am afraid to  
say that I had absolutely no idea what he was saying  
when he spoke in his local potteries dialect. Finally, the  
mark of my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Sandy  
Martin) has clearly already been felt in his constituency,  
and I am confident that it will continue to be felt. He  
made a thoughtful and thorough contribution, which I  
am sure will be the first of many.

There were too many speeches for me to summarise  
them all, but I want to touch on the contributions from  
my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington  
(Jeff Smith) and the hon. Member for Oxford West and  
Abingdon (Layla Moran). Both of them spoke about  
the case of Martha Fernback and the bravery of her  
parents—I believe that they are with us today—who  
came forward after the tragic death of their daughter.  
They referred to the importance of education about  
safe dosage and purity levels, issues which we come  
back to time and time again, and to the case for legal  
regulations and clear safety information, which would  
enable full informed choices that could save lives.

I hope that today's important debate is the start of a  
wider debate around drugs policy because, as has been  
said, very little progress has been made under successive

Governments over the past few years. Unfortunately,  
however, the drug strategy that was announced last  
week does not advance us any further. We should not  
forget that the Government's 2010 drug strategy was  
essentially ripped up in 2013 when they ended the  
ring-fencing of drug rehabilitation and treatment services  
and passed the responsibility to local authorities, which  
were already facing deep cuts. I regret to say that the  
strategy does not appear to even recognise, let alone  
respond to, a climate that has utterly changed since the  
previous publication.

Despite the strategy being so long overdue, the  
Government undertook no formal consultation in its  
development. Where are the voices of drug users, law  
enforcement officers and treatment professionals? Their  
voices must be heard, and each and every one of them  
will tell us that the status quo is not working. It is not  
working for the desperately vulnerable cohort of heroin  
and opioid users with increasingly complex health needs  
who are falling between the gaps of reduced drug  
rehabilitation services and a social care service in crisis.  
It is not working for the homeless community, where  
95% of the population are said to be drug users and  
who are given scant support. It is not working for the  
victims of drug-related crime. It is certainly not working  
for our public services, particularly our police and  
emergency services, which are being left to pick up the  
pieces as services of last resort as the substance use that  
demands their attention soars.

Since the publication of the last strategy, drug-related  
deaths have risen and the number of drug users has  
not fallen. In addition, drug-related crime has placed  
increased pressure on all public services, including the  
NHS and the police. The figures for drug-related deaths  
should shame us all. In 2013, there were 2,955 drug-  
related deaths. In 2015, there were 3,674 deaths—a new  
record. That is a record of failure from this Government  
and their immediate predecessor. Worse still, the  
recommendations of the Government's own advisory  
council are being ignored. The report by the Advisory  
Council on the Misuse of Drugs stated that factors  
such as

“socio-economic changes (including cuts to health and social  
care, welfare benefits and local authority services) and changes in  
treatment services and commissioning practices may also have  
contributed to these increases.”

It suggested that deaths could be reduced by protecting  
“investment in evidence-based drug treatment to promote recovery”,  
investing in the

“provision of medically supervised drug consumption clinics in  
localities with a high concentration of injecting drug use”  
and through the roll-out of heroin-assisted treatment  
for addicts. Finally, it raised concerns that

“drug treatment and prevention services in England are planned  
to be among those public health services that receive the most  
substantial funding cuts as a consequence of the government's  
decision to cut the public health grant”.

Those warnings and recommendations were completely  
and utterly ignored in this week's drugs strategy, which  
offers no new investment and few new ideas. It is a grim  
feature of this Government that the experts are ignored  
when they raise the alarm.

Where do we stand on the Government's current  
drugs strategy? Is it evidence-based, bringing in the  
widest possible array of expert opinion in formulating  
policy? Is it logical, identifying the necessary steps to

801

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

802

achieve the optimal possible outcome? Is it achievable,  
and have the resources been provided that can make a  
significant difference? I am afraid it is none of those  
things.

It is not clear that there has been any meaningful  
wide-ranging consultation process, or that experts across  
the field have been heeded. It is not clear, either, that  
policy has been formulated based on evidence, given the  
deteriorating drug-related mortality rate and the UK's  
uniquely poor performance in that regard. Crucially,  
have any new resources been provided, or is there any  
intention to develop new ideas that would make a  
significant difference to outcomes? It appears not.

To take just one example, the Government's drugs  
strategy document blithely states that

“local authority public health teams should take an integrated  
approach to reducing a range of alcohol related harm, through a  
combination of universal population level interventions and  
interventions targeting at risk groups.”

Alcohol is the biggest single killer when it comes to  
drugs. Alcohol abuse ruins lives, leads to crime, especially  
violent crime, and is a prevalent factor in domestic  
abuse. Its treatment is a huge drain on the NHS, but any  
local councillor or mayor, from whatever party, will be  
amazed at the Government's sheer brass neck in demanding  
that they do more to tackle alcohol and drug abuse  
when their budgets have been cut to the bone. This is  
not localism; it is the devolution of austerity and the  
shifting of responsibility and blame.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): Lancashire constabulary,  
due to cuts, has taken the mental health worker out of  
its police response unit.

**Sarah Newton:** That is out of order.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. I  
reassure the Minister that that is not the case. It is for  
the Chair to decide. Thanks for your help, but you are  
wrong.

**Graham Jones:** Lancashire constabulary, because of  
budget cuts, has had to remove the mental health workers  
who were embedded in its police response unit. Is that  
not an example of the Government asking for something  
to be done while undermining local authorities, which  
are unable to deliver these services?

**Louise Haigh:** The vast majority of the drugs strategy  
is simply about shifting blame on to authorities and  
agencies that have seen their budgets fall and squeezed  
over the last seven years.

Although we welcome the creation of the national  
recovery champion, what good is a national recovery  
champion while the Government are cutting local authority  
budgets, ending the ring fence on public health, slashing  
police resources, cutting back on school funding and  
reducing the resources available to prevention campaigns,  
while mental health waiting lists are through the roof ?  
Help is increasingly inaccessible.

It is not even clear that Ministers have a clear picture  
of the drugs problem overall. Complacently, they point  
to survey evidence that suggests drug misuse is not  
increasing, yet both drug-related hospital admissions  
and deaths are on the increase. Has the Minister considered  
that the survey evidence may not be fully accurate,

especially given that it is confined to 16 to 59-year-olds  
but drug deaths among 50 to 69-year-olds have risen  
sharply? Drug deaths in the latter group have doubled  
in the last eight years in England and Wales, according  
to the Office for National Statistics. We respectfully  
suggest that the age categories in the survey should be  
broadened. Will the Minister today commit to the  
continuation of the British crime survey, which measures  
these statistics, so that these data continue to be collected?

There are several other important evidence gaps in  
the drugs strategy. The Government clearly do not have  
a firm grip on what is happening to the supply of drugs,  
on how much and what types of drugs are being imported,  
on how much and what types of drugs are being produced  
domestically or on the distribution chains. That important  
data mapping might be easier if the Government had  
not cut 1,000 Border Force guards and more than  
20,000 police officers over the past seven years. Nevertheless,  
this remains an important task in the fight against illicit  
drugs and organised crime. The National Crime Agency  
should be tasked with providing the data on supply—of  
course, it also needs to be given the resources to do so.

Here we come to the nub of the entire problem with  
the Government's drugs strategy. They have provided  
no new resources to meet the rising problems related to  
drugs and drug addiction. As a result, all that is left are  
warm words about the need for treatment and rehabilitation,  
and, in some instances, outright contradiction. One  
such example is the Government pledging to develop  
Jobcentre Plus offices in communities to support people  
with drug dependencies, but at the exact same time the  
Department for Work and Pensions is cutting hundreds  
of jobcentres across the country. Unfortunately, this  
adds up to a recipe for failure. It means that addicts will  
not receive the treatment they need; that we are likely to  
remain the overdose capital of Europe; that we will have  
a continuing problem of drug-related crime and drug-related  
hospital admissions; and that greater numbers of people  
will drift through the criminal justice system who should  
not be treated as criminals at all. Without the space for  
innovative ideas, debate and practices to thrive, we will  
continue to exacerbate all these issues, and we all will  
have failed.

6.30 pm

**Sarah Newton:** Before I respond to the substantial  
questions and items in today's debate, I wish to pay  
tribute to the excellent maiden speeches we have heard.  
I shall start with the excellent speech from the hon.  
Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) about Slough's bright  
future as the silicon valley of the UK. I am sure he also  
has a very bright future in this House, and not just  
because of the bright colours of his turbans. This is a  
very proud day for our democracy as a glass ceiling has  
been shattered. He spoke so powerfully about belonging,  
and everyone, from all parts of the House, wants to  
welcome him so that he feels that he truly belongs in  
this mother of all Parliaments.

It was also a great pleasure to listen to my hon.  
Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack  
Brereton), whose great maiden speech described the  
history and the potential of Stoke, and the role it is  
playing in global Britain. I am sure he will represent  
Stoke-on-Trent as a powerful advocate for innovation  
and all those growing businesses there that he so well  
described. I am also sure we are all going to be lifting up  
mugs, plates and any other items we buy to look for the

803

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

804

*[Sarah Newton]*

words “Made in Stoke-on-Trent” on them. I share with  
him a strong link to his constituency, because the china  
clay that is mined in Cornwall is taken to the potteries  
and has helped to create those iconic brands such as  
Wedgwood that he mentions. I am very much looking  
forward to working with him in the weeks, months and  
years ahead.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Kingston  
upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy), who spoke  
so powerfully about the importance of making a sacrifice  
so that we can make the powerful difference we want to  
see in our country and the sacrifice that our families  
make to enable us to do that. I am sure her daughters  
will be so proud of her. Having heard her speech today,  
I am sure nobody will ever underestimate her or Hull  
again.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West  
(Eleanor Smith) also spoke powerfully about the scourge  
of drug use, and the need to look at the root cause of  
why people take drugs and then to support them on the  
road to recovery. She is obviously very proud of her  
constituency, its history, its people and its culture. My  
sister is a nurse, and I know what powerful advocates  
nurses are for their patients. I am sure she will be a great  
advocate for all her constituents.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Ipswich  
(Sandy Martin), who spoke of his passion to help  
marginalised people in Ipswich choose a life free of  
drugs, and I look forward to working with him in that  
vital task. It is good to hear that he wants to build on  
the work of Ben Gummer, his predecessor, in improving  
the local economy and the opportunities there, particularly  
the rail links, and I wish him well during his time in  
Parliament.

I will try to cover in as much detail as I can in the  
remaining time the issues, questions and challenges that  
have been posed about the strategy. I welcome the fact  
that the right hon. Member for Hackney North and  
Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) welcomed the strategy  
and recognised some of the achievements of the 2010  
strategy. In doing that, she rightly wanted to know what  
more we are doing in prisons and rightly pointed out  
the real problem we have with drug use in prisons. I  
want to reassure her about the actions that are going on  
now to support prison officers in tackling this dreadful  
problem. We are enhancing the drug-testing regime,  
supporting governors by recruiting new officers to our  
prison estate, looking at how prisons can co-commission  
drug services with the NHS locally, ensuring that the  
parameters of prisons are more secure and maintained  
and improving the searching capability of dedicated  
teams. It is really important that I have this chance to  
point out that we are taking a comprehensive series of  
actions to prevent prisons from being a place where  
people can readily access drugs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin  
Blunt) made a really important contribution to this  
debate. The fact that we have allowed this debate in  
Government time—we have had a really good debate  
with a wide-ranging discussion—demonstrates our  
commitment to getting this policy area right. We have  
published a lot of data, which my hon. Friend mentioned.  
We have worked with a wide range of stakeholders to  
inform our evidence-based strategy, and we will continue  
to do so.

My hon. Friend and others have asked whether we  
will be evaluating the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.  
We are already doing so. We have published the framework  
for that evaluation so people can contribute, and we will  
be publishing the findings in 2018. We are determined  
to be an open, evidence-based policy team. We do look  
very closely at the work of the Advisory Council on the  
Misuse of Drugs, as it is the key Government adviser. It  
is simply not true to say that we have not taken on  
board all the recommendations that it has made. It has  
made a really important contribution to this strategy,  
and will continue to do so going forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate also talked  
very movingly—as did a number of hon. Friends—about  
the stigma around this issue. He was absolutely right. I  
have met many parents of families myself. I went along  
to a very moving service in Westminster Abbey only a  
month or so ago organised by Adfam. I encourage everyone  
who has a family member struggling with substance  
misuse to seek that help, to go to their GP, and to pick  
up the phone to the helplines that are available because  
they will receive support on how to manage their issues  
and their substance abuse problems.

**Fiona Bruce** *rose—*

**Sarah Newton:** I will give way briefly, but I do want to  
cover the points.

**Fiona Bruce:** Does the Minister agree that effective  
treatment means helping those who are suffering addiction  
to come off the substance to which they are addicted? It  
is not just about managing their situation, which might  
mean being dependent on a different substance.

**Sarah Newton:** We have a broad range of strategies,  
and I will come on to talk about harm reduction,  
because, clearly, it has a role to play. The ultimate goal is  
to enable people to have a drug-free life in which they  
have a job and are playing a full part in society, but  
there is a role for harm reduction.

**Norman Lamb** *rose—*

**Sarah Newton:** I am sorry, but I have very little time.  
If I can make some progress, I will give way.

Many Members talked about how concerned they  
were that the police and the criminal justice system were  
criminalising a whole generation of young people. I can  
absolutely assure Members that, having spent a lot of  
time with police officers, that is simply not the case. The  
police are very, very sensitive to the need not to do that.  
We have a wide range of options available to police  
officers and the courts, so that young people in the  
criminal justice system can be referred straight to health  
solutions, diversion services and treatment. It is only as  
a last resort, often with persistent offending, that the  
criminal justice solution is sought.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk  
(Martyn Day) talked about the need for class A drugs,  
such as heroin, to be used in treatment and recovery  
programmes. I can assure him that that is absolutely  
what happens. That was the recommendation that ACMD  
made and the drugs are available. However, that is quite  
different from just making a space available for people  
to take drugs. Having heard the evidence of the hon.  
Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann), it is really important  
that if people are to be taking heroin it must be part of

805

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

806

a treatment programme with recovery as the end point.  
I have been to the facilities and seen for myself how  
people are given clean needles and support and advice,  
but it is medically led by a doctor. That was a point that  
the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman  
Lamb) made, and it was reflected in the advice that we  
took from the ACMD.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona  
Bruce) talked powerfully about the issue being a matter  
of social justice, and she is absolutely right. The strategy  
addresses the problems that she articulated so well of  
children living in homes with parents who have substance  
abuse problems, whether we are talking about alcohol  
or drugs. It is important that we take a joined-up  
approach to make sure that those families are really  
supported. She also mentioned the important issue of  
cheap alcohol and white cider. I very much supported  
the action that the Treasury is taking in consulting on  
increasing taxation; that consultation is under way, and  
I am sure that we will hear the results in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle  
(Victoria Atkins) spoke powerfully, drawing on her  
experience of the serious organised criminals who bring  
the most harmful drugs into our country. She is absolutely  
right to highlight the human trafficking and appalling  
abuse of children that happens in bringing the drugs  
into our country. The same gangs exploit vulnerable  
people in our country in order to traffic these drugs  
around the country. She is right to draw on her experience,  
and on the view shared by many in the criminal justice  
system that we need to work globally, through the  
United Nations and our partners, and share data to  
prevent these drugs from arriving on our shores.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff  
Smith) spoke about the difficulties of families. I really  
hope that Martha's mum, who is here, sees how seriously  
we take the loss of any child. As a mother of three  
children, I just cannot imagine the horror of getting  
that phone call to say that I had lost one of my children.  
I want to reassure her; I hope that she sees, from the  
nature of this debate, how seriously the Government  
and everyone in the House take the issue. We want to  
work against the stigma that families face, so that they  
can speak out and get the help that they need. I hope  
that she is somewhat reassured by the strategy's emphasis  
on the good advice and information that should be  
readily available to young people, so that they understand  
the risks of all drugs, including alcohol, tobacco, and  
other substances that they might be tempted to take. A  
lot of progress has been made in the four years since  
Martha's tragic death.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Ian C. Lucas) made  
a point that he also raised at Home Office questions last  
week. Winging its way to him is a detailed written  
response to that question. I recognise the picture that he  
describes in his community. It is something that I faced  
in Truro last year. What I saw there is that, as he has  
discovered, not everybody—not all police officers or  
people in local authorities—has all the information  
about the powers that they have to work as a team to  
tackle these issues. In my letter to him, I describe what I  
think he can do, and the advocacy and agency that he  
can bring to bear in getting all the partners together in  
Wrexham to work on the issue.

I can reassure the hon. Gentleman on the funding for  
the testing that police officers need to do of substances  
that they find on people in order to get convictions.

That testing regime is well supported by and funded by  
the Home Office, but as I say, I will write to him in a lot  
more detail.

The hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn)  
spoke passionately about the work of Elizabeth Brice  
and her campaign for the medicinal use of cannabis. I  
want to assure him and all Members in the House that  
there is access to medicinal cannabis. It can be used for  
a wide range of ailments and can be very beneficial.  
Sativex, for example, is licensed for use. It has been  
raised with me before that our regime for enabling  
pharmaceutical companies or medical researchers to  
use licensed drugs is letting people down, so I have  
asked the Department of Health and the ACMD to  
look at this. We have not seen any evidence that the  
current regime is a barrier to people using banned drugs  
in medical research, but if the hon. Gentleman has that  
evidence and wants to send it to me, of course we will  
review that.

The term “war on drugs” was used repeatedly in the  
debate, most passionately by the right hon. Member for  
North Norfolk, who spoke with customary eloquence,  
but also by the hon. Member for Inverclyde (Ronnie  
Cowan). I just want to say that I have never used that  
term, and it appears nowhere in the strategy. It is simply  
not the Government's policy to have a “war on drugs,”  
so I hope that we can sort that out once and for all. We  
have a far-reaching, cross-Government policy focused  
on the health harms of drugs, the underlying social  
reasons why people take drugs, and trying to prevent  
them, right through to the criminal justice system. We  
are taking a balanced, full-Government, integrated  
approach. I can assure hon. Members that we always  
look at evidence from around the world, so the evidence  
from Portugal has been considered.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw quite rightly said  
that if we are absolutely serious about reducing the  
number of deaths from heroin, especially among those  
who have been taking it for some time—and we certainly  
are; no Minister wants the number of deaths to increase  
on their watch—we must have an evidence-based approach.  
I honestly think that the strategy will tackle that. We do  
recognise that naloxone can play a vital role in saving  
lives, as he said, and that there is a good evidence base  
for that. The strategy that was published commits us to  
the wider use of that in saving lives.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw also described the  
excellent work that was done in Bassetlaw up until 2013.  
That is just the sort of local response that we want to  
see, with all the agencies working together. The drug  
champion will of course have a vital role, travelling  
across the country, finding best practice and sharing it  
with those communities that perhaps do not have as  
good an understanding of how to tackle the issue. The  
strategy board, which will be chaired by the Home  
Secretary, will include representation from NHS England,  
Public Health England and the police—a whole range  
of expertise. They will work together to develop measurable  
outcome frameworks, which of course we will share  
over time as they are developed, and we can hold each  
other to account for their delivery.

The hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam  
Debbonaire) claimed that the Government are ignoring  
the recommendations of the Advisory Council on the  
Misuse of Drugs with regard to deaths from heroin.  
That is simply not the case. We have taken all of its  
recommendations into consideration in forming the

807

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

808

*[Sarah Newton]*

strategy. We have a good, constructive, ongoing relationship  
—I meet the chairman regularly. I am sure that the  
work of the board, led by the Home Secretary, will be  
informed by the ACMD's really excellent work.

The Home Office and Public Health England jointly  
set up some heroin and crack cocaine action areas. The  
piloting we did in Middlesbrough gave some good ideas  
about how to move in the right direction, and that is  
referenced in the strategy. Despite the claims made by  
some colleagues on the Opposition Benches, there has  
been a lot of innovation in recent years, and we very  
much want to build on that. We need only look at the  
excellent clinical advice that has been developed by  
Public Health England to help clinicians have a much  
more nuanced and effective approach to understanding  
the different types of people who suffer from drug  
misuse and the different types of drugs they use, and  
therefore to have a more tailored approach to helping  
them on the road to recovery.

**Norman Lamb:** I am grateful to the Minister, who has  
responded to all the challenges in a tolerant and civilised  
way. The hon. Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt)  
proposed that we have a royal commission in order to  
take the heat and the politics out of this matter and  
look dispassionately at all the arguments. Will the Minister  
at least consider that?

**Sarah Newton:** I just do not agree that politics is  
driving the issue. Our approach is totally evidence-based.  
If we were worried and felt unable to talk about the  
problem, as some have characterised us this afternoon,  
the Government would not have given a whole afternoon  
of debate to it. I accept the sincerely held views of hon.  
Members who do not agree with the Government, but  
that does not mean that our policy is not based on  
evidence. We are happy to debate the issue; there will be  
other opportunities and I will welcome those.

The pivotal role of Parliament is to scrutinise the  
work of the Executive and take on some of the difficult  
issuesinour society. I amproudof our work together in  
the last Parliament on destigmatising mental health  
issues. A lot of people in this place were prepared to  
talk about those issues from personal experience and  
also with a huge amount of evidence. It is fair to say  
that there has been a huge culture change in our country.  
By talking about drug addiction and substance abuse  
problems, as we have today, we will contribute to a  
destigmatisation. As a result, more people will come  
forward. Families will be saved appalling loss and  
communities will be saved the blight of the criminal  
activity that goes along with this issue.

**Crispin Blunt:** If a royal commission looked into this  
matter, I hope that it would consider not only what is  
happening in the United Kingdom. This is a global  
problem that needs a global policy to address it. The  
sand is shifting under our feet as other nations begin to  
change their policies. If there were a royal commission,  
the United Kingdom could do some thought leadership  
about what is happening around the world.

**SarahNewton:**Ithoroughlyagreethatwemustapproach  
this matter from a global point of view. That is the  
fourth strand of the policy—the global strand. It is

about working thoroughly and consistently with colleagues  
at the United Nations and globally, and looking at the  
evidence base. Actually, some other countries look to us  
as leaders in this area, especially on psychoactive substances.  
We are global Britain. We are always out looking and  
working in partnership with other countries and we will  
look at the evidence base from them.

**Paul Flynn:** Will the Minister give way?

**Sarah Newton:** I am going to make a little more  
progress if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

The hon. Member for High Peak (Ruth George)  
touched on the issue of resources. Having a good, well  
implemented strategy requires resources, ofcourse.There  
was a lot of misunderstanding about funding this afternoon.  
The Public Health England budget is ring-fenced. Yes,  
it is given to local authorities, which need to make  
decisions, based on consultation with and the health  
needs of their communities, about the allocation of  
resources. If some local authorities are disinvesting,  
that is sad to hear, because we put the evidence out  
there and the benefits of investment in good recovery  
services are clear—not just to the individuals concerned,  
but to the whole community.

I expect local authorities to use their ring-fenced  
budgets for public health for those services. But there is  
not just that budget. The Government have made record  
sums available for mental health services, and the national  
health budget is growing. The homelessness prevention  
funding has been ring-fenced and there is investment in  
innovative ways of working on homelessness prevention.  
There has also been the troubled families funding. The  
issue is about joining up those funds so that we can use  
the money in a smart way and tailor it to the needs of  
each family and person—they are all different—so that  
we can be really effective.

**Ruth George:** All the funds that the Minister mentioned  
are stretched beyond compare, especially the mental  
health funding. Yes, public health funding is ring-fenced,  
but it has been cut by £85 million. Drug treatment  
services are being cut, I am afraid, even though there is  
increased need.

**Sarah Newton:** What I see when I go around the  
country is a great deal of innovation where people are  
learning to use their resources more effectively.

One of the very important jobs of the champion is to  
look at what is happening well in parts of the country  
where people are not disinvesting in services and have  
excellent examples of partnership working. I praise the  
work that the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam  
Debbonaire) is doing in really getting into the weeds in  
her community and understanding this issue. In doing  
so, she knows that it is only by joining up all the services  
in the community and involving employers that we are  
going to make the step change that we need to see. I am  
very clear—

**Paul Flynn:** Will the Minister give way?

**Sarah Newton:** I only have a few minutes left.

I am very clear that this is a very ambitious policy. It  
has been based on evidence. It has been some time in  
the coming because we have looked at reports and

809

Drugs Policy

18 JULY 2017

Drugs Policy

810

research that has been done, particularly by the ACMD,  
to inform what we are doing. I absolutely want to put it  
beyond doubt that we see this strategy as joining up  
health, social and crime areas. It is a completely joined-up  
approach to government. We are trying to help people  
into recovery. The health interventions that people have  
so rightly spoken about are absolutely critical to the  
success of this strategy.

The strategy board will meet when we get back in the  
autumn. I am sure that Members will see that we have  
many opportunities to debate the outcomes framework  
that we will be putting forward, and we will hear about  
the really good work that the recovery champion is  
going to do. I hope that Members in all parts of the  
House will engage with the recovery champion, share  
the good work that is going on in their constituencies,  
and share their concern where things are not working,  
because let us be in no doubt—this is a complex issue  
that is going to require a huge amount of effort in every  
community in every part of our country. Despite our  
views on whether we should criminalise or not criminalise,  
we are all united in wanting to end the pain and  
suffering that is caused to too many people and too  
many communities by the use of drugs.

**Paul Flynn:** I would like to make a brief contribution,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, because there are four minutes  
to go.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** No—the  
Minister has summed up the debate.

**Paul Flynn:** There are four minutes to go.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Mr Flynn—are you making  
a point of order, because you cannot argue with the  
Chair across the Chamber?

**Paul Flynn:** I am not arguing with the Chair—I am  
arguing that the Minister has finished and I want to  
make a small contribution. Those are the normal rules  
of debate.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Mr Flynn, you have already  
made a contribution and the Minister has chosen not to  
take an intervention. She has concluded and the debate  
is thus concluded.

**Paul Flynn:** May I make a point of order, then,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, because the excuse that the  
Minister gave—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Mr Flynn—I am about to  
put the Question. You may make a point of order after I  
have put the Question.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered drugs policy.

**Paul Flynn:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy  
Speaker. You will have heard the Minister say that she  
could not take a brief intervention from me because of  
lack of time. Could I just make the point that the  
Government's policy is not evidence-based, because  
otherwise they would be taking clear cognisance of the  
evidence from Portugal and from Uruguay—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I must stop the hon.  
Gentleman. He has been in this House for a very long  
time and he knows that is not a point of order for the  
Chair. He wishes to continue the debate, but the debate  
has lasted for some hours and it is now finished.

**PETITION**

**Removal of greenfield sites in Bulkington from  
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Plan**

6.58 pm

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): I rise on behalf of the  
residents of Bulkington in my constituency in relation  
to the inclusion of two sites in their village, referenced  
HSG7 and HSG8, in the local plan prepared by Nuneaton  
and Bedworth Borough Council and submitted to the  
Planning Inspectorate on 6 June. The petition has been  
organised by Bulkington Residents Voice, a group hastily  
assembled to oppose the addition of those sites to the  
local plan, and it has been signed by 1,490 local residents,  
which is almost one in three of the local population.

The petition states that the two sites in Bulkington  
were added at a late stage in the preparation of the local  
plan, giving residents no time to prepare and submit  
objections; further, that Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough  
Council did not make any attempt to engage with or  
advise local residents of the addition of the sites; and,  
further, that the two sites would accommodate 691 houses,  
representing an increase of more than a quarter, and a  
further 2,500 residents. Both those increases are totally  
out of proportion with the current village setting and  
would lead to the loss of the village's identity.

The petition further states that there are no proposals  
for the additional infrastructure that development on  
this scale would entail; further, that there are no proposed  
economic improvements by way of job creation or  
business investment; and, further, that the sites are  
greenfield and located in the green belt, which is an  
important barrier between Nuneaton and Bulkington  
and where there is a presumption against development.  
The petition accordingly asks this House to cause Nuneaton  
and Bedworth Borough Council to remove the two sites  
from the local plan.

*The text of the petition is as follows:*

*[The petition of residents of Bulkington, Warwickshire,*

*Declares that the residents of Bulkington, Warwickshire,  
petition your honourable House that Nuneaton and Bedworth  
Borough Council prepared and made major policy changes  
to the proposed Borough Plan, without making any attempt  
to engage with, or advise local residents, or their representative  
organisation; furthermore, these changes committed  
inappropriate numbers of new houses to the village of  
Bulkington, yet this would not deliver any economic  
benefit to the village or more importantly to the wider  
Borough.*

*Therefore, the petitioners request that the House of  
Commons urges the Government to cause the Nuneaton  
and Bedworth Borough Council to remove from the  
Publication Version of the Borough Plan (2017-2031)  
the proposed developments in the existing Green Belt  
around Bulkington.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

[P002045]

811

18 JULY 2017 Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry 812

Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry

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

7.1 pm

**Mr Charles Walker** (Broxbourne) (Con): It is a great  
pleasure to lead this Adjournment debate on the Lea  
valley greenhouse industry. You know, Madam Deputy  
Speaker, because you represent a large part of it, what  
an industry it is. There are 350 acres of glass greenhouses  
in the Lea valley—a magnificent sight to see. The industry  
employs 2,500 people and has a turnover of £500 million  
a year.

Let me put some more numbers into the record. You  
will know these, Madam Deputy Speaker, but many  
people will be ignorant of the facts and I want to  
inform their thinking about this great industry. Our  
glasshouse industry in the Lea valley produces 80 million  
cucumbers a year—75% of the UK's total cucumber  
production. It produces 70 million sweet peppers a year,  
which is more than 60% of the UK's sweet pepper  
production. But it does not end there. The industry  
produces thousands and thousands of tonnes of tomatoes,  
lettuce, baby leaf salad and herbs, as well as bedding  
plants, trees, shrubs and flowers—a smorgasbord of  
great things.

The Lea valley glasshouse industry also produces a  
huge number of aubergines. I am not particularly familiar  
with aubergines, but I was given a few by a greenhouse  
owner a few weeks ago and they were turned into  
moussaka by Mrs Walker. I had always thought that  
moussaka was an impossibly exotic dish left over from  
the 1970s, but it has a lot going for it. If anybody out  
there wants to try moussaka—a lovely, evocative word  
that rolls off the tongue—I advise them to get to know  
aubergines from the Lea valley.

I have visited these amazing greenhouses, and it is  
just extraordinary to see the labour and effort that goes  
into growing this fresh produce. One of the most beautiful  
things about going there is getting to see the boxes of  
bumblebees that are used to pollinate crops. Bumblebees  
are lovely creatures anyway, but to see them beetling  
around—if that is not mixing a metaphor—the greenhouses  
and pollinating really is a wonderful sight. The glasshouse  
industry is hugely important to the economy of the Lea  
valley and it is a hugely important part of this country's  
overall farming economy, which is why I am so pleased  
to see the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
here to respond to the debate.

I want to pay tribute to those who run the greenhouse  
industry in the Lea valley. All of them are fantastic  
people, and many of them are of Italian extraction.  
First generation Italians or their children and grandchildren  
run many of these amazing businesses, of which there  
are about 85 in the Lea valley. I am so lucky to have  
more than 10,000 Italians and their descendants living  
in my constituency. They throw a great party, we have a  
great town twinning event with Sutera every year and  
they are an absolutely fantastic group of people to  
know, work with and represent.

I want to discuss a couple of issue that may threaten  
the future of our glasshouse industry. The first relates  
to the vote on the EU. I am a committed Brexiteer and I  
know the Minister is a committed Brexiteer, as are  
many people in the farming community, but that is not  
to say that they do not have concerns. Our industry is

reliant on seasonal workers, many of whom come from  
eastern Europe, and they play a very positive part in the  
production of these amazing crops. I hope that the  
Minister will work with the National Farmers Union,  
the Lea valley glasshouse industry and other interested  
parties to make sure that the industry can still access the  
labour it needs to put this wonderful food on our tables.

There is, however, another and far darker cloud on  
the horizon, which is the proposed incinerator in the  
Rye House and Fieldes Lock area off Ratty's Lane in  
my constituency of Broxbourne. The planning application  
is for an incinerator that will burn 350,000 tonnes of  
rubbish. The incinerator was originally going to be on  
the New Barnfield site in Welwyn Hatfield, but in 2015  
the Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government threw out that application. In doing so, he  
said that the alternative sites, one of which is the  
proposed site in my constituency, were wholly unsuitable  
as locations. Those were not his words, but the arguments  
put forward by Veolia. In 2013, Veolia identified the  
Ratty's Lane site as

“a safeguarded strategic rail aggregate depot”  
located on a floodplain and opposite a Ramsar site,  
which is one of the highest designations for a protected  
and treasured environment. It said the site was too  
compact to house a 350,000 tonne incinerator, let alone  
the recycling part of the operation, and was not easily  
accessible from the road network for more than 280 lorry  
movements a day. However, having said all that against  
the site, Veolia, when it lost its planning application for  
New Barnfield, suddenly changed its tune and decided  
that the area in my constituency was after all the perfect  
site for its incinerator.

As the Minister will be aware, this is causing huge  
concern to the 85 businesses that you, Madam Deputy  
Speaker, my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow  
(Robert Halfon) and I represent. This is a serious business.  
The interests of a French multinational such as Veolia  
are not unimportant, but its interests are certainly less  
important than those of the 85 businesses, many of which  
have been established for 50, 60, 70 or 80 years, that are  
contributing to our communities in the Lea valley.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): I congratulate my  
hon. Friend on securing this debate, among others, and  
on the remarkable work he has done on this issue. Is he  
aware that many people in Roydon and Dobbs Weir in  
my constituency of Harlow have expressed numerous  
objections against this waste installation that we are all  
threatened with, yet all their objections seem to have  
been ignored?

**Mr Walker:** My right hon. Friend makes a number of  
excellent points. This application is hugely contentious.  
It is on the edge of Hertfordshire. I do not want it in my  
backyard, and up until 2015 Veolia did not want it in  
my backyard. However, what Hertfordshire County  
Council, the sponsor of the facility, is actually proposing  
is that all the smoke ends up in Harlow's backyard and  
Epping Forest's backyard, so it is your constituents,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, and the constituents of my  
right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow who are  
downwind and will get the fallout.

The critical point is that we have an industry that is  
turning over half a billion pounds a year and producing  
huge amounts of fresh produce that graces the restaurants

813

Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry 18 JULY 2017 Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry

814

and cafeterias of the House of Commons and is to be  
found in the homes of millions of people up and down  
this country, and the producers of that food get very  
nervous when half of the 350 acres of glass might fall  
within a 5-mile radius of a 350,000-tonne incinerator.  
Their concerns need to be heard.

It is simply unacceptable for Hertfordshire County  
Council, the sponsor of the incinerator, to be the  
determining authority for the application. Hertfordshire  
both owns the contract and is the determining authority  
for the contract, and if it does not determine in Veolia's  
favour it has to pay a break-up fee of £1.2 million. This  
cannot be a safe decision. It cannot be a safe decision  
for my constituents, but it certainly cannot be a safe  
decision for your constituents, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
for the constituents of my right hon. Friend the Member  
for Harlow or for the 85 businesses that risk suffering  
the fallout from the facility.

It is no good for the Environment Agency to say,  
“There's no worry here. These are tall chimneys. This is  
not a problem.” I am not saying that it will say that, but  
it does not matter what the Environment Agency says  
about this. The fact of the matter is that 85 producers  
are concerned that if they are downwind of this facility,  
they will lose contracts with supermarkets. That could  
be devastating. There are 2,500 jobs on the line and a  
half a billion pound industry.

I know that the Minister is not a miracle worker—he  
is pretty good, but he is not a miracle worker—and it  
would be unfair of me to suggest that he was, but what  
we do have in this Minister is a champion for the  
farming industry and a champion of our industry in the  
Lea valley. My simple request to him this evening is  
please to engage with the concerns of the Lea valley  
growers and our greenhouse industry, and please to  
reflect those concerns to the Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government, because we need  
this application to be called in.

We need the chance to argue our case before an  
independent planning inspector—not just me, not just  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow and not  
just you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the NFU, the  
Lea valley growers, my constituents, my right hon.  
Friend's constituents and your constituents. We need  
the chance to argue our case before an independent  
inspectorate. That is what we are asking for today.  
Please, as our voice for agriculture, will the Minister  
listen to the concerns that I and my right hon. Friend  
the Member for Harlow are raising today and take  
them to the Secretary of State, because this is a very  
important industry? No doubt he will have received  
representations from Madam Deputy Speaker, who is  
not allowed to speak in this debate. If she could, I am  
sure she would join me on these Benches.

I do not want to go on for too long. I said that I  
would be brief and I want to get home for my moussaka—  
I genuinely am having moussaka tonight. I thank my  
colleagues who have remained in this place for attending  
and for listening so intently and politely to what I have  
had to say on behalf of 85 businesses in the Lea valley  
that do an outstanding job, produce an outstanding  
product, employ 2,500 people and make a huge contribution  
to farming and agriculture in this country.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Before  
I call the Minister, I commend the hon. Member for  
Broxbourne (Mr Walker) for his eloquence in putting

the case so well, and the right hon. Member for Harlow  
(Robert Halfon) for supporting the case. I of course am  
not able to make any comment from the Chair, but if I  
were able to do so I would tell the House how much I  
am in agreement with the hon. Member for Broxbourne.

7.15 pm

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Broxbourne (Mr Walker) on securing the debate. I note  
your comments too, Madam Deputy Speaker. In your  
neighbouring seat, you clearly share many of his concerns  
and his passion for the very important Lea valley glasshouse  
industry.

I recognise the importance of the sector and some of  
the challenges it faces. For several years, I ran a glasshouse  
enterprise in Cornwall. I had two acres of heated  
glasshouses, a former tomato nursery and I grew  
strawberries for the best part of five years. I am therefore  
familiar with some of the issues and, having studied  
horticulture, I am familiar with the role that Lea valley  
enterprises play. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the  
Lea valley is the UK's largest cucumber and sweet  
pepper producer, accounting for more than 200 million  
pieces per annum—including 60 million cucumbers—and  
representing up to 75% of the UK's total cucumber  
production and over 60% of the UK's sweet pepper  
production.

Lea valley horticultural enterprises contribute some  
£500 million a year to the British economy and sustain  
2,500 jobs annually. Today members cultivate around  
120 hectares of glasshouses, extending beyond the Lea  
valley and across a dispersed area including London,  
Essex, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Cambridgeshire and  
Yorkshire.

**Robert Halfon:** I want to pick up a different issue,  
although it is directly relevant to the Lea valley greenhouses,  
to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker)  
and to you, my wonderful constituency neighbour, Madam  
Deputy Speaker. We have a woodpile in Nazeing—which  
is part of both the Harlow and the Epping Forest  
constituencies—which has burned down four times in  
the past four years, causing massive damage to one  
greenhouse glass enterprise as well as local residents.  
Many residents feel that not enough has been done, and  
we cannot understand why new licences are given to  
new companies to “run” the woodpile site. It causes  
enormous damage and expense—it burned down again  
only recently. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to  
look into the matter because it has a significant effect  
on the Lea valley glasshouse industry.

**George Eustice:** I am not familiar with the issue that  
my hon. Friend raises, but if there are concerns about  
the licensing of the woodpile operation he mentions I  
will ask officials to look at them.

I want to point out the history of the Lea valley. The  
success of the Lea valley over the years has been its  
fantastic contribution to feeding London throughout  
its history. From the middle ages onwards, it served the  
fledgling London with wheat, hay and barley, which  
came through to east London. The Lea valley has fertile  
alluvial soil, so by the mid-18th century it had become  
the leading market garden for Britain, growing a wide  
range of field vegetables and fruits. By the mid-19th century,

815

Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry 18 JULY 2017 Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry

816

*[George Eustice]*

the advent of the railways resulted in greater supply to  
London. As the population grew and the glass tax was  
removed in 1845, Lea valley became home to the very  
first greenhouses and subsequently developed its industry  
in everything from grapes to cucumbers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne raised  
the issue of labour, and I can reassure him that I am in  
regular contact with representatives from the farming  
industry, including the National Farmers Union and  
others, and I am picking up that concern. Indeed, it was  
recently the subject of a report produced by the  
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and  
only last week we had a Westminster Hall debate on  
that very issue.

In the last 12 months the number of EU migrants to  
the UK has increased by about 171,000, bringing the  
total to more than 2.3 million. However, horticulture  
faces a particular challenge relating to seasonal workers,  
who come here for a few months and then return home.  
Between 1945 and 2013, a seasonal agricultural workers  
scheme enabled people from countries outside the European  
Union to work here on a temporary basis. The scheme  
was closed in 2013 on the advice of the Migration  
Advisory Committee, but we have always made it clear  
that we will keep the issue under review. We established  
a SAWS transition group, which has met regularly, and  
met as recently as 6 March to discuss some of the  
challenges that businesses are facing this year. For  
instance, changes in the benefits system in Poland mean  
that fewer Polish citizens come here, and the work being  
done in Bulgaria to encourage people to stay and take  
employment there has also had an impact.

We estimate that there are between 67,000 and 80,000  
seasonal workers in the UK, and that is very important  
to the industry. The Home Office, which leads on the  
issue, has said that it intends to commission the Migration  
Advisory Committee to examine the issue of immigration  
in the context of the decision to leave the European  
Union, including the issue of so-called tier 3 low-skilled  
labour. We had some discussions with members of the  
SAWS transition group to establish when they will be  
able to give us accurate data for the third and fourth  
quarters of this year, with a view to meeting again  
before the end of the year to review the position. I am  
therefore well aware of the issue of labour, and I can  
reassure my hon. Friend that we will be looking closely  
at the issue.

One of the great things about leaving the European  
Union is that we will regain control, and it will be in the  
gift of the British Government to do whatever they  
choose to do. If we deem that we need additional labour  
in a particular area, it will be within our power to secure  
that labour, and to set up whatever work permit  
arrangements are required to satisfy our needs.

My hon. Friend dedicated most of his comments to  
the issue of the Hoddesdon incinerator proposal in his  
constituency. Applications of that kind are always incredibly  
contentious. I remember that, a few years ago, there  
were proposals for an incinerator in Cornwall, a few  
miles down the road from my constituency, and I am  
well aware of the deep-seated concern that people may  
feel in such circumstances. My hon. Friend made a  
number of flattering remarks about my knowledge of  
the issue. As he knows, the Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local Government would have to

lead in this regard, and planning issues are obviously a  
matter for the local authority in the first instance, but  
there is a role for the Environment Agency in a couple  
of areas.

As my hon. Friend also knows, Hertfordshire County  
Council is currently dealing with the planning application.  
One of the roles of the Environment Agency is to act as  
a statutory consultee in the planning process, and I am  
told that it is engaged in a dialogue with the council in  
that role. The agency also has a role in the environmental  
permitting regulations, dealing with any concerns that  
would arise as a result of an environment permit. I  
understand that it has received an application for an  
environmental permit, and that the application has  
been duly made, which means that the information has  
been received, but it has not yet been processed or  
assessed. I am told that the Environment Agency is due  
to start consulting on the permit application imminently  
and that it intends to hold a public drop-in session in  
due course. I understand that that consultation will take  
place in earnest in the weeks ahead.

I have asked the Environment Agency whether in  
principle there are certain issues here. It will not surprise  
my hon. Friend to know that it very much depends on  
the individual application and that it would not be  
appropriate for me to make any judgments on the case  
he described in his constituency. However, as a general  
point on some of the concerns about smoke, I am told  
that a properly constructed incinerator with the right  
kind of filtration would not necessarily have a problem  
such as he describes and residues would not necessarily  
be expected. I am also told that the environmental  
permit will assess and control emissions to air, land and  
water. That said, he is right that each case has to be  
considered on its merits. This case will be considered  
thoroughly on its merits. The consultation is under way.  
I would encourage any—

**Mr Charles Walker:** My hon. Friend makes a very  
important point. He said that the application will be  
considered on its merits. As it currently stands, it will be  
considered by Hertfordshire County Council, which is  
both the owner of the contract and the determiner of  
the contract. It is impossible for anyone in my constituency,  
and I believe in the constituencies of Epping Forest and  
Harlow, to imagine that the application will be considered  
on its merits, given that Hertfordshire County Council,  
if it does not grant it, will have to pay a £1.2 million  
failure fee to Veolia. That is the real concern, which is  
why I am hoping that the Minister will help the Lea  
valley growers and the NFU to make representations to  
the Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government for a proper independent inquiry by a  
planning inspector.

**George Eustice:** I understand the point that my hon.  
Friend makes, but he will be aware that I am not an  
expert on planning law and planning policy and that  
any such decision would be a matter for the Secretary of  
State for Communities and Local Government.

**Robert Halfon:** On that point, will my hon. Friend  
ensure that the consultation is open and transparent  
and that everyone can see exactly what is being said?

**George Eustice:** Yes, the consultation that the  
Environment Agency will conduct on the environmental  
permitting regulations will be an open process. As I said,

817 Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry 18 JULY 2017 Lea Valley Greenhouse Glass Industry 818

it intends to open the drop-in session to members of the  
public. I encourage anyone with concerns about this  
application, of which, according to my hon. Friends  
and the representations they have made, there are many  
in their constituencies, to contribute to the consultation  
that the Environment Agency is putting together. I  
understand that the consultation is open and that that  
drop-in session will take place shortly.

I recognise the points that my hon. Friends have  
made on this contentious issue and I will ensure that the  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

sees a transcript of the debate. I am sure that Members  
will continue to make representations to him. It is  
ultimately for the Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government to make any decisions along the  
lines that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne  
seeks.

*Question put and agreed to.*

7.28 pm

*House adjourned.*

819

19 JULY 2017

820

House of Commons

*Wednesday 19 July 2017*

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

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

**Mr Speaker:** I have to notify the House, in accordance  
with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has  
signified her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Act 2017.

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

AVON FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

*Resolved,*

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That  
she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid  
before this House a Return of a Paper, entitled Statutory Inspection  
of Avon Fire and Rescue Authority, dated 19 July 2017.*—(Craig  
Whittaker.)*

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

*The Secretary of State was asked—*Barnett Formula: Public Sector Pay Cap

1. **Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)  
(SNP): What assessment he has made of the effect of  
the removal of the public sector pay cap in Scotland on  
the Barnett formula if that cap is retained in England.  
[900486]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):**Mr Speaker, I am sure you will join me in congratulating  
Jamie Murray in the mixed doubles and Gordon Reid  
in the wheelchair doubles for ensuring that we again  
had Scottish champions at Wimbledon, where your  
enthusiasm for tennis was in evidence once again.

The Barnett formula applies to changes in UK  
Government funding and will not be impacted by Scottish  
Government decisions on public sector pay.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** The Secretary of State's  
constituents, and mine, have benefited from the Scottish  
National party Government's ending of the public sector  
pay cap for their public sector workers in Scotland. The  
SNP tried to help public sector workers in England and  
throughout the UK by voting to end the UK public  
sector pay cap too. However, Scottish Tory MPs voted  
against helping workers in England. With the SNP  
helping workers in his constituency and mine, are he

and his colleagues not ashamed of voting against removing  
the public sector pay cap in England to help workers  
there? What does he have against English workers?

**David Mundell:** From that question, Mr Speaker, you  
would not think that since 2007 the SNP Government  
in Scotland have been responsible for public sector pay  
and that a public sector pay cap has applied for most of  
that time. As far as I am aware, the SNP Government  
have not lifted the public sector pay freeze in Scotland;  
they have announced a consultation.

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): May I put  
on record the fact that the Scottish women's football  
team will play an important European championship  
match tonight? I wish them all the best in their endeavours.

I do not think the Secretary of State fully appreciates  
the sense of grievance about the pay cap among hard-  
working public sector workers in Scotland. The Scottish  
Government have declared their intention to review and  
end the pay cap; will he argue in the United Kingdom  
Government for the same policy?

**David Mundell:** May I first welcome the hon. Gentleman  
to his new place? When the new SNP leader at Westminster  
said that he was reluctant, I did not realise that he was  
going to be reluctant to do Scottish questions, or that  
he was going to downgrade them.

I am clear that hard decisions have to be taken on  
public sector pay. If the Scottish Government, in their  
responsibilities, are saying that they are going to increase  
public sector pay, they have to identify where the funds  
are coming from.

**Tommy Sheppard:** I thank the Secretary of State for  
his kind words, but he and I will get on a lot better in  
this process if he does me the courtesy of answering the  
question. I asked him to state his intention to argue  
within Cabinet and the British Government to end the  
pay cap in Scotland so that workers in the public sector  
there will get the same rate of pay for the job, whether  
they work for the Scottish Government or for his  
Government.

**David Mundell:** I think I did answer the hon. Gentleman's  
question. The Government have struck the right balance  
on pay and ensuring continued employment. We see  
that in Scotland, where we have the lowest unemployment  
figures on record. It is better that more people are in  
work in the public sector than that we had changed the  
public sector pay cap in previous years.

**Lesley Laird** (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Lab): I,  
too, send my best wishes to the Scottish women's football  
team for tonight. I also congratulate our tennis players  
on a wonderful tournament.

It is a pity that the SNP has bounced Labour's  
proposal on lifting the public sector pay cap in November.  
Will the Secretary of State tell me what assessment has  
been made of the effect of the Government's pay cap on  
the living standards of public sector employees in Scotland?  
Does he share the view of the Chancellor, who was  
recently reported to have said that public sector workers  
are overpaid?

821

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

822

**David Mundell:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her place  
and congratulate her on her success in the election. I  
also send my best wishes to her predecessor, Dave  
Anderson, who was one of the Members who voluntarily  
left this Parliament at the last election. Of course, I pass  
on my best wishes to the Scottish women's football team  
as I should have done in answer to the question of the  
hon. Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy Sheppard). I  
agree with the Chancellor that we have struck the right  
balance in public sector pay on the basis that we have  
ensured that 200,000 public sector jobs were able to be  
maintained during this period of difficult fiscal conditions.

**Lesley Laird:** I thank the Secretary of State for his  
answer, but it is very clear that the Government are in  
complete chaos on this issue, which is very much like  
the SNP Government, who claim that they will abandon  
the public sector pay cap—*[Interruption.]—*despite voting  
it down in a proposal in May. Is it not the case that  
public sector workers in Scotland are being let down by  
two weak and wobbly Governments who have the wrong  
priorities, and that only a Labour Government have the  
policies and the political will to lift the public sector pay  
cap, ban austerity, stand up for public sector workers  
and stand up for Scotland?

**David Mundell:** Although I might be tempted to  
agree with the hon. Lady's comments on the SNP  
Scottish Government, the position with Labour is absolutely  
clear in that no funds have been identified to increase  
public sector pay. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has  
made it very clear that, if we want to make a real  
difference on public sector pay, we have to do something  
that hits everybody—put a penny or two on the rates of  
income tax or VAT or something such as that. We  
cannot make a big difference just taxing the rich. The  
Labour party in Scotland and here in Westminster has  
the soundbites, but it does not have the policies to  
deliver what it is promising.

**Jobcentre Closures**

2. **Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab):  
What assessment he has made of the potential effect of  
the planned closure of job centres in Scotland on local  
communities. [900487]

4. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op):  
What assessment he has made of the potential effect of  
the planned closure of job centres in Scotland on local  
communities. [900489]

6. **Faisal Rashid** (Warrington South) (Lab): What  
assessment he has made of the potential effect of the  
planned closure of job centres in Scotland on local  
communities. [900491]

15. **Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): What assessment  
he has made of the potential effect of the planned  
closure of job centres in Scotland on local communities.  
[900500]

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds):** We  
will continue to provide excellent support to those  
seeking work, or who cannot work, through a network  
of offices, which are modern, accessible and meet future  
requirements.

**Bambos Charalambous:** As yet, no equality impact  
assessment of the closures has been published. Will the  
Secretary of State tell this House whether the Government  
plan to publish such an assessment, and, if so, when?

**Damian Hinds:** In making these decisions, the  
Department has fulfilled its duties under the Equality  
Act 2010 and paid due regard to the impact of the  
proposals on the staff, and the communities and customers  
that they serve.

**Alex Norris:** Given that UK Government cuts to  
social security and new sanctions on low-paid workers  
are likely to increase demand for jobcentres, do Ministers  
agree that it is reckless and perverse of the Government  
to be closing them down, especially in our most deprived  
communities that have some of the highest rates of  
unemployment?

**Damian Hinds:** I reassure the hon. Gentleman that,  
of course, in looking forward in time to our future  
needs, we plan for the expected demand on jobcentres  
and allow for some contingency as well. I also reassure  
him that the rate of sanctions has been coming down.  
As we are in Scottish questions, it is particularly relevant  
to note that the rate of sanctions in Scotland is lower  
than it is in the rest of the UK.

**Faisal Rashid:** May I ask the Minister whether he and  
his colleagues will consider the term in which the excess  
fares allowance will be paid to Department for Work  
and Pensions staff across Scotland who are being forced  
to move office? The Department has refused to use its  
discretion to pay the EFA for five years, and will cover  
staff for only three years, which contrasts with previous  
decisions made by the Department.

**Damian Hinds:** We do think that we have a fair and  
reasonable approach to relocation. Of course we are  
asking some staff to move offices, and we try to do  
everything we can to facilitate that. Part of that is  
providing the excess fares policy that the hon. Gentleman  
mentions, which is greater in its extent than in many  
other organisations and we do think it is a reasonable  
approach.

**Sandy Martin:** The Minister says that there is a low  
level of sanctions in Scotland, but if a substantial  
number of jobcentres are closed will it not make journey  
times longer and routes more complicated, leading to  
an increase in missed appointments and in sanctions?  
What mitigating measures will he introduce to deal with  
an increase in sanctions?

**Damian Hinds:** The first thing to say is that missing  
or being late for an appointment does not necessarily  
result in a sanction. We expect people to make reasonable  
efforts to make it to appointments and, as I have said,  
the rate of sanctions has been coming down, but we  
expect people to have time—the entire working week—  
available to seek work. That involves going to job  
interviews and visiting the jobcentre. For an able-bodied  
person without children, for example, that would be up  
to 35 hours a week. Obviously, if a person has caring  
responsibilities, we expect them to have correspondingly  
less time available.

823

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

824

**Mr Alister Jack** (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con):  
Can the Minister confirm that reforms to the DWP  
estate will not lead to a reduction in the number of  
frontline jobcentre staff ?

**Damian Hinds:** I can absolutely give my hon. Friend  
that assurance. In fact in every nation and region of the  
UK, including Scotland, we are looking to increase the  
number of frontline staff and work coaches helping  
people into work.

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Clark, you were standing a moment  
ago. Do you wish to give the House the benefit of your  
thoughts?

**Colin Clark** (Gordon) (Con) *indicated dissent.*

**Mr Speaker:** No? Very well. We will move on.

**Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op):  
It is quite clear that the Minister has offered no convincing  
assurance about the maintenance of access to jobcentre  
facilities in Glasgow and across Scotland. We have seen  
a commitment to cut the number of jobcentres in  
Glasgow by six. These are areas where unemployment is  
twice the national average and where 35% of people  
cannot access IT facilities to allow them to apply online  
for support. There is a clear issue with the provision of  
a footprint and the citizens advice bureaux have offered  
a solution through the co-location of services in community  
hubs alongside citizens advice bureaux, housing associations  
and council services. Has the Minister given any  
consideration to those mitigating measures so that we  
can maintain the footprint or is it, as PCS has said,  
merely a cost-driven effort to abandon unemployed,  
sick and disabled people, making it harder for them to  
access these vital services?

**Damian Hinds:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that  
important question. Of course we consider opportunities  
to co-locate our services with other public sector and  
third sector services, as he mentions. We continue to  
consider those opportunities. In the specific case of  
those jobcentres where we are moving operations more  
than 3 miles or 20 minutes away, we are considering new  
outreach facilities. I also want to mention that, of  
course, in the city of Glasgow the unemployment claimant  
count has come down by 43% since 2010.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Deirdre Brock.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP):  
Thank you, Mr Speaker—but I was not actually standing  
at that point.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady was standing. Self-awareness  
is quite an important quality in the House—

**Deidre Brock:** I was standing for the previous question—

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Lady does not wish to  
participate in the exchange, that is perfectly all right. It  
is not compulsory. I call Gerard Killen.

**Public Sector Pay Cap**

3. **Gerard Killen** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)  
(Lab/Co-op): What recent discussions he has had with  
his Cabinet colleagues on the public sector pay cap.

[900488]

5. **Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab):  
What recent discussions he has had with his Cabinet  
colleagues on the public sector pay cap. [900490]

12. **Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): What recent  
discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on  
the public sector pay cap. [900497]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):**I hold regular discussions with my Cabinet colleagues  
on a wide range of matters of importance to Scotland.  
The Scottish Government are responsible for Scottish  
Government pay.

**Gerard Killen:** I thank the Secretary of State for that  
answer and I want to give him another opportunity to  
clarify his view on the reported comments of the Chancellor  
of the Exchequer at the weekend. Does he agree that  
public sector workers are overpaid?

**David Mundell:** The hon. Gentleman will have seen  
what the Chancellor said on Sunday: he said that there  
are areas in the public service where recruitment and  
retention are becoming an issue and areas of the country  
where public sector wages and private sector wages are  
getting out of kilter in the other direction. It is important  
that we have a discussion on those issues.

**Liz McInnes:** Yesterday, in this Chamber, a Treasury  
Minister declined to answer a question on the grounds  
that it was way above his pay grade. Should not we be  
grateful to our public sector workers for not taking that  
attitude, and is it not high time that they got the pay rise  
they deserve?

**David Mundell:** I fully acknowledge the contribution  
that public sector workers make across the UK, and  
particularly in Scotland. Of course we will listen carefully  
when the pay boards make their recommendations.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** Sixty-six per cent. of public sector  
workers in Wales, another devolved country, are women,  
and I suspect that the figure is a lot higher in Scotland.  
In the light of that, does the Secretary of State not  
agree that the public sector pay gap is now fundamentally  
unsustainable and is not only eroding the living standards  
of women and families but damaging the economy?

**David Mundell:** We are all concerned about the gender  
pay gap. Some figures released within the last hour by a  
public sector organisation suggest that there are significant  
gender pay gap issues at the BBC. I set out my position  
in my previous answer: it is for the Scottish Government  
to determine pay for Scottish Government employees,  
and the Government's position has also been set out.

**Leaving the EU: Fishing Policy**

7. **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland)  
(LD): What discussions he has had with representatives  
of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on the Government's  
policy on fishing after the UK leaves the EU. [900492]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):**It is perhaps remiss of me not to welcome new Members  
from Scotland and elsewhere to this House, in particular  
when I am answering a question from one of the  
potential Scottish Fathers of the House.

825

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

826

Since the vote to leave the EU last year, I have spoken  
regularly with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which  
I most recently met in Peterhead on 16 June. In our  
discussions I emphasised that we will take Scotland out  
of the failed common fisheries policy and extend control  
of our waters up to 200 nautical miles or the median  
line with nearby coastal states.

**Mr Carmichael:** I hope the Secretary of State will join  
me in welcoming the news today that the Marine  
Stewardship Council has again accredited North sea  
cod as a sustainable species. The cod recovery programme  
saw some of the best and worst examples of fisheries  
management. The best were the measures that came  
from the industry and had credibility with the industry.  
Will the Government look at the lessons of the cod  
recovery programme and take the best examples of  
fishery management to inform future policy?

**David Mundell:** I, too, absolutely welcome today's  
announcement on cod. I confirm that we will look to  
the industry to help shape its future. One thing is clear:  
this Government will take Scotland and the UK out of  
the hated common fisheries policy, but the SNP Scottish  
Government would take us right back in.

**David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): Will the  
whole Scottish fishing industry, including processors  
and catchers, have the opportunity to be represented in  
consultations on the design of the new fisheries policy?

**David Mundell:** I very much welcome my hon. Friend  
to this House as the MP for one of the most important  
fishing constituencies in the United Kingdom, for which  
he will be a strong advocate. As he knows, when I  
visited Peterhead I had the opportunity to meet processors,  
and I take on board fully their importance in shaping  
the future of the industry after the CFP.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP):  
News has reached Westminster that the Secretary of  
State has a new deputy in the House of Lords. Will he  
therefore instruct his deputy to procure a copy of the  
“Brexit: devolution” report that the House of Lords  
published yesterday, which states

“that, in the event that the UK Government does not secure a  
UK-wide agreement that adequately reflects Scotland's specific  
needs”—

that includes fishing—  
“thereisastrongpoliticalandeconomiccaseformakingdifferentiated  
arrangements for Scotland”?

**David Mundell:** I hope you, Mr Speaker, will forgive  
me for laughing when I hear the SNP extol the House of  
Lords, which on every other occasion it condemns. The  
reference—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Mr Docherty-Hughes, despite  
the fact that your shiny pate is secreted behind the face  
of Mr Cowan, I can tell what you are up to. You are  
behaving in your usual outlandish manner, from which  
I hope you will now desist.

**David Mundell:** There will in any event be no need for  
the provision to which the hon. Member for West  
Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes) refers—this

United Kingdom Government will deliver a good deal  
on Brexit for Scotland and the whole of the United  
Kingdom.

**Jobcentres: Glasgow**

1. **Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
   What recent discussions he has had with Glasgow City  
   Council on the future of job centres in Glasgow.

[900493]

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds):** DWP  
officials engage regularly with local authorities, which  
can of course include exploring opportunities to share  
accommodation. We are introducing 40 new such  
arrangements, three in Scotland. These arrangements  
bring benefits for colleagues, customers and the taxpayer.  
I am keen that we continue to explore more opportunities  
into the future.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Given that the hon.  
Gentleman is going to close quite a number of jobcentres  
in the city, does he not think he should at least sit down  
with Glasgow City Council, which is concerned that  
organisations such as the Scottish Association for Mental  
Health, the Prince's Trust and others are going to have  
to pick up the slack of his closure in supporting people  
into work? He needs to have a discussion about how  
that will work and what financial support he will give  
them.

**Damian Hinds:** We will continue to work with local  
authorities and third sector organisations, but I must  
remind the hon. Gentleman that before these changes  
the city of Glasgow had the greatest coverage of jobcentres  
per head of population of any large city in the UK.  
After these changes, it will still have the greatest coverage  
of jobcentres of any large city in the UK.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): While the hon.  
Gentleman is having discussions with Glasgow City  
Council, will he pick up the phone to the City of  
Edinburgh Council and explain why he can find £1.5 billion  
for the Democratic Unionist party, but cannot find a  
solitary pen to sign the Edinburgh city region deal?

**Damian Hinds:** I am told by my right hon. Friend the  
Secretary of State that he may have excitement coming  
soon.

**Agreement with the DUP: Funding for Scotland**

1. **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Whether

the additional funding provided to Northern Ireland  
announced in the Government's agreement with the  
Democratic Unionist Party will have consequences on  
funding for Scotland. [900494]

11. **Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): Whether the  
additional funding provided to Northern Ireland announced  
in the Government's agreement with the Democratic  
Unionist Party will have consequences on funding for  
Scotland. [900496]

14. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):  
Whether the additional funding provided to Northern  
Ireland announced in the Government's agreement with  
the Democratic Unionist Party will have consequences  
on funding for Scotland. [900499]

827

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

828

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):**Like previous Northern Ireland support packages and  
city deals in Scotland and Wales, this funding is a  
targeted intervention to address a specific set of unique  
challenges. As with those previous interventions, this  
exceptional funding will be made outside the normal,  
ongoing Barnett funding system. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. There is excessive noise in the  
Chamber. To my certain knowledge, at least one retired  
teacher is in the precincts of the Palace observing our  
proceedings; she would want there to be a seemly  
atmosphere.

**Alison Thewliss:** The running total given by the UK  
Government to city deals in Scotland since 2014 is  
already dwarfed by the sums given by local government  
and the Scottish Government. If £1.5 billion can be  
found overnight for the DUP deal to hold up this Tory  
Government, when will the Government find the money  
for the Tay cities deal, the Ayrshire growth deal and the  
Perth deal?

**David Mundell:** I am surprised at the hon. Lady's  
tone because the Government have committed to delivering  
city deals across Scotland. There will imminently be  
some exciting news about Edinburgh. I would have  
thought she would welcome that, rather than simply  
politicking.

**Hannah Bardell:** I would like to put on the record the  
best wishes of everyone on the Scottish National party  
Benches to the Scottish football team. I am wearing  
their colours; I hope they do not mind. I used to play  
alongside two of Scotland's national players at university—  
their football careers have obviously been better than  
mine.

Livingston and West Lothian already have a low  
proportion of public sector jobs in Scotland; the local  
authority ranks 20 out of 32. The private sector is  
strong, but with the loss of HMRC jobs, the percentage  
of public sector jobs is going to fall. Will the right hon.  
Gentleman come to my constituency and face up to the  
reality of those job closures and at least receive a  
delegation, as is his duty as Secretary of State?

**David Mundell:** I would be very happy to meet the  
hon. Lady.

**Martyn Day:** May I remind the Secretary of State of  
his own words? He said that he would not

“agree to anything that could be construed as back-door funding  
to Northern Ireland.”

We expect him, as Scotland's representative in the Cabinet,  
to fight for fiscal fairness for Scotland and not to be  
short-changed by £3 billion. Did he make any  
representations to the Prime Minister before or after the  
deal was signed?

**David Mundell:** I take my responsibility to fight for  
Scotland's fiscal priorities very seriously. That is why,  
two years ago when the hon. Gentleman was walking  
through the Lobby to deliver full fiscal freedom and a  
£9 billion black hole to Scotland, I voted to keep the  
Barnett formula.

**Ross Thomson** (Aberdeen South) (Con): Will my  
right hon. Friend update the House on the benefits to  
the north-east of Scotland brought about by the UK  
Government's Aberdeen city region deal? Does he share  
my concern at the dither and delay of the SNP Government  
in improving the rail journey times between Aberdeen  
and the central belt, which may take until the 2020s? We  
need urgency from the Scottish Government.

**David Mundell:** I welcome my hon. Friend to his  
place. As a noted councillor in Aberdeen, he played a  
significant role in bringing together the Aberdeen city  
region deal, which has been such a boost to the north-east  
of Scotland. I am disappointed to hear what he says  
about the actions of the SNP Government, but, sadly, I  
am not surprised.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP):  
The Secretary of State could not be clearer:

“I'm not going to agree to anything that could be construed as  
back-door funding to Northern Ireland.”

This is not just back door; it is locked away in secure  
accommodation. Will he therefore detail in full what  
representations he made to the Prime Minister and  
what he did at any time to offer any objections on  
behalf of Scotland?

**David Mundell:** On 8 June, the people of Scotland  
delivered their verdict on which party in this House  
stands up for Scotland and Scotland's financial  
arrangements. Scottish Conservatives—12 additional  
MPs. The Scottish National party—21 less.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, or even “fewer”.

PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—***Engagements**

Q1. [900571] **Mr Geoffrey Robinson** (Coventry North  
West) (Lab): If she will list her official engagements for  
Wednesday 19 July.

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** As we approach  
recess, I am sure that Members from all parties wish to  
thank the staff of the House for their dedication to our  
work here in what has been a particularly challenging  
year. We saw terrorists attack our democracy and our  
way of life—not just in the Westminster attack, but in  
the attacks at Manchester, Finsbury Park and London  
Bridge. It is thanks to the professionalism and bravery  
of people such as Elizabeth Bryan, an off-duty A&E  
nurse from Cambridgeshire who ran to help at the scene  
of the Borough Market attack and who is with us in the  
Gallery today—[HON.MEMBERS: “Hear, hear]—that these  
attacks will never succeed. We are united in defending  
the values that define our nation.

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues  
and others, and in addition to my duties in this House, I  
shall have further such meetings later today.

**Mr Robinson:** Of course the whole House associates  
itself with the Prime Minister's words about defending  
our values. Her schedule does not seem so busy, so  
could she find time to visit Coventry? I can assure her of

829

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

830

a warm welcome from the city's three Labour MPs, who  
all doubled their majorities in the recent general election  
that she called; we were very grateful for that.

On a serious note, is the Prime Minister aware  
that Coventry is the designated national research and  
development centre for the controls of driverless vehicles?  
Would she not consider it an appropriate location to  
relocate her whole Government to? Then she could see  
the controls of driverless vehicles in practice.

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I am always happy to visit  
the west midlands. I am particularly pleased to visit the  
west midlands under its new Mayor, Andy Street, who is  
doing a very good job. The hon. Gentleman mentioned  
automated vehicles. This country is a leader in automated  
vehicles. That is part of building a strong economy and  
that is what this Government are doing.

Q4. [900574] **Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent)  
(Con): Our national health service was last week judged  
the best, safest and most affordable healthcare system—  
better than that of France, Germany, Norway, Sweden,  
Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand. Too often in  
this House, we focus on the negatives. I have heard the  
Labour party attempt to weaponise the NHS. Will my  
right hon. Friend—and, I hope, the Leader of the  
Opposition when he stands—congratulate NHS staff  
on their skills and dedication, and on the hard work  
they have put in to achieve these high standards?

**The Prime Minister:** I am very happy to stand here  
and congratulate all NHS staff, who are delivering such  
a fantastic service and who have made the NHS, once  
again—this is not the first time—the No. 1 health  
system in the world. We are determined to continue to  
enable that high level of service to be provided, which is  
why we will be investing more than half a trillion  
pounds in our NHS between 2015 and 2020.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): I join the  
Prime Minister in thanking all the staff of this House  
for all the work they do all the year round. They are  
fantastic, supportive and inclusive, and they are great  
with the public who come here. I want to thank them  
for everything they do.

I also join the Prime Minister in thanking all our  
emergency services for the way they coped with all the  
terrible emergencies we have had over the past few  
months in this country, and I thank those communities,  
such as my own in Finsbury Park, that have come  
together to oppose those who try to divide us as a  
community and as a people. The emergency services  
were in action again yesterday, protecting the people of  
Coverack from the flood they suffered. We should always  
remember that we rely on those services.

The Chancellor said this week that some public servants  
are “overpaid”. Given that the Prime Minister has had  
to administer a slapdown to her squabbling Cabinet,  
does she think the Chancellor was actually talking  
about her own Ministers?

**The Prime Minister:** First, I join the right hon. Gentleman  
not only in praising the work of our emergency services,  
but in recognising the way in which after the terrible  
terrorist attacks, and of course the appalling tragedy of  
the Grenfell Tower fire, we have seen communities come

together and support those who have been victims of  
those terrible incidents. I was very pleased, as he knows,  
to be able to visit Finsbury Park after the attack there  
and see for myself the work that had been done in that  
community and the work that he had done that night in  
working among his constituents to ensure that the  
community came together after that terrible attack.

On public sector pay, I simply say this to the right  
hon. Gentleman: I recognise, as I said when I stood on  
the steps of Downing Street a year ago, that some  
people in our country are just about managing—they  
find life a struggle. That covers people who are working  
in the public sector and some who are working in the  
private sector, which is why it is important that the  
Government are taking steps to, for example, help those  
on the lowest incomes through the national living wage.  
It is why we have taken millions of people out of paying  
income tax altogether; and it is why under this Government  
basic rate taxpayers have seen a tax cut of the equivalent  
of £1,000. But you only get that with a strong economy,  
and you only get that with a Conservative Government.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I thank the Prime Minister for what  
she said about my own community; I am obliged to her  
for that. However, my question was about whether the  
Chancellor had said that public service workers are  
overpaid or not. The reality in this country is simply  
this: a nurse on a median salary starts on £23,000;  
police officers start on £22,800; and jobcentre clerks  
start on £15,000. I had a letter from Sarah who wrote to  
me this week about her sister-in-law, who is a nurse.  
Sarah said:

“she has sacrificed her health for the caring of others. She has had  
a pay freeze for the last five years. Only her dedication and  
passion for her vocation keeps her going. Why is this happening”.  
What does the Prime Minister say to Sarah and those  
others working in our NHS?

**The Prime Minister:** What I say to Sarah and to those  
working in the national health service is that we recognise  
the excellent work they are doing. We recognise the  
sacrifice that they and others have made over the past  
seven years. That sacrifice has been made because we  
had to deal with the biggest deficit in our peacetime  
history—left by a Labour Government. As we look at  
public sector pay, we balance being fair to public sector  
workers, protecting jobs and being fair to those who  
pay for them. The right hon. Gentleman seems to think  
it is possible to go around promising people more  
money and promising that nobody is ever going to have  
to pay for it. He and I both value public sector workers.  
We both value our public sector services. The difference  
is that on this side of the House we know that you have  
to pay for them.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** The Prime Minister does not seem to  
have had any problem finding money to pay for the  
Democratic Unionist party's support. The Conservatives  
have been in office for 84 months, and 52 of those  
months have seen a real fall in wages and income in our  
country. In the last Prime Minister's Question Time  
before the general election, the Prime Minister said:  
“every vote for me is a vote for a strong economy with the benefits  
felt by everyone across the country.”—[*Official Report*, 26 April  
2017; Vol. 624, c. 1104.]

Does she agree you cannot have a strong economy when  
6 million people are earning less than the living wage?

831

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

832

**The Prime Minister:** I will tell the right hon. Gentleman  
when you cannot have a strong economy: it is when you  
adopt Labour party policies of half a trillion pounds of  
extra borrowing, which will mean more spending, more  
borrowing, higher prices, higher taxes and fewer jobs.  
The Labour Government crashed the economy; the  
Conservative Government have come in—more people  
in work, more people in jobs, more investment.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** May I invite the Prime Minister to  
take a check with reality on this? One in eight workers  
in the United Kingdom—that is 3.8 million people in  
work—are now living in poverty. Some 55% of people  
in poverty are in working households. The Prime Minister's  
lack of touch with reality goes like this. Low pay in  
Britain is holding people back at a time of rising  
housing costs, rising food prices and rising transport  
costs; it threatens people's living standards, and rising  
consumer debt and falling savings threaten our economic  
stability. Why does the Prime Minister not understand  
that low pay is a threat to an already weakening economy?

**The Prime Minister:** The best route out of poverty is  
through work, and what we now see is hundreds—  
*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The question has been asked.  
The Prime Minister's answer must—and however long  
it takes, it will—be heard.

**The Prime Minister:** The best route out of poverty is  
through work. That is why it is so important that, over  
the last seven years, we have seen 3 million more jobs  
created in our economy. It is why we now see so many  
thousands of people in households with work, rather  
than in workless households, and hundreds of thousands  
more children being brought up in a household where  
there is work rather than a failure to have work. That is  
what is important. But what is important for Government  
as well is to ensure that we provide support to people.  
That is why we created the national living wage. That  
was the biggest pay increase ever for people on the  
lowest incomes. When did the Labour party ever introduce  
the national living wage? Never! That was a Conservative  
Government and a Conservative record.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** It was Labour that first introduced  
the minimum wage—with opposition from the Conservative  
party.

Wages are lower than they were 10 years ago. The  
Prime Minister has been in office for just one year, and  
during that time disposable income has fallen by 2%.  
The economic consequences of austerity are very clear,  
and so are the social consequences: life expectancy  
stalling for the first time in 100 years. Today, the Institute  
for Fiscal Studies forecasts that income inequality is  
going to get worse and that child poverty will rise to  
5millionby2022.DoesthePrimeMinister—*[Interruption.]*

**MrSpeaker:**Order.Membersareshouting, and shouting  
excessively. They must calm themselves. Take some sort  
of soothing medicament.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I will try to help hon. Members,  
Mr Speaker. Does the Prime Minister not realise that  
her talk of a strong economy does not remotely match  
the reality that millions of people face, with low wages  
and poverty at home?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is, of  
course, wrong in some of the facts that he is putting  
forward. In fact, inequality is down. Life expectancy is  
continuing to rise. What we know is that what will not  
deliver a strong economy for this country is Labour's  
policies of more borrowing, more spending, higher  
taxes and fewer jobs. What the right hon. Gentleman  
wants is a country that is living beyond its means. That  
means making future generations pay for his mistakes.  
That is Labour's way, and the Conservatives will never  
do that.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** What we want is a country where  
there are not 4 million children living in poverty and  
where homelessness does not rise every year. I look  
along the Front Bench opposite and I see a Cabinet  
bickering and backbiting while the economy gets weaker  
andpeople are pushed further into debt. *[Interruption.]*Well, they can try talking to each other. The economy  
is—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Stratford-  
on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) is gesticulating in a distinctly  
eccentric manner and he must stop doing so. Shakespeare's  
county deserves better.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** The reality is that wages are falling,  
the economy is slowing, the construction sector is in  
recession, the trade deficit is widening, and we face  
crucial Brexit negotiations. Is not the truth that this  
divided Government are unable to give this country the  
leadership it so desperately needs now to deal with these  
issues?

**The Prime Minister:** I will tell the right hon. Gentleman  
the reality. The reality is that he is always talking Britain  
down and we are leading Britain forward. Let us look at  
the record of the Conservatives in government: 3 million  
more jobs, 4 million people out of paying income tax  
altogether, over 30 million with a cut in their income  
tax, record levels of people in employment, record  
numbers of women in work, the deficit cut by three  
quarters, inequality down, and record levels of foreign  
direct investment. That is a record to be proud of, and  
you only get it with a Conservative Government. [HON.  
MEMBERS: “More!”]

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mike Wood. I do not think the  
hon. Gentleman knew how popular he was.

Q5. [900575] **Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): The  
black country flag has come under attack from Labour  
Members in recent days. Will the Prime Minister join  
me in again congratulating Gracie Sheppard, who designed  
the flag, reflecting our industrial heritage, when she was  
just 12 years old? Does the Prime Minister agree that  
the latest figures showing the west midlands as the  
fastest-growing part of this country show once again  
that the black country remains a great place to do  
business?

**The Prime Minister:** As my hon. Friend says—he is  
absolutely right—the black country remains a great  
place to do business. I would like to congratulate Gracie  
on designing that flag at the age of only 12. I am sure  
that she and others, including the *Express & Star*,have  
been surprised at the attitude from the Labour Benches

833

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

834

on this particular issue. I commend my hon. Friend and  
my other hon. Friends in the black country, and indeed  
the *Express & Star*, for the work that they are doing to  
promote the black country as that great place to do  
business, to live, and to bring up children like Gracie.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP):  
Does the Prime Minister believe that her Government  
have delivered pension fairness for women who, like her,  
were born in the 1950s?

**The Prime Minister:** What the Government are delivering  
for women is a better state pension for women so that  
women in future will be better off under the state  
pension than they have been in the past. We are equalising  
the state pension age, and I think that everybody across  
the whole House will recognise that that is the right  
thing to do.

**Ian Blackford:** The Prime Minister has found up to  
£35 billion for Hinkley Point C nuclear power station,  
up to £200 billion to replace the Trident missile system,  
and £1 billion for a deal with the DUP just so she can  
keep her own job. She seems to be able to shake the  
magic money tree when she wants to. Will she now end  
the injustice for those women who are missing out on  
their pensions before she herself thinks about retiring?

**The Prime Minister:** I am a little surprised, given the  
hon. Gentleman's background, that he said what he did  
about Hinkley Point. Hinkley Point is actually privately  
funded—this is not money that is coming from the  
Government to develop Hinkley Point—so I find that a  
little strange. We have put £1 billion extra into the  
question of the change in the state pension age to  
ensure that nobody sees their state pension age increase  
by more than 18 months from that which was previously  
expected. I must also say to the hon. Gentleman that  
the Scottish Government of course now have extra  
powers in the area of welfare. Perhaps it is about time  
that the Scottish Government got on with the day job  
and stopped talking endlessly about independence.

Q8. [900578] **Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): Businesses  
in Stafford and other constituencies need as much certainty  
as possible now about what will happen after we leave  
the EU in March 2019 for investment decisions they are  
making in the coming weeks and months. As the  
Government work on the comprehensive future relationship  
with our European neighbours, will they also negotiate  
time-bound transitional arrangements that prioritise  
the jobs of our constituents and the health of our  
economy?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. As I have said in this Chamber and elsewhere, we  
want to avoid a cliff edge for businesses, because people  
want to know where they stand, and to be able to carry  
on investing in the UK and creating the jobs that we  
have seen being created. As I have also said before, once  
we know—once we have negotiated through this two-year  
period—what the end-state relationship for the UK and  
the European Union will be in the future, it will then be  
necessary to have an implementation period when people  
can adjust to that new end state that is coming in. There  
will be some very practical things that need to be done  
during that period. As part of the negotiations, it will

be important for us to agree what that implementation  
period, or periods, is, and what the arrangements will be  
during that.

Q2. [900572] **Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP):  
Since Winnie Ewing's maiden speech 50 years ago this  
year, SNP MPs and MSPs have been arguing for the  
voting age to be lowered. In recent elections, young  
people have proven themselves to be the most  
knowledgeable and most engaged that they have ever  
been. I believe there is a majority in this House in favour  
of lowering the voting age. Will the Prime Minister  
support giving votes to 16 and 17-year-olds?

**The Prime Minister:** I would say to the hon. Lady  
that this is one of those issues on which people will  
obviously have different views. My view has always  
been and continues to be that 18 is the right age. We  
expect people to continue in education or training until  
the age of 18, and I think that is the right point for the  
voting age.

Q9. [900579] **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): In  
Harrow and up and down the country, young people  
will be eagerly anticipating their A-level results to see  
whether they qualify for a university education. Will  
my right hon. Friend confirm the dramatic increase  
in the number of people from disadvantaged  
backgrounds going to university, and can she think of  
anyone who should apologise for misleading the British  
public?

**The Prime Minister:** I think it is very important, as  
people are thinking about going to university, that they  
are not misled in any way. It is the case that more  
disadvantaged 18-year-olds are now applying to university  
than ever before. I believe the Leader of the Opposition  
said exactly the opposite, and I think he should apologise  
for that. I think the Labour party should actually go  
further. At the election, the Leader of the Opposition  
vowed to deal with student debt, and Labour were  
going to abolish student debt; now they say it was not a  
promise at all. Students know Labour cannot be trusted  
on student fees.

Q3. [900573] **Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East)  
(Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister will now know what  
it is like to have a job but to lack job security. Sometimes  
it can even bring a tear to the eye. Given her new-found  
empathy for millions of workers in insecure work, why  
is she now cutting six Department for Work and Pensions  
jobcentres in Glasgow and also back-office staff at  
Springburn in my constituency, where unemployment is  
twice the national average?

**The Prime Minister:** May I start by welcoming the  
hon. Gentleman to his new job in this House? What is  
happening in relation to jobcentres in Scotland is that  
the DWP is ensuring it is using the estate properly and  
to the best advantage. As a result of what is happening,  
no services are going to be cut. In fact, services to  
people using jobcentres will be enhanced in future. I  
think what matters is actually the service that is provided  
to people attending those jobcentres.

Q11. [900581] **Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): The  
brave men and women of our armed forces put themselves  
in extremely challenging situations in their efforts to  
keep us all safe. We therefore owe it to them to do all we  
can to support them and their families when they have

835

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

836

completed their service. I warmly welcome the launch  
of the “Defence people mental health and wellbeing  
strategy” yesterday, but will my right hon. Friend tell  
the House how we can co-ordinate this excellent programme  
with our international allies? May I also wish her a very  
well deserved break when she finally decides to take it in  
the recess?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend raises a very  
important issue. Members across the House recognise  
the importance of ensuring that we provide that support  
to those who are in our services and our veterans. The  
issue of mental health and wellbeing is very important,  
and I welcome the new strategy for mental health and  
wellbeing in the armed forces. I also pay tribute to the  
tireless work of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth,  
Moor View (Johnny Mercer), particularly on mental  
health, since he came to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Richard  
Drax) raises an issue that is important not just for us in  
the UK; we need to see how we can work internationally  
on it. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of  
State for Defence launched the strategy at an international  
conference yesterday, with counterparts from the United  
States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. We will all  
campaign against the stigmas around mental health so  
that members of our armed forces and our veterans can  
get the help they need.

Q6. [900576] **Dan Carden** (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab):  
In my constituency of Liverpool, Walton, almost 40% of  
children are growing up in poverty. With schools closing  
this week and local support services cut to the bone,  
austerity bites and kids do not get fed. The Prime  
Minister says that her mission is to make Britain  
“a country that works for everyone”.

What is she doing now to stop kids going hungry this  
summer in Liverpool, Walton?

**The Prime Minister:** May I first of all welcome the  
hon. Gentleman to his place in this House? He is right  
to say that it is important that we look at the provision  
made in school for children and at the issue of households  
and poverty, but as I said to his right hon. Friend the  
Leader of the Opposition, the best way we can deal  
with poverty—the best route out of poverty—is for  
people to get into the workplace and then for us to  
ensure that other, better-paid jobs are provided for  
people in the workplace in the future.

Q12. [900582] **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): A young  
woman in Telford who gave evidence in a horrific child  
sexual exploitation case five years ago is living in fear.  
The perpetrator, who received a 22-year sentence, is  
about to be released early. CSE victims are too often  
overlooked and ignored. Does the Prime Minister agree  
that CSE victims should be properly consulted on the  
release of perpetrators and that in this case the  
perpetrator should not be returned to Telford?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend raises a very  
important issue. We all know that child sexual exploitation  
is an absolutely horrific crime. It is absolutely right that  
if victims are going to come forward to report this  
abuse, they need to know that they will be supported so  
that they can have the confidence to do so and be

confident in their future security and safety. The victim  
contact scheme is supposed to treat victims properly  
and ensure that consideration is given to victim-related  
conditions when looking at an offender's licence on  
release. If my hon. Friend would like to write with the  
details of the case to my right hon. Friend the Justice  
Secretary, he will look at it very carefully.

Q7. [900577] **Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The  
interim Prime Minister has repeatedly refused to  
answer the question asked by my right hon. Friend  
the Leader of the Opposition, so may I try again? It  
was reported over the weekend, by the temporary  
Chancellor's own Cabinet colleagues, that he had said  
that some public sector workers are “overpaid”. Will  
the Prime Minister tell the House, the country and  
those public sector workers which ones she thinks are  
overpaid, which ones she thinks are underpaid and  
what she is going to do about it?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said earlier, I recognise that  
there will be people working in the public sector who do  
find life a struggle and are just about managing, and  
there will be people in the private sector who are in the  
same place. I also say to the hon. Gentleman that, as we  
have seen in the figures released today, there are some  
people working in the public sector who are very well  
paid. We need to ensure that, when we look at public  
sector pay, we balance being fair to workers, protecting  
jobs and being fair to those who pay for the public  
sector, and that we also support people by ensuring that  
they can keep more of the money they earn. That is why  
we believe in cutting taxes.

**Mr Kenneth Clarke** (Rushcliffe) (Con): The Government  
are under predictable pressure on public sector pay and  
public sector spending, which we would all like to  
respond to if there were some sensible demands. However,  
does my right hon. Friend agree that the only way in  
which a responsible Government can increase public  
sector pay is if we restore to this country strong economic  
growth and a sensible Government fiscal balance sheet,  
and that the biggest threats to our achieving either of  
those things over the next two years are a bad Brexit  
deal that puts up barriers to trade and investment, or  
the return of a hard-left, old-fashioned socialist  
Government?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. and learned Friend  
is absolutely right. As a very successful former Chancellor  
of the Exchequer, he speaks with expertise on this issue.  
He is right that we need to get a good Brexit deal, but he  
is also right that the policies of the Leader of the  
Opposition and the shadow Chancellor, were they ever  
to get the opportunity to put them into practice, would  
not lead to more money for nurses, our national health  
service or our public sector; they would lead, through  
higher spending and higher borrowing, to jobs going,  
higher prices, higher taxes for people, less money available  
for our health service and less money available for our  
nurses.

Q10. [900580] **Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab):  
Does the Prime Minister know that her universal credit  
process is failing my constituents? The Salvation Army  
and Streetlife report that vulnerable Blackpool people  
are juggling a month's money without help, that there

837

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

838

are unfair sanctions for people with mental health issues,  
that a six-week wait for money is causing more stress,  
and that there is a phone helpline that Citizens Advice  
says can cost claimants 55p a minute and take 39 minutes  
to answer. Can she start by getting them a freephone  
number?

**The Prime Minister:** The importance of the universal  
credit scheme is that it is ensuring that being in work  
always pays. With the universal credit scheme, we are  
seeing more people getting into the workplace. The  
DWP is constantly looking at the scheme and how it is  
operating around the country to ensure that any problems  
that people raise are addressed.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): Thousands  
of my constituents and millions of consumers in this  
country have to pay surcharges when they use their  
credit or debit card—a highly unfair practice. Will my  
right hon. Friend outline the impact of lifting surcharges  
on consumers in this country?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. It is very important that this issue is being addressed.  
We believe that rip-off charges have no place in modern  
Britain. That is why card charging abuse is going to  
come to an end. This is about fairness and transparency.  
We do not want people to be surprised, when they come  
to pay for something, that an extra surcharge is suddenly  
added because they have used a particular card. The  
total value of such fees in 2010 was estimated to be  
£473 million. That money will be put back in the hands  
of shoppers across the country, so that they have more  
cash to spend on the things that matter to them.

Q13. [900583] **Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South  
East) (Lab): In her Lancaster House speech, the Prime  
Minister said that the UK would be leaving the single  
market. Will she tell the House whether that red line on  
the single market also applies to any transitional  
agreement or implementation period that might be  
agreed for the period after March 2019?

**The Prime Minister:** We said that we would no longer  
be a member of the single market because we will no  
longer be a member of the European Union and, as the  
European Union says consistently, its four pillars are  
indivisible. Therefore, the fact that we do not wish to be  
subject to other issues, like the European Court of  
Justice and free movement requirements, means that we  
will no longer be a member of the single market. At the  
end of the two years, when we have negotiated the end  
state deal, there will be an implementation period for  
that deal, but we are very clear that at the point at which  
we reach the end of the negotiations, we will be out of  
the European Union.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): I  
welcome the Institute for Fiscal Studies report this  
week on income inequality in the UK. It clearly shows  
that, contrary to Labour propaganda that was often  
repeated during the general election, the income gap  
between rich and poor in our country has reduced every  
year since 2010. Does my right hon. Friend agree that  
that clearly shows that those with the broadest shoulders  
are bearing the heaviest burden in dealing with the debt  
we inherited from the last Labour Government?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. The IFS report clearly shows what he has said  
today. As we know, the top 1% of taxpayers are bearing  
27% of the tax burden. That is a higher burden than in  
any year under the Labour Government.

Q14. [900584] **Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab):  
NHS England commissions child and adolescent mental  
health beds at a private hospital in my constituency,  
which recently received a damning Care Quality  
Commission report. The CQC found that the hospital  
was unsafe not least because, on inspection, it found a  
young woman with MRSA with open wounds on a  
ward. Does the Prime Minister share my concern that  
a shortage of mental health beds risks the NHS placing  
vulnerable young people in unsafe environments, and  
will she consider giving NHS England the responsibility  
for, and the resources to investigate, the quality of care  
before it commissions?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady has raised a very  
significant point. On mental health, of course we are  
boosting the funding that is going into mental health in  
the national health service and across the picture, across  
Government, in terms of dealing with mental health.  
We are taking a number of steps to improve mental  
health. She has raised a very particular case, which I am  
sure everyone in the House will have been concerned to  
hear, and I will ensure that the Secretary of State looks  
into the case she has raised.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): Daesh's atrocities  
have failed to deliver a caliph or a fictional caliphate.  
Does my right hon. Friend agree that our international  
partners must provide resources and commitment to  
apply international law and bring prosecutions against  
Daesh fighters and those who choose to partner with  
them, making it clear that wherever a death-cult terrorist  
hides, we will find them and hold them accountable for  
their barbaric crimes?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right about this. It is important that those who have  
committed these horrific crimes are brought to justice.  
We have done good work as a United Kingdom in  
helping those in these theatres to see how they can  
collect evidence that can then be used in prosecutions.  
We want to do this work internationally through the  
United Nations and it is an issue that I spoke about to  
Prime Minister al-Abadi of Iraq yesterday. We want to  
work with them and others to ensure that we can send  
the very clear message that my hon. Friend identifies.

Q15. [900585] **Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab):  
Does the Prime Minister agree that the huge increase in  
knife crime has tragic consequences for families in  
constituencies such as mine? What will she do to work  
with me and other Members on both sides of the  
House to find solutions to this blight on young lives,  
including looking again at the budget for policing?

**The Prime Minister:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her  
place in the House. Her presence has enabled me to  
appoint a very good chief of staff to my office at  
No. 10. She raises the very serious issue of knife crime.  
The Government have been taking a tougher stance on  
knife crime. We do think this is an issue and we have  
done this in a variety of ways. Now, if people carry a  
knife in public they are much more likely to go to

839

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

840

prison. But we do recognise that there is more to do in  
this area. That is why yesterday my right hon. Friend  
the Home Secretary announced plans to consult on new  
offences to toughen up knife crime laws, including  
restricting the online sale of knives—we have done  
some of that already, but we think there is more for us  
to do—and banning possession of dangerous or offensive  
weapons on private property. The hon. Lady has raised  
an important issue and the Government have been  
addressing it. We recognise that we need to do more,  
and that is what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary  
is doing.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): Before the  
election, the Government committed to removing the  
faith-based cap for free schools and even included that  
promise in our election manifesto. Catholic dioceses up  
and down the country are anxious to open free schools  
and some have even purchased sites. Will the Prime  
Minister commit her Government to honouring that  
solemn pledge in our manifesto?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend will recognise  
that the reason we put that in our manifesto, and the  
reason it was in the schools Green Paper that we published  
before the election, is that we do believe it is important  
to enable more faith schools to be set up and more faith  
schools to expand. This is an issue that my right hon.  
Friend the Secretary of State for Education is considering  
and she will publish further details on our overall view  
in terms of improving school diversity and encouraging  
the creation of more good school places in the near  
future.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Last  
week the Prime Minister refused to make public a  
report on the foreign funding of extremists in the United  
Kingdom, despite pressure from Members in all parts  
of the House and beyond. Last night, survivors of 9/11  
also urged her to make the report available. Has she  
refused to do so simply because the content of the  
report will embarrass the Government's friends in Saudi  
Arabia, or because Ministers care rather more about  
arms sales to Riyadh than they do about public safety  
in Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** It is absolutely nothing to do  
with that. There is certain confidential information in  
the report that means that it would not be appropriate  
to publish it, but my right hon. Friend the Home  
Secretary has made it available, on a Privy Council  
basis, to Opposition parties.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): For signs of  
the strong economy that the Prime Minister has so  
eloquently outlined this morning, we need look no  
further than Taunton Deane. It is a microcosm of the  
national picture, with record house building, record  
employment, and record Government investment in  
road schemes such as the A358 upgrade and the expansion  
of junction 25. Does the Prime Minister agree that to  
build on the economic success that this Government  
have overseen, those key road projects should not just  
speed up traffic and ease congestion but unlock more  
jobs, thus further fuelling the rise in productivity?

**The Prime Minister:** I am very happy to recognise  
Taunton Deane as a microcosm of the excellent economy  
that we see across the country. My hon. Friend has

made an important point about the need to invest in  
infrastructure in order to boost our economy. It is a  
point that the Government readily understand and accept,  
which is why, in last year's autumn statement, my right  
hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able  
to announce a £23 billion national productivity investment  
fund, a considerable portion of which will go into  
infrastructure. We fully recognise not just the importance  
of large-scale transport projects such as Crossrail, HS2  
and the expansion of Heathrow, but the importance of  
investing in projects at a more local level if we are to  
unlock further economic growth in areas like Taunton  
Deane.

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab):  
With no legal powers, funds or criteria, and with schools  
and Parliament not open, Epsom and St Helier University  
Hospitals NHS Trust is once again consulting on the  
closure of the hospital and the building of a new  
£400 million hospital in Belmont. There have been five  
consultations over 18 years, wasting £40 million of  
taxpayers' money. Is it not time for the Prime Minister  
to step in and put a stop to it, and allow this important  
hospital to get on with the day job?

**The Prime Minister:** I understand that Epsom and  
St Helier Trust is indeed seeking views on future specialist  
care at the trust, and on how the existing buildings can  
be improved. I also understand that the discussions are  
at an early stage, that no final decisions have been made,  
and that any proposals for major service change will be  
subject to a full public consultation.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Not only has the  
Institute for Fiscal Studies said that we have the narrowest  
income gaps for a decade, but the Office for National  
Statistics has said that Britain has some of the lowest  
levels of persistent poverty in Europe. Does my right  
hon. Friend agree that it is right that this country is  
governed by the true facts and not by fake news, and  
that this Government are committed to building a strong  
economy for all?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me start by welcoming my  
hon. Friend to the Chamber. She is absolutely right: we  
owe it to our constituents—we owe it to the public—to  
ensure that when we debate these issues we debate them  
on the basis of the facts, and not on the basis of the sort  
of fake news that we hear all too often in the Chamber.

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Lakeside  
children's centre is a lifeline for often struggling kids  
and their parents in one of the poorest wards in Britain,  
giving them the best possible start in life, yet it is one of  
26 children's centres that face closure in Birmingham.  
Does the Prime Minister understand the consequences  
of her actions? Does she understand that £700 million  
of cuts in the city council's budget are having a devastating  
impact on the provision of children's centres? Will  
she act properly to fund those centres, and to reverse a  
tidal wave of closures that will otherwise have a devastating  
impact on the life chances of a whole generation  
of children?

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously, decisions on this  
issue are being taken by the Birmingham local authority,  
but it ill behoves any Member of the Labour party to

841

Oral Answers

19 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

842

stand up in this House and complain about the issues  
with public spending that we have had to address,  
because they are the direct result of the failure of a  
Labour Government to manage our economy.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady is signalling that she  
wishes to raise a point of order, but customarily points  
of order come after urgent questions and statements. If  
the hon. Lady can hold herself until that point, we look  
forward with eager anticipation to hearing of what she  
wishes to unburden herself then.

843

19 JULY 2017

Prison and Youth Custody Centre Safety

12.46 pm

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op)  
*(Urgent Question):* To ask the Secretary of State for  
Justice if he will make a statement on safety in prisons  
and the findings of Her Majesty's chief inspector's  
annual report.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice  
(Dr Phillip Lee):** Independent scrutiny is an essential  
part of our prison system, and I thank the chief inspector  
of prisons and his team for the work they do in delivering  
this, including through his annual report. His report  
raises important issues in relation to safety and security  
in prisons and youth custody. We have been clear that a  
calm and ordered environment needs to be created to  
ensure effective rehabilitation, and that achieving this is  
our priority.

The current levels of violence, self-harm and self-inflicted  
deaths in the adult estate are unacceptable. The issues in  
our prisons have deep roots and, while they will not be  
addressed overnight, we are combining immediate action  
to stabilise the estate with significant additional investment.  
For example, we are investing £100 million a year to  
bring in an additional 2,500 prison officers by the end  
of 2018. We are already making significant progress,  
with a net increase of 515 prison officers in post at the  
end of March compared with the previous quarter.

Turning to youth justice, the annual report highlights  
particular issues regarding the youth estate. I reassure  
the hon. Lady that the safety and welfare of every  
young person in custody is of paramount importance to  
me and we are clear that more needs to be done to  
achieve this.

In response to Charlie Taylor's review of the youth  
justice system last December, the Government  
acknowledged the serious issues the youth justice system  
faces, and that is why we are reforming the system. Let  
me give three examples of the progress we are making.  
First, we have created a new youth custody service, with  
an executive director, for the first time in the Department's  
history. Secondly, the development of a new youth  
justice specialist officer role is ensuring that more staff  
can be specifically trained to work with young people,  
boosting the numbers on the operational frontline in  
youth offender institutions by 20%, and recruiting workers  
specifically trained to work within the youth sector.  
Thirdly, there is the introduction of a more individualised  
approach for young people focused on education and  
health, enhancing the workforce, improving governance,  
and developing the secure estate.

Finally, in his report the chief inspector expressed  
disappointment about the implementation rate of his  
recommendations. I recognise this concern, and to address  
this, we have created a new unit within Her Majesty's  
Prison and Probation Service to help ensure that  
recommendations are taken forward in a timely manner  
and to track how they are being implemented by prisons.

The issues within our prisons will not be resolved  
overnight, but we are determined to make progress as  
quickly as possible, and I hope that hon. Members on  
both sides of the House will support our plans for reform.

Prison and Youth Custody Centre 844

Safety

**Seema Malhotra:** Last year, the chief inspector reported  
that too many of our prisons had become unacceptably  
violent and dangerous. This year, he reports that the  
situation has not improved, and that it has got worse.  
Staff assaults increased by 38% in the 12 months to  
December 2016. Of the 29 local prisons and training  
institutes inspected last year, 21 were judged to be poor,  
or not sufficiently good, in the area of safety.

Only two weeks ago, here in the Chamber, I raised the  
issues at Feltham young offenders institution, but this  
devastating report is a cause for even greater concern.  
The jump in violence in our prisons is a crisis of the  
Government's own making. The warning signs have  
been there. The Government have been warned by MPs,  
by the staff in our prisons and by charities. Now they  
are being condemned by this damning report. The  
budget for prisons has been cut by more than a fifth  
over the past six years, and those cuts have now been  
proved to be a false economy. Prison staff numbers have  
been cut by a quarter and those who remain are being  
put at risk. The human impact of Tory austerity is now  
being laid bare in our prison system. Effective prisons  
should be about rehabilitation, so that people come out  
less likely to reoffend. Drugs, debt and bullying are  
contributing to the violence, but this has been found to  
be compounded by staffing levels described as being  
simply too low to keep order and run a decent regime.

In the last Parliament, the Government introduced a  
Bill to address some of these safety concerns. However,  
the Bill was lost on Dissolution. Despite recognition of  
prison safety being in the Tory manifesto, no prisons  
legislation was announced in the 2017 Queen's Speech.  
Will the Minister tell the House whether there is any  
intention of bringing back that legislation? Will he also  
tell us why a third of prisons have been found not to  
have implemented the prisons and probation ombudsman's  
recommendations on reducing the risk of self-inflicted  
death? What action is being taken to address governance  
concerns and the extensive use of force and segregation?  
Will the Minister also update the House on the  
implementation of progress on recruitment and the  
action being taken to keep experienced staff and retain  
new staff ? Our prison system is no longer fit for purpose  
and the Government must take urgent action.

**Dr Lee:** We fully recognise that there are difficulties  
in the prison system—we have been honest about that  
ever since I have been in the Department—and yes, the  
staffing issue has been indicated as a problem. It has  
been addressed in the last year and, as I have said, we  
have appointed more than 500 to March and we are on  
course to fulfil our target of 2,500 extra prison officers  
by the end of 2018. I would argue, however, that the  
unforeseen exacerbant in prisons has been the use of  
Spice and other drugs. This was not anticipated by any  
previous Government and it is undeniably causing  
difficulties in terms of the behaviour of prisoners and  
the corruption of prisoners and some staff with regard  
to the trade in those substances.

I also take seriously the issue of mental health in  
prisons. Only yesterday I had further meetings with the  
Department of Health, which carries responsibility for  
that. We recognise that we need to improve mental  
health services for offenders, including the services relating  
to substance misuse, both in custody and in the community.

19 JULY 2017

845 Prison and Youth Custody Centre

Safety

*[Dr Phillip Lee]*

We are working hard to make those improvements  
because we know that those issues are contributing to  
the problems that the hon. Lady has raised.

In relation to the youth estate, and particularly to  
Feltham, which is in the hon. Lady's constituency, the  
use of segregation is an issue. It has been an issue  
recently in the case that has been raised, but I cannot  
comment on that case because there is an appeal. This  
indicates how difficult it can be to manage young people.  
Over the past 10 years, the number of young people  
being held in custody has fallen from 3,000 to 1,000.  
That is something to celebrate. What we cannot celebrate,  
however, is the fact that when that target was set, before  
2010, no plan was in place to change the infrastructure  
to meet the demands of dealing with and managing  
1,000 extremely difficult young people at any one time.  
We are seeing problems not just at Feltham but across  
the youth justice system. I am fully aware of those  
problems, and that is why we are bringing forward two  
new secure schools over the next two years.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): The  
Minister is right to be frank, as he always has been,  
about the dire state of affairs in our prisons, which the  
Select Committee highlighted in a number of reports  
during the last Parliament. On a constructive note, does  
he recognise that although the Queen's Speech contained  
no prisons legislation for the current Session, it would  
none the less be appropriate for the Government to take  
forward much of the prison reform agenda that does  
not require legislation? In particular, will he commit to  
ensuring that data and updates are provided to the  
House—through the Select Committee or otherwise—on  
the progress of the implementation of Her Majesty's  
inspectorate's recommendations? We do not need legislation  
for the Government to be transparent about that, and  
we need to track the progress that is being made.

**Dr Lee:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his  
reappointment as Chair of the Justice Committee. We  
are committed to transparency on this. We recognise  
that there is a series of challenges and problems within  
the system, and I would be more than happy to come  
before his Committee to discuss this further. In regard  
to legislation, we have not ruled out future legislation  
on prisons, but I would argue that there is quite a lot we  
can be getting on with that does not require legislation.  
We are eager, keen and determined to reform our prison  
system.

**Richard Burgon** (Leeds East) (Lab): Yesterday's scathing  
report by the chief inspector of prisons in England and  
Wales represents a watershed moment in the national  
debate on our prisons. Prisons should be places not  
only of punishment but of rehabilitation. They should  
be making us all safer in the short run and in the longer  
term. I believe that the whole House will be alarmed by  
the chief inspector's view that

“too many of our prisons had become unacceptably violent and  
dangerous places.”

Members on both sides of the House are all too well  
aware that there is a crisis in our prisons, and yesterday's  
report revealed that, despite the Government's warm  
words, the situation is not under control, and it is  
getting worse.

Prison and Youth Custody Centre 846

Safety

In the light of that, I believe that the Minister has  
some serious questions to answer. Does he agree with  
the remarks by his former colleague, the former Chancellor  
of the Exchequer and former next Prime Minister, that  
prisons are approaching an “emergency”? What role  
does he think the substantial cuts to the prisons budget  
since 2010 have played in this, and what measures will  
he undertake to address the situation? The chief inspector  
of prisons in England and Wales has warned that this  
crisis

“has all been compounded by staffing levels in many jails that are  
simply too low”.

Does the Minister agree that prison officers deserve a  
pay rise, and that that will be necessary if we are going  
to increase numbers and improve retention?

The chief inspector has also said that he is

“appalled by the conditions in which we hold many prisoners”.  
What measures is the Minister taking to address this  
and to reform our prisons so that prisoners leave prison  
as less, rather than more, of a danger to society? Most  
shockingly, the number of self-inflicted deaths has more  
than doubled since 2013. What strategy will he adopt,  
and what specific resources will he allocate, to reduce  
that number? The chief inspector said that he had  
“reached the conclusion that there was not a single establishment  
that we inspected in England and Wales in which it was safe to  
hold children and young people.”

He added that the speed of decline had been staggering,  
given that in 2013-14, nine out of 12 institutions were  
graded as good or reasonably good for safety. What  
explanation does this Minister have for this? Everyone  
knows that the Government have created a crisis in our  
prisons. What yesterday's report shows is that they are  
failing to take action to solve it.

**Dr Lee:** I do not accept that the Department has lost  
control of the prison system. That is nonsense. We have  
a full grip on the issues that we need to face. I would like  
to talk about the £1.3 billion that we have invested to  
transform the estate. By transforming it, we are going to  
improve the quality of the accommodation for prisoners,  
which will have a direct impact on the problems that we  
are encountering among the small volume of people  
who have mental health and suicide issues. We recognise  
that parts of our estate are antiquated, and that is why  
we are investing the money.

As I have already said, we know that there are many  
difficulties in the youth justice system, where the violence  
rate is 10 times higher than in the adult prison estate. I  
give my full support to the staff who continue to work  
in the youth estate because I have seen it with my own  
eyes: I have visited the majority of the youth estate and  
it is extremely difficult. I would argue that the genesis of  
the problem goes back many years. As I alluded to  
earlier, the admirable intention to reduce the number of  
people being locked up in the youth estate has brought  
us to a point at which we have a very challenging  
population that is particularly violent and difficult to  
manage. That is why we have the problems we have.

We are bringing forward plans on secure schools—there  
are two in the pipeline—and we intend to make them a  
completely different regime with a completely different  
curriculum balance, including getting people outside  
more because I am particularly passionate about the  
use of sport, so that we can deal with the issues we are

847 *Prison and Youth Custody Centre*

*Safety*

confronting. I am under no illusions about how difficult  
this issue is, but we have a plan and we are going to  
implement it.

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):  
I know the Minister appreciates the fact that people  
with autism are disproportionately represented in the  
custodial system. Notwithstanding the issues at YOI  
Feltham, it was in fact the first prison to receive autism-  
friendly accreditation, and the governor and staff there  
report that that contributed to a diminishment in violence  
levels across the whole estate. Some 20 prisons have  
indicated interest in such accreditation. Will the Minister  
look into the programme and consider making its roll-out  
compulsory throughout the entire prison estate? It would  
be of benefit to prisoners and prison staff alike.

**Dr Lee:** Yes, I am more than happy to consider  
rolling out that programme. There are positive schemes,  
and not only with regard to the diagnosis, treatment  
and management of autism; various sports clubs, rugby  
clubs and football clubs are also involved, such as  
Saracens at Feltham. The work they are doing and the  
evidence of its outcomes are all positive. That is why I  
am passionate about this: if we can get the management  
of autism and mental health right and broaden the  
curriculum so that more time is spent outside cells, I am  
convinced that we can change the behaviour and atmosphere  
in each prison and institution so that staff can feel safe  
while they are at work.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The  
combination of rising prisoner numbers and shrinking  
budgets is a major factor that affects the welfare of  
prison officers and prisoners. In that context, it is  
regrettable that the UK Government dropped prison  
reform from the Queen's Speech and continue to cut  
budgets and staff numbers. In contrast, the Scottish  
National party Government in Scotland have continued  
to invest in modernising and improving the prison  
estate. They have also committed to significant penal  
reform, aimed at reducing reoffending by moving away  
from custodial sentences in favour of community sentences,  
which have been proven to be better for rehabilitation.  
Does the Minister agree that he should follow the  
Scottish Government's example and concentrate his  
efforts on schemes that will reduce prison numbers and  
overcrowding, thereby reducing pressure on prison officers  
and prisoners?

**Dr Lee:** Yes, intellectually I agree with the hon. and  
learned Lady that it would make life a lot easier if we  
could reduce the prison population, and I know that the  
Secretary of State agrees with that position. The difficulty  
is the constant balance with the justice issue: if people  
have committed crimes, they have to serve the time. The  
question is where they serve that time. I am responsible  
for women's justice, on which a strategy is coming out  
by the end of the year. I very much want that strategy to  
concentrate on the provision of community sentences  
and for us to move to that model of prison—in future  
years it could be rolled out to the adult male estate, but I  
am just looking at the female estate. I think that we can  
learn a lot from where we hold people when they are  
serving their time. I am going to Scotland in the autumn  
and am looking forward to seeing a few programmes  
up there, because I gather that some good work is  
being done.

19 JULY 2017

Prison and Youth Custody Centre 848

Safety

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Is the  
Minister satisfied that sufficient remedies are available  
to deal with violent offenders?

**Dr Lee:** Yes, I am.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD):  
The Minister is right to say that legislation will not  
solve this crisis by itself—many other measures are  
necessary—but will he tell the House why the Prisons  
and Courts Bill, which was drafted and had made some  
progress in the previous Parliament, has been dropped?  
If the Government are committed to prison reform,  
why have they dropped a piece of legislation that was  
ready to be considered by the House?

**Dr Lee:** We can deliver our reform package without  
any further legislation. We will not rule out further  
legislation if there is a requirement for it in future, but  
the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that there are  
pressures on parliamentary time and this is something  
we are having to accommodate. Nevertheless, there is  
absolutely no reason why we cannot continue with the  
reform programme we have planned.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Does the Minister  
agree that although there are challenges, dedicated officers  
are doing much positive and transformative work in  
prisons on issues such as mental health, as well as  
through chaplaincy services and restorative justice  
programmes? An example is the work I have seen being  
done at Thorn Cross Prison over many years by Shawn  
Verhey and Lorraine Turner. Will he join me in thanking  
them, and the many dedicated officers like them who do  
such a tremendous job?

**Dr Lee:** Yes. That is another example of how, throughout  
the system, positive schemes are being followed. People  
who work in a variety of areas, particularly mental  
health, are delivering care to the prisoners who need it,  
so that they can rehabilitate properly before they return  
to society.

**Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): The Minister referred  
to the advent of drugs such as Spice as an unknown  
quantity for the Prison Service to have to deal with, but  
the fact that there are a quarter fewer prison officers  
than in 2010 hardly helps to address new challenges.  
Assaults on staff are up by 70% since 2009, and in 2016  
alone one in five justice staff members left the sector.  
Will the Minister confirm that there is a retention crisis,  
which is being fuelled by the disgraceful rise in the  
number of assaults on Prison Service staff ?

**Dr Lee:** As I hope the right hon. Lady would  
acknowledge, I am trying to be as candid as possible  
about the difficulties we face. A year ago, we acknowledged  
that there was a need for more staff, and we are delivering  
on that. I must stress, though, that there was no expectation  
that the drug would cause this problem. There is yet to  
be proper documentation on how it affects the prisoners  
who take it and their behaviour, and on the long-term  
impact that that will have on the prison population. We  
acknowledge that we need more staff, and that those  
staff need better training. In the youth justice system,  
we are introducing a new youth custody role, because  
we recognise that additional skills are needed. We recognise  
the problems, and we are working to solve them.

19 JULY 2017

849 Prison and Youth Custody Centre

Safety

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): The Minister will share  
my concern about the impact of contraband, and  
particularly new psychoactive substances, on prisoners  
and the violence that it can cause, so will he say what  
measures the Department is taking to prevent such  
materials from getting into prisons?

**Dr Lee:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. We  
have improved the seizure of drugs; the figure for the  
past 12 months is about 225 kg, which is up on the  
previous year. We have employed dogs to detect  
psychoactive substances, and we were the first jurisdiction  
in the world to introduce drug testing for psychoactive  
substances. We continue to develop that service as the  
substances evolve.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I hope that the  
planned new youth custody service works, but will the  
Minister say how many new prison officers will join  
the existing service this year?

**Dr Lee:** No, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an  
exact figure, but I will write to him with it. We are  
actively seeking to recruit in every single institution  
area, particularly in south-east England, where there  
are always challenges in recruiting prison staff. Perhaps  
more importantly, we are trying to recruit people who  
have a history of working with young people. Working  
with troubled young individuals is a difficult business,  
and we recognise that there may have been recruitment  
errors in the past. We want to recruit people who have  
the proper experience.

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): The Minister  
will know that I have previously questioned his Department  
about rehabilitation. As a result of the report, will he  
prioritise rehabilitation plans for offenders and employment  
opportunities for ex-offenders?

**Dr Lee:** Yes, that is very much our intention. There  
are several schemes throughout the country that involve  
employers. I visited Drake Hall, a women's prison,  
where Halfords has a bicycle repair unit, and met an  
offender who was leaving prison a week or so later to  
work for Halfords. Such schemes up and down the  
country are fantastic and we need more of them. We are  
working hard on getting more.

**Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): This is  
surely an issue of safeguarding. The chief inspector of  
prisons says that there is not a single establishment that  
is currently safe to hold children and young people. The  
Minister did not answer the specific question put to him  
by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds East (Richard  
Burgon) about why there has been such a staggering  
decline in safety over the past year and, as the chief  
inspector said, such a “slump in standards”. Can the  
Minister explain what a “slump in standards” means,  
and what he is doing to address it?

**Dr Lee:** I do not accept that all institutions fit that  
description. YOI Werrington received a positive report  
last week. I would argue that the slump has not happened  
over the past year. As I keep saying, the problem came  
about over a number of years. With some institutions,  
we are wrestling with a legacy of issues. At one institution,  
for example, a contract that was signed in 2004 is

Prison and Youth Custody Centre 850

Safety

preventing us from making necessary changes. The idea  
that this problem was created by this Government is  
simplistic and just not accurate.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): This Government are  
building new prison capacity, including at Wellingborough  
in north Northamptonshire. What difference does my  
hon. Friend believe that that will make in terms of  
improving safety?

**Dr Lee:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. As I  
said earlier, some of our prisons are Victorian. They are  
antiquated, and the quality of the cells is substandard,  
which is why we are building new prisons. Cells in which  
prisoners find it much harder to commit suicide are  
what is needed, which is why I am pleased that we are  
investing £1.3 billion in the system.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): Let me declare an  
interest as an outgoing police and crime commissioner.  
This report is devastating and the Minister must act on  
it. One way of acting very quickly would be to invest in  
things such as non-custodial programmes for women  
offenders and intensive community orders, which have  
better returns in terms of reoffending rates. Will the  
Minister commit this Government to putting money  
where it will make a real difference?

**Dr Lee:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question  
and I welcome him back to the House. It is good to see  
him here, having had a good relationship with him  
before. Yes, the women's justice system is a classic  
example of where there is scope to devolve responsibility  
and indeed funds. North-west England, a part of which  
he used to represent, has had a whole-system approach  
to funding over the past year or two, so that we can try  
to build a system in which women can be treated  
holistically and in which the team understands each  
woman's home, situation, partners and relationships, so  
that it can bear down on the number of people who are  
locked up. In the strategy that will be delivered before  
the end of the year, I hope to outline in more detail  
what I want to do in north-west England.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Last November, the  
Department outlined in its White Paper probably the  
most comprehensive plan for improving our prisons for  
a generation. Some items—a minority of them—require  
primary legislation. I would like to see that brought  
forward in due course, particularly with regard to changing  
the statutory definition of the purpose of a prison to  
include rehabilitation and reform. However, the vast  
majority of items do not require such legislation, so will  
the Minister confirm that his Department will continue  
to implement the White Paper in full?

**Dr Lee:** My hon. Friend is very informed on this  
matter. Yes, he is right: the great majority of the reform  
package that was announced last year can be delivered  
without any further legislation. As I have said three  
times, we have not ruled out primary legislation in this  
area in the near future.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): By what date does the  
Minister expect the first people to enter the new units  
that he has announced for the north and the south? Will  
he update the Justice Committee on the objectives that

19 JULY 2017

851 Prison and Youth Custody Centre

Safety

he has set for improving the situation, and will he agree  
to look again at the recommendations of Lord Toby  
Harris, to which the Government did not agree when  
they were produced early last year?

**Dr Lee:** I think the right hon. Gentleman is referring  
to the secure schools. We are committed to opening one  
in September 2019. There is a possibility that it could be  
earlier, but it depends on finding the appropriate site; as  
Members can imagine, these sites have to be secure. We  
are working extremely hard and are in negotiations with  
various agencies. The Mayor's Office for Policing and  
Crime is particularly interested in assisting us on this.  
When we know about the locations, we can be a bit  
clearer about the delivery date.

On the wider question, which I think is about the  
state of the youth justice system, he can probably tell  
that I think we need to move towards a different system  
of how we lock up young people. Sadly, we recognise  
that some young people will need to be locked up—we  
have a very small uptick in some serious sexual crimes  
at the moment—but the environment, the staffing and  
the manner in which we do so must change. This report  
confirms what we already knew, and my intention is to  
work hard to bring forward a plan so that in the  
future—in the next 10 years—we can get to a situation  
in which our young people are not only safe and secure,  
but properly rehabilitated.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): I welcome  
the additional £2 million that this Government have  
invested in providing handheld mobile detectors and  
portable detection poles to every prison to root out the  
mobile phones that facilitate so many problems. Does  
my hon. Friend agree that we need to continue monitoring  
this issue and to consider what more can be done in this  
area?

**Dr Lee:** Yes. We have made some real progress; we are  
stopping thousands of mobile phones getting into our  
prisons. We are working extremely hard to stop the use  
of drones and to block the use of mobile phone signals  
over prisons. Things are not perfect; we have not finished  
this work, but we are continuing to press hard, because  
it would be fantastic to have a mobile phone and  
drone-free prison network.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I look  
forward to the strategy for women offenders that the  
Minister said he would introduce later this year. He will  
know that last year, 30% of women in custody self-harmed,  
and 12 women killed themselves in prison—the highest  
level since 2004. In reviewing the estate for women, will  
he take the opportunity, once and for all, to take on  
board the recommendations of Baroness Jean Corston?  
Women who need to be in custody should be placed not  
in prisons far from their families, but in small, secure  
community units. There is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity  
to do this. Please will the Minister take it?

**Dr Lee:** The Corston report was one of the first  
things I read when I was appointed to this role in July  
2016, and it makes a persuasive case. There is an issue  
about where some women should be held. I am not  
completely convinced that we can go down the path of  
all women being held in community provision, in residential  
women's centres. However, I am persuaded that we can

Prison and Youth Custody Centre 852

Safety

reduce the number of women we are locking up. This  
will be based primarily on the way that we deliver  
community provision, and on mental health care before,  
during and after prison.

I have met a number of women in prison, the majority  
of whom have displayed scars of self-harm. As the hon.  
Lady might know, I am a doctor and I observe these  
things, and it is quite distressing to see this. To deal with  
the problem, we need to change the environment in  
which these women are held and to get their mental  
health services improved. Those are my two priorities,  
and I hope that the hon. Lady will be reassured that the  
strategy, which will be delivered by the end of this year,  
will get things right.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Listening to parents  
of young offenders in my constituency surgeries has  
been eye-opening, as is listening to those working in  
Winchester Prison, who have seen what happens to  
people who have never got out of the prison system. I  
welcome the focus on dealing with the growing level of  
violence and youth justice. It is vital that we look at  
those issues individually and at the outcomes. How will  
this new unit help to ensure that the recommendations  
are followed?

**Dr Lee:** The unit to which my hon. Friend refers has  
been set up by the Department to ensure that the  
recommendations are followed. I gather that this is the  
first time that such a unit has been created. With regard  
to youth justice and to women's justice, the key is to  
build a network over time—it will take a long time—that  
allows people to be held closer to home, so that families,  
and mothers in particular, can stay in contact with their  
children. That is our intention. I have mapped out the  
country with regard to women's justice and youth justice  
to ensure that what we bring forward fits the framework,  
so that we can deliver time in prison closer to home for  
women and young people.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): There is a grave  
situation in our prisons, and the Minister is being  
typically frank in acknowledging that. One problem is  
the large cohort of prisoners languishing on indeterminate  
sentences for public protection. Will the Minister confirm  
that the Government are committed to getting that  
number down as quickly as possible?

**Dr Lee:** That has been a long-running issue in the  
prison system, and the answer to my hon. Friend's  
question is yes.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): Reoffending rates remain stubbornly high, especially  
for young offenders, with nearly seven out of 10 who  
are sent to prison going on to reoffend on release. We  
know that that is to do with the conditions and the  
environment in our prisons and young offender institutions,  
but what more can be done to ensure effective rehabilitation,  
especially for our young people?

**Dr Lee:** The recidivism rate in the youth estate is not  
acceptable, nor is the environment in which young  
people are being held. In some institutions, they are  
being locked up for too long, which is primarily to do  
with the safety and security of the institution. That  
needs to change. There are programmes in place—I

853

19 JULY 2017

854

Prison and Youth Custody Centre

Safety

*[Dr Phillip Lee]* Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

have mentioned one already, with Saracens and other  
sports teams—that are showing evidence of reducing  
recidivism rates. I am determined to change the curriculum  
being delivered in the youth estate. People need to  
spend more time outside, on sport, for example. If we  
do that, we will achieve what my hon. Friend wants us  
to achieve. By early next year, I plan on bringing out a  
review of the criminal justice system and sport, particularly  
in the youth justice system. Its recommendations will be  
interesting to see.

1.21 pm

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD) *(Urgent  
Question)*: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home  
Department if she will update the House on the  
implementation of section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

**The Minister for Immigration (Brandon Lewis):** The  
Government are fully committed to helping and supporting  
the most vulnerable children, and we are contributing  
significantly to hosting, supporting and protecting  
vulnerable children affected by the migration crisis. This  
is part of our wider response of taking 23,000 people  
from the region. We have already granted asylum or  
another form of leave to more than 8,000 children and  
local authorities across the country are supporting more  
than 4,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Children transferred under section 67 are being cared  
for by local authorities across the country and we and  
they take our responsibility to those children very seriously.  
Safeguarding those children is paramount. Following  
consultation with local authorities, the Government  
have set the number of children who will be transferred  
under the scheme at 480. We have invited referrals of  
eligible children from France, Greece and Italy and our  
officials at the Home Office have visited those countries  
in recent months to put in place processes further to  
identify and transfer eligible children. In the past week I  
have spoken to my counterparts in Greece and Italy  
specifically on this issue, and I shall follow that up with  
face-to-face meetings in both countries next week.

It is important to remember that the processes for  
transferring children must be implemented in line with  
each member state's national laws and all transfers of  
children to the UK must be carried out safely and with  
the best interests of the children at the centre of all  
decisions. The ongoing work to transfer children under  
section 67 is in addition to our other commitments and  
we continue to work closely with member states and  
relevant partners to ensure that children with family in  
the UK can be transferred quickly and safely.

Our approach continues to be to take refugees directly  
from conflict regions, providing refugees with a more  
direct and safe route to our country rather than risking  
hazardous journeys to Europe. We are committed to  
resettling 23,000 people from the region and our resettlement  
schemes are some of the largest and longest-running in  
the EU. So far, we have resettled more than 7,000  
people under the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement  
scheme and the vulnerable children resettlement scheme.  
Our schemes allow children to be resettled with their  
family members, thereby discouraging them from making  
perilous journeys to Europe alone.

It is worth noting that families continue to arrive  
from the region. Just yesterday, 199 individuals arrived  
and another 80 are due to arrive next week. That is all  
part of the Government's approach to helping the most  
vulnerable.

**Tim Farron:** I thank the Minister for his response, but  
it seems in the light of fact that those are somewhat  
hollow words. Before the election, the Government  
promised they would transfer 480 refugee children from  
Europe to the UK, but in the other place the Government

855

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

19 JULY 2017

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

856

recently admitted that so far only 200 unaccompanied  
children have been given sanctuary here. When do the  
Government expect to fulfil this measly commitment,  
and will the Minister give us a date today?

I say that it is a measly commitment because the UK  
should do so much more. Freedom of Information Act  
requests show that local councils have voluntarily offered  
to accept 1,572 more children in addition to those they  
already support. Does the Minister know this? In light  
of this information, will the Government reopen Dubs  
and take their fair share?

As summer approaches, more are taking the dangerous  
crossings across the Mediterranean to reach the safety  
of European shores. More desperate, refugee children—  
*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Stop the clock. I apologise to the  
hon. Gentleman but we cannot have two sets of exchanges  
taking place. There is a rather unseemly exchange between  
the hon. Member for Braintree (James Cleverly) and the  
hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy), who  
are gesticulating at each other and in obvious dispute.  
They must calm themselves and listen to the Demosthenian  
eloquence of the hon. Member for Westmorland and  
Lonsdale (Tim Farron), whose question this is.

**Tim Farron:** That is understandable, Mr Speaker; this  
subject raises passions, and rightly so.

Summer approaches and more are taking the dangerous  
journey across the Mediterranean to reach European  
shores. More desperate refugee children without anyone  
looking after them will arrive in Europe, yet the Government  
have said that they will not consider taking any child  
under Dubs who arrived after their arbitrary cut-off  
date of 20 March 2016. In the light of the delays, which  
are the Government's fault, will they extend that cut-off  
date, which is as heartless as it is pointless?

Finally, I have visited the camps in Greece and elsewhere,  
which neither the Home Secretary nor the Prime Minister,  
who is, of course, the previous Home Secretary, have. I  
cannot forget what I have seen. I have met those children  
who, through no fault of their own, find their lives on  
pause as Ministers here choose to ignore them. How  
many children have been taken from Greece under the  
Dubs amendment to date? Have the UK Government  
even signed a memorandum of understanding with  
Greece to get these transfers under way? I know of two  
young people who signed a consent form to be transferred  
under Dubs more than a year ago. They are still stuck in  
Greece.

The horrific truth is that the longer this goes on the  
more likely it is that these children will go missing and  
fall into the evil hands of traffickers. According to  
Oxfam, 28 children every single day are going missing  
in Italy alone. Will the Government step up, or continue  
to ignore the plight of these desperate children?

**Brandon Lewis:** I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's  
comments are based on pretty much a series of false  
premises. I remind him that, as I have said, we have a  
range of schemes out there and are working to bring  
23,000 people over. While he bandies around numbers I  
politely ask him to bear in mind that behind every  
number he talks about—some of which were wrong—there

is a child. It is important for us to ensure that those  
children get the care and support they need in the right  
time and the right place.

The hon. Gentleman talks about timelines, and he  
seems to forget that Italy and Greece are nation states,  
as is France. We must work around the timelines for  
them, too. He mentioned the FOI request concerning  
local authorities, which I am afraid is simply wrong. We  
consulted local authorities, which is what we said we  
would do when the legislation was in front of the  
House. That is what has led to the figure of 480, and the  
FOI request he is talking about does not consider what  
local authorities can provide. It is about the 0.7%1threshold, which is an entirely different calculation, so  
perhaps he should go away and look further at that.

We are very clear that we must ensure that we do not  
create a pull factor while at the same time doing the  
right thing, as we have done with the £2.46 billion of  
support that makes us one of the biggest contributors  
and covers the biggest humanitarian aid project this  
country has ever conducted, to look after the people  
who need our care the most. Instead of playing politics  
with children's lives, we should get on with looking after  
them and I wish the hon. Gentleman would join us in  
that.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): I urge the  
Minister to keep the deadline in place. It is incredibly  
important that we do not encourage any more families  
to send their children on dangerous journeys. We should  
continue to take children directly from the region—directly  
from the camps—so that we can ensure they arrive  
safely. Encouraging the thought that if children get to  
Europe they will be able to stay is exactly what encourages  
the dangerous journeys that lead to their dying. I urge  
the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim  
Farron) to think carefully before he presses that course  
on the Government.

**Brandon Lewis:** My right hon. Friend, with his experience,  
is absolutely right: we must ensure that we do not create  
a pull factor. It must be remembered that under our  
schemes we have already brought over some 7,0002children from the region. I remind the hon. Member for  
Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) that the scheme  
is not closed. We are still working, and next week I shall  
go to Italy and Greece to talk to Ministers. The most  
vulnerable people are those who cannot afford to pay  
human traffickers—the children in the region, in Lebanon  
and in Jordan. They should be our focus, to ensure we  
do not, as my right hon. Friend said, create a pull  
factor.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)  
(Lab): The House understands the Government's preference  
to take unaccompanied children directly from the region.  
I have visited the camps in France and Greece. The  
Minister needs to be reminded that the children are  
already there, often living in horrible conditions and at  
the mercy of traffickers and sexual exploitation. How  
many children in 2017-18 will come into this country  
under section 67? How many children will come in  
under Dublin? How long, on average, has each case  
taken? What is the future of close family reunion once  
we leave the European Union? Will the Government  
consider expanding UK immigration rights so that a

1.*[Official Report, 5 September 2017, Vol. 628, c. 1MC.]*

2.*[Official Report, 5 September 2017, Vol. 628, c. 1MC.]*

857

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

19 JULY 2017

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

858

*[Ms Diane Abbott]*

child's right to family reunion in the broad sense is in no  
way diminished, or will the Government simply walk  
away from their moral obligations?

**Brandon Lewis:** The right hon. Lady's final point  
does not do her, this House or this country justice.  
We—councils, charity groups and individuals—should  
be proud of the phenomenal work being done across  
the country, including the £1 million community  
sponsorship scheme that the Home Secretary announced  
last night, to welcome the most vulnerable people. It is  
right that we look to see who are the most vulnerable—who  
cannot afford to pay human traffickers, and who need  
our support in the region—rather than those who are in  
European countries. We are still bringing people over  
under the agreements with European countries, but I  
remind the right hon. Member for Hackney North and  
Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) and the hon. Member  
for Westmorland and Lonsdale that we must work  
according to the rules and laws in these countries—they  
are nation states. Our position on what will happen  
once we leave the European Union has been clear. The  
fact that we are running the biggest humanitarian project  
this country has seen highlights the Government's  
determination to do the right thing. We will continue to  
seek to do so and to fulfil our moral duty to those who  
need our help most.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con):  
The protestations of Opposition Members would have  
more credibility if they acknowledged the huge effort  
and huge resources that the Government have put in to  
date. I too have been to Athens to see the camps and the  
fantastic work being done there, but there is a criticism:  
it is taking too long to process and assess children who  
have a right to be here. Will the Minister acknowledge  
that post-Brexit, when presumably we will come out of  
the Dublin III scheme, there will be a problem with  
children under the family reunion scheme? Can we  
ensure that they will still be matched with relatives  
beyond their parents, because many of them will have  
lost their parents but will have siblings, uncles and  
others with whom they may be safely and appropriately  
placed?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend makes a good point,  
and I appreciate the time he spent explaining to me  
what he saw at the camps, which I shall visit next week.  
He is right: all of us in this country should be proud of  
the finance and focus we provide, but for every 3,000  
people we bring over and help we could be helping  
800,000 people in the region. We therefore must be very  
clear about our focus. As I said, we are clear that  
post-Brexit we shall want to continue to do the right  
thing for vulnerable people in the region. I shall be  
happy to work with him to deliver that.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Westmorland and  
Lonsdale (Tim Farron) on securing this question. I  
make it clear to the Minister that what the hon. Member  
said was not based on false premises. I am able to say  
that because last week I attended the launch of a report  
from the Human Trafficking Foundation, following an

independent inquiry into separated and unaccompanied  
minors in Europe. The inquiry found that UK Ministers  
have done

“as little as legally possible”

to help unaccompanied children who have fled war and  
conflict in their home nations; have turned away from a  
humanitarian crisis that “would not be tolerable” to the  
British public if they were more aware of it; and that by  
failing to offer safe passage are “unquestionably” fuelling  
both people trafficking and smuggling. Those are not  
my words but the findings of an independent inquiry.  
What will the Minister do about it? *[Interruption.]*There is no point in shouting at me because the Minister  
and his colleagues do not like the independent inquiry's  
findings. The British public deserve to know about this.  
What steps are the Government taking to resolve the  
blockages in the transfer of Dubs children, which we  
voted for in the House last year, thinking there would be  
3,000 transfers? When do they expect the transfers to  
begin?

**Brandon Lewis:** Transfers have been happening, and  
we are determined to deliver on exactly what we set out.  
We will continue to do so—it is part of the 23,000  
people, and it should be remembered that we have  
brought over 7,0001 children already. I encourage more  
people to look at what she refers to as an independent  
report, one of the co-authors of which is a recently  
retired Labour Member of Parliament. Fiona Mactaggart's  
foreword makes many accusations and statements that  
have no evidence base whatsoever. I disagree with the  
report, but my point about the freedom of information  
request and several of the other statements that the  
hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale made  
being based on false premises still stands.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): As well as accepting  
refugees into this country the United Kingdom is the  
second largest donor to the crisis following the United  
States and has given more than the rest of the European  
Union combined. I support the Government having a  
holistic, comprehensive approach. Will my right hon.  
Friend continue to commit the Government to providing  
the right help in the right places?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right: it  
is important that we focus our help on the most vulnerable  
in the places that most need that support, while doing  
what we can as part of our work with our European  
partners to support those whom we have agreed to  
support.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)  
(Lab): The Minister knows that helping children in the  
region and those in Europe and already here is not an  
either/or. Parliament told the Government to help lone  
child refugees in Europe when it passed the Dubs  
amendment last year. I know the Government did not  
want to agree to it, but it was passed. The way in which  
they have narrowed the criteria, dragged their feet, and  
failed even to count councils' offers properly is shameful.  
Will he confirm that they have helped only 200 children  
under the Dubs amendment, despite the fact that councils  
have offered nearly 500 places, and that there are tens of  
thousands of child refugees still alone in Europe? Italy  
and Greece cannot cope with what they are having to  
deal with. It is shameful that all he has managed to do is

1.*[Official Report, 5 September 2017, Vol. 628, c. 2MC.]*

859

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

19 JULY 2017

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

860

send a few officials to Italy and Greece to try to arrange  
a few procedures for the future, when this has been  
going on for years. Stop the warm words about helping  
the most vulnerable children and actually get on with it,  
as Parliament said the Government should.

**Brandon Lewis:** We are clear about wanting to give  
children the right support and ensuring they have the  
support network to be an important and valued part of  
our community. It is important that we do so within  
what local authorities can provide, bearing in mind the  
restrictions and capacity they have. In 2016 we granted  
asylum or some form of leave to over 8,000 children,  
and since 2010 we have done so for some 42,000 children.  
We are doing our bit. We want to continue to do that  
work. Other countries have their own rules and regulations.  
I am sure the right hon. Lady will appreciate from her  
previous role that we have to work with them and with  
what works with the laws. We shall continue to do so,  
which is why I will visit Italy and Greece to meet my  
counterparts next week.

**Heidi Allen** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I know  
that everybody is incredibly passionate about this issue,  
but I hope that we can collectively be proud of what the  
country as a whole has contributed to help with the  
refugee crisis in Syria, because it is tremendous. I am  
glad that the Minister is going to visit the camps; that  
does rather shift someone's perception about how the  
picture forms overall. The Government and I have  
different views on Dubs, and I still maintain that more  
capacity is available in our councils and country to help.

Further to what my hon. Friend the Member for East  
Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) said, I am  
particularly concerned about what will happen to Dublin III  
as we move towards this brave new Brexit world. How  
many children have come to the UK this year under  
Dublin III already? How will we make sure that the  
legislation is embedded in our own laws when we leave  
the EU?

**Brandon Lewis:** I take my hon. Friend's point about  
local authorities. We will continue to work with them;  
our numbers are based on the information that they  
have given us through roadshows and conversations we  
have had directly. We will continue to look at the  
numbers that they feed in, as we deal with children and  
bring them over within our schemes and commitments.

On Dublin going forward, as I said earlier I can give  
an assurance that we are determined to fulfil our  
commitments. Obviously, as we go through the negotiations  
on leaving the European Union, it is too soon to say  
exactly what technical format that will take. However,  
we are determined to stick with our moral and ethical  
duty as we continue to provide support to the people  
who need it most, through the Dublin agreement.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): The Minister gets  
the message: the whole House wants the process to be  
enacted as speedily as possible. May I take him back to  
one of the points made by the hon. Member for  
Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) about the  
Mediterranean summer crisis that will unfold? What  
additional help is being given to enable those with some  
responsibility in Libya to prevent boats from setting off

on the Mediterranean? Those journeys will result only  
in people—children, especially—dying before they reach  
the mainland.

**Brandon Lewis:** The right hon. Gentleman has vast  
experience in this area and he makes an important  
point. It is very important that in this discussion we do  
not lose sight of what continues to happen in the  
Mediterranean. We are working closely with member  
state authorities and all our partners, including the  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and  
other non-governmental organisations, to agree what  
more we can do in that region.

The Prime Minister made a statement and announcement  
after the last EU Council meeting. We will continue to  
deliver on that, to make sure that we do two things: that  
we do not create a pull factor and that we give a clear  
message that people should not make that treacherous  
journey. That is why it is so important that we continue  
our phenomenal work with the £2.46 billion spend,  
along with the £10 million from the Department for  
International Development, to work with people in the  
region and make sure that things there are as safe and  
flexible as possible.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): As my  
right hon. Friend has set out, tackling this problem at  
source and dealing with the trafficking are crucial. Will  
he outline what the British security services and police  
are doing with European counterparts to track down,  
arrest and prosecute people traffickers who wish to  
profit directly by exploiting the situation?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend makes a good point.  
It is important that we continue to give a clear message  
about the atrocious and completely unacceptable behaviour  
of the disgraceful traffickers out there who continue to  
ply their despicable trade. The European Migrant Smuggling  
Centre was formed in February this year in response to  
the increase in the number of irregular migrants. We  
continue to work with our partners, along with Europol  
and our National Crime Agency, to focus on and drive  
out that form of trafficking, as well as the organised  
crime that thrives around it. There has to be a clear  
message at every stage. That despicable behaviour is not  
acceptable and it needs to end.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): As the  
Minister will know from the response of the High  
Court to the judicial review of the consultation on the  
places available for children in the UK, section 67 is  
explicitly about families in Europe. May I ask him  
about a specific case that I wrote to his office about  
more than a week ago, involving an incredibly vulnerable  
Syrian family in Lille who have been wrongly refused  
the right to come to the UK under the Dublin regulations?  
I have not yet had even an acknowledgment from his  
office of receipt of that correspondence. Will the Minister  
meet me to urgently review this case of a suicidal  
mother and her young children and discuss how we can  
improve how people claim asylum and come to the UK,  
so that it is not only the smugglers who meet them in  
Calais?

**Brandon Lewis:** As the hon. Lady will appreciate, I  
am not going to comment on a particular case today,  
but as soon as I leave the Dispatch Box I will chase up

861

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

19 JULY 2017

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

862

*[Brandon Lewis]*

the case she mentions and why she has not had a  
response. I will make sure that she gets one as soon as  
possible.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Last year,  
I visited the Zaatari refugee camp on the Syrian border  
in Jordan. It was clear from conversations with parents  
that although they did not want to risk their children's  
lives across the sea, they would if there were no jobs or  
education for them. Does the Minister agree that thanks  
to the UK Government's 0.7% aid contribution, we are  
able to keep people well and safe in their own region  
rather than risking squalor in the European camps?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend's excellent point  
highlights why it is so important for us to continue to do  
that work in the region. We should be proud of the time,  
effort and money being spent out there and of the work  
of the charities as well as the Government in making  
sure that we do everything we can to help people in the  
region and deal with the challenges at source. In that  
way, we can prevent people not only from taking the  
chance to come to places that are not appropriate for  
them but from making that treacherous journey and  
giving profit to human traffickers in the first place.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I draw the House's  
attention to the fact that I am to be an unpaid director  
of the Human Trafficking Foundation; that will appear  
shortly in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

What would the Minister say to Tory-controlled  
Nottinghamshire County Council, which on Monday  
suspended support for unaccompanied children despite  
having places available? One of the senior councillors  
said that it was because the children come here of their  
own volition. Is that not simply a disgrace? Is it not also  
a disgrace that they have turned around and blamed the  
Government? Is it not about time that the Minister got  
his act together with his Tory colleagues and stopped  
unaccompanied children fleeing war and persecution  
taking the consequences of this disastrous Government  
policy?

**Brandon Lewis:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman  
on the role that he is about to take up, and I look  
forward to working with him to do something about  
what we agree on: driving out human trafficking completely.

I am pleased that a Conservative authority took  
control of Nottinghamshire County Council a few weeks  
ago in local elections. I learned many years ago at this  
Dispatch Box to make sure that I understood the full  
details and both sides of any particular case before I  
comment on it. I will look into what the hon. Gentleman  
said and talk to Nottinghamshire County Council before  
I comment any further.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): The hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale  
(Tim Farron) talked of “hollow words”; in fact, the  
Government's response has been generous—it is, if I  
may say so, a typically British generous response to this  
crisis. Will my right hon. Friend confirm the number of  
refugees that this country is helping and compare it  
with the equivalent figures for other EU states?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend makes a very good  
point. Just this week, the Home Secretary and I launched  
and put extra funding into the community support  
project. We have seen phenomenal work, which people  
should be proud of, in charities and communities,  
developing and learning from colleagues from countries  
around the world such as Canada. I appreciate the time  
that the Canadian Minister gave us to discuss the issues.  
My hon. Friend is right: last year alone, we took in  
more than any other country in Europe. We should be  
proud of that, but we are clear that we want to build on  
that. We should be very proud of the fact that we are  
looking to bring over 23,000 people, to make sure that  
we are helping the most vulnerable—including the many  
thousands of children who have already come over and  
others who will continue to come.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): The Minister  
will have on his desk petitions from children at St Matthew's  
Primary School and Moss Park Infants School in my  
constituency asking him to respect the rights of all  
refugee children under the United Nations convention  
on the rights of the child—their right to an education,  
in particular. What assessment is he really making of  
the quality and experience of education that children  
are getting in camps? Is it not time that we brought  
children here to settle them and ensure that they have  
the chance to develop a happy and successful childhood?

**Brandon Lewis:** The hon. Lady is effectively agreeing  
with the point I made earlier. We are working with local  
authorities to make sure that when children come over,  
they are given the right support and the home that they  
deserve, to help them be an important part of the  
community and give them a fruitful and fulfilling life.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Is the Minister  
aware that unaccompanied minors are again congregating  
in and around Calais? But without the camps, there are  
now even fewer resources. Safe Passage UK and Refugees  
Welcome are organising a cross-party group of MPs to  
go there next month. If the Minister is listening, perhaps  
he would also like to go there to explain what he and his  
French counterpart are doing to ensure that children  
with rights under Dublin or Dubs come to this country  
for safety, rather than stay on the streets of Calais?

**Brandon Lewis:** Not only have I met Safe Passage UK  
and explained the slightly different view that I saw when  
I was in Calais about 10 days ago, but I am discussing  
the matter with French authorities and the operators  
out there.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): Many of us do not understand  
why the Government chose to put a limit on the Dubs  
scheme based on a rather half-baked consultation with  
local authorities at one particular time. Why do the  
Government not continue to engage with local authorities  
and take proactive steps to increase their capacity to  
take unaccompanied children, including by implementing  
fully funded places?

**Brandon Lewis:** First, that is what the amendment  
and the legislation said we should do. Secondly, I come  
back to a point I have made a few times. When we bring  
people—including families and, most importantly,

863

Immigration Act 2016: Section 67

19 JULY 2017

864

vulnerable children—over, it is important that we have  
the facilities and capacity to give them the best start in  
life. I come back to the point I made earlier. Yes, people  
will want to play politics with numbers, as some Opposition  
Members unfortunately do, but the reality is that there  
is a child behind every number. We need to ensure that if  
we are bringing children over, we can give them the best  
possible start. The hon. Gentleman should be proud, as  
I outlined to the Scottish Minister when I met her last  
week, that we have already granted asylum or some  
other form of leave to more than 8,000 children. We  
have to remember that.

**Preet Kaur Gill** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op):  
Europol has estimated that more than 10,000  
unaccompanied child refugees have disappeared in Europe  
over the past two years. What steps are the Government  
taking to address that and to support our EU partners  
in improving protection for unaccompanied children at  
risk of trafficking or exploitation?

**Brandon Lewis:** There are two sides to this. First, we  
must ensure that we do not create a pull factor that  
encourages more children and other individuals to take  
that treacherous journey, which simply helps the profits  
of the traffickers we all hope to see driven out. It is also  
about working with our partners and the National  
Crime Agency, which is working with Europol, to ensure  
that we track down and catch the people who commit  
these awful crimes.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Organisations  
such as Refuweegee are doing a great deal to welcome  
asylum seekers and refugees to Glasgow. What can the  
Minister do to ensure that there is adequate funding for  
local authorities so that those who arrive with nothing  
get all the support they require to lead a life with  
dignity?

**Brandon Lewis:** I fully agree that there is some really  
good work in Glasgow. I had that conversation with the  
Scottish Minister last week. A number of local authorities  
around the country are doing such work. It comes back  
to the point I have been making: it is very important  
that we work with local authorities to ensure that they  
have the capacity, resources, ability and properties to  
give people who come over the right start in life and the  
protection, security and safety they deserve.

**Mr Speaker:** As the hon. Member for Westmorland  
and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) prepares to step down from  
the leadership of his party, I thank him not only for his  
question today, but for his unfailing courtesy and his  
personal support for the Chair over a very long period,  
for which I have reason to be very grateful.

Point of Order

1.53 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order,  
Mr Speaker. You will know that page 448 of “Erskine  
May” states:

“It is not in order to refer to persons in the galleries”.

This is a very old tradition of the House that goes back  
to clearing the Galleries by saying, “I spy strangers.”  
The ruling has been strictly enforced in our time, but in  
recent years lots of Members have referred to people in  
the Gallery. It was particularly nice the other day when  
my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha De  
Cordova) referred to her mother in the Gallery as she  
paid tribute to her during her maiden speech. The  
Prime Minister referred to people in the Gallery today,  
and sometimes we refer to international guests. Is not  
now the time to completely and utterly get rid of this  
rather silly and old-fashioned rule?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is, not for the first  
time, spot on. The prohibition on reference to those  
attending our proceedings—let me say it candidly—no  
longer applies. It dates back to a time when the act of  
noticing such attendance led to the Galleries being  
cleared, since public attendance was not, in formal  
terms, allowed for at all. For some time, I have not  
sought to enforce the rule, nor—to the best of my  
knowledge and understanding—has it been enforced in  
Westminster Hall. I hope that Members are adapting  
gently to this new regime. Reference to visitors must be  
brief and directly related to proceedings. Such references  
should not be phrased so as to be in any way intimidating  
or to seek to influence debate. The House's guidance,  
including “Erskine May”, will be gradually updated to  
reflect this change. I hope that is helpful.

I know that other Members have a desire to raise  
points of order. I would rather not take further points  
of order now. We ordinarily take points of order after  
statements and I see no good reason to change that  
practice today. I took this particular point of order  
because I thought it best that I should be here in the  
Chair, and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant)  
was here. I am about to leave and the Chairman of  
Ways and Means will chair the pensions statement,  
towards the end of which I will return. Members who  
are poised and perched, ready to raise their points of  
order on other matters, can do so at that time.

865

19 JULY 2017

Pensions

866

Pensions

1.56 pm

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr David  
Gauke):** With permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will  
make a statement on pensions.

Last year, the Government commissioned the  
Government Actuary and John Cridland CBE to produce  
independent reports to inform the first review of the  
state pension age required under the Pensions Act 2014.  
I am grateful to Mr Cridland for his contribution in  
producing a thorough and comprehensive review. Over  
the course of his review, evidence was put forward by a  
wide range of people and organisations. I am grateful to  
everyone who took the time to engage. Today I am  
publishing the Government's report on this review.

The Government are determined to deliver dignity  
and security in retirement, fairness across the generations,  
and the certainty that people need to plan for old age. In  
the report, I set out how we will achieve these things. As  
part of this publication, we have set out a coherent  
strategy targeted at strengthening and sustaining the  
UK's pensions system for many decades to come. This  
is about the Government taking responsible action in  
response to growing demographic and fiscal pressures.  
That is why I am today announcing the Government's  
intention to accept the key recommendation of the  
Cridland review and increase the state pension age from  
67 to 68 over two years from 2037. This brings forward  
the increase by seven years from its legislated date of  
2044 to 2046, in line with the recommendation made by  
John Cridland, and following careful consideration of  
the evidence on life expectancy, fairness and public  
finances.

When the modern state pension was introduced in  
1948, a 65-year-old could expect to live for a further  
*13Vi* years. By 2007, when further legislation was introduced  
to increase state pension age, this had risen to around  
21 years, and it is expected to be nearly 25 years in 2037.  
As the Cridland review makes clear, the increases in life  
expectancy are to be celebrated. I also want to make it  
clear that, even under the timetable for the rise I am  
announcing today, future pensioners can still expect to  
spend on average more than 22 years in receipt of the  
state pension. But increasing longevity also presents  
challenges for the Government. There is a balance to be  
struck between the funding of the state pension in years  
to come while also ensuring fairness for future generations  
of taxpayers.

The approach I am setting out today is the responsible  
and fair course of action. Failing to act now in the light  
of compelling evidence of demographic pressures would  
be irresponsible, and place an extremely unfair burden  
on younger generations. Although an ageing population  
means that state pension spending will rise under any of  
the possible timetables we have considered, the action  
we are taking reduces this rise by 0.4% of GDP in  
2039-40. That is equivalent to a saving of around £400 per  
household, based on the number of households today.

Our proposed timetable will save £74 billion to 2045-46  
when compared with current plans, and more than  
£250 billion to 2045-46 when compared with capping  
the rise in state pension age at 66 in 2020, as the Labour  
party has advocated. It is the duty of a responsible  
Government to keep the state pension sustainable and  
maintain fairness between generations. That is why the

Government are aiming for the proportion of adult life  
spent in receipt of state pension to be “up to 32%”. This  
is a fair deal for current and future pensioners.

We will carry out a further review before legislating to  
bring forward the rise in state pension age to 68, to  
enable consideration of the latest life expectancy projections  
and to allow us to evaluate the effects of rises in state  
pension age already under way. This Government have  
a proven track record on helping people plan for their  
retirement. Alongside our automatic enrolment scheme,  
which has already brought the benefits of private pensions  
to nearly 10 million people since its inception, we have  
also set out plans to enhance the availability of impartial  
consumer advice through schemes such as the single  
financial guidance body and the pensions dashboard.  
Today, people have a much better idea of what their  
pension will be, bringing more certainty and clarity.  
ThatissomethingtheGovernmentwillbuildon;making  
it easier for people to seek advice and make effective  
financial decisions.

I want Britain to be the best country in the world in  
which to grow old, where everyone enjoys the dignity  
and security they deserve in retirement. At the same  
time, we need to ensure that the costs of an ageing  
population are shared out fairly, without placing an  
unfair tax burden on future generations. To deliver that,  
we need to make responsible choices on the state pension  
age, and that is what the Government are doing today.

2.1 pm

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth)  
(Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement,  
and for arranging to let me have sight of it 30 minutes  
ago.

Yesterday, the renowned expert on life expectancy,  
ProfessorSirMichaelMarmot, described how a century-  
long rise in life expectancy was

“pretty close to having ground to a halt”  
since 2010, when this Government began their failing  
austerity programme. Last week, evidence from Public  
Health England showed how deep inequalities in healthy  
life expectancy remain, both regionally and between  
different groups in our society, including women, disabled  
people and black and minority ethnic groups. It is  
therefore astonishing that today this Government choose  
to implement their plans to speed up the state pension  
age increase to 68.

Most pensioners will now spend their retirement  
battling a toxic cocktail of ill health, with men expecting  
to drift into ill health at 63, five years earlier than this  
proposed quickened state pension age of 68, and women  
expecting to see signs of ill health at 64. This national  
picture masks even worse regional inequalities. Men  
who live in Nottingham are likely to suffer ill health  
from the age of 57, a full 11 years earlier, under this  
Government's shortened plans, than a state pension age  
of 68. The Government talk about making Britain  
fairer, but their pensions policy, whether on the injustice  
that 1950s-born women are facing or on today's proposal  
to increase the state pension age to 68, is anything but  
fair.

The Government claim that it is young people who  
will have to bear the burden of the state pension, but in  
fact it is the young who have to bear the burden of the  
cuts that they are facing already—cuts to education,

867

Pensions

19 JULY 2017

Pensions

868

housing and working age social security—as well as the  
Government's endless extensions of the state pension  
age. Sadly, like much of the Conservatives' policy platform,  
their approach to this matter appears to have changed  
little since their election manifesto. At that time, they  
promised to

“ensure that the state pension age reflects increases in life expectancy,  
while protecting each generation fairly.”

How does today's statement meet the promise made in  
the manifesto, given the evidence on life expectancy that  
we have seen in the past week? What conversations has  
the Minister had with his new friends in the Democratic  
Unionist party, whose manifesto promised advocating  
“for the interests of our older people”?

Perhaps, as the Pensions Minister astonishingly suggested  
in a debate earlier this month, the Government will  
force people in their mid-60s to seek out an apprenticeship.  
A constituent of mine, hearing that suggestion, visited  
our local jobcentre in Oldham, only to find that the  
adviser had no idea of any apprenticeship support or  
Government employment support available to a woman  
of her age. The Pensions Minister's position was not  
one shared by Mr Cridland, who suggested that the  
social security system must be able to support those  
who find themselves unable to work. Perhaps Mr Cridland  
was unaware of the seven years of slash-and-burn policy  
on our social security system; the so-called “safety net”  
is increasingly inadequate, driving up pensioner poverty  
by 300,000.

Labour wants a different approach. In our manifesto,  
we committed to leaving the state pension age at 66  
while we undertake a review into healthy life expectancy,  
arduous work and the potential of a flexible state  
pension age. We want an evidence-based approach to  
build a state pensions system that brings security for the  
many, not just the privileged few, so that we can all  
enjoy a healthy retirement.

**Mr Gauke:** Even by the standards of the Labour  
party, its approach to the state pension age is reckless,  
short-sighted and irresponsible. When the evidence in  
front of us shows that life expectancy will continue to  
increase by a little over one year every eight years that  
pass, fixing the state pension age at 66, as advocated by  
the Labour party, demonstrates a complete failure to  
appreciate the situation in front of us. Compared with  
the timetable set out by this Government, Labour's  
approach will add £250 billion to national debt. Let us  
put that in context: it is almost twice as much as was  
disbursed into the financial sector following the financial  
crisis. Let us put it another way: spending in 2040 on the  
state pension would be £20 billion a year higher under  
Labour's plans than under the plans we are setting  
out—that is almost twice the Home Office budget.  
Where on earth is this money coming from? Even  
the*—[Interruption.]*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. In  
fairness, I want to hear both sides so that we can make a  
judgment, and I am finding it very hard to hear the  
Minister. This is in a reply to the shadow Minister, so  
we all ought to be able to hear the answer.

**Mr Gauke:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Even the  
last Labour Government, who were not known for their  
fiscal rectitude, legislated to increase the state pension  
age to 68. Yet on top of a long list of unaffordable  
spending pledges, the Labour party now happily makes

pledges on the state pension that it must know will  
cause unsustainable damage to the public finances.

The facts are, based on the most up-to-date evidence,  
and clearly set out in the Government Actuary's report  
and John Cridland's report, that life expectancy is going  
up. Healthy life expectancy at the age of 65 is also going  
up. The Government have to face up to this long-term  
challenge and not pretend that it does not exist. We  
should celebrate increased life expectancy, but it has  
consequences for fiscal sustainability that cannot be  
ignored. The Cridland review is a serious piece of work  
with a clear recommendation on the pension age. In  
contrast with the Labour party, we will act responsibly  
and accept that recommendation.

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford  
Green) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend for his  
statement. The Labour party used to work on a consensual  
basis, given the facts, but it has now departed from that.  
He is aware that we have a proud track record in reform,  
for example, in respect of automatic enrolment and the  
single tier. We also got rid of the default retirement age,  
where people were forced to retire when they did not  
want to do so. It is the Conservatives who have a proud  
record. The single figure that stands out starkly from  
this review is that if we do nothing about this, it will  
cost £250 billion more. That is not just a figure, as it will  
be borne by future generations, as they will have to pay  
excessive moneys. Given that the Labour party at the  
last election promised to get rid of the student debt and  
now reneges on that, does my right hon. Friend think  
that Labour will be doing the same very shortly on  
this one?

**Mr Gauke:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his  
question. He makes some good points about the work  
the Government have done over the past seven years in  
terms of fuller working lives and helping more people  
to work longer, and he has a proud personal record in  
what he did on that as Secretary of State. He is absolutely  
right to highlight the irresponsibility of the position  
Labour Members had at the last election. Just as they  
have walked away from a deeply irresponsible position  
on student debt, I hope they will walk away from a  
deeply irresponsible position on the state pension age.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I thank  
the Minister for advance sight of the statement. I can  
see why the Department for Work and Pensions did not  
want to publish this report by the date it was supposed  
to have been published by—7 May—because it would  
undoubtedly have lost the Conservatives more seats  
than they did lose.

The SNP opposes plans to raise the state pension age  
above 66. We also have concerns about the fact that the  
Government have chosen the 32% rather than the 33.3%,  
which was the more gentle of the scenarios presented in  
the Cridland review. I am lucky enough to be a few days  
inside the 69 group, so I will get to retire at 69 rather  
than 70, which people a couple of weeks younger than  
me will retire at if the full extent of the 32% in the  
Cridland review is implemented.

The SNP continues to call for the establishment  
of an independent savings and pensions commission.  
The Government are not doing enough to recognise  
demographic differences across the United Kingdom,

869

Pensions

19 JULY 2017

Pensions

870

*[Kirsty Blackman]*

and an independent review would look at those and  
take them into full account.

**Mr Gauke:** John Cridland looked at exactly those  
issues and concluded that the divergence within the  
regions and nations on this matter was greater than the  
divergence between them. However, if the Scottish  
Government believe that there should be more support  
from the state for those approaching retirement age,  
they will have the power to provide it. If they wish to  
provide that support in Scotland—effectively, providing  
support a year or two years earlier than in the rest of  
the United Kingdom—they have the power to do that. I  
would not particularly advise them to do it, but that is  
their decision, and I really do not think there is a  
complaint to be raised with the UK Government on  
that front.

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): I commend  
my right hon. Friend for his statement. He is right to be  
tackling the issues of intergenerational fairness, but  
retirement is not about the state alone. What other  
measures, alongside this one on intergenerational fairness,  
will he propose to ensure that younger people can save  
for their retirement alongside state provision?

**Mr Gauke:** One thing I would highlight, as my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford  
Green (Mr Duncan Smith) did a moment ago, is what  
wehavedoneonauto-enrolment.Thatmeans10million  
more people saving for retirement, which is a huge step  
forward. I am delighted with the success of auto-  
enrolment—the very low opt-out rates—and that is one  
example of how the Government are ensuring that  
people will have a dignified retirement, but we must  
remember that the public finances need to be in good  
order as well.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):  
Bearing in mind regional health inequalities, what steps  
will the Government introduce in terms of social security  
to support those who will not be able to work until this  
later age?

**Mr Gauke:** As a country we spend very large sums—  
something like £50 billion a year—on support for people  
with health and disability issues, and we will obviously  
continue to do that. That is the best way of supporting  
people who have health difficulties, rather than by having  
a lower state pension age, which would be unaffordable.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): I thank the Secretary  
ofState,althoughperhapswithnottoomuchenthusiasm,  
for delaying my retirement by a year. I think I am in  
exactly the range of people whose retirement has just  
been delayed. What plans does he have to learn from the  
issues that arose from previous increases in the retirement  
age about communicating to people that this change  
will affect them?

**Mr Gauke:** First, I should say that the longer we can  
delay my hon. Friend's retirement, the better that will  
be all round.

In terms of communicating with those affected, we  
are giving something like 20 years' notice today, but as

we legislate in due course, it will of course be necessary  
to communicate properly with those who are affected.  
*[Interruption.]* It will be done properly. It is proper that  
we communicate with those people, and we will do so.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): What steps is the  
Secretary of State's Department taking to ensure that  
older people are not subject to the Government's punitive  
sanctions regime?

**Mr Gauke:** The number of sanctions is down by  
about half in the last year. We have a welfare system  
that has at its heart the principle of conditionality for  
many benefits, and to enforce conditions it is necessary  
to have a sanctions regime. However, the vast majority—  
something like 98%—of benefit claimants are not  
sanctioned.

**Kwasi Kwarteng** (Spelthorne) (Con): With respect to  
the statement, my right hon. Friend will be aware that  
300 people reached the age of 100 in 1952, when Her  
Majesty the Queen came to the throne; last year, it was  
over 13,000. Is he surprised, as I am, at the irresponsibility  
and recklessness of the Labour party in resisting some  
of these measures?

**Mr Gauke:** I do not knowwhether I am surprised any  
more by anything that the Labour party does, but it is  
disappointing. The reality is that we have an ageing  
population, just as every similar country does. We all  
have to respond to the facts, and the facts are that, as  
the population ages, and as life expectancy—and indeed  
healthy life expectancy—improves, it is necessary for  
the state pension age to reflect that. To deny that is just  
to deny common sense.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I had hoped that the  
Minister was coming here today because he had seen  
the light; that he had realised that the women from the  
1950s have been dealt a terrible set of cards by this  
Government; that he was going to compensate them;  
that he was going to make good on the injustice that has  
been done to them; that he was going to make sure that  
every single person who was not even notified by the  
Government that they would be caught by the proposed  
measures would be compensated; and that he was finally  
going to acknowledge that women in my constituency  
who are in their 60s, who say to me that they are  
completely clapped out because they have had tough,  
laborious jobs all their lives, are the very people one of  
his Ministers said should now take up an apprenticeship.  
How dull are Ministers?

**Mr Gauke:** I am not sure I would want to call my  
constituents clapped out, but there we go. The position  
when it comes to those born in the 1950s, just as with  
this announcement on those born in the 1970s, is that  
we have to balance the need and the desire to provide a  
dignified retirement with the fact that state pensions  
have to bepaidfor, anditis unfairon taxpayers if we do  
not have a state pension age that reflects life expectancy.  
That is all we are saying, and it seems to me to be very  
hard to argue against.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): The Secretary  
of State is absolutely right to go ahead with the main  
recommendation in the Cridland report, which, critically,  
gives advance notice of more than 20 years to those  
who will be affected, thereby distinguishing this

871

Pensions

19 JULY 2017

Pensions

872

Government's record from that of the previous Labour  
Government, who failed to communicate adequately  
their changes to women's state pension provision. Will  
my right hon. Friend confirm, first, that there will be a  
comprehensive communication programme to make sure  
everybody knows about these changes in advance and,  
secondly, whether the Government accept the Cridland  
report's other recommendations, on means-tested benefits,  
working past the state pension age and the auto-enrolment  
review?

**Mr Gauke:** We are looking carefully at the other  
Cridland recommendations. Obviously, there are issues  
that have an impact across Government, but it is right  
to move swiftly on the key recommendation—on the  
state pension age—to give people as much advance  
notice as possible. However, my hon. Friend makes a  
good point about the communication process and so  
on, and those things will need to be determined nearer  
the time. As I said, we are 20 years away from the point  
at which this change takes effect, but we are determined  
to ensure that it is brought to the attention of all those  
who are affected.

**Mr Geoffrey Robinson** (Coventry North West) (Lab):  
On the issue of the WASPI women raised by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), the  
essence of their complaint, in some respects, is the fact  
that some of them were not even notified of the change  
that had occurred. Some were notified late, some were  
notified after it happened, and some received no notification  
at all. This point has been put time and again to the  
Government, and it is about time they came up with an  
answer to it. Instead of driving the WASPI women to  
take court action, why do not the Government give  
them a fair deal?

**Mr Gauke:** Some 5 million letters were sent out to the  
addresses that the Government had. As I say, the changes  
made in the 1995 Act were many, many years in advance  
of when they took effect. None of those women born in  
the 1950s had had their state pension age put back by  
more than 18 months by the Pensions Act 2011.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): Demographic  
pressures are felt acutely across East Sussex, where we  
have the most 85-year-olds, most of whom live in my  
constituency. With life expectancy increasing at birth  
and at older ages, can my right hon. Friend confirm  
that, looking ahead, people, including those who live in  
my constituency, can expect to receive more state pension  
over their lifetimes than generations before?

**Mr Gauke:** That is absolutely right. Looking ahead,  
every generation will spend more years, on average,  
receiving a state pension than the previous generation.  
That is a very good thing, but it is right that we get the  
balance right. If Governments do not address this issue,  
we end up with a crisis, end up having to move quickly,  
and end up with sharp increases in the state pension  
age. That is what we are avoiding through the responsible  
approach we are taking today.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): I am the father of  
three young daughters. Office for National Statistics  
figures say that one of them will live to be 100, and that

by the time they retire, there will be only two workers in  
this country for every retired person. Does the Secretary  
of State agree that it is blindingly obvious that we need  
to take the steps that he has outlined today? It should  
not be a cause of regret—it should be a cause of  
celebration that our children and grandchildren are  
going to live to such a grand old age—and it should be  
treated on a cross-party basis as the perfectly responsible  
action that any Government should be taking.

**Mr Gauke:** My hon. Friend puts it very well. It is a  
cause of celebration that life expectancy is improving,  
but along with changes in life expectancy, inevitably,  
there are changes in the state pension age, as the change  
announced today demonstrates.

**Chris Philp** (Croydon South) (Con): Does the Secretary  
of State agree that thanks to the financial responsibility  
shown hitherto, we have managed in the past seven  
years to increase state pensions quite generously by  
£1,250 a year, and that is why pensioner poverty has  
gone down?

**Mr Gauke:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In  
order to do that, we need to take responsible decisions  
on the public finances as a whole, including on the state  
pension age. That is what we will continue to do, even if  
we will not get Labour's support.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): As someone who had  
their state pension age increased to 68 back in 2007,  
along with everyone slightly older than me and everyone  
younger than me, I have listened with incredulity to  
some of the comments made this afternoon. How does  
this compare with the situation in other countries—for  
example, the Republic of Ireland? Presumably it is not  
just a challenge unique to the United Kingdom.

**Mr Gauke:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We  
are seeing increases in the state pension age in the  
Republic of Ireland, in the Netherlands, and in Denmark.  
It is what responsible Governments do and what responsible  
parties support. Unfortunately we have only one responsible  
party in this country.

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): I pay  
tribute to the Cridland report, which is, in part, as  
excellent as it is because John Cridland was educated at  
Boston Grammar School in my constituency. Does the  
Secretary of State agree that by taking responsible,  
brave decisions, and having reviews such as the Cridland  
review, we avoid the situation that countries such as  
Italy find themselves in, where the pension age has to be  
increased, in one go, by four and a half years? This is  
the responsible thing to do and the fair thing to do.

**Mr Gauke:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We  
could have put this off, failed to address it, or kicked it  
into the long grass, but it is important for the future of  
this country that we have a Government who are prepared  
to take these long-term decisions, securing intergenerational  
fairness and ensuring that we provide more certainty to  
pensioners that there will not be the need for the sudden  
changes that may be seen elsewhere.

873

19 JULY 2017

Points of Order

874

Points of Order

2.25 pm

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): On a point of  
order, Mr Speaker. Yesterday's Order Paper said that  
the debate on drugs could continue until 7 o'clock. The  
final speaker sat down four minutes early. The normal  
practice in this House is then to use that time for other  
speakers to contribute. It was particularly interesting  
that the final speaker, the Minister, had denied interventions  
on the grounds that she did not have enough time to  
finish. The Standing Orders are not clear on this point.  
Is it not right that we get some definition of past  
practice in relation to cases where speakers do not have  
anything else left to say and other Members can contribute  
to what would then be a full debate?

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for his point of order and for his characteristic courtesy  
in giving me advance notice somewhat earlier of his  
intention to raise it. I am loth to quibble with the hon.  
Gentleman, who is a considerable authority on matters  
parliamentary, as evidence by the well-thumbed tome  
on how to be a Back Bencher of which he is the  
distinguished author. That said, I am inclined slightly to  
quibble with him on his proposition that it is normal or  
commonplace, if a ministerial wind-up concludes early,  
for other Members to be invited to contribute. In my  
experience, that is not commonplace. I would not say  
that it never happens, because you can almost always  
find an example of something if you try hard enough,  
but certainly when I am in the Chair I tend to work on  
the assumption that the ministerial wind-up is indeed  
the conclusion of the debate.

I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the  
conclusion of this debate taking place earlier than listed  
on the Order Paper, although I am sure that he will  
readily accept that the *Official Report*—that is to say,  
the verbatim account of what was said; there is no  
question of misleading anybody—will show that the  
debate concluded a little early. The Chair does not  
normally allow a further Back-Bench speech, and—this  
is not directed at the hon. Gentleman; it is just a wider  
point—certainly not from a Member who had already  
made a substantial speech in the debate.

As for interventions, the hon. Gentleman, as the  
author of “How To Be An MP”—available in all good  
bookshops, and of which I am myself a noted admirer,  
as he knows—he will appreciate that a Member is free  
to take interventions or not. I note what he tells me—that  
the Minister said, “No, I can't take interventions because  
I haven't time”—but that is not something on which the  
Chair can rule. Sometimes Ministers can be a tad neurotic  
in these circumstances, it is true, as can sometimes,  
perhaps, shadow Ministers, but that is not a matter for  
the Chair. Whether the Member seeking to intervene  
likes it or not, the situation is as I have described.

Let me take this opportunity, in a positive spirit, to  
encourage all new Members—I am not sure the Whips  
would agree about this—to read the hon. Gentleman's  
books on being a good parliamentarian. *[Interruption.]*“No!” says a Government Whip, chuntering from a  
sedentary position, in evident horror at what bad habits  
new members of the flock might pick up. I think that  
they are fine tomes. The hon. Gentleman has used his  
position as a Back-Bench Member to stand up for his

constituents and to fight for the principles in which he  
believes. That has sometimes pleased his party and  
sometimes not, but that is what we are supposed to get  
here—Members of Parliament who speak to their principles  
and their consciences. That is a good thing, and, as he  
knows, I like to encourage it. In fact, when I was a Back  
Bencher, I had a relationship with my Whips characterised  
by trust and understanding—I didn't trust them and  
they didn't understand me.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Yesterday, the  
Department of Health accounts were finally laid before  
the House, after a week of to-ing and fro-ing that  
prompted no actual changes, as I understand it, to  
them. The Comptroller and Auditor General has raised  
some concerns about the accounts. I seek your guidance  
on two points, Mr Speaker. First, the accounts have  
again been laid late. Last year, they were laid on the  
final day on which Parliament sat; this time, they were  
laid only a couple of days before the final day. Secondly,  
what can we do to ensure that a Minister turns up to the  
House to explain the Department of Health accounts  
and address the financial concerns that many Members  
of the House, and not least the Public Accounts Committee,  
have about the Government's handling of health finances?

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Lady, who  
has put her concern on the record. It will have been  
heard by those on the Treasury Bench, and I suspect  
that the contents of her point of order will wing their  
way to Health Ministers ere long. The truth of the  
matter is that there is no resolution of her grievance  
available from the Chair. The Select Committee on  
Health may wish to return to this matter if it is dissatisfied,  
and the Public Accounts Committee, of which the hon.  
Lady is herself the distinguished Chair, may wish to  
pursue this matter further. Realistically, I fear that that  
will have to wait until September, although if the hon.  
Lady—she is of course a London Member, and a very  
assiduous attender—is present in her place tomorrow  
for the summer Adjournment debate and wishes to  
expatiate further on her concerns, she may well find she  
is able to catch the eye of the Chair.

If there are no further points of order—I think  
that there are none—we come now to the presentation  
of Bills.

BILLS PRESENTED

ASSAULTS ON EMERGENCY WORKERS (OFFENCES) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Chris Bryant, supported by Holly Lynch, Stephen  
Crabb, Mr Graham Brady, Ms Harriet Harman,  
Mr Dominic Grieve, Jo Stevens, Diana Johnson, Tulip  
Siddiq, Lilian Greenwood, Carolyn Harris and Philip  
Davies, presented a Bill to make provision about offences  
when perpetrated against emergency workers, and persons  
assisting such workers; to make certain offences aggravated  
when perpetrated against such workers in the exercise of  
their duty; to require persons suspected of certain assaults  
against such workers which may pose a health risk to  
provide intimate samples and to make it an offence,  
without reasonable excuse, to refuse to provide such  
samples; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 20October, and to be printed (Bill 7).*

875

Points of Order

19 JULY 2017

Points of Order

876

MENTAL HEALTH UNITS (USE OF FORCE) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

MrSteveReed,supportedbyNormanLamb,MrCharles  
Walker, Jim Shannon, Keith Vaz, Sarah Jones, Mr David  
Lammy, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, Marsha De Cordova,  
Caroline Lucas, Clive Lewis and Heidi Allen, presented  
a Bill to make provision about the oversight and  
management of the appropriate use of force in relation  
to people in mental health units and similar institutions;  
to make provision about the use of body cameras by  
police officers in the course of duties in relation to  
people in mental health units; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 3 November, and to be printed (Bill 8).*

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Afzal Khan, supported by Joanna Cherry, Hannah  
Bardell, Mr Alistair Carmichael, Liz Saville Roberts,  
Lady Hermon and Caroline Lucas, presented a Bill to  
amend the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 to  
make provision about the number and size of parliamentary  
constituencies in the United Kingdom; and for connected  
purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 1 December, and to be printed (Bill 9).*

HOMES (FITNESS FOR HUMAN HABITATION AND  
LIABILITY FOR HOUSING STANDARDS) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Ms Karen Buck, supported by Luciana Berger, Jess  
Phillips, Matthew Pennycook, Shabana Mahmood, Heidi  
Allen, Marsha De Cordova, Andy Slaughter, Alex Sobel,  
Kate Green, Diana Johnson and Clive Efford, presented  
a Bill to amend the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to  
require that residential rented accommodation is provided  
and maintained in a state of fitness for human habitation;  
to amend the Building Act 1984 to make provision  
about the liability for works on residential accommodation  
that do not comply with Building Regulations; and for  
connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 19 January 2018, and to be printed (Bill 10).*

**Mr Speaker:** Friday 19 January is a splendid day—it  
is my birthday.

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS  
(REGISTRATION ETC.) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Tim Loughton, supported by Mr Graham Brady,  
Dame Caroline Spelman, Mrs Anne Main, Frank Field,  
Heidi Allen, Caroline Lucas and Antoinette Sandbach,  
presented a Bill to provide that opposite sex couples  
may enter a civil partnership; to make provision about  
the registration of the names of the mother of each  
party to a marriage or civil partnership; to make provision  
about the registration of stillborn deaths; to give coroners  
the power to investigate stillborn deaths; and for connected  
purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 2 February 2018, and to be printed (Bill 11).*

ORGAN DONATION (DEEMED CONSENT) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Mr Geoffrey Robinson, supported by Paul Flynn,  
Sir Vince Cable, Caroline Lucas, Michael Fabricant, Liz  
Saville Roberts, Dr Philippa Whitford, Kate Green,  
Sir Oliver Letwin, Jim Shannon, Angela Rayner and  
Crispin Blunt, presented a Bill to enable persons in  
England to withhold consent for organ donation and  
transplantation; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 23 February 2018, and to be printed (Bill 12).*

REFUGEES (FAMILY REUNION) (NO. 2) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Angus Brendan MacNeil, supported by Stephen Twigg,  
Robert Neill, Stuart C. McDonald, Tulip Siddiq, Tim  
Farron, Jim Shannon, Caroline Lucas, Anna Soubry,  
Ian Blackford, Stella Creasy and Hywel Williams, presented  
a Bill to make provision for leave to enter or remain in  
the United Kingdom to be granted to the family members  
of refugees and of people granted humanitarian protection;  
to provide for legal aid to be made available for such  
family reunion cases; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 16 March 2018, and to be printed (Bill 13).*

PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT (LEAVE AND PAY) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Kevin Hollinrake, supported by Will Quince, Sir Nicholas  
Soames, Craig Tracey, Carolyn Harris, Antoinette  
Sandbach, Jeremy Quin, Huw Merriman, Victoria Prentis,  
Diana Johnson and Rebecca Pow, presented a Bill to  
make provision about leave and pay for employees  
whose children have died.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 20 October, and to be printed (Bill 14).*

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
ENFRANCHISEMENT AND EDUCATION) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Vicky Foxcroft, on behalf of Jim McMahon, supported  
by Jeremy Corbyn, Tom Watson, Peter Kyle, Diana  
Johnson, Lucy Powell, Sir Peter Bottomley, Stephen  
Gethins, Jo Swinson, Jonathan Edwards and Caroline  
Lucas, presented a Bill to reduce the voting age to 16 in  
parliamentary and other elections; to make provision  
about young people's education in citizenship and the  
constitution; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 3 November, and to be printed (Bill 15).*

OVERSEAS ELECTORS BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Glyn Davies presented a Bill to make provision extending  
the basis on which British citizens outside the UK  
qualify to participate in parliamentary elections; and  
for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 23 February 2018, and to be printed (Bill 16).*

PARKING (CODE OF PRACTICE) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Sir Greg Knight, supported by Kevin Brennan, Pete  
Wishart, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, Daniel Zeichner and  
Graham Jones, presented a Bill to make provision for

877

Points of Order

19 JULY 2017

Points of Order

878

and in connection with a code of practice containing  
guidance about the operation and management of private  
parking facilities; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 2 February 2018, and to be printed (Bill 17).*

**Mr Speaker:** I think the nation should be aware that,  
perhaps because the right hon. Gentleman's Bill relates  
to parking, he is sporting a notably colourful tie, which  
features a very large number of cars. Knowing his  
penchant, I assume that they are classic cars.

**Sir Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire) (Con): They are,  
indeed.

UNPAID TRIAL WORK PERIODS (PROHIBITION) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Stewart Malcolm McDonald, supported by Ian Murray,  
Lady Hermon, Caroline Lucas, Christine Jardine, Patricia  
Gibson, David Linden, Alison Thewliss, Chris Stephens,  
Patrick Grady, Carol Monaghan and Martin Whitfield,  
presented a Bill to prohibit unpaid trial work periods in  
certain circumstances; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 16 March 2018, and to be printed (Bill 18).*

PRISONS (INTERFERENCE WITH WIRELESS  
TELEGRAPHY) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Esther McVey, supported by Andrew Selous, David  
T. C. Davies, Kirstene Hair, Trudy Harrison, Philip  
Davies, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, Mr Christopher Chope,  
Paul Farrelly, Mr Kevan Jones, Mr Stephen Hepburn  
and Sir Edward Davey, presented a Bill to make provision  
about interference with wireless telegraphy in prisons  
and similar institutions.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 1 December, and to be printed (Bill 19).*

STALKING PROTECTION BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Dr Sarah Wollaston, supported by Mrs Cheryl Gillan,  
Ms Harriet Harman, Alex Chalk, Antoinette Sandbach,  
Luciana Berger, Richard Graham, Victoria Prentis, Maria  
Caulfield, Mims Davies, Jess Phillips and Vicky Ford,  
presented a Bill to make provision for protecting persons  
from risks associated with stalking; and for connected  
purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 19 January 2018, and to be printed (Bill 20).*

**Mr Speaker:** Friday 19 January—I do hope I am  
here.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKERS'RIGHTS BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Stephanie Peacock, supported by Louise Haigh, Rachel  
Reeves, Dan Jarvis, Ellie Reeves, Clive Lewis, Lisa Nandy,  
Jo Stevens, Ian Mearns, Mike Amesbury, Laura Smith  
and Chris Stephens, presented a Bill to make provision  
about employment conditions and workers' rights; and  
for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 27 April 2018, and to be printed (Bill 21).*

LICENSING OF TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES  
(SAFEGUARDING AND ROAD SAFETY) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Daniel Zeichner presented a Bill to make provision  
about the exercise of taxi and private hire vehicle licensing  
functions in relation to persons about whom there are  
safeguarding or road safety concerns; and for connected  
purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 2 February 2018, and to be printed (Bill 22).*

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (EXTENSION) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Andy Slaughter, supported by Dan Jarvis, Jo Stevens,  
David Hanson, Ian C. Lucas, Ruth Cadbury, Christian  
Matheson, Clive Efford, Stephen Timms, Ms Karen  
Buck, Louise Haigh and Kate Green, presented a Bill to  
make providers of social housing, local safeguarding  
children boards, Electoral Registration Officers, Returning  
Officers and the Housing Ombudsman public  
authorities for the purposes of the Freedom of Information  
Act 2000; to make information held by persons contracting  
with public authorities subject to the Freedom of  
Information Act 2000; to extend the powers of the  
Information Commissioner; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 15 June 2018, and to be printed (Bill 23).*

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
ENFRANCHISEMENT) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Peter Kyle, supported by Nicky Morgan, Norman  
Lamb, Sir Peter Bottomley, Rachel Reeves, Ruth Smeeth,  
Wes Streeting, Anna Turley, Holly Lynch, Conor McGinn,  
Caroline Lucas and Jim McMahon, presented a Bill to  
reduce the voting age to 16 in parliamentary and other  
elections; to make provision for auto-enrolment onto  
the electoral register for people aged 16 to 24; to make  
provision about the use of educational establishments  
as polling stations; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 11 May 2018, and to be printed (Bill 24).*

PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES (REGULATION) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Anne Marie Morris presented a Bill to make provision  
for the regulation of physician associates; to make  
physician associate a protected title; and for connected  
purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 26 October 2018, and to be printed (Bill 25).*

NATIONAL LIVING WAGE (EXTENSION TO YOUNG  
PEOPLE) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Holly Lynch, supported by Chris Bryant, Jo Stevens,  
Anna Turley, Wes Streeting, Jess Phillips, Tulip Siddiq,  
Ruth Smeeth, Gareth Snell, Conor McGinn, Naz Shah  
and Graham Jones, presented a Bill to extend the National  
Living Wage to people aged 18 to 24.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on  
Friday 6 July 2018, and to be printed (Bill 26).*

**Mr Speaker:** I thank colleagues for their patience.

879

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

880

Tuition Fees

*Emergency debate (Standing Order No. 24)*

2.37 pm

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I beg to  
move,

That this House has considered the Government's decision to  
increase tuition fees implemented by the Higher Education (Basic  
Amount) (England) Regulations 2016 (S.I., 2016, No. 1205) and  
the Higher Education (Higher Amount) (England) Regulations  
2016 (S.I., 2016, No. 1206).

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this emergency  
debate. It is a shame that it has been necessary when we  
have a First Secretary of State who called for a national  
debate on tuition fees, a Brexit Secretary who says that  
this House always votes on statutory instruments and a  
Justice Secretary who, when Leader of the House, actually  
accepted the need for a debate and a vote. Of course,  
that was before the election; 100 days later, this weak  
and wobbly Government do not even trust their own  
Back Benchers with a vote on their own policies.

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017, which  
the Education Secretary and the Minister for Universities,  
Science, Research and Innovation took through this  
House, is very clear on the matter. Paragraph 5 of  
schedule 2 states that the upper limit of fees can rise  
only when

“each House of Parliament has passed a resolution that, with  
effect from a date specified in the resolution, the higher amount  
should be increased”.

Will the Minister guarantee that no students will have  
to pay the higher fees until both Houses have passed  
such a resolution allowing it, and will he tell us when  
the votes on these resolutions will take place?

The Minister seems to be one member of the  
Government who does not want this vote, judging from  
his Twitter feed last night. He said that plans to raise  
fees were first outlined in July 2016, and that we have  
since had extensive debate. Perhaps he forgot that the  
plans were announced on the last day before summer  
recess last year, and were snuck out as one of 30 written  
statements on that day. The statutory instrument was  
then put before the House just before Christmas last  
year. Not long after that, the Opposition prayed against  
the measures, yet despite repeatedly pushing for it we  
were not given a debate. As the Minister said, the  
regulations came into force on 6 January.

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): On the subject  
of being weak and wobbly, will the hon. Lady confirm  
whether it is still Labour policy to pay off all £100 billion  
of the outstanding student debt—yes or no?

**Angela Rayner:** I do not know how many times I have  
to explain this to Conservative Members before they  
finally understand. A cynic might say that they are  
wilfully misrepresenting my party's policy. We have  
never said that we would simply write off all existing  
debt. Conservative Members refer to comments made  
by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition,  
and I remind them that he said we would look at steps  
to reduce or ameliorate the debt burden. Perhaps that  
confused Conservative Members, because their Front  
Benchers have not done that in seven years. For instance—

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Angela Rayner:** Conservative Members may want to  
listen to this before they intervene. For instance, we  
would look again at the repayment threshold for student  
debts; the Government have frozen it at £21,000, which  
will cost lower-earning graduates the most. We would  
look at the interest rates on debt, which the Government  
have allowed to reach an extortionate, unacceptable  
6.1% for the year to come. I have said it once and I will  
say it again: we have no plans to write off existing  
student debt and we never promised to do so. Unlike  
the Conservative party, we made sure that all our plans  
were fully costed and outlined in our manifesto. Perhaps  
it could learn something from that.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): In 2010 the  
Government tripled tuition fees and then slashed the  
education maintenance allowance. In 2015 they took  
grants from students and now they are raising fees  
again. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is no surprise  
whatsoever that young people are turning away in their  
droves from this Government?

**Angela Rayner:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend,  
who makes an important point. Conservative Members  
have a sour-grapes attitude because they clearly understand  
that, unlike them, we have connected with the young  
people of this country.

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford  
Green) (Con): I wonder if the hon. Lady could put to  
one side the script she was given seconds before she got  
up and answer this very simple question. During the  
election, her party made it categorically clear to endless  
numbers of students that it would abolish the student  
debt. Will she now get up and apologise for using them  
as election fodder?

**Angela Rayner:** As I said to the hon. Member for  
South Suffolk (James Cartlidge), that was not—  
*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Members must calm down. Earlier  
we were blessed with the presence of the Father of the  
House, who asked a question at Prime Minister's questions.  
The rest of the time, he exuded a Buddha-like calm,  
which other right hon. and hon. Members should seek  
to emulate. I deliberately granted this debate the full  
three hours, so there is plenty of time, but Members  
should not shout at each other across the Chamber.

**Angela Rayner:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The right  
hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green  
(Mr Duncan Smith) seems to have failed to understand  
our policy, which was absolutely clear: we would abolish  
tuition fees from the day we took office—*[Interruption.]*Please listen to my answers. That was absolutely clear.  
We said that we would abolish tuition fees from the  
moment we got into power. We also said that we would  
bring back maintenance grants. Unlike Conservative  
Members, who are chuntering away and not listening to  
what I have to say in response to their interventions—

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Angela Rayner:** I am not taking any more interventions  
if Conservative Members are not prepared to listen to  
the answers.

881

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

882

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): May I suggest to my  
hon. Friend that she does not take any nonsense from  
Government Members? They repeatedly told this House  
that whenever the Opposition prayed against a statutory  
instrument, they would guarantee a vote in this House  
so that people could put their vote where their mouth  
was, but they have repeatedly failed to do that. They are  
trying to do this by the back door, which is why she is  
absolutely right to show them the door.

**Angela Rayner:** I thank my hon. Friend for his  
intervention and I congratulate him on having more  
experience than I do of such matters.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Angela Rayner:** I am going to make some progress.

The Minister said that the regulations came into force  
on 6 January, but they did so without debate, let alone a  
vote in this House. Then, when we were finally granted  
a debate and a vote, the Prime Minister called her early  
election and the regulations came into force while Parliament  
was dissolved. We have since raised the issue repeatedly,  
only to be told, eventually, by the new Leader of the  
House that the Government do not intend to provide  
any time for it. So much for the Minister's “extensive  
debate”.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I promise the  
hon. Lady that I will listen intently to her reply. She and  
I will agree, I am sure, on one thing: this country is very  
lucky to have people with high-quality brain power at  
university today. They have told me and my Conservative  
colleagues what they thought her party leader said  
during the election campaign, and it is at huge variance  
with what the hon. Lady claims he said. Nobody remembers  
the weasel words and caveats that she has deployed  
today. Will she now apologise?

**Angela Rayner:** The hon. Gentleman calls them weasel  
words, but I can guarantee him that before and throughout  
the general election campaign I travelled up and down  
the country with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the  
Opposition and we were absolutely clear on this. Many  
students—

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Will the hon. Lady  
give way?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Members have really got to learn  
the ropes and the hon. Gentleman has been here a  
number of years. It is normal manners and parliamentary  
etiquette that a Member be given the chance to respond  
to an intervention before being hollered at to take  
another. It is not a laughing matter, Mr Jenrick.

**Robert Jenrick:** I wasn't laughing.

**Mr Speaker:** You were—you were smirking. Don't  
smirk at me. I am telling you what the situation is and  
you can accept it, whether you like it or not. Behave.

**Angela Rayner:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I believe  
that our party was absolutely clear on the matter. The  
thousands of students who have contacted me are clear  
on it as well, so I do not know why the hon. Member for  
North Dorset (Simon Hoare) is not.

The consequence, of course, is uncertainty both for  
universities and for thousands of students due to go to  
university next year. Perhaps the Minister will tell us  
what will happen if, once we eventually secure a vote,  
the regulations are revoked during the university year.  
This fees hike is damaging enough in itself, but leaving  
it unclear is even worse.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):  
Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's  
response to this debate is extraordinary? They are mocking  
the issues when they should be much more concerned  
about the recently published drop in university application  
figures and the rising debt of young people. Parents and  
grandparents have told me of debts of about £50,000  
for young people and their families. Should we not be  
sending a message of hope to young people, not saying  
that we will increase their anxiety before they even start  
on life?

**Angela Rayner:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.  
This was a really hot topic during the general election. I  
believe that the Opposition have the best interests of  
young people at heart, and the Government really need  
to listen to where the population are on this particular  
issue.

The current plans are all part of a pattern of behaviour  
from this Government. They tripled tuition fees to  
£9,000. They abolished maintenance grants for students,  
meaning that the poorest students will take on the most  
debt. They promised, when they tripled tuition fees,  
that the threshold at which graduates repay their student  
debts—it is currently £21,000—would rise in line with  
earnings. In fact, the then Universities Minister said:

“We will increase the repayment threshold to £21,000, and will  
thereafter increase it periodically to reflect earnings.”—[*Official  
Report*, 3 November 2010; Vol. 517, c. 924.]

They broke that promise as well. While tuition fees  
continue to rise, the repayment threshold remains frozen,  
hitting graduates on lower salaries each and every year.

**Lucy Frazer** (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con): The  
hon. Lady refers to broken promises. Will she tell us  
which party stated in 2001 that it would not introduce  
top-up fees because it had legislated against them, and  
then introduced them in 2004?

**Angela Rayner:** The hon. and learned Lady will know  
that when we introduced tuition fees and dealt with that  
issue, we invested considerably and increased the amount  
of maintenance grants and support on offer to poorer  
students. Recently, even Lord Adonis, the architect of  
those tuition fees, called fees a

“Frankenstein's monster of £50,000-plus debts for graduates on  
modest salaries who can't remotely afford to pay back these sums  
while starting families”.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): I was in Parliament  
at the time when that Bill went through, protesting  
against it. Not only has our noble Friend Lord Adonis  
had a change of heart; so has the entire Conservative  
party, because it railed against the introduction of top-up  
fees. George Osborne called it a “tax on learning”. Who  
would have thought that only a few years later, it would  
be the Conservative party that plunged students into  
the highest levels of debt in the western world?

883

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

884

**Angela Rayner:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
intervention. I am really trying to make this debate  
constructive, instead of ping-ponging who said what. It  
should be about what the young people and students of  
today expect of us. They are telling us that the current  
debt levels are unsustainable, and they clearly are  
unsustainable.

Conservative Members say all the time that a record  
number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds  
are going to university. If only that was the whole story.  
The evidence shows that students from the most  
disadvantaged backgrounds are the most likely to be  
deterred by debt.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend  
agree that something different is happening in Wales,  
with the implementation of the Diamond review? It is  
moving back to a grant-based system, so the vast majority  
of students will receive a full grant and support for  
living costs, which is something that the National Union  
of Students and various other student union bodies  
have called for. That shows that there can be a different  
way. That is the difference between having a Labour  
Government in Wales and a Tory Government in England.

**Angela Rayner:** I am sure that my hon. Friend will  
have pre-empted some of the interventions from  
Conservative Members, who like to say that the Welsh  
Government are not doing things right. Of course, the  
Welsh Government have invested in their young people.  
They believe that their young people are the future of  
the Welsh economy. I congratulate them on making  
those decisions. Of course, the Welsh Government make  
decisions about education—before I get an intervention  
about what Wales is doing about loans.

As I was saying, burdening students with more than  
£50,000 of debt means that we will see more disadvantaged  
young people not going to university. After all, we have  
seen that at many of the most prestigious universities,  
including Oxford and Cambridge, the number of  
disadvantaged students is falling.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con):  
The hon. Lady complains that we keep asking questions  
about who said what and when. The trouble is that the  
Opposition perpetrated a scam on the British people.  
They clearly led students in our constituencies to believe  
that their loans would be written off. If she is now  
saying that that was not the intention, but that they  
would just cancel future tuition fees, how is it fair to  
those people, including my children, who have notched  
up tens of thousands of pounds of debt, which she is  
complaining about, that she leaves them with a debt  
when future students will not have a debt? What is fair  
about that?

**Angela Rayner:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention, but I cannot really say it any more clearly  
than we have said it. We said we would look at that, but  
that we would not do anything with it unless we could  
afford it.

I have put forward and will continue to put forward  
three things that the Government could do right away  
to help our students, including the hon. Gentleman's  
family members. First, the Government have decided to  
freeze the repayment threshold, which they do not have  
to do. They could put it in line with earnings. Secondly,

they could look at the percentage rate of the loans. It is  
6.1%, but it does not have to be that much. It was the  
Bank of England rate plus 1%, which would now be  
1.25%—considerably lower than the current 6.1%. Lastly,  
if the Government really care about social mobility and  
getting students into university, let them bring back  
maintenance grants.

**Ms Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): I was a nurse until a  
month ago. I was not even adequately paid, let alone  
overpaid. I got a bursary when I trained. I was a single  
parent and I could not have trained without it. The fact  
that nursing applications have fallen by 23% since the  
Government took away bursaries means that people  
like me will not be able to train. What are my hon.  
Friend's comments on that?

**Angela Rayner:** I welcome my hon. Friend to this  
place. She makes an extremely important point. Ending  
nursing bursaries has had a negative impact on people  
applying to go to university to do nursing courses. As  
we look to exit the European Union, Members on both  
sides of the House know that we have to train and skill  
up our own workforce in order to provide all the nurses,  
doctors and other skilled workers we require. Conservative  
Members said during the general election campaign  
that they wanted to cut immigration. If they truly want  
to do that, they have to invest in young people in this  
country.

It seems that the Secretary of State believes that  
access to higher education simply ends with admissions.  
Figures from the Office for Fair Access show that the  
proportion of students dropping out before they finish  
their studies is at a five-year high. Disadvantaged students  
are nearly twice as likely to drop out than their more  
affluent peers.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): I appreciate that  
this is a difficult day for the hon. Lady because she has  
come to raise some important issues, which we should  
debate, but her credibility is completely undermined by  
the difficulty of her saying that she speaks in the best  
interests of young people on the one hand, while on the  
other hand her party's policy has changed to a position  
where today she says she has no plans to write off  
student debt. Therefore, her party's word cannot be  
trusted on anything and young people will become  
more cynical about what politicians say.

**Angela Rayner:** The hon. Gentleman knows that we  
are talking about the tuition fee rise that his party said it  
would not impose on students and that it is trying to  
deny us a vote on. I hope he will push his Government  
to ensure that we do get a vote and that he will vote with  
us not to hike up tuition fees for young people.

Social mobility is stalling and drop-out rates are  
rising. Student debt in the UK is the highest in the  
world and more than 75% of students will never pay off  
their debts. The fact is that the Government's policy on  
higher education simply is not working.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): My position  
on tuition fees is perfectly clear, as my voting record in  
this Chamber will attest. The difference in what the  
hon. Lady has outlined today is that the normal run of  
things with Labour policy is to promise students something  
and backtrack when in government; this time, Labour  
has promised to write off students' debts and then

885

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

886

*[Andrew Percy]*backtracked in opposition. Will she therefore apologise  
to the grandfather in my constituency who simply got  
his information from the news and wrote to me to tell  
me that he was going to vote Labour so that his children's  
debts would be written off ? If not, is she accusing him  
of being a bit stupid?

**Angela Rayner:** What I promise I will do for any of  
the hon. Members in this Chamber and any of their  
constituents who potentially were misguided is ask them  
to refer to our website, where they can get a copy of  
“For the many not the few”, which highlights our  
national education service. That is a huge number of  
pages longer than the policy in the Conservative manifesto,  
which was, quite frankly, to take the food from children's  
mouths. That was rejected by the people of this country  
quite outstandingly.

There is an alternative—one that was outlined by the  
Labour party at the last general election. We pledged to  
end university tuition fees so that future generations  
will not be burdened with debt simply for seeking an  
education. We would fund that by taxing only the  
wealthiest individuals and the biggest businesses, rather  
than forcing only those graduates unfortunate enough  
to be £50,000 in debt to foot the bill. By contrast, the  
Government's system will still cost the taxpayer nearly  
£6 billion a year in the long term. We would also bring  
back student maintenance grants to support students  
from low and middle-income backgrounds with their  
living costs, reversing one of the Government's most  
regressive decisions.

There is someone in the Conservative party who for a  
long time agreed with that policy. There was a Tory  
shadow Education Secretary who said that the removal  
of the maintenance grant would  
“far from widening access, narrow it.”  
She told her party that it needed to

“show we care about the student who wants to go to university,  
but can't afford tuition fees.”

She then helped to write, and stood on, a manifesto that  
would have scrapped tuition fees altogether. She is now  
the Prime Minister. But she is now the one narrowing  
access, not widening it. She is showing students that she  
does not care, and is hoping that her manifesto promises  
can be disposed of as quickly as Nick and Fiona were.

To think that on Monday the Secretary of State  
accused me of peddling “snake oil propaganda”. I  
guess that is her specialist subject. She promised to  
protect school budgets in her manifesto in 2015 before  
cutting them in real terms. She pledged to give 30 hours  
of free childcare to working parents only to tell tens of  
thousands of them that they do not earn enough to be  
eligible. Now she is breaking every single promise the  
Conservative party has made to students.

I have told the Secretary of State again and again  
what could be done to address the existing debt burden.  
I repeat that she could look again at the extortionate  
interest rates on students, due to rise to more than 6% at  
a time when the Bank of England base rate is 0.25%.  
She could keep the promise originally made to students  
to raise the repayment threshold on their debt in line  
with average earnings. She could look again at the  
unacceptable levels of disadvantaged students dropping  
out of university, and give them proper maintenance  
support.

All of those things would reduce the burden of debt  
on today's graduates, and most of them would not cost  
the taxpayer an extra penny. The 2015 general election  
feels like a long time ago, but I remember a time when  
the Conservatives stood on a manifesto that said that  
“weasanationshouldnotbepilingupandpassingonunaffordable  
levels of debt to the next generation.”

But that is exactly what the Government are doing.  
Increasing tuition fees again will simply leave more and  
more young people with debts they will never repay.  
Labour believes that is the wrong thing to do. Conservative  
Members may disagree, and that is their right, but what  
is not right is to deny this House the chance to decide.

Tuition fees are an important issue, but they are not  
the main issue before us today. The question before us  
today is much more fundamental. It is about trust in  
our Government and ultimately our democracy. Frankly,  
if Ministers cannot keep their promises to us, why  
should anyone else believe them?

**James Cartlidge:** On a point of order—

**Mr Speaker:** I hope that this is a point of order,  
rather than a point of frustration.

**James Cartlidge:** The point of order is that the Leader  
of the Opposition said to the *NME*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume  
his seat. It was a nice try, and he is an industrious fellow,  
but that is a matter of debate. He cannot ask the Chair  
to adjudicate on who said what when, especially when it  
was outside the Chamber. I appreciate his assiduity, but  
he needs a rather better disguise than that.

**Angela Rayner:** I am sure the Minister is about to  
make what he believes is a convincing case. However,  
the real test is not to give us his words, but to give us a  
vote on them. That is the question I put to him now. If  
he is so convinced that what he is doing is right, will he  
have the courage of those convictions and put them to  
the House?

3.4 pm

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and  
Innovation (Joseph Johnson):** The Labour party wants  
to talk about process because its policy platform is  
disintegrating before our eyes. I welcome the opportunity  
to set out once again the Government's approach to the  
student fees regulations. This is hardly new terrain for  
Parliament. The Government made it clear as far back  
as the Budget in June 2015 that maximum tuition fees  
would rise in line with inflation, and I set out changes to  
fees in detail for 2017-18 in a written ministerial statement  
in July 2016. Changes to fees were subsequently extensively  
debated during the passage through both Houses of the  
Higher Education and Research Act 2017, with numerous  
votes on student finance issues that were all won by the  
Government.

The regulations are not “proposed” as the hon. Member  
for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner) suggested: they  
have been in force for six months. This debate, which  
cannot change arrangements for 2017-18, is therefore a  
sham exercise. I suspect that this is simply more of the  
same cynical politics we saw over the weekend, when  
Labour broke its own pre-election pledge—about which  
we have heard so much this afternoon—to write off  
historic student loan debts.

887

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

888

Let us recall precisely what the Leader of the Opposition  
told the *NME* seven days before the general election.  
He said:

“I don't see why those that had the historical misfortune to be  
at university during the £9,000 period should be burdened excessively  
compared to those that went before or those that come after. I will  
deal with it.”

That was a clear pledge to young voters. The first sign  
of trouble came when the shadow Education Secretary  
said a few days ago that she was still trying to work out  
the costs of that policy on a big abacus. The penny  
dropped completely over the weekend when we heard  
from the shadow Chancellor and others that that pre-  
election promise was being downgraded to the lowly  
status of an ambition. We all know what that means. It  
means that it is never ever going to happen. It does not  
do anything for the credibility of the Labour party to  
abandon such a striking commitment to young people  
just a few weeks after the general election.

**Simon Hoare:** I may be becoming a little forgetful,  
but was the manifesto to which my hon. Friend just  
referred the “fully costed” manifesto from the Labour  
party?

**Joseph Johnson:** My hon. Friend has exposed the  
truth, which is that the Labour party is delivering what  
is perhaps the biggest act of political deception we have  
seen in decades. It is the old game of bait and switch,  
saying one thing before a general election and another  
thing immediately after. Of course, given that this would  
be a £100 billion hit to our public finances, which would  
hurt hard-working taxpayers across the country and  
deliver a significant addition to our national debt and  
the interest burdens of the next generation, I am glad  
that the Labour party has done this spectacular and  
embarrassing U-turn. I suspect that it will not be too  
long before it abandons the rest of its unaffordable,  
unfunded and fantastical policy platform. It is a programme  
that it has clearly taken wholesale from the statist  
playbooks of 1970s tax-and-spend regimes that all ended  
up needing the International Monetary Fund to step in.

The policy that Labour proposed before the general  
election would have increased our national debt by a  
whole five percentage points of GDP, adding no less  
than £3,500 to the debt carried by every household in  
the country.

**Kwasi Kwarteng** (Spelthorne) (Con): At what point  
does my hon. Friend think the hon. Lady decided to  
make that U-turn? Can he enlighten the House on that?  
It seems a real puzzle.

**Joseph Johnson:** I suspect that the Opposition decided  
to do that spectacular U-turn when they realised what  
impact it would have on hard-working taxpayers up and  
down the country. As I have said, the proposal to write  
off student debt will add £3,500 to the debt carried by  
every household in the country.

**Ms Karen Lee:** The decision to scrap the maintenance  
grant means that the most disadvantaged students will  
graduate with the highest level of debt. Does the Minister  
think that is fair?

**Joseph Johnson:** A better way of looking at it is that  
the Government are making the most resources available  
to the people who are most in need of them. We want

people from disadvantaged backgrounds to go to university.  
We are delighted that they are doing so in record  
numbers, and that they are now 43% more likely to do  
so than they ever were before.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): If we  
were to put the best possible gloss on what the Leader  
of the Opposition said, and imagine that he was merely  
misunderstood in his intentions by students when he  
said that he would “deal with it”, what faith can we put  
in the new language that is being used? It is now being  
said that the Opposition will merely “look at”a number  
of propositions. If we cannot trust what “deal with”  
means, how can we possibly trust merely “look at”?

**Joseph Johnson:** That is exactly right. The Opposition's  
policy platform is collapsing before our eyes. The inevitable  
next step is their abandonment of the albatross around  
their neck that is their policy of abolishing tuition fees  
in their entirety. They are currently saddled with it.  
They are trying to wriggle off the hook of their clear  
promise to abolish student debt, and they will soon be  
trying to get rid of that appalling albatross of getting  
rid of tuition fees in total. As I have said, abolishing  
student debt would mean a huge addition to our net  
debt. The proposal to abolish tuition fees and reinstate  
maintenance grants would add £12 billion to the national  
deficit, which is equivalent to 0.7% of GDP and to an  
additional 2.5p on the basic rate of income tax.

**Chris Bryant:** Let me make a very simple procedural  
point to the Minister. If the Government want to make  
dramatic changes in schemes, they should take those  
changes through the House fairly and properly so that  
Members can vote on them. Ministers have said repeatedly  
in the House that if the Opposition pray against a  
statutory instrument, including those that are relevant  
in this case, there will be a vote. That promise has not  
been fulfilled. Will the Minister make it again now?

**Joseph Johnson:** As I said in my opening remarks, we  
have had lots of votes on student finance issues, and we  
won them all. [HON.MEMBERS: “What about the statutory  
instrument?”] The statutory instrument in question has  
been in force for six months. It went through all the  
parliamentary processes. Labour Members had plenty  
of opportunity to push for votes at the correct time;  
they are now six months too late.

When we reformed student finance in 2011, we put in  
place a system designed to make higher education accessible  
to all. Students are now supported by a system of  
Government-subsidised loans, which are repayable only  
when borrowers are earning more than £21,000 a year.  
Controlling the cost of higher education to the general  
taxpayer who has to fund public spending in this way  
allowed us, critically, to remove the cap on student  
numbers and ensure that higher education was available  
to all with the potential to benefit from it.

**Gareth Snell** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op):  
The Minister rightly points out that funding higher  
education will involve a cost to the public purse. His  
own Government will be aware that 45% of all loans  
that are taken out are never repaid, and that after the  
30-year rule period has elapsed, 70% of students have a  
debt outstanding. Has he worked out the figures to  
establish whether that money, which the Government

889

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

890

*[Gareth Snell]*

must ultimately pay off, could be better used to reduce  
the cost of tuition fees up front so that more students  
could go to university?

**Joseph Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman is correct in  
saying that there is a Government contribution towards  
the loan book. It is a conscious, deliberate Government  
subsidy towards the skills base of the country, and  
towards giving more people from disadvantaged  
backgrounds a chance to go to university with finance  
being absolutely no barrier. We want people to pursue  
worthwhile, socially valuable careers that may not lead  
to high earnings—careers in social work, for instance—and  
we also want people to be able to take on childbearing  
and family-rearing responsibilities. Those are all reasons  
why the state will continue to make a contribution  
towards the cost of the loan book

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Joseph Johnson:** I have already given way a number of  
times, and I am now going to make some progress.

The move to a predominantly loan-based system has  
enabled us to increase the level of financial support  
available to disadvantaged students. I am pleased to say  
that the application rate for 18-year olds from disadvantaged  
backgrounds is at an all-time high. We have also seen  
record numbers of black and minority-ethnic students  
going into higher education in recent years. There is  
more to be done, but we are making progress. The  
effectiveness of our system and our reforms has been  
recognised by the OECD. In September 2016, its head  
of education, Andreas Schleicher, said

“the UK has been able to meet rising demand for tertiary education  
with more resources...by finding effective ways to share the costs  
and benefits”.

The Government remain committed to providing a  
fair deal for students and ensuring that England's universities  
are sustainably and properly financed. That has enabled  
them to maintain their world-class standing, with funding  
per student per degree up 25% as a result of our  
changes.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD):  
There are two great universities in my constituency, and  
they are both telling me that they face huge uncertainty  
because of Brexit, not least because they do not know  
their own fee arrangements for EU students. They are  
worried about not attracting those students. What is the  
Minister doing about that, if he wants to ensure that  
they are well funded tor the future?

**Joseph Johnson:** We have provided significant clarity  
in that respect. EU students will continue to be eligible  
for access to student support in 2016-17, 2017-18 and  
2018-19. We have provided the clarity that they need.  
They know that for the duration of their studies they  
will be able to come here, access home fee status and  
access student support.

The £9,000 fee cap that we set in 2012 is now worth  
£8,500 in real terms. If we leave it unchanged, it will be  
worth just £8,000 by the end of this Parliament. We  
simply cannot let that happen, as it would inevitably put  
the quality of teaching in our universities at risk and  
undermine the financial sustainability of the sector.

**Mr Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op):  
I chair the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
Committee. Before tuition fees were trebled in 2012, the  
Committee held a session during which it interviewed  
the then Secretary of State for Education. He said—I  
quote from the report—

“When the Government's economic policies have produced the  
successful outcome that we all expect, we can return to the  
question of how universities can be supported in a more generous  
way, but at the moment we face a massive financial crisis.”

The current proposals are actually less generous, not  
more generous. Are we still experiencing a financial  
crisis? If not, when will the present Minister and the  
current Government live up to the commitment given  
by that Minister?

**Joseph Johnson:** I am puzzled by that intervention.  
Our per-university, per-student funding has risen by  
25% as a result of our reforms. If the hon. Gentleman  
wishes to read the report published last week by the  
Institute for Fiscal Studies, he will see that, on a per-student  
basis, our universities, per degree, are better funded  
than they have been at any point during the past 30 years.

**James Cartlidge:** May I pursue the logic of that  
point? Is it not the case that if these fee increases do not  
take place, we will effectively be cutting spending on  
universities? Should we not be fighting cuts and opposing  
Labour's plan to cut spending on higher education?

**Joseph Johnson:** Indeed. Our system of student finance  
is enabling our universities to be funded sustainably. As  
I have said, per-student, per-degree funding is up by  
25%, but we will put all that at risk if we move anywhere  
near Labour's policy platform.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Is it not true that  
Labour Members are now feigning confusion over  
parliamentary process on this, having previously deliberately  
created their own confusion? The reality on the doorsteps  
across Eastleigh was that Labour's promise to deal with  
tuition fees included the possibility of covering bank  
overdrafts. Does the Minister agree that this is an empty  
promise from a mathematically illiterate party? People  
felt bank overdrafts, as well as student loans, were being  
dealt with.

**Joseph Johnson:** That goes to show the extent to  
which the Labour party misled the country in the  
run-up to the general election, and I think my hon.  
Friend's constituents are owed an apology.

Let us not forget that it was a Labour Government  
under Prime Minister Tony Blair who sensibly put in  
place these legal powers, which we used some six months  
ago, to uprate fees in line with inflation through a  
negative procedure. However, under the regulations we  
are debating today, rather than increasing fees for everyone,  
we are only allowing providers to maintain their fees in  
line with inflation if they can demonstrate that they are  
using these resources well in terms of providing high-quality  
teaching and good outcomes for their students. Universities  
UK and GuildHE, the two main representative bodies  
that collectively represent over 170 higher education  
providers, have made it clear that allowing the value of  
fees to be maintained in real terms is essential if our  
providers are to continue to deliver high-quality teaching.  
Gordon McKenzie, the chief executive of GuildHE,  
made it clear that

891

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

892

“fees had to rise by inflation at some point and it was fairer for  
students if those rises were linked to an assessment of quality”,  
as the Government are doing.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): University education  
is also a route to higher earnings, worth up to a quarter  
of a million pounds over a lifetime. If we go forward  
with Labour's policy to abolish tuition fees, it would  
have a damaging effect on those from disadvantaged  
backgrounds, as we have seen in Scotland, where there  
is a fall in the number of people from disadvantaged  
communities applying to university.

**Joseph Johnson:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
Labour's policies would do the opposite of what it says  
they would do; they would represent a huge step backwards  
for social mobility in this country, they would be bad  
for taxpayers, who would be left shouldering the entire  
cost of the higher education system, and they would  
leave the finances of our university system in tatters.

As Professor Steve Smith, vice-chancellor of Exeter  
University, has said:

“The Teaching Excellence Framework presents us with an  
opportunity to invest in our students' futures and the long-term  
economic success of our country, and to be recognised for outstanding  
teaching at the same time...The Government rightly wants ‘something  
for something', for the economy and for students.”

**Wes Streeting:** I am shocked that vice-chancellors  
want tuition fees to rise—this comes as a complete  
surprise to everyone!

Vice-chancellors want fees to rise every year. Surely  
the Minister will be able to confirm today that tomorrow  
he is very likely to use powers to once again increase  
tuition fees to a higher level, and that once we get to  
2019-20, under the Higher Education and Research  
Act 2017, passed just before the general election, we are  
going to have to have votes in Parliament in order to  
allow and facilitate fees rises. If we are going to be  
doing that in the future, why not do it now?

**Joseph Johnson:** As I have already made clear on a  
number of occasions, these regulations have been in  
force for the last six months; they are already law—they  
are already applying across the sector.

Widening participation is an important policy objective  
for this Government. Alongside incentivising improvements  
in teaching, the Government's policies on student fees  
have also allowed us to lift the student number cap. This  
is allowing more people than ever before to benefit from  
a university education. As I said, disadvantaged 18-year-olds  
are now 43% more likely to go to university than in  
2009, and 52% more likely to go to a high-tariff institution.  
For the last application cycle, the entry rate for 18-year-olds  
from disadvantaged backgrounds is at a record high:  
19.5% in 2016, compared with 13.6% in 2009. The  
application rate and actual number of English 18-year-old  
applicants is at record level in this entry cycle.

This Government have made it clear that finance  
should not be a barrier to going to university, which is  
why we have made more funding available to students.  
By replacing maintenance grants with loans, we have  
been able to increase the funding for living costs that  
some of the most disadvantaged students receive. It is  
an increase of over 10% in the current academic year,  
with a further 2.8% increase for 2017-18. We have  
worked with the Office for Fair Access to encourage  
universities to do more to help disadvantaged students.

In 2017-18, institutions are expected to spend over £800  
million on measures to improve the access and success  
of disadvantaged students. This is more than double the  
amount spent in 2009-10.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): I am  
sure my hon. Friend is aware that our education exports  
last year exceeded those of our insurance industry,  
mainly fuelled by the excellence of our universities. If  
we do not fund them properly, we will not maintain  
world-class education at our universities.

**Joseph Johnson:** My hon. Friend is entirely right.  
Sustainable funding of our system is essential for our  
universities to continue to attract international students  
from around the world. Moving to the systemLabour is  
advocating would leave their finances in tatters and be  
hugely damaging to the quality of teaching they can  
offer.

Although we are making good progress on widening  
participation, more can be done, and we are doing  
more. For example, in the latest guidance given to the  
Director of Fair Access we acknowledged that selective  
institutions, including Oxbridge and parts of the Russell  
Group, already do much to widen access, but we have  
asked the Director of Fair Access to push much harder  
to see that more progress is made. In the Higher Education  
and Research Act 2017, we are strengthening our approach  
to widening participation by placing an overarching  
duty on the Office for Students to consider the promotion  
of equality of opportunity in relation to access and  
participation in all that it does. The new Director for  
Fair Access will have a clear role looking across the full  
student lifecycle.

The hon. Member for Blackpool South (Gordon  
Marsden) has been chuntering about drop-out rates for  
several minutes. I would like to inform him that drop-out  
rates are lower now for all students—young, mature,  
disadvantaged and those from black and minority ethnic  
backgrounds—than when we came into office in 2010,  
and we are taking all the steps I have just mentioned to  
ensure they stay among the very lowest in the OECD.  
The Act also requires individual higher education providers  
to publish their respective student application, offer,  
acceptances, drop-out and attainment rates, broken down  
by gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background,  
through the transparency duty on the Office for Students.  
Greater transparency will push universities into further  
action in this area, to build on what has already been  
achieved.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): Will the Minister  
confirm that applications from mature students were  
downby18%inthelastyearalone?In2011-12,applications  
from part-time students were down by a massive 30%.

**Joseph Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman makes an  
important point, and I acknowledge the fall, but he  
needs to understand that there are complex reasons for  
it, including the rapid increase in the proportion of  
people entering higher education at the young age of  
18. This means that there is a smaller stock of students  
seeking to participate in part-time and mature study  
later in life. We also have one of the most buoyant  
labour markets of any economy anywhere in the world,  
which increases the opportunity cost of study for people  
later on in life, at a time when they would otherwise be  
earning significant sums of money. But we recognise

893

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

894

*[Joseph Johnson]*

that there is a fall, and we are taking significant steps to  
address some of the financial barriers that mature students  
face. That is why from the next academic year we are  
introducing a part-time maintenance grant on the same  
basis as the current full-time equivalent grant.

**Andrew Percy:** On the point about disadvantage, before  
young people get to university they have to go through  
the FE system. Will the Minister therefore congratulate  
North Lincolnshire's Conservative council, which has  
confirmed this week that its post-16 student bus passes  
will again be set at £30 for the coming year, down from  
£200 a year under Labour? Does this not demonstrate  
once again that, when it comes to students, Labour says  
one thing when in opposition and does something very  
different when in power?

**Joseph Johnson:** My hon. Friend makes some superb  
points, and he is a tireless champion of his constituents.

On the repayment of loans, our repayment system  
offers a fair deal to students. The current student loan  
system is deliberately subsidised by the taxpayer and is  
universally accessible to all eligible students, regardless  
of their personal financial circumstances or credit history.  
Our repayment system is based on income, not on the  
amount borrowed. Graduates with post-2012 loans pay  
back only when they are earning more than £21,000,  
and then only 9% of earnings above that threshold.  
After 30 years, all outstanding debts will be written off  
altogether with no detriment to the borrower, and the  
Student Loans Company has no recourse to their other  
assets. The maximum fee cap is being maintained in line  
with inflation in 2017-18, so it will not be increasing in  
real terms for anyone going to university. We believe  
that it is right for those who benefit most from the  
higher education they receive to contribute to the cost  
of it. We should not forget that higher education leads  
to an average net lifetime earnings premium that is  
comfortably over £100,000.

Labour continues to scaremonger about the changes  
to higher education. The Conservative-led coalition  
and this Government have introduced important reforms.  
The Opposition have promised to write off student  
debts, to cut tuition fees and to restore maintenance  
grants. However, they have failed to set out a credible  
plan on how to fund their promises, and are now  
shamelessly abandoning them just weeks after the general  
election. That is hardly surprising, given that they had  
not even managed to persuade key figures in the Labour  
party who served in their previous Government. For  
example, Lord Mandelson described their policy offer  
as “not credible” and urged Labour to  
“be honest about the cost of providing higher education”.

Of course, it is not just Lord Mandelson who has  
commented on this. The former shadow Chancellor,  
Ed Balls, said that his party's failure to identify a sustainable  
funding mechanism was a “blot on Labour's copybook”.

I therefore challenge the Opposition to explain how  
they would fund their alternative proposals on tuition  
fees, maintenance grants and the write-off of student  
debt. We estimate the annual cost of their policy on  
tuition fees to be £12 billion a year over the next five  
years of this Parliament. In addition, a one-off expenditure  
would be required to make good the promise of writing  
off historical student debt to the tune of £89.3 billion in

cash costs. If Labour wanted to go the whole hog, a  
further £14 billion would be required to compensate  
graduates for historical borrowing that they had already  
repaid.

Make no mistake, Labour's policy of abolishing fees  
would be a calamity. It would be ruinous for our world-class  
university sector, leading almost certainly to a fall in  
per-student funding of the same magnitude we saw in  
the decades before the introduction of top-up fees—a  
fall of around 40% in terms of the unit of resource. It  
would lead to the inevitable re-imposition of student  
number controls, which would cause the poorest and  
most disadvantaged to miss out on university, throwing  
social mobility into reverse. It would do all this at an  
eye-watering cost to the hard-working general taxpayer,  
whether he or she had been to university or not. Gone  
would be the concept of a fair sharing of the costs of  
university between graduates with higher-than-average  
lifetime earnings and society at large; taxpayers would  
foot the entire bill. That would be bad for universities,  
bad for students and bad for the taxpayer. It is no  
surprise that in the one place where Labour is in power,  
it has chosen a different approach. Last week, the  
Labour Government in Wales quietly increased their  
tuition fees for 2018-19 to £9,295 a year, making them  
marginally higher than the current rates in England.  
Labour in Wales at least knows that the party opposite's  
plans are unfair to students and ruinous to universities.  
Perhaps it should tell the Labour party leader.

**Angela Rayner:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope that it is not a point of debate.

**Angela Rayner:** It is not, Mr Speaker. I did not want  
to interrupt the Minister earlier, but he claimed that the  
Opposition had had the chance to call a vote on the  
statutory instrument and did not do so. Perhaps you  
could confirm for the record that a prayer was laid  
against the regulations, and that the Government have  
simply refused to allow the House a vote on them since  
then. I understand that the Minister has a particular  
responsibility not to misinform the House and I therefore  
ask for this matter to be clarified.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady has put me on the spot,  
but I make no complaint about that. Knowing the  
Minister as I do, I know him to be a person of integrity,  
and I would not and am not doubting that for one  
moment. My recollection—I am open to advice and  
possibly even scholarly correction from the source from  
which it usually derives—is that the Opposition had  
prayed against this set of regulations. My further  
recollection—I think this is in the *Official Report*—is  
that the Government had indicated an intention for this  
matter to be debate and voted upon. It is not always  
possible to predict the course of events, but I think the  
commitment was made on 31 March for 19 April.  
Members will recall, and others will be aware, that on  
19 April the House debated a motion to facilitate the  
calling of an early general election. Thereafter, there  
was a small amount of business in what we normally  
call the wash-up session, and then we departed to our  
constituencies, so there was no debate and vote. That is  
how I remember it.

It is not desirable for the Chair to be asked to take  
sides between the parties, and I am not taking sides. I  
am certainly not taking sides on the merits or demerits

895

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

896

of this issue; the Speaker should not do that. I had  
thought there was an expectation of a debate and a  
vote, and that the Opposition had done what was necessary  
to maximise the chance of such a vote. To be honest, I  
thought that the Government were open to such a  
debate and vote, until events overtook. That is history;  
wearewhereweare.

As to whether there is to be a substantive vote now, I  
await the development of events. *[Interruption.]* Iam  
being fed a note. Oh, that is very helpful—and I mean  
very helpful. It is from one of our senior Clerks and  
says: “Don't have the details. Believe you are correct.  
We can check.” I am very grateful to the Clerk, who is  
extremely committed to the public service.

3.36 pm

**Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): It  
is a fundamental Scottish National party principle that  
access to education should be based on the ability to  
learn, not the ability to pay. SNP MPs have a strong and  
principled record of opposing tuition fee increases in  
England and Wales and, if we are able to, we will reject  
any Bill that would increase the financial burden on  
students.

In 1997, I personally lobbied my predecessor in this  
place on the introduction of student fees. I had never  
met him before, but I think he still remembers that  
meeting, because I was incensed at the idea that students  
should have to pay fees. I found their introduction by a  
Labour Government particularly objectionable, especially  
as so many of them had gone to university themselves;  
they then pulled up the ladder behind them. Neither I  
nor the SNP have changed our view that access to  
education must be based on the ability to learn, not the  
ability to pay.

The SNP's commitment to free tuition is firm and  
unequivocal. In 2007, the SNP Scottish Government  
abolished tuition fees. The Scottish Government's free  
tuition policy benefits 120,000 undergraduate students  
in Scotland every year, saving them from accruing debts  
of up to £27,000, unlike their peers in other parts of the  
UK. The SNP will always guarantee that access to education  
is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay.

Since we came to office in Scotland, the number of  
Scottish-domiciled full-time first-degree entrants has  
risen by 12%, but this is also about our values and the  
kind of Scotland we want to live in. Scotland as whole  
values free access to higher education, as does the SNP.  
Unlike the Tories in Scotland, we have no intention of  
billing our young people for their education, either up  
front or after they have graduated.

In 2015, the president of the National Union of  
Students Scotland, Vonnie Sandlan, said:

“The idea that abolishing free education—a clear recognition  
of the public and social good provided by higher education—would  
improve fair access seems bizarre.”

It is almost as bizarre as the recent comments by the  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs on “The Andrew Marr Show”, when he said  
that only graduates benefit from their studies. As a  
Scot, has he not heard of the commonweal? Everyone  
benefits. Society benefits from a higher tax take, and  
from its teachers, its doctors, even its lawyers, and  
sometimes, perhaps, its MPs.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Has the hon. Lady  
read the report by the Sutton Trust, the social mobility

charity, which was absolutely damning about social  
mobility in Scotland as a specific result of the SNP's  
policy of capping places? Does she not deprecate the  
fact that social mobility in Scotland is going into reverse?

**Marion Fellows:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention, but I totally disagree with him. I will come  
on to that point further on in my speech. The fact is that  
Scottish education is different; the way into it and how  
to progress in it are completely untypical.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP):  
Does my hon. Friend share my frustration at the blatant  
gaslighting that is going on, once again, around the  
number of young people in Scotland from disadvantaged  
backgrounds attending university? Does she agree that  
our young people have many pathways to university? If  
children coming through further education colleges are  
included in UCAS figures, there are significantly higher  
numbers of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds  
in Scotland going through to university than in the rest  
of the UK.

**Marion Fellows:** As a former further education lecturer,  
I have personal experience of that. Indeed, I will be  
disseminating my wisdom on this when I take up my  
place on the Education Committee; I see that the Chair  
of the Committee, the right hon. Member for Harlow  
(Robert Halfon), is sitting on the Government Back  
Benches. The point that has been raised is a well-known  
canard. We cannot measure Scottish education by the  
same yardstick that we use in England and Wales because  
it is different.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross)  
(LD): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. I have for  
some time been trying to make the point that things are  
done slightly differently in Scotland. I once was a  
Member in another place. The scrutiny of subordinate  
legislation in Scotland is very thorough indeed, and  
consideration is given to whether it should be positive,  
negative or super-affirmative. The heart of the problem  
is that the instrument to which the parent Act refers is  
perhaps a little too draconian in the powers that it gives  
the governing party. The fault may lie with what was  
originally agreed months ago—this may be what is  
bedevilling hon. Members—and perhaps the role of the  
House was not made suitably strong.

**Marion Fellows:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention and welcome him to his place. Yes, there  
are many differences, and trying to compare apples and  
pears just does not work.

**Wes Streeting:** There are international comparators.  
The fact is that the SNP Government's record on education  
in Scotland is a national disgrace: there are 4,000 fewer  
teachers, class sizes are up and, of the increased number  
of students going to university, 10 times more are  
coming from the wealthiest backgrounds than the poorest  
backgrounds. The gap is widening, and that is under an  
SNP Government.

**Marion Fellows:** If the hon. Gentleman listens to the  
end of my speech, he will find that I completely refute  
what he is saying. The facts tell a different story. Larry  
Flanagan, the general secretary of the Educational

897

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

898

*[Marion Fellows]*

Institute of Scotland, has said that Scottish education is  
not in the parlous state that is ascribed to it by other  
parties. I believe that he is one of the hon. Gentleman's  
colleagues.

Scottish-domiciled full-time first-degree university  
entrants rose 12% in 2006-07. The figure now stands at  
28,777, 58% of whom are women. As I have said, the  
SNP firmly believes that access to university should be  
based on the ability to learn. To support that, the SNP  
Government have invested record levels of funding in  
our universities—£5 billion since 2012-13, with a further  
£1 billion planned in 2017-18.

The latest UCAS statistics have shown a drop in  
Scottish-domiciled students applying to higher education  
institutions, but that is not necessarily a negative. Indeed,  
it is further evidence that the approach taken in Scotland  
to ensuring that young people have equal choices and  
chances to succeed in life is working. For example, the  
youth unemployment rate has fallen from 14% since  
2007 and now stands at 8.4%, and Scotland continues  
to have among the lowest rates of all the EU countries.

A record proportion of young people from Scotland's  
most deprived communities are continuing their education,  
entering training or getting a job after they leave school,  
with 88.7% of school leavers from these communities  
going on to a positive initial destination—the highest  
ever proportion, and up since 2011-12. A record 93.3% of  
young people are continuing their education, going into  
training or getting a job—that includes modern  
apprenticeships—after leaving school. This is a good  
news story. They do not all want to go to university;  
many of them want to earn and learn.

According to the Scottish Funding Council, nearly  
85% of further education students who achieve a  
qualification go on to a positive destination such as  
further study, training or employment. In 2015-16, almost  
12,000 more students than in 2008-09 in both further  
and higher education at college successfully completed  
full-time courses leading to a recognised qualification. I  
know about that because I taught in a further education  
college. People in the most deprived areas of Livingston  
and West Lothian, where I taught, started in further  
education colleges at 16, and in some cases at 15. They  
progressed through college. They did further education  
for perhaps one or two years—in the same place—and  
continued on to higher education courses at higher  
national certificate and higher national diploma level.  
They were then able to articulate into the second or  
third year of Scottish university courses. That is how it  
is done in Scotland.

I was privileged to be part of the educational journey  
made by these people, some of whom were from the  
worst areas. I can think of one woman student who got  
pregnant at 15, had to leave school and came back to  
university. I interviewed her and saw her potential; she  
had no formal qualifications, yet she ended up with a  
degree—and no debt. I think that answers the question  
of the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting)  
about social mobility.

Thanks to free tuition, Scotland is making progress  
towards achieving the target of 20% of students who  
enter university coming from the 20% of Scottish  
communities that are most deprived. There is no doubt  
about the SNP Government's investment in additional  
places for access students; my husband was an access

student. He decided to go to university aged 65 and  
joined the local college, which at that time was called  
Motherwell College. He took an access programme, did  
a year at college and gained a place at Glasgow University.  
He was unable to continue his educational journey for  
various reasons, but I know many others who have  
followed the same route. These students go to not only  
former technical colleges or institutes of technology  
that have since become universities, but our ancient  
universities. That is to be cherished and encouraged—and  
they have no fees.

That is why the Scottish Government continue to  
invest £51 million a year in supporting approximately  
7,000 places. Scotland's universities continue to attract  
students from around the world, and the number of  
non-EU international applicants has increased by 6% since  
last year; that is higher than the 2% increase in the UK  
as a whole. This is good news for Scotland, and we are  
keen to welcome those who wish to come to Scotland to  
live, learn and work.

The Scottish Government are determined to support  
our valuable higher education sector and are committed  
to working with our universities to continue to attract  
the very best students from around the world.The UK  
Government's failure to provide an offer that goes far  
enough for EU nationals after Brexit has had a worrying  
knock-on effect on applications to HEIs in Scotland.

Down here, the Tories are all for front-door fees;  
back in Scotland, the Tories are all about back-door  
fees. If Ruth Davidson's Tories had had their way in the  
2016 election in Scotland, they would have introduced a  
£6,000 graduate tax, which would have had to be paid  
back when graduates earned £20,000. The UK Tories  
want to stop international students studying in the UK  
by abolishing the vital post-study work visa, but the  
Scottish Tories want to deter EU students by threatening  
them with additional taxes. By contrast, the SNP Scottish  
Government have pledged to reform student loan  
repayments: graduates will not pay loan debt until they  
earn £22,000; the repayment period is reduced to 30 years.  
If even a wee country like Scotland can do that, so can  
any other.

Over the past 10 years, the SNP Scottish Government  
have worked hard to make Scotland the best country it  
can be. It is no wonder that other parties are now taking  
their lead from the SNP on tuition fees. Labour and the  
Tories opposed progressive SNP policies tooth and nail  
for a decade; now they have changed their minds. The  
SNP has opposed tuition fees since they were first  
introduced by Labour in 1997, and scrapped them in  
2008. Now Labour has said it will follow our lead in  
England—imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery.

Average student loan debt in Scotland continues to  
be the lowest in the UK: £10,500 per student in 2015-16,  
compared with £24,640—up 2% since 2014-15. By contrast  
with the UK Government, who abolished maintenance  
grants entirely for new students in England from the  
2016-17 academic year, we raised the income threshold  
for the maximum bursary from £17,000 to £19,000.  
That will benefit an additional 2,500 young students  
and 400 independent students.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** Have not further education  
budgets in Scotland been cut continually, which has led  
to a reduction of 152,000 young students in Scotland?

899

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

900

Is it not high time to do what the Conservative party  
manifesto pledged to do, which is to reverse those cuts  
so that we give our young people a fair chance in life?

**Marion Fellows:** May I also rebut that canard? When  
I started teaching in further education in Scotland in  
1992, many college courses were not vocational but  
leisure courses. West Lothian College ran a very successful  
one on which people my age—now—spent six hours a  
week doing art. The Scottish Government cut funding  
for courses like that and increased funding for vocational  
training. They also do huge programmes in places where  
there has been a loss of jobs locally, and the first thing  
the Scottish Government do when they send in a taskforce  
is include local colleges to provide short-term training  
courses. More people now leave further education with  
good qualifications—and that is totally what matters.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Marion Fellows:** I am sorry, but I would like to  
continue—I am feeling a little dizzy, to be fair.

The SNP Government are not complacent and are  
committed to doing more to support students. They  
want to ensure that support is equitable, in particular  
for the most vulnerable, which is why the Scottish  
Government are conducting a comprehensive review of  
student support under an independent chair and a wide  
range of membership, from Scotland's colleges to the  
National Union of Students and other bodies.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Marion Fellows:** As the hon. Gentleman persists, I  
will give way.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** The hon. Lady is generous in  
giving way. She has talked about the most vulnerable  
students in Scotland and about being able to work and  
learn. Can she explain why the Scottish Government  
receive the apprenticeship levy yet sponsor only a very  
modest 30,000 apprenticeships, compared with the 3 million  
awarded in the UK during the last Parliament?

**Marion Fellows:** Let me say one thing in response to  
that. The Scottish Government consulted businesses in  
Scotland; they were already doing good work with  
businesses, encouraging them to take on modern  
apprenticeships. Modern apprenticeships were far further  
advanced. The Scottish Government did not just make  
decisions for themselves. There was almost an imposition  
on the Scottish Government because our devolved  
Parliament deals with issues such as training and education.  
When the UK Government introduced the new levy for  
all employers, we consulted those employers and the  
agreement went forward.

I am not prepared to take any more interventions; I  
have almost finished.

The terrible decision to introduce fees for nurses and  
to scrap bursaries in England and Wales is clearly  
having an impact on nursing application numbers from  
England; figures show a massive 23% fall on last year.  
In Scotland, we remain committed to free tuition fees  
and protecting the non-means-tested, non-repayable nursing  
and midwifery student bursary, which we believe is  
essential to ensure a steady supply of trainees into the  
profession.

Those who want a highly educated workforce should  
follow Scotland's example. After all, it ranks at the top  
of the world's statistics, with Canada and Russia:  
45% of Scotland's population aged between 25 and  
64 are educated to degree level. Will the Minister  
consider doing what the Scottish Government have  
done so well? Do not attempt to increase fees for  
students in England and Wales—abolish them. We have  
world-class universities too, and what the Scottish  
Government do works.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Chair of the Education Select  
Committee, Mr Robert Halfon. As we have discussed,  
the right hon. Gentleman is welcome to speak from a  
seated position if he wishes.

3.56 pm

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): This is an important  
debate. I have huge respect for the Minister and all the  
work he has done to make our university sector better  
by ensuring that students from all backgrounds have the  
chance to climb the ladder of opportunity.

In considering student fees, we have a duty of fairness  
to both the taxpayer and the student, and it is right that  
taxpayers should not bear the burden alone. A number  
of principles need to be clear when it comes to tuition  
fees. The first is that we help students from disadvantaged  
backgrounds not just get on that ladder of opportunity,  
but get to the top. The second is that the interest rates  
charged should be fair for students. The third is value  
for money. When we talk about disadvantaged backgrounds,  
we need to be sure that we mean those at the very  
bottom struggling the most, as well as those who are  
just about managing.

Earlier this year, we heard that the numbers of working-  
class students entering the top universities had fallen  
over the last decade. Although more of our poorest  
young people are entering university, most are winning  
places at the lower and middle-ranked institutions rather  
than those offering the best opportunities for high-earning  
graduate careers. Disadvantaged graduates will suffer  
even more acutely than their more affluent peers on  
graduation, but they will also suffer a class pay gap that  
means that professional employees from poorer  
backgrounds are paid almost £7,000 a year less than  
their peers from more privileged families.

My hon. Friend the Minister spoke powerfully about  
what he wanted to do to improve the prospects of  
part-time students, and he recognised that the figures  
had declined. I welcome that and urge him to do everything  
possible to support part-time students, particularly single  
parents on low incomes who may fear going to university  
because of the size of the loan.

What does value for money mean when it comes to a  
university education? Why can universities charge the  
same high fees when there is such variation in the jobs  
that students find? The Minister has done a lot of work  
on that and on the new measurements he has introduced,  
but surely the time has come to look at the level of fees  
as compared with the destination data. People go to  
university to climb the ladder of prosperity, and to  
improve the skills and productivity of our nation. If  
they pay £9,000-plus and come out with a good job—job  
done. If they do not come out with a good job, we need  
to ask why.

901

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

902

**James Cartlidge:** My right hon. Friend is making an  
excellent argument, but does it not focus his attention  
on the repayment threshold? In a sense, a higher threshold  
enforces the very point he is making. If people get the  
higher salary, fair enough; they repay their loan. If not,  
they do not repay it anyway.

**Robert Halfon:** I have a lot of sympathy with my hon.  
Friend's point.

We need to look carefully at the salaries of the senior  
management of universities. Something is going wrong  
if there are significant increases in the salaries of top  
management but poor destinations for graduates. To be  
honest, I do not mind what management figures earn if  
every single person who leaves that university gets a  
good job at the end. If they do not, I cannot understand  
why some vice-chancellors receive huge increases in  
their pay but fail to provide good outcomes. I am not  
going to name those universities today, but we need to  
take a hard look at this.

**Julian Knight:** My right hon. Friend is making a  
powerful and considered speech. Does he agree that we  
should also look at the length of university courses?  
Three years seems a little long for some courses, considering  
the smaller number of teaching hours.

**Robert Halfon:** Yes. My hon. Friend makes a point  
that I will come to, which relates to business rates. This  
is about not just the length of courses, but the way in  
which terms are structured. I said at the beginning of  
my remarks that the burden on the taxpayer needs to be  
fair, but we also need to ensure that the burden on the  
student is fair.

A constituent of mine entered university during the  
first year of £9,000 tuition fees, and her debt is now  
around £45,000 including the maintenance loan. I am  
not against student loans. It is not fair for working  
people in my constituency to bear the full burden of  
paying for all students to go to university. However,  
value for money also involves interest rates. Interest rate  
levels are much lower in the United States and, as I  
understand it, there are quite a few months in the year  
when students have more opportunities to work so they  
can pay back their loans. That relates to what my hon.  
Friend the Member for Solihull (Julian Knight) just  
said. The interest rate here, which the Minister knows is  
quite high, puts people off. I urge him to look into what  
can be done to have a system similar to that in the  
United States.

Of course, not all courses or institutions offer the  
same opportunities for employment after graduating. A  
history degree from a Russell Group university could,  
after five years, see someone earning double what they  
would have earned had they received the same degree  
from a less prestigious institution. University graduates  
have traditionally out-earned their non-graduate peers,  
but the gap appears to be narrowing. The value of a  
degree has begun to decline as the supply of graduates  
has outstripped demand. The Institute for Fiscal Studies  
recently warned that further increases in the number of  
graduates could lessen the financial gains of a degree.

The Minister knows that I am passionate about and  
strongly believe in apprenticeships, and he is a huge  
supporter of degree apprenticeships. It is important  
that all students know that there is a choice. There is a

chance that we can offer every young person an  
apprenticeship, all the way from level 2 right up to  
degree level. We need as much investment as possible in  
degree apprenticeships, for which there is no loan.  
Apprentices earn while they learn, are virtually guaranteed  
to get a job afterwards, and get the skills and training  
they need. That would be a huge boon to people from  
disadvantaged to backgrounds. The levy must be used  
to fund degree apprenticeships as much as possible, as  
this will transform the nature of the debate, particularly  
for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. At this stage, as colleagues will be  
aware, I have not imposed any time limit on Back-Bench  
speeches, and I would prefer not to have to do so from  
the Chair, but it might be a helpful guide to colleagues if  
I say that a seven-minute speech by each colleague  
would probably enable everybody to contribute. If  
somebody goes on longer, let that Member be clear that  
he or she is stopping other Members speaking, which  
would seem rather unfair.

4.5 pm

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I am pleased  
to follow the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert  
Halfon), and I congratulate him on his election as Chair  
of the Select Committee and on his thoughtful contribution  
to the debate, which bodes well for the future. I represent  
more students—some 36,000 at the last count—than  
any other Member of this House, and consequently I  
chair the all-party parliamentary group on students. I  
represent many post-2012 graduates as well. They have  
been described as “generation rent” but we might also  
describe them as “generation debt”. The poorer the  
family they come from, the greater the debt as a result  
of the Government's actions, as the Institute for Fiscal  
Studies has reported. We are talking about debts of up  
to £57,000.

It is five years since the coalition Government forced  
through the £9,000 fees, but the impact is only beginning  
to take effect. This recent election was the first to be  
held since students starting graduating with the debt as  
a consequence of £9,000 fees—in May 2015, they had  
not started to do so. As a consequence, the issue took  
centre stage in this election. It is an issue not just for  
generation debt, but for their parents and, apparently,  
for some senior members of the Government. Even the  
Prime Minister's deputy, the First Secretary of State,  
says, in a way that contradicts the confidence of the  
Minister, that we need to have a national debate on the  
issue. He is right, because we do, and this is only an  
opening salvo. We need to examine how we can provide  
the funding that our universities need to maintain  
their world-leading position, but without burdening  
our young people with unsustainable debt. That is the  
big challenge.

There are some immediate things that the Government  
could do on this. First, they could scrap the proposed  
increase in interest rates to 6.1% from the current 4.6%. This  
will be 6.1% at a time when the base rate is 0.25% and  
rates for average mortgages are less than 4%. The Minister  
will say that this is an automatic rise based on the  
formula of RPI plus 3%, but that formula is wrong. It  
means, as the IFS estimated, that students are accruing

903

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

904

an average of £5,800 of additional debt in interest  
during their studies—before they even have the chance  
to start paying it off. As the former skills Minister, the  
hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles),  
has argued:

“It is unutterably depressing for hard-working students to see  
the amount they owe spiralling upwards, before they have even  
started paying it off.”

The greatest burden is on the students from the poorest  
homes. So will today's Minister hear what his colleagues  
are saying, what students and parents are saying, and  
what this House is saying, and commit to press the  
Chancellor to scrap the proposed increase in the interest  
rate and to review the formula?

A second thing the Government should do immediately  
is reintroduce maintenance grants for students from  
lower-income households. The grants were a central  
part of the package put together in 2012 and without  
that commitment this House would probably not have  
passed the proposals that saw tuition fees rise, because  
the grants mitigated the impact of trebling the fees.  
Scrapping grants for the poorest at the first opportunity  
after the 2015 election says a lot about this Government's  
priorities and went a long way towards undermining  
confidence in the system.

While we are on the question of confidence in the  
system, the Government should think again on their  
retrospective changes to the terms of repayment, which  
make graduates pay for the Government's miscalculation  
of the cost of the funding system and the escalating  
RAB—resource accounting and budgeting—charge. The  
Minister says it was a conscious decision; he knows well  
enough that the conscious decision his predecessor talked  
to the House about involved a RAB charge of 28%. That  
got out of control—it rose into the 40% area, and it was  
even being modelled at more than 50%—and the  
Government made graduates pay for their miscalculation.

Anticipating that before the 2015 general election, I  
asked Ministers for assurances that they would not  
make students pay for the Government's mistakes by  
changing the terms of the 2012 system, and the Minister's  
predecessor told me there were no plans to do so.  
Running into the election, the promise to students was  
that there were no plans to change the terms of the  
repayments. However, no sooner were the votes counted  
than the plans were rolled out in the 2015 Budget,  
freezing the repayment threshold and making graduates  
pay more than they signed up for. Conservative Members  
talk about broken promises, but there could be no worse  
breach of faith, breach of promise and breach of contract  
than that retrospective change. It is, frankly, fraudulent,  
and if this had been any other organisation than the  
Government, the Financial Conduct Authority would  
get involved. This decision undermines confidence in  
the loans system, and it should be reversed.

Let me highlight one further thing, of many, that  
should change: the decision to scrap bursaries and to  
introduce fees and loans for nursing, midwifery and  
allied health courses. Back in January 2016, when we  
debated the issue in Westminster Hall, the then Health  
Minister, Ben Gummer, told Members that the Government  
wanted—listen to this—

“to spread to nurses the same benefits that have been realised in  
the rest of the student population.”—[*Official Report,* 11 January 2016;  
Vol. 604, c. 236WH.]

Some of us in the debate expressed some scepticism that  
nurses and midwives would see £50,000 of debt as a  
benefit. We warned that these courses, which still provided  
a route into professional careers for those who were put  
off university by fees—mature students and others from  
low-income backgrounds—would see applications fall,  
at a time when we need more nurses.

Those concerns were cavalierly dismissed by the  
Government, but the final numbers have been published  
in the last few days, and Sheffield Hallam University in  
my city has seen a 22% drop, with the drop across the  
country estimated at 26%. The Government were clearly  
wrong. Will they accept that and reverse their decision  
on bursaries? They have been wrong time and again. We  
need a fresh start in this whole policy area.

4.12 pm

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): At the general election,  
the Labour party managed to rally an extraordinary  
number of young people to its cause—in one constituency,  
it even had young people standing on roundabouts with  
“Vote Labour” signs. I am sure many Labour Members  
will concede that they have those votes to thank for  
their place in this House today.

It is not difficult to see why students were tempted:  
not only did Labour promise to abolish tuition fees, but  
there was even talk of forgiving all student loan debt—an  
extraordinary, expensive undertaking. I wonder what  
those young voters must think now, barely a month on  
from the election, as they see Labour desperately trying  
to downgrade that promise to an aspiration, or as they  
see Wales—the only corner of the kingdom where the  
Labour party is in power—actually increasing fees,  
despite Labour's having attacked them during the campaign.

What goes around comes around. I should inform the  
House that the film of the Labour party, effectively,  
backtracking on this promise has been shared 1.3 million  
times, so perhaps those roundabouts will not be quite so  
full of young students holding up signs for the Labour  
party at the next general election.

Perhaps the Labour party, including in Wales, now  
realises that there are very progressive elements to the  
tuition fee system.

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman  
give way?

**Julian Knight:** I am not going to give way at the  
moment.

Loans are available in this progressive system to  
everybody. They are paid back only when the student is  
earning enough to afford it, and the amount to be  
repaid scales up with income. Effectively, student loans  
are a type of graduate tax, rather than a tax on everyone,  
including everyone who does not go to university. No  
bailiffs are sent out to collect on student loans, and after  
30 years any outstanding debt is forgiven by the  
Government. No other loan has so many protections  
built in for low earners.

However, to focus narrowly on the repayment structure  
is to ignore so much of what makes the current system a  
good deal for less-advantaged students. It secures more  
places and higher-quality teaching.

I know there is a lot of nostalgia in some circles for  
the days when university was free, but too often those  
people fail to acknowledge that this was only possible  
because the proportion of school leavers who went on

905

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

906

*[Julian Knight]*

to higher education was tiny. I was the first member of  
my family to go to university. I come from a council  
house background and a lone-parent family. It was a  
really unusual event at my school to go to university, to  
such an extent that when people found out that I had a  
place, I and a few others at my school were called on  
stage. When I went to university, only one in 10 were  
able to take up the advantages that I had, and I do not  
want us to go back there, under any circumstances.

When the previous Labour Government decided to  
massively expand higher education, the costs for universities  
ballooned, and it was rightly decided that those who  
stood to benefit should shoulder a share of the cost.  
The alternative was to fund the entire cost from general  
taxation—shifting the burden to millions of people who  
have never had higher education—or to leave it to  
universities to fill in the gaps in their budgets themselves.  
Scotland illustrates the dangers of that approach. Local  
students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds,  
have been consistently squeezed out of Scottish universities  
in favour of fee-paying international students.

**Marion Fellows:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Julian Knight:** I am not going to give way, I am afraid.

**Marion Fellows** *rose—*

**Julian Knight:** Actually, I will.

**Marion Fellows** *indicated dissent.*

**Julian Knight:** Scotland used to say to the rest of the  
United Kingdom, “We have a gold standard in education.”  
I think it is a matter of shame that the SNP has presided  
over the collapse of Scottish education in the way that it  
has.

**Marion Fellows:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Julian Knight:** No—you had your chance.

As all studies show, the introduction of fees in England  
has seen an increase in the number of students from  
poorer backgrounds. Tuition fees have opened up the  
opportunity to study, and the repayment structure shelters  
them if they do not get the graduate dividend that they  
hoped for.

Of course, the current system is not perfect. There are  
legitimate questions over the interest levied on loans,  
and especially about the fact that nearly every university  
charges the maximum amount of fees. Price signals  
should be an important way for students to gauge the  
actual value of a degree course. I also think that some  
courses may be too long, and if they were to be time-limited,  
that would bring down the costs for all. But abolishing  
fees and forgiving debts that will only ever be repaid by  
high earners, and replacing the current system with one  
that taxes those who do not benefit or leaves universities  
fighting over high-income applicants, would be a huge  
transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich, and a  
ferocious attack on opportunity and social mobility.

4.17 pm

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker,  
for allowing me to make my maiden speech in this  
important debate on tuition fees—a subject that

came up time and time again on the doorstep in  
Blaydon. I know this debate will be of interest to many  
constituents.

I would like to start by thanking the people of Blaydon  
constituency for electing me to represent them here. It is  
a great privilege. Some of you may first have heard of  
Blaydon through our local anthem, “Blaydon Races”,  
played proudly by many a brass band at the Durham  
miners gala. You will be glad to hear, Mr Speaker, that I  
will not be bursting into song in this Chamber—  
parliamentary decorum and a lack of musical talent  
mean that I should avoid that at all costs—but it does  
remain a theme and a constant symbol of our proud  
and sometimes raucous local history.

It is customary in maiden speeches to talk about your  
predecessor, and for me it is not just a tradition but a  
matter of great personal pleasure to talk about my great  
friend and comrade, Dave Anderson. Dave served Blaydon  
very well in the 12 years he was in this House, and  
was—and still is—a great champion of working people  
not just in Blaydon but throughout the trade union  
movement, working most recently on the Shrewsbury  
24 campaign with Ricky Tomlinson. As a former Unison  
president, Dave spoke up for the public service workers  
who do so much to deliver the vital services that we all  
need. Dave will also be remembered here for his work as  
chair of the all-party parliamentary group on muscular  
dystrophy—a campaign close to his heart as it affected  
his family, and for which he twice received charity  
champion awards in this place.

In this maiden speech, I want to talk about the  
communities that make up the constituency—a constituency  
that takes in rural areas, industrial sites and areas of  
great natural beauty, representing the traditions, past  
and present, of Blaydon. I start from Chopwell, in the  
west, separated from County Durham by another river,  
the Derwent. Chopwell, known as “Little Moscow” for  
its strong socialist links, is a community defined for  
many years by its proud mining history, and it retains its  
strong community links and boasts the Chopwell woods,  
which were thankfully saved from sell-off in 2011. Then  
I move on to Crawcrook and Greenside, where last  
Sunday I was proud to open the Greenside community  
picnic, part of the celebrations to commemorate the last  
shift at the local pit, and where on 8 July I marched with  
the local community and the band through the village  
on our way to Durham for the miners gala, banner  
flying high. And on to Ryton, where the beautiful  
Ryton Willows and the Keelman's Way run alongside  
the River Tyne towards Blaydon itself. The old Blaydon  
horse races have long been replaced by a road race on 9  
June each year from Newcastle to Blaydon. You can  
still see hundreds of people

“Gannin' alang the Scotswood Road”,  
not to see the Blaydon races, but taking part in them.

Then on to Whickham, where Dave Peacock and  
other members of the local community have recreated a  
lost garden, making a tranquil green retreat in the  
village open to all, and to Sunniside, another former  
mining community that is proud of its history, as well as  
to Winlaton and High Spen, where the red kite now  
flourishes after being reintroduced some years ago. It  
was magnificent to see them high overhead as we knocked  
on doors. Further south and east are the communities  
of Birtley, Lamesley and Kibblesworth, and the magnificent  
Angel of the North. Created by Antony Gormley, it

907

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

908

looms over the A1 and the surrounding landscape,  
demonstrating the strength and endurance of our local  
communities. Sadly, I never managed to identify the  
Angel's voting intention, but I think I could have a  
guess.

Blaydon is also open for business, taking in much of  
the Team Valley trading estate and the Metro Centre,  
representing manufacturing and retail. On the day we  
have seen the new polymer £10 note, I must mention  
De La Rue, which produces passports at the Blaydon  
site—and long may that continue.

These communities, and so many more I could mention,  
make up my constituency of Blaydon, but as in so many  
areas, the people of Blaydon have had much to deal  
with. They have felt the impact of austerity. Too many  
of my constituents have been hit hard—by the bedroom  
tax, by benefit sanctions, by reassessments for employment  
and support allowance or for the personal independence  
payment—and too many find themselves without money  
to buy the necessities of life for their family, like food or  
money to pay for gas and electric. It is fortunate for  
them that we have a well-established food bank in  
Blaydon, and I must pay tribute here to the Reverend  
Tracey Hume, who has worked with so many local  
volunteers in Blaydon to make sure that those who need  
help get it. What they do is magnificent, but this should  
not be needed in 2017.

Then there are the 1950s-born women, who told me  
on the doorstep how badly they have been hit by the  
equalisation of state pensions. This cannot be right or  
just. Mr Speaker, I must declare an interest as one of  
the 1950s-born women. Sadly, unlike me, most of them  
are not able to take up an apprenticeship in this House  
and must manage as best they can, but I intend to do all  
I can to work for them.

All of us come to this House with not just a passion  
for politics, but a personal history that influences the  
issues we care about, and I want to share a little of  
mine. Seventeen years ago, my husband, Charlie, ended  
his life by suicide. Many of you in this House will have  
been affected by suicide, but you only find out how  
many others have been affected when it happens to you.  
I do not ask for sympathy; I ask for your support for  
action to reduce the number of people who take their  
lives. I am glad to be a Samaritans listening volunteer,  
but we need deeds as well as words to prevent suicide.

In March, Samaritans produced a report, “Dying  
from inequality”. To put it bluntly, a rigorous academic  
study has shown that suicide risk increases when people  
face unemployment, job uncertainty and poverty. These  
are the very problems faced by the constituents I have  
talked about and by many others. Two weeks ago, I had  
the chance to ask the Secretary of State for Health what  
action he planned to take in the light of this report, and  
he told me that he always listens to the views of Samaritans.  
I give notice that I will be pressing the Secretary of State  
for Health and other Government Ministers to take real  
action to tackle the causes that lead to too many people  
taking their own life. As Samaritans chief executive,  
Ruth Sutherland, said:

“Each suicide statistic is a person. The employee on a zero  
hour's contract is somebody's parent or child. A person at risk of  
losing their home may be a sibling or a friend. And each one of  
them will leave others devastated, and potentially more disadvantaged  
too,iftheytaketheirownlife.Thisisacallforusasindividualsto  
care more and for organisations that can make a difference, to do  
so.”

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to speak in  
this debate. I will do all that I can in this House and in  
my constituency to speak up for the people of Blaydon  
and to represent them in the best way that I can.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank and congratulate the hon. Lady  
on that wonderful maiden speech.

4.25 pm

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): It is a pleasure  
to be called to speak in this debate and a great pleasure  
to follow the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist). I  
congratulate her on her maiden speech, which was very  
moving and powerful, particularly in relation to suicide.  
We all share her sentiment and hope to see greater  
progress on that. It is a terrible tragedy that so many  
still choose to take their own lives.

Having stood on many a football terrace, I am  
familiar with the Blaydon anthem, but I do not think  
that the edited lyrics to which I have been subjected are  
repeatable in this Chamber. I welcome the hon. Lady to  
the House.

This debate is on an important subject. Having intervened  
earlier on the shadow Secretary of State, the hon.  
Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), I  
have great sympathy for her. She has maintained her  
composure in the face of her party's policy wobble over  
historical student debt, but, if we look at what the  
Leader of the Opposition said to the *NME* prior to the  
election, we cannot form any conclusion other than that  
he wished to wipe out historical student debt. He said  
that he would “deal with it.” Those were his words.  
What other conclusion could we form?

The politics of this are quite cynical. Talking about  
helping students means helping a large number of people,  
but it is a limited base. Spreading policies to all graduates  
with historical student debt, however, means appealing  
to a vast number of people, so to renege on that so  
clearly is disappointing and deceptive.

Equally, we all have to accept that people are  
worried about levels of student debt. I have four children  
and worry about them, should they ever get to university,  
racking up enormous debts. Who, as a parent and a  
human being, would not be concerned about that?  
However, we have to think rationally about the issue.

There are measures that can be used to ameliorate the  
situation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow  
(Robert Halfon), the Chairman of the Education  
Committee, mentioned interest. Of course, student debts  
are packaged and bought on the basis of securitisation.  
I want to understand more about how that works,  
including the redemption penalties and whether it is  
possible to change those contracts without huge cost to  
the taxpayer. We would all benefit from knowing more  
about that. Perhaps my right hon. Friend's Committee  
could take evidence on it.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): My  
hon. Friend makes a strong point about the level of  
interest on debt and securitisation. He will accept that,  
because of the high proportion of that debt that is  
written off, it is in effect a grant, so the interest rate will  
need to be higher to make it attractive to people who  
want to take on that security.

909

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

910

**James Cartlidge:** I am afraid and suspect that that is  
true. I think that it is also the case that the higher  
interest rate enabled the Government to increase the  
low threshold under Labour to the higher threshold of  
£21,000 under us.

On the subject of the cap—this goes back to my  
intervention on my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Harlow—if we are able to raise the threshold at which  
people pay, that is a fairer deal for the student because it  
ensures greater quality. They repay when their earnings  
reach a point where we think it is fair for them to start  
doing so. I think we should look at that, but it is not  
cheap. My understanding is that if we raise the threshold  
to £25,000, it will cost almost £2 billion a year in lost  
income to the Revenue. That is not a minor detail.

We really have to make a decision, as a country and a  
Parliament, about our priority. What is the most important  
thing that we want from higher education? Why do  
people go to university? In my view the most important  
thing is to have the highest-quality education possible—the  
best quality degrees. That is what matters. We need to  
think about the upside, which is that someone who goes  
to university could earn £250,000 more in their lifetime—the  
figure is often far more than that—than someone who  
does not. In fact, to access highly paid professional jobs  
people need a degree.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): Was my hon. Friend as interested as I was to  
discover that the uplift is £250,000 for females and only  
£170,000 for males? Both are significant figures, but is it  
not interesting that the larger figure is the uplift for  
females who go to university?

**James Cartlidge:** I am always interested in female  
uplift. The striking thing is that, regardless of whether  
they are a man or a woman, university is an incredible  
opportunity for individuals to improve their standing  
and their circumstances and to get a career, so that they  
can afford a home and to raise a family. That is the  
upside.

To me, the most important thing is the quality of the  
degrees. I worry that if we go back to a free system,  
the quality of degrees will not improve but fall,  
partly because the funding will fall. We will go back to  
rationing the funding and the places. If we are honest,  
will the students who go to university when it is “free”  
take their education as seriously as those who go when  
it is not? Of course, it is not free. That is the great  
delusion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull  
(Julian Knight) said, it is not free; it is just that somebody  
else pays, rather than the beneficiary. The whole of  
society pays.

The money has to come from somewhere. The Labour  
party will supposedly pay for it by raising corporation  
tax. Never mind the fact that all the evidence shows that  
by cutting corporation tax, we are raising the revenue to  
the Exchequer. This will not happen without a cost.  
*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Wythenshawe  
and Sale East (Mike Kane) chunters about the Laffer  
curve—he's having a laugh about the Laffer curve! If  
Labour Members studied this, they would realise the  
reality. The OECD figures show that the predicted tax  
take from corporation tax when it goes to 17% will be  
the same percentage of GDP as in 2010 when it was  
at 26%.

The point is that there is a downside of going back to  
free education. We have to pay for it in some way. What  
we need is the upside, and the upside is having a  
competitive graduate system so that our graduates have  
the best quality qualifications.

I want to conclude with the big picture. The big  
picture is that people who go to university now are  
heading into a much more competitive labour market—a  
globalised, international labour market. Whatever the  
effects of Brexit are, that will not change. When our  
children go to university, they will be up against it. They  
will be up against graduates from India and all over the  
world. We need to give them the best weapons in their  
hands—the best tools with which to navigate their way  
through the challenges of life—and that means getting  
the best possible qualifications. I therefore urge my hon.  
Friends to consider the importance of quality.

Finally, I will remark on a very welcome measure that  
my hon. Friend the Minister for Universities, Science,  
Research and Innovation has brought in. As I understand  
it, universities will be able to raise fees to the maximum  
level only if they can demonstrate that their teaching is  
of the highest quality. We are moving towards a quality-  
based scheme. I very much welcome that and we should  
all support it.

4.32 pm

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): It is always a  
pleasure to follow the hon. Member for South Suffolk  
(James Cartlidge). I congratulate my hon. Friend the  
Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) on her moving, personal  
and powerful maiden speech, and wish her well for what  
I hope will be her long and distinguished service to the  
House.

The late, great Ron Dearing set out in his compact a  
clear route map for how higher education should be  
funded. Ultimately, it was to be funded by the beneficiaries.  
Graduates should make a contribution as beneficiaries;  
business should make a contribution, because it benefits  
from well-educated graduates; and society, as taxpayers,  
should make a contribution, because collectively we  
benefit from the contribution our universities make,  
both through learning and teaching, and through their  
wider impact on our country.

Under the Conservatives in government, first with  
the Liberal Democrats, then alone and now with the  
Democratic Unionist party, the Dearing compact has  
been broken. People in this country graduate with the  
highest levels of debt anywhere in the world. Most  
terribly of all, it is students from the poorest backgrounds  
who graduate with the greatest debt.

Having followed these debates for some time, dating  
back to my tenure as president of the National Union  
of Students, I think that one of the most egregious  
things about Conservative policy on higher education is  
that every single concession that was fought for and  
won has been gradually eroded. Maintenance grants,  
which were reintroduced to help people from the poorest  
backgrounds, have been abolished by the Conservatives.  
Interest rates are now well above inflation, which is not  
what was promised. The repayment threshold has been  
frozen, which means that the poorest graduates will pay  
back a disproportionate amount. The NHS bursary has  
been abolished, which unsurprisingly has led to a free-fall  
in nursing applications. The part-time and mature access  
rate would make any decent Government blush.

911

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

912

**Michael Tomlinson:** On poorer students, does the  
hon. Gentleman not welcome the fact that more students  
from disadvantaged backgrounds are going to university  
than ever before—an increase of 43% from 2009 to  
2016, and an increase of 73% from 2006 to today?

**Wes Streeting:** As someone who has always campaigned  
for wider access to higher education and who believes  
strongly that we should have more, rather than fewer,  
better educated people in our country, I welcome the  
fact that more students are in higher education than  
ever before. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raises  
that point, because it brings me to the issue of Government  
complacency. It is not really a surprise that more young  
people are going to university than ever before: there  
are more young people than ever before. In addition to  
the shocking record on part-time and mature access—  
students in those cohorts tend to be from non-traditional  
and under-represented backgrounds in higher education—  
the Government are hugely complacent about the extent  
to which working-class young people are being deterred  
from accessing higher education by fear of tuition fees  
and debt.

**Joseph Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman has made a  
specious point. It is the rate for people from disadvantaged  
backgrounds that is 42% higher than it was in 2009-10.  
That has nothing to do with the number, although that  
is also higher.

**Wes Streeting:** The Minister is right that there has  
been progress—I do not doubt that—but once again he  
underlines my point about complacency. Research published  
by the distinguished academic Professor Claire Callender  
of University College London warned:

“When we compared working and upper-class students with  
similar GCSE results, taking account of differences in gender,  
ethnicity and type of school attended...a lower percentage of  
working-class students had applied to university .compared with  
those from an upper-class background. because of these fears.

Our study is an important reminder that academic achievement  
at school cannot adequately explain the lower proportion of  
students from poorer backgrounds. High fees and fear of debt  
play a crucial role.”

I caution the Government against complacency on this  
issue. They have been consistently complacent about it  
since they decided to treble fees. If they were not  
complacent, they would never have abolished the  
maintenance grants, which was one of the most terrible  
policies of the last Parliament.

It is not surprising that so many people—not just  
young people, but parents and grandparents—are  
angry about the extent to which students and graduates  
have been plunged into record levels of debt. It is not  
surprising that the issue has hit the top of the political  
agenda. It is not only Ministers who are to blame;  
university vice-chancellors should take some responsibility,  
too. There is scant evidence that trebling university  
tuition fees has led to a better quality of experience  
for undergraduate students. In fact, the student experience  
survey suggests the opposite. Students believe they get  
less value for money than they did before. Frankly,  
looking at retention rates and graduate destination  
data for certain courses at certain universities, those  
vice-chancellors who continue to award themselves  
inflation-busting pay increases should be ashamed.

The truth is that if people from a disadvantaged  
background take the plunge, go to university, take on  
the risk of the debt and, for whatever reason, are unable  
to complete the course, the cost to them is far higher  
than if they had never been to university—not just in  
terms of the debt that they still have to repay, but  
because on their CVs they will forever be branded  
failures by employers. Having been awash with cash,  
thanks to higher fees, in a way that the rest of the public  
sector has not, universities have not demonstrated the  
duty of care or responsibility to students that I would  
expect for the fees that they charge and the level of debt  
that results. We have to be much firmer with universities.

My final point is a broader one about where social  
mobility in this country is headed and the state of  
political debate about that. I am horrified by the number  
of housing cases that I deal with involving children, and  
the impact on their education. As I said in Communities  
and Local Government questions this week, I did a  
school visit last week, and at the end of the Q and A  
with a group of year 6 students, I was pulled aside by an  
11-year-old boy who told me that he, his mother and his  
two brothers have been living in one room in a hostel, in  
so-called temporary accommodation, for more than a  
year.

I will never forget the conversation that I had in my  
surgery with a mum and her teenage daughter. Again,  
they were living in one room, in a bed and breakfast.  
The daughter has to do her homework under the covers  
at night, with a torch. She does not want to disturb her  
mother's sleep, because her mother works all hours to  
try to make ends meet—evidently not very successfully,  
which is why they are stuck in poverty in a single room  
in a hostel.

I will certainly never forget another mother who  
came to me, a victim of domestic violence living in  
Ilford with three children, two of primary-school age  
and one teenager. Her daughter had admitted that she  
had considered taking her own life because her  
circumstances were so appalling. That family do not  
live in Ilford any more; they were moved to Harrow in  
west London, and then to Wolverhampton.

This is what really upsets me, as someone who grew  
up on a council estate and did not enjoy the experience:  
however bad I thought my childhood was—growing up  
in poverty and relying on the benefits system; living in a  
council flat that was not nice and to which I did not  
want to invite friends round to play, because it was not  
the sort of environment in which they would feel  
welcome—I realise how lucky I was now. The policies of  
successive Conservative Governments have led us to a  
point at which we are disrupting children's education by  
moving them from pillar to post in temporary bed-and  
breakfast accommodation, with huge consequences for  
their education today and their life chances tomorrow.

If the Government were serious about social mobility,  
it would be an overriding priority running through  
every single Department. However, their policies and  
their pet projects—grammar schools, free schools and  
everything else—are so far removed from the reality of  
most people in the country, and from policies that  
would genuinely make a transformational difference,  
that they really ought to be ashamed. Theirs may be the  
largest party, but there is a reason for their failure to  
win a majority at the general election, and that is their  
deep detachment from the everyday lives of most people  
in this country.

913

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

914

4.41 pm

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ilford North  
(Wes Streeting), although I did not concur with all his  
points. I will address one or two of them in my speech.  
First, however, let me join others in congratulating the  
hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist). She made a very  
touching and well-delivered speech, and it was wonderful  
to hear about her work in the Samaritans, which—in  
addition to her work as a Member of Parliament—shows  
that she is a true public servant. Whatever the public or  
the media may say, I believe that the vast majority of  
people who decide to enter the world of parliamentary  
politics do so because they want to make the world a  
better place, and it is clear that that is why the hon.  
Lady is sitting on the green Benches today. I welcome  
her to the House.

I think that all of us, when we remember our time at  
school, describe someone as our favourite teacher. Mine  
was a gentleman called Ken Hudson, my physics teacher.  
Ken was a pipe-smoking, bespectacled gentleman with  
a haircut like Ray Reardon's—hon. Members may  
remember that he was a snooker player. Ken was definitely  
my inspiration, although I did not do tremendously well  
in physics at A-level or at college.

I remember the day we did our physics mock O-level.  
None of the class did particularly well. Ken walked into  
our classroom, stood by the blackboard, wiped it down,  
and just looked at us until we all went very quiet. Then  
he wrote across the blackboard in chalk, “The world  
does not owe you a living”. That has stuck with me for  
37 years, and it has stuck with my children, too, because  
I tell them about it an awful lot—the principle that the  
world does not owe anyone a living. I also tell them that  
their parents do not owe them a living.

My son, who had just left his sixth form, had to  
choose whether to go to university or enter the world of  
work. Was he going to invest in his education? Was he  
going to university? If a person can provide for themselves  
at 18, the world does not owe them a living. At that  
point, it is their decision whether to invest their money—  
tuition fees and student accommodation away from  
home—and time. All that would add to my son's debt in  
the future. Did he want to spend up to £30,000, £40,000  
or £50,000 on his education, which might pay in the  
future? As we have heard, it could pay up to a quarter of  
million pounds over a lifetime, so that might have been  
a sensible choice to make. He decided not to do that,  
but instead to move into the world of work. Do I think  
it is right that he, having made that decision, should  
fund others who choose to go down a different route  
and enter higher education and university? I do not  
think it is right that he should have to bear that burden;  
surely the burden should be carried by those who benefit  
most from that education.

Of course other people benefit from the fact that our  
society is better educated, but there is a clear correlation  
between someone's education and their investment in it,  
and the long-term return that they will see from it. A  
balance needs to be struck; somebody has to pay. We do  
not have a bottomless pit of money; that is an absolute  
fact. So who will pay is the key question.

I tried to intervene on the hon. Member for Ilford  
North (Wes Streeting), because I wanted to ask him a  
question. He has a very sensible economic perspective.  
At a time when we are spending £60 billion more every

year than we are collecting in taxes, does he honestly  
feel that the £11.2 billion a year allocated to this policy  
in the Labour manifesto is the best way to spend that  
public money at this time, with all the other demands  
we have, including on our healthcare and our pre-18  
education? Does he honestly feel that is the best use of  
that public money? I do not.

We have to make ends meet in this country, and  
therefore must choose where to allocate our resources  
for the best effect. *[Interruption.]* Iamhappytotakean  
intervention, but the point is that the Labour manifesto  
clearly has £250 billion of extra spending, plus £25 billion  
a year in infrastructure spending, which is another  
£125 billion. It would also nationalise the water companies  
and the railways. That amounts to £500 billion of extra  
debt. That same manifesto also says that if Labour had  
been in government they would have reduced the national  
debt over the course of this Parliament. How is that  
possible? How does any of this stack up? It is uncosted  
spending after uncosted spending.

The issue of past student debt was not in the manifesto,  
of course, but what the Leader of the Opposition said  
about that is clear, and not every party commitment  
needs to be in the manifesto for people to have a  
reasonable degree of expectation that it will be delivered.  
He said:

“I will deal with those already burdened with student debt.”  
That was a clear commitment. So on top of that  
£500 billion, there is another £111 billion—uncosted  
debt after uncosted debt. That is the reality, and we  
cannot carry on like that. We must not go back to the  
1970s, which is when I grew up; my household had  
uncollected rubbish and the TV used to go off at  
10 o'clock. I am old enough to remember that, and we  
will return to it if we do not maintain a sensible economic  
policy.

It is wrong to think that we on this side of the House  
are not worried about student debt. Of course I am  
worried about student debt—both that of the many  
students across the country, and potentially that of my  
children, as I have three more children, some of whom  
might choose to go to university. We should be talking  
about constructive ways of allowing students to go  
through university and benefit from higher education  
without incurring so much debt. One way of doing so  
would be to have shorter courses. My daughter is looking  
at a psychology course.

**Joseph Johnson:** My hon. Friend will be pleased to  
know that the Higher Education and Research Act 2017,  
enacted on the last day of the last Session, makes it  
possible for universities to offer shorter courses, such as  
two-year degrees.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** That is an example of ideas in  
action, and it is tremendous news. I should have been  
following that more closely, but—*[Interruption*.*]* I see  
that you want me to conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
but I will make a couple of quick points, if I may.

We should look at the US system, with its modular  
courses. Students can also live closer to home and not  
incur the accommodation and living costs involved in  
moving away. There are ways to reduce the financial  
impact on students, but overall this is about choice and  
who pays for those choices. I believe the burden of the  
cost should be borne by those who benefit from the  
education.

915

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

916

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** I call  
James Frith to make his maiden speech.

4.49 pm

**James Frith** (Bury North) (Lab): Thank you, Madam  
Deputy Speaker. It is an absolute pleasure to be here  
making my maiden speech during this debate on tuition  
fees, and I give thanks to the people of Bury, Tottington  
and Ramsbottom for the fact that I am standing here in  
the first place. Bury North is an amazing place, and I  
have 100 years of history there, from my late great-  
grandfather, a vicar in Bury, to me, his great-grandson,  
the new MP. For me and my wife, Nikki, and our three  
children—with a fourth on the way—it is our family's  
home town.

Growing up, public service was a staple of my home  
life. My mum was a leaving-care worker and magistrate  
with a passion for music. Dad was a Church of England  
minister with a love of cricket and politics. And so it  
goes that my passions are politics and music. These  
were supercharged within me when, 20 years ago, I  
witnessed Romania and South Africa newly emerging  
as political states, recovering from a ruthless dictator  
and the abhorrence of apartheid respectively.

I then moved to the music capital of the world—  
Manchester—to study. There, I formed an indie rock  
and roll band, in which I was the singer for 12 years. I  
joined the Labour party and married a Bury woman.  
The rest is history. I never did get that elusive record  
deal, though few people need to know me for long  
before learning that I did in fact play Glastonbury  
festival, long before it became the thing to do. *[Laughter.]*I'd have killed for his crowds, though.

During the election—the competition, as my son,  
Henry, called it—my eldest daughter, Jemima, asked  
me, “What is an MP, Daddy?” I tried to explain, saying,  
“If someone wants help, might be in trouble, wants  
something changing, needstotalktosomeoneormaybe  
just has a really good idea, they might go and see their  
MP.” Jemima looked at me and said, “Well, Daddy,  
you're my MP already.”

It is customary to pay tribute to one's predecessor.  
David Nuttall was graceful in his victory last time, as he  
was in his defeat this time. For all our considerable  
political differences, I always found him to be an affable  
man. I wish him and his wife the very best for the future.

Bury North is a fantastic place to live. It is book-ended  
by two traditional market towns, and the world-famous  
Bury market is home to the new superfood, Bury black  
pudding. There is also a magnificent market in  
Ramsbottom, from where, one winter morning, my wife  
started her own business. My constituency stretches  
from the foothills of the Lancashire Pennines in the  
north—it is overlooked by Peel Tower atop Holcombe  
Hill—to Gigg Lane, home of the mighty Shakers, Bury  
FC, in the south. Proudly, we are home to the Lancashire  
Fusiliers and veterans. They are legendary for being  
awarded six Victoria Crosses before breakfast at the  
battle of Gallipoli in 1915—a battle in which one Clement  
Attlee also fought.

Local charities including SuperJosh, Annabelle's  
Challenge and Bury hospice are an inspiration. Whether  
attending a community event at the Jinnah Centre,  
relaxing around the boundary at Greenmount cricket  
club, enjoying our countryside or a curry at the Jewel in  
the Crown, or taking the East Lancashire railway up to

Ramsbottom, all human life and experience is there.  
Local employers set high standards, drawing on the  
strengths of our town and its heritage. They include the  
award-winning Eagle and Child pub and Pennine  
Communications. Stories of this fine place are expertly  
retold by the local paper, the *Bury Times*. My new  
constituency office will be hosted in the same building  
as the Freedom church, which welcomes everyone to its  
door with “it's great to see you”—a simple message that  
sums Bury up.

But, Mr Speaker—sorry; Madam Deputy Speaker—  
Bury has had seven years of bad luck, with £120 million  
cut from services, local government and our economy.  
Our walk-in centre is used by thousands of patients a  
month. They rely on it not as Labour or Conservative  
supporters but as patients, so why is it threatened with  
closure? The reality of austerity is being lived through  
in hospital wards, or by carers and the underpaid,  
overworked parents who know differently. Mental health  
services are disappearing. We do not have enough nurses  
because the Government's own target is 20,000 short.  
Children with special educational needs are no longer  
supported. Social care has been reduced to minutes per  
day. Last year, 6,000 food parcels were handed out in  
Bury alone. AveteraninBuryhadhisbenefitssanctioned  
for selling poppies. There is no access to finance for  
many of our growing businesses without people risking  
the family home. In this once weathervane seat many  
feel, at best, that we have stood still as a country; many  
more feel stood on.

As my daughter might ask, so we say from this  
House: what are we for? What do we do? For Bury  
North, I am here to help to determine what comes next.  
That is the point of being here: the power to intervene,  
to disrupt and to change; the authority to speak out  
and to help manage. That is the point, not to manage  
decline or sponsor disadvantage. But austerity continues  
at pace. Austerity is not “living within our means”;  
austerity is lifeless economics. We must be as much  
about humanity as about eventually balancing the books.  
You grow by investing. You nurture talent and empower  
people. A business would not seek to grow by taking its  
people off the road, and nor should a country.

I believe that politics is a force for good and for hope,  
not an excuse for despair. My belief in Labour values is  
why I believe we need a fairer, more diverse economy.  
We need an economy that is more innovative and  
entrepreneurial and that takes risks and gives rewards.  
We need an economy with work-life balance, an economy  
that affirms the fact that both public and private sectors  
combine to create wealth. From nursery to university,  
these ambitions should feature, too. We need proper  
investment paid for by a broader economy. We should  
be empowered by a curriculum that prepares our young  
people for a successful, modern working life, whether  
via an apprenticeship or a degree, or if they are starting  
up for themselves, not the ever-narrowing curriculum it  
has become.

Too often, it is our young people who have been the  
first to face the political calculation of this place. With  
tuition fees as they are, they face a future saddled with  
debt, and rising interest rates on that debt. We must  
move to a higher-skilled economic ground. We must  
harness our assets: creativity, intuition, emotion, empathy  
and intelligence. In doing so, we must outbid the threat  
to jobs and livelihoods that automation poses for so  
many. We need a collaboration of all levels of education,

917

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

918

*[James Frith]*

research development, trade unions, business and new  
national industry, pulled together by the Government,  
jumpstarting the plan.

In closing, Mr Speaker—sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker;  
you will have marked me out already. On Brexit, please,  
a less bombastic approach and more grace; a Brexit that  
works for Bury is what I have said. I am not religious  
about Brexit—few people are—but away from this bubble,  
Brexit for many was a chance to stop the show, smash  
the glass and pull the leave cord, and it struck a chord.  
For the first time, many who have not been listened to  
have now been heard, but they did not vote to be worse  
off or poorer.

I am proud that in Bury North people voted to trust  
Labour with public services, and to trust Labour to  
ensure that industries are made anew and that our  
workers are protected. My mission is to improve the  
lives and the living of everyone I represent in Bury  
North, whether they voted for me or not.

I am not here to trade insult but to advance our  
argument. Politics—the great intervener, the enabler,  
the change we want to see, the kicking out and the  
putting in—may too often be a wasted force, but it is a  
force for good. After a historic result in Bury North, I  
now join my colleagues in what might feel to this  
musician like a difficult second album. I will be working  
with my friends and colleagues to advance our argument  
and win it with inspiration, assurance and vision. Desmond  
Tutu once said “never underestimate man's capacity to  
do wrong. But never underestimate man's capacity for  
good also.” The same is true of our estimation of  
politics, and the responsibility on us to ensure that our  
politics' capacity for good begins in this place—restoring  
faith in politics and professing to a new generation that  
its power is the best force for good and for change that  
we have for the many, not the few.

5.1 pm

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole)  
(Con): It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member  
for Bury North (James Frith). He paid a fitting and  
generous tribute to his predecessor and my friend, David  
Nuttall. He spoke with eloquence and with confidence.  
He said that his passions are politics and music; I would  
stick to politics and cricket. He said that we should not  
be trading insults, so I look forward not to trading  
insults with him in future but to disagreeing well. I am  
sure there is much on which we will disagree, but I look  
forward to his future contributions in this place.

In a very short speech, I shall make just a few points.  
The history of tuition fees has already been mentioned,  
providing a helpful reminder of what happened. The  
fees were introduced by the Labour party in 1998. In  
2001, the Labour party manifesto pledged:

“We will not introduce top-up fees.”

Then Labour proceeded to do just that in 2004. The  
final piece of the jigsaw that has not yet been mentioned  
is the Liberal Democrats' pledge in 2010 that they  
would scrap university tuition fees, and, in coalition,  
they voted to put them up.

This debate is not just a timely reminder of those  
facts, but an opportunity for us to consider the issue of  
social justice. It is an issue that my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), the new Chairman

of the Education Committee, picked up. I love his  
vision and his picture of the ladder. What we mean by  
social justice should be opportunities for the next generation,  
particularly for those who are less advantaged. Others  
can make the economic argument. My hon. Friend the  
Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) did  
so eloquently and well. I fear that the Leader of the  
Opposition has dug himself into a bit of a hole if we  
listen to what he said in the run-up to the election  
campaign—the promise that he made on the stump to  
students—and what was said at the Dispatch Box this  
afternoon.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but more people from  
disadvantaged backgrounds are now going to university  
than ever before—not just more people, but a higher  
proportion of people. The Minister set it out quite  
rightly at 43%. It has gone up from 13.5% in 2009-10 to  
19.5% in 2016. The proportion has gone up 73% since  
2006. This is not an accident, but a result of this  
Government's policy. The quid pro quo is that we give  
universities more money, but, as part of the deal, they  
must ensure that there is social justice and that more  
people from less well-off backgrounds get to university.  
We heard some of that from the Minister this afternoon.  
I look forward to more about it in the future. The hon.  
Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) said that we  
should not be complacent. He is absolutely right—we  
should not, and this Minister and this Government  
should ensure that these statistics persist and that  
we continue to see more people from poorer backgrounds  
going to university, improving their life chances. It is  
happening now under a Conservative Government.

What would happen if Labour got into power and  
introduced its policy? We would see a reduction in  
funding, reduced access, crumbling institutions and fewer  
students—and, importantly, on the question of social  
justice, we would see fewer students from disadvantaged  
backgrounds going to university. How do we know that  
is true? How do we know that is right? We look at  
Scotland; we look at what has happened when student  
tuition fees have been taken away. My hon. Friend the  
Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) made this point  
in an intervention earlier and he is absolutely right.  
These are not my words but those of the Sutton Trust—they  
tried it in Scotland and there were

“particularly negative consequences for less advantaged students.”  
If people are concerned about social justice and about  
the ladder mentioned by my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Harlow, they should follow this Government's  
policy on tuition fees.

5.5 pm

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): I am grateful,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to give my  
maiden speech in this important debate on education  
fees. Many young people are facing this increased burden  
more often.

It is with great pride that I rise to speak representing  
a constituency in my home city of Manchester. In May,  
the city I love was the victim of a terrible attack—22 adults  
and children were killed and more than 100 people were  
injured attending a concert at Manchester Arena. It was  
an act of pure evil. Faced with this tragedy, the people  
of Manchester responded in the only way they know:  
with solidarity, with compassion, and with the  
determination that those who seek to endanger our way  
of life will not succeed.

919

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

920

When such events happen there is always a danger  
that some people will try to use them to divide us, and  
unfortunately we witnessed an increase in hate crimes in  
the wake of the attack, yet just a few weeks later the  
people of Manchester elected me—a Muslim—as the  
city's first ever BME MP. I cannot think of a more  
powerful message to the terrorists and bigots that their  
attempts to divide us will never succeed.

I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of my  
predecessor, the late Sir Gerald Kaufman. Sir Gerald  
was a legend in this place and he will be missed by  
Members on all sides. He brought colour to proceedings  
here—sometimes literally through his keen sense of  
style, and at other times through his sharp wit. He  
served in this House for almost 47 years, until he passed  
away earlier this year. He served in many roles: as an  
Environment Minister, a senior shadow Cabinet member,  
Chair of the Select Committee on Culture, Media and  
Sport, and later Father of the House. But above all,  
Sir Gerald was a tireless champion for his constituents  
and in return he was loved by them. I worked with him  
for 20 years on issues such as peace in south Asia and  
the middle east and standing up for oppressed people in  
general—work that I will try to continue in this House.  
I was always grateful for his support, advice and, above  
all, his friendship. I know he will be a hard act to follow,  
and although I cannot promise to match his dress sense  
I will try my best to at least fill his shoes. Most of all, I  
will never forget the people of Manchester Gorton, who  
have given me the privilege of representing them here.

The Gorton constituency is a wonderfully diverse  
and vibrant place, taking in Fallowfield, Gorton,  
Levenshulme, Longsight, Rusholme and Whalley Range.  
It has thriving local businesses, such as Belle Vue speedway  
and dog track; wonderful green spaces such as Platt  
Fields, Debdale, Alexandra and Crowcroft parks; and,  
of course, the famous curry mile. It is also a spiritual  
place, home to a huge number of places of worship,  
with beautiful historic buildings such as Gorton monastery  
and Victoria Park mosque, the first mosque in Manchester.

But it is not without its challenges: seven years of  
austerity have hit my constituents hard; more than one  
in three children live in poverty, the average wage is  
£100 less than the national average; £300 million has  
been cut from Manchester City Council's budget; and  
there are 2,000 fewer police on our streets.

During my election campaign, I promised I would  
always put Manchester, Gorton first; that is exactly  
what I intend to do during my time in this place.  
Manchester is a thriving, world-class city and a great  
place to live. The people in my constituency are decent  
and hard-working. They play by the rules and do the  
right thing, but they have not always felt the benefits of  
our city's success and they have not had a fair deal from  
this Government. So I will stand against the cuts and  
further austerity, and I will fight for the extra investment  
in housing, schools, NHS and local businesses that  
Manchester, Gorton needs and deserves.

My own journey to this place has not been a typical  
one. I was born in Pakistan and came to the UK when I  
was adopted out of poverty as a child. Since then  
Manchester has been my home for nearly 40 years. I  
often tell people that although I was born in Pakistan, I  
was made in Manchester. I left school with no qualifications  
and, at 16, went straight into work as a labourer in a  
cotton mill. Later I became a bus driver and then a  
police officer, one of Manchester's very few BME officers

in the 1980s. That caught up with me during my election  
campaign when a voter approached me and said he  
would not vote for me. Like any candidate, I was a little  
hurt and wanted to know why. He said, “Twenty years  
ago, you arrested me.” Even after a brief chat, I was not  
able to change his mind.

I always felt that I had missed out on an education. I  
was supporting my wife and young children, but I also  
went to night school, got my O-levels, A-levels and  
eventually a law degree. I became a solicitor because I  
wanted to defend those most in need. I worked my way  
up to become a partner at my own law firm in Gorton.  
Over the past 17 years, I have been a Manchester  
councillor and Lord Mayor, and latterly an MEP.

I entered politics because I believe in the power of  
social justice to transform lives, to bring hope and to  
deliver opportunity. I believe in a world in which someone's  
prospects should be determined by the content of their  
character and not by their circumstances at birth or the  
colour of their skin. Although progress has been made,  
it is clear from the recent increase in inequality that  
more is still to be done.

As a father, I can see society's unfairness clearly when  
I look at my children—I have three, two daughters and  
a son. I see them equally, but society does not. It is more  
than 45 years since the Equal Pay Act 1970, but women  
still earn less than men. I do not want to have to wait for  
another 45 years for my great-great-granddaughter to  
be treated equally.

In the House, I will always be a champion of equality;  
I will stand against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and  
all other forms of discrimination. I look forward to the  
upcoming release of the race audit so that we can better  
ensure that our public services do not fail the most  
vulnerable in our society. I will no doubt touch more on  
such issues in future debate. I also hope to bring my  
experience from my time in the European Parliament to  
bear on the important discussions to come on Brexit.

For now, I thank the House for indulging me while I  
made my maiden speech. I look forward to making the  
voice of Manchester, Gorton heard loud and clear  
during my time in this House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** I call  
Mike Hill to make his maiden speech.

5.14 pm

**Mike Hill** (Hartlepool) (Lab): Thank you, Madam  
Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make  
my maiden speech today. As the first person in my  
family to attend university—on a grant, a wing and a  
prayer—I know just how difficult it is to survive university,  
let alone be saddled with debts as a result of tuition fees.

I begin by paying tribute to those who elected me—the  
most wonderful, friendly, warm-hearted and welcoming  
people. It is an honour and a privilege to represent  
Hartlepudlians in this House. I should also like to pay  
tribute to the town's previous MPs—Iain Wright, Peter  
Mandelson and Ted Leadbitter. Sadly, I did not know  
Ted, but I do know that he was a true and much  
respected constituency MP, and that is something that I  
aspire to emulate. I thank Peter Mandelson for his  
energy and efforts in helping to regenerate the town, for  
throwing his weight behind some wonderful projects  
such as our most beautiful world class marina, and for  
flying the flag for that little known northern delicacy,  
guacamole.

921

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

922

*[Mike Hill]*

As for my immediate predecessor Iain Wright, who  
could ever forget his true tenacity and ruthlessness as  
Chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee  
as he exposed the disgraceful and completely unacceptable  
exploitation of workers at Sports Direct, or his dogged  
determination to stand up for British Home Stores  
workers when they lost their jobs in the blink of an eye  
and during the pension scandal that followed? Yes, we  
lost our BHS in Hartlepool too—and yes, Philip Green  
deserved to lose his knighthood over it.

At the turn of this century, I had the good fortune to  
land a new job with the trade union Unison. Of all the  
places where I could have lived in the wonderful region  
of the north-east, I chose Hartlepool. As I said earlier,  
the people are warm and welcoming—straight-talking  
and honest folk. But they were not the only attraction.  
Hartlepool is a real hidden gem, a beautiful coastal  
town steeped in history. From Greatham to the Fens,  
from Elwick village to Hart village, from the prehistoric  
petrified forest seen at low tide at Seaton Carew to the  
medieval St Hilda's church on the Headland, there is  
history everywhere.

Robert de Bruce is famously connected with the  
town. It has sitting in a dry dock in its centre one of  
Nelson's original flagships, HMS Trincomalee. We have  
recently welcomed to the town the new Royal Navy  
museum of the north. The Heugh battery on the Headland,  
a survivor of the first bombardment of British soil from  
the sea in the first world war, is a hidden treasure.  
Hartlepool truly has a wonderful tourist offer, and I am  
proud to be here to promote it today.

My constituents are no fools—they know their own  
minds and speak plainly. They voted massively for  
Brexit; 69.5% was the highest vote in the north-east. But  
that did not mean that they were converts to UKIP or  
the Tories, as UKIP found out when it lost its deposit in  
the general election and as the Tories found out when  
we increased our majority. I thank the Prime Minister  
for deciding to go to the polls early. The fact that  
Hartlepudlians voted in the local football mascot H'Angus  
the Monkey as their first ever elected Mayor shows their  
humour and ability to challenge the establishment when  
they need to.

Unlike the monkey Mayor, I did not get elected for  
promoting free bananas for every primary school pupil,  
but I did on the promise that I would fight for those  
kids, for their schools, for the NHS, for our hospital and  
for our public services—and against the Government  
hellbent on breaking them. I pay tribute to all those  
who supported me in getting elected to this strange  
place—particularly to my family, who are with us in the  
Gallery, and to my mother and father, who passed away  
in February this year. My dad, Mr Robert Hill, from the  
other monkey town of Heywood in Lancashire, was a  
true inspiration and he would be proud of me today.  
Yes, it is true—I moved from one monkey town to  
another and became its MP. You simply could not make  
that one up, could you?

My experience here so far has inspired me all the  
more to do what I promised to set out to do. Hartlepool  
is a wonderful place, yet it has some of the most  
deprived wards in the country. Life expectancy for  
women is the second lowest in the country, and  
unemployment is significantly higher than in any other

town in the north-east. It is my job—my determination—to  
fight tooth and nail in this place against the constant  
attacks on our people and communities by the failed  
austerity agenda delivered by a Government who are  
disconnected and uncaring of our people and communities.

I want to champion and fight for mental health  
services—mental health is a growing issue emerging  
from austerity—and, as a former union official, for  
health workers, who themselves fall ill and often suffer a  
second-class service when it comes to their own treatment.  
I want also to champion and fight for the trade union  
movement and the co-operative movement. I am proud  
of my co-operative and union roots. I pay personal tribute  
to all my work colleagues and friends in Unison, particularly  
my secretary, Angela, and everyone at the Middlesbrough  
office, who are nothing short of family to me.

I also pay tribute to a true inspiration and giant of  
the trade union movement, Mr Rodney Bickerstaffe—my  
friend and the former general secretary of Unison. He  
is a brilliant man and working-class hero who is currently  
suffering from a terrible illness and is having an operation  
today; I wish him well.

I am unashamedly a trade unionist and my constituents  
know that. They also know that I am a tried and tested  
campaigner. I am privileged to have their support and  
to be able to do what I said I would do: fly the flag for  
Hartlepool, put the town on the map, and fight every  
inch of the way for the people who elected me.

5.21 pm

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): The  
House will know that I was not here for most of the  
debate, but I would like to join the hon. Member for  
Hartlepool (Mike Hill) and send best wishes from this  
side of the House to Rodney Bickerstaffe, who I knew  
in my various roles. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman  
and his supporters on doubling the majority of his  
predecessor. The House will look forward to many  
more contributions from him. The less controversial  
ones will be welcomed, including his commitment to  
investment—private and public—in his constituency,  
and the more controversial ones may get a riposte later  
on.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal  
Khan) comes to this House as one of the best qualified  
people to contribute to our debates for all the reasons  
he mentioned in his speech. He is the sort of person  
who will give Parliament a good reputation. I hope he  
and we can co-operate, working across the House to  
achieve many of the things to which he is committed. I  
congratulate both hon. Gentlemen on their maiden  
speeches.

5.22 pm

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I  
congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Blaydon  
(Liz Twist), for Bury North (James Frith), for Hartlepool  
(Mike Hill) and for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan)  
on making excellent maiden speeches today. I came into  
the House with them and I am sure that we will carry on  
our journey together to help transform this country.

I have been waiting for 20 years to make a speech in a  
debate on higher education funding and tuition fees—ever  
since 23 July 1997, when Ron Dearing published his  
report and I was an executive officer at Leeds University  
union. In the past three months, I have spoken to

923

Tuition Fees

19 JULY 2017

Tuition Fees

924

hundreds of students from the University of Leeds and  
Leeds Beckett University. Since Parliament dissolved,  
they were not aware that their fees were rising to £9,250  
from £9,000. The fact was not made clear to them at all.  
The Government seem to have created a tuition fee rise  
escalator. In other areas, they are abandoning such  
escalators, but not for tuition fees. Fees are expected to  
hit £10,000 by 2020. I wonder how many students are  
aware of that.

The teaching excellence framework adds an additional  
element, starting an Olympic-style race with gold, silver  
and bronze medals awarded for quality. Future increases  
will be linked to the rostrum, creating a new hierarchy  
in higher education whereby gold medal-winning universities  
will be able to place their fees ever higher.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that the  
average student now graduates with more than £50,000  
of debt. The replacement of maintenance grants with  
loans also means that the poorest students are worst hit,  
whereas the richest 30% of households would have  
lower borrowings, at “only” £43,000. The poorest are  
hit hardest, the richest are hit the least and the middle  
are hit in the middle. Is that the sort of system we are  
trying to create? How much further does debt need to  
rise before the Government stop the debt spiral they  
created in 2012?

Graduates have raised the issue of loans with me  
consistently over the last period and before I was a  
Member of Parliament, because students currently repay  
loans at a rate of 9% of their earnings over £21,000. The  
repayment threshold was due to rise in line with  
earnings, but in 2015, after the previous general election,  
the Conservative Government froze the threshold until  
at least 2021. We are now seeing inflation rising but the  
repayment threshold staying the same, which is creating  
a real-terms increase in the payments. In addition,  
people have to deal with the high interest rate. We are  
talking about mortgage-style debt—this is not a short-term  
loan—but the Government are treating it like Wonga.  
Students are having to pay 3% above RPI; this is currently  
4.6%, but in September, when the new academic year  
starts, it will go up to 6.1%. Why are students being lent  
money without fully knowing the terms that they will be  
repaying? Why are they totally at the whim of the  
economic climate and of the Government? A further  
irony is that graduates who earn more pay their loans  
back more quickly and incur less debt than those on  
lower incomes, who have to wait longer to repay their  
loans and are continually having to pay back interest.

So we have a quadruple whammy of rising fees,  
real-terms cuts in the threshold for when graduates have  
to pay back, rising interest rates and larger debt for  
lower-earning graduates. Has not the worst of all worlds  
been created? Students know that no aspect of this  
system is fit for purpose, and the general election showed  
just that, with many new hon. Members, some of whom  
spoke today and made maiden speeches, now representing  
university and student-heavy seats because students  
have lost trust in the Government. They know that the  
only party that will fix this broken system is the Labour  
party, with the action on both fees and loans outlined  
by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne  
(Angela Rayner).

5.27 pm

**Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): I  
was lucky enough to go to Liverpool Polytechnic to  
study law in 1987 and have my tuition fees paid in full. I  
am sure many of the people here in this Chamber who  
went into higher education also had their fees paid. I do  
not know whether the prospect of having substantial  
debt at the end of my studies would have put me off, but  
it would have made me stop and think. That is the crux  
of the problem with tuition fees: many students from  
low-income families that might not even earn £20,000 a  
year would seriously baulk at the idea of having to pay  
back £50,000. With maintenance grants being replaced  
by loans, total student debt for those from poorer  
families will be much higher than for those from wealthier  
ones. It is therefore no accident that, on average, one in  
20 freshers drops out from university every year, whereas  
the figure for those from poorer families is one in 12.  
Even when they graduate, those from poorer families  
earn 10% less than their wealthier peers, who find it  
easier to get placements and internships, and impress  
with CVs with better extracurricular activities. On the  
subject of jobs, it is also worth noting that many professions,  
including teaching and nursing, are struggling to recruit  
graduates, partly because of the low pay and the inability  
of graduates to pay off their loans.

Another invidious factor that arises from tuition fees  
and debt is that many young people are putting their  
lives on hold, as they have to live with their parents  
sometimes well into their 30s to save up enough money  
to buy a home of their own. That has a knock-on effect  
on their relationships and life choices, such as whether  
or not they want to start a family. It is not just young  
people who are affected by this; many potential mature  
students and part-time students have already been put  
off studying since 2012, when tuition fees were hiked up  
to £9,000. We have seen an overall decline of 61% in  
part-time students and 39% in mature students.

With the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimating that  
average student debt is £50,000 on graduation, and with  
77% of students expected never to pay off their loans  
entirely, it is scandalous that the Government are trying  
to increase tuition fees at this time. They should take  
immediate steps to reduce tuition fees, not increase  
them.

We have heard that Conservative Members question  
Labour policy on tuition fees, but if they wanted to  
debate Labour party policy properly, they should have  
voted for our amendment on Monday to give us more  
Opposition days.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Government's decision to  
increase tuition fees implemented by the Higher Education (Basic  
Amount) (England) Regulations 2016 (S.I., 2016, No. 1205) and  
the Higher Education (Higher Amount) (England) Regulations 2016  
(S.I., 2016, No. 1206).

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** I thank  
hon. Members for their self-denying ordinance. We  
managed, without a time limit, to come in almost  
exactly perfectly on time. In particular, I pay tribute to  
the people who have made their maiden speeches this  
afternoon and done so within the limits which Mr Speaker  
asked them to keep to. Thank you very much indeed.

925

19 JULY 2017

Exiting the European Union: Sanctions

5.31 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting  
the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered Exiting the European Union  
and Sanctions.

May I congratulate those who have just given their  
maiden speeches?

The United Kingdom has long been one of the most  
networked and outward-looking countries in the world.  
The Prime Minister has set out her vision for the  
country, following our exit from the European Union: a  
truly global Britain—a country that goes out into the  
world to build relationships with old friends and new  
allies alike. We hold fast to a vision of a UK that is  
respected abroad, tolerant at home, engaged in the  
world, and working with international partners to advance  
the prosperity and security of our nation.

That said, we live in a fast-changing and uncertain  
world. The United Kingdom faces a number of threats  
from states that act in contravention of international  
law, from individuals who peddle messages of hate or  
commit acts of terror, and from companies that corrupt  
basic standards of behaviour, and this country needs as  
many tools as are available to counter these threats and  
to influence the behaviour of others.

Effective, targeted sanctions policy is one of those  
tools. Sanctions have helped resolve complex and serious  
policy issues—for example, by bringing Iran to the  
negotiating table to agree to robust constraints on its  
nuclear programme. The UK currently implements  
34 sanctions regimes, around half of which result from  
legally binding resolutions of the UN Security Council,  
and half from additional measures agreed with partners  
in the European Union. We must retain the ability to  
impose, update and lift sanctions regimes, both to comply  
with our international obligations and to pursue our  
wider foreign policy and national security objectives  
after we exit the European Union.

The referendum result last year was a clear message  
from the people of the United Kingdom that we need to  
change our relationship with the European Union and  
take back control of our laws, and this Government are  
delivering on that instruction through the ongoing  
negotiations, the second round of which is under way  
this week, and through the introduction of essential  
legislation, such as the European Union (Withdrawal)  
Bill, which the Government published last week.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): This mantra of taking  
back control of our own laws has been very prominent  
in the Brexit debate. Could the Minister give an example  
of an EU sanction that the United Kingdom would not  
want to apply, or of a sanction that it would want to  
apply, but that the European Union does not currently  
apply, just to give us some idea of how much control we  
need to take back in this area?

**Mr Walker:** I will respond to the hon. Gentleman  
perhaps later in my speech. This is more about powers  
than policy. The UK wants to pursue a consistent  
policy as we go forward, but to do so, we will need  
powers as we exit the European Union.

Exiting the European Union: 926

Sanctions

The UK's implementation of UN sanctions and  
European Union multilateral sanctions relies on the  
European Communities Act 1972. The UK has some  
limited domestic powers to impose sanctions—notably  
in domestic counter-terrorism—but these are not sufficient  
to replicate the full range of sanctions in force through  
the European Union. While the European Union  
(Withdrawal) Bill will preserve or freeze existing sanctions,  
it would not provide the powers necessary to create new  
regimes, as we may need to in future, or to update,  
amend or lift sanctions, as we have done in the past  
when there are changes in circumstances in the fast-moving  
world of foreign policy.

When the United Kingdom exits the European Union  
in March 2019, we will therefore need to have new  
legislation in place. As set out in Her Majesty's Gracious  
Speech, the international sanctions Bill will be introduced  
this Session. The Bill will focus on powers, not policy,  
establishing the legal framework that we need to continue  
implementing UN sanctions, and to return decision-making  
powers on non-UN sanctions to the UK, while preserving  
flexibility, for now, on how we use those powers in  
relation to specific countries or threats.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): Does not the  
Minister accept that what he has outlined of this process  
really does underline the stupidity of some of the  
arguments around sovereignty? He says that we can  
now impose our own sanctions regime, but we are less  
powerful and less influential acting alone than we would  
be acting through the European Union.

**Mr Walker:** I do not agree. The referendum clearly  
took the key decision that we would be leaving the  
European Union, but that does not prohibit us from  
working with allies in the European Union, or indeed  
elsewhere. The UK will continue to be a powerful,  
positive influence in the world, and we can work with  
allies on a number of planes.

Returning to the Bill, on 21 April the Government—the  
Foreign Office, the Treasury, and the Department for  
International Trade—launched a nine-week consultation,  
which closed on 23 June, on the United Kingdom's  
future legal framework for imposing sanctions. The  
consultation document was published online and sent  
to over 30,000 individuals and companies. Government  
officials also held roundtables to consult key sectors,  
including financial services, the legal profession, industry  
professionals and representative bodies, as well as  
international partners. The views of those who participated  
in the consultation have been carefully analysed by  
officials, and the Government response will be published  
shortly.

We intend to preserve important elements of our  
current approach to sanctions, using them in a targeted  
fashion to maximise the intended pressure while minimising  
unintended consequences. In line with the Human Rights  
Act 1998, we will designate people only when this is  
justified by evidence, and we will provide a framework  
for sanctioned persons to challenge their designations  
in a court. We will improve current practice where we  
can, using the greater flexibility we will have in future to  
provide guidance to UK businesses affected by sanctions  
and to grant licences to prevent sanctions from disrupting  
humanitarian operations. The Bill will ensure that the  
United Kingdom is ready, on exit day, to continue to

19 JULY 2017

927 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

play a leading role as a global foreign and security  
policy actor. It will allow us both to meet our international  
obligations and to support our own foreign policy and  
national security.

It is clear that sanctions are most effective when  
agreed multilaterally with our allies and partners around  
the world. The more countries acting in concert, the  
greater the impact of sanctions and the less scope there  
is for evasion or retaliatory measures. UN sanctions are  
therefore the gold standard, as they bind the entire  
international community. However, as we see in relation  
to Russia and Syria, we also need to be able to work  
with the EU, the US and Canada, and other allies to  
impose sanctions outside the UN framework.

We cannot say with complete certainty at this stage  
what the precise form of our future co-operation with  
the EU will be, and what that will look like after the  
UK's exit. That will depend on the wider negotiations  
on our future relationship in the field of foreign and  
security policy. However, as the Prime Minister and  
others have said, there is a clear mutual interest in a  
deep and special partnership. We remain committed to  
European security and to working with our EU allies to  
counter global threats that we all face. Sanctions are an  
important means to that end, and the international  
sanctions Bill will ensure that we retain the necessary  
powers.

I welcome today's debate as an important opportunity  
for Members across the House to feed into the vision  
for a global Britain, and to discuss how our sanctions  
regime will operate after we leave the European Union.

5.39 pm

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Sanctions  
are obviously an extremely important policy lever. People  
often think of sanctions as a modern policy instrument,  
but Thucydides mentions them as one of the instruments  
used against Megara in 432. Unfortunately, on that  
occasion they did not succeed in averting the Peloponnesian  
war. Sanctions are crucial nowadays, and it is vital that  
Ministers have the legal powers to implement sanctions  
policy in line with foreign policy objectives and  
responsibilities.

As the Minister has just said, the Government produced  
a consultation document on 21 April, and the deadline  
for people to respond was 23 June. The plan was originally  
that we would have a Bill before the summer recess, and  
I ask the Minister who will respond at the end of the  
debate: where is the Bill, and why have we not got it?

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** I may be able to help the hon. Lady. There was  
something called a general election that came along,  
and these things cannot be announced during purdah,  
so to have a proper response to the consultation, it is  
appropriate that we should prepare it during the coming  
few weeks and months. It would have been improper to  
have done so earlier.

**Helen Goodman:** I am not of course suggesting that  
the Bill should have been produced in the middle of the  
general election campaign, but it is quite clear that  
consultation responses were coming in during that period.  
As the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European  
Union said, officials have been looking at the responses.

Exiting the European Union: 928

Sanctions

This is another example of the chaos and confusion  
that is evident on the part of the Government in the  
whole Brexit process. We had another example of that  
on Monday, when, without any explanation, Ministers  
withdrew the motion on a unified patent court. Across  
the board, policy is not being processed sensibly. These  
are not pieces on a chess board, but important areas of  
policy responsibility.

The consultation paper said that the legal powers we  
need to maintain sanctions will be put in the Bill, but it  
will not look at the policy goals or at how we will align  
future UK sanctions with those imposed by the European  
Union. I can understand the first part, but I really want  
to learn from Ministers whether the second part can be  
true. For sanctions to be effective, they must obviously  
be co-ordinated with our partners. Surely the way we  
make decisions to initiate and review sanctions must be  
explicitly linked with the processes of our partners in  
the UN and the European Union.

Hitherto in the EU, sanctions have often related to  
upholding values set out in the common foreign and  
security policy, including human rights, democracy, good  
governance and the rule of law. These should continue  
to be the cornerstones of our policy post-Brexit. I  
would be grateful to the Minister for Europe and the  
Americas if he confirmed that. The European Council  
has hitherto adopted decisions, together with any necessary  
regulations, and set out the elements of each individual  
sanctions regime. A number of UK Departments—  
principally, the Home Office, the Treasury and the  
Department for International Trade—have then taken  
on the responsibility for implementation. Will Ministers  
explain which Department will take the lead in co-ordinating  
other Departments on future sanctions?

In 1998, the Labour Government carried out a wide-  
ranging review of UK sanctions policy. When reporting  
to Parliament on the outcome of that review, the then  
Government outlined the core principles of sanctions  
policy: sanctions should be targeted to hit the regime,  
rather than ordinary people; they should include exemptions  
to minimise the humanitarian impact on innocent civilians;  
they should have clear objectives, including well defined  
and realistic demands against which compliance can be  
judged, with a clear exit strategy; there should be effective  
arrangements for implementation and enforcement by  
all states, especially neighbouring countries; and sanctions  
should avoid unnecessary adverse impacts on UK economic  
and commercial interests. We believe that these principles  
remain appropriate, and I would like an assurance from  
Ministers that they take the same view.

In the consultation paper, the Government state:

“Primary legislation will create a framework containing powers  
to impose sanctions regimes, the details of which will be laid out  
in the secondary legislation”.

That is somewhat vague. We seem to be being presented  
with a number of Henry VIII powers. We would be  
grateful if Ministers could tell us what the supervision  
and accountability arrangements with Parliament will  
be.

Assuming that the Bill creates a broad framework,  
and given the importance of ensuring that individual  
sanctions regimes are carefully calibrated, we believe  
that there is a good case for saying that all secondary  
legislation imposing UK sanctions should be subject to  
the affirmative procedure. In other words, new sanctions  
or changes to sanctions should require a debate on the

19 JULY 2017

929 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

*[Helen Goodman]*

Floor of the House, rather than in Committee upstairs.  
That is the only mechanism that would provide the  
requisite parliamentary scrutiny and the opportunity  
for us to hold the Government to account.

We would also like to know what level of oversight  
will be built into the process of reviewing sanctions. The  
consultation paper says only that both

“UN and EU sanctions are subject to internal reviews. We  
propose a similar approach under our new legislation. Internal  
reviews by the Government could include periodic reviews of  
individual designations or of entire regimes.”

Obviously, sanctions regimes need to adapt to changing  
circumstances, so ongoing parliamentary scrutiny and  
independent oversight will always be necessary. We  
want Ministers to provide clarity on that, so that procedures  
for accountability and independent oversight are built  
into any new legislation. We would like the Government  
to publish an annual report on the implementation of  
the sanctions regime, and to give Parliament a role in  
periodic reviews of UK sanctions—for instance, by  
making the Government's annual report the subject of  
debates in both Houses—as well as a role in re-authorising  
ongoing sanctions on a yearly basis.

It is really difficult for a meaningful debate on this  
issue to take place until we have more clarity on the  
extent to which future UK-EU co-operation can take  
place, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North  
(Wes Streeting) has said. That is particularly true of  
decisions as to whether sanctions should be imposed in  
the first place. The case of Ukraine is a good example of  
why it will remain important for us to work with the EU  
in future. It serves as perhaps the most prominent recent  
reminder of how collectively imposed sanctions can still  
have a real impact outside the UN. Everybody knows  
that the UK played a key role in making the intellectual  
case for those sanctions, and that the UK undertook  
significant diplomatic efforts in the EU and at the G7.  
How will the Government ensure not just that UK-EU  
co-operation on sanctions continues after we leave the  
EU, but that we will maintain our ability to shape  
decisions on when the EU sanctions are imposed?  
*[Interruption.]* “We won't,” mumbles the Minister. We  
will hear whether, instead of mumbling on the Front  
Bench, he can answer those questions at the end of the  
debate.

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I hope that the hon. Lady will allow  
me to not mumble from the Dispatch Box. I was trying  
to alert her to the fact that most of those sanctions are  
imposed by the UN, to whose authority we are subject  
as a member.

**Helen Goodman:** As a matter of fact, the right hon.  
Gentleman's colleague, the Under-Secretary of State  
for Exiting the European Union, just said—I think this  
is right—that about half the sanctions in which we are  
involved are not subject to UN resolutions, but have  
come separately from the European Union. Given that  
the debate is about exiting the European Union and  
sanctions, it is reasonable to focus on the European  
angle.

The Government have set up their consultation and  
scheduled this debate, but they are not able to explain  
how in practice we will co-operate with our allies in the  
EU on issues such as intelligence sharing, policing and

Exiting the European Union: 930

Sanctions

judicial matters, and all the things that are needed to  
enforce compliance with sanctions regimes in an effective  
way. The lack of any plan is another example of the  
Government's recklessness in threatening to use security  
co-operation as a bargaining chip in the Brexit  
negotiations.The role of the financial sector is likely to  
be key in implementing any effective UK sanctions  
regime, particularly in terms of tackling money laundering  
and terrorist funding. The size of the City of London  
means that our role is vital. We have a record of leading  
in this area, although concerns remain about money  
laundering and sanctions evasion.

A critical question concerns the extent to which any  
new sanctions regime will be applied to the UK's overseas  
territories. Following the revelations of the Panama  
papers, it is clear that all the UK's overseas territories  
could play a part in tracking down and clamping down  
on illicit finance. That applies especially to the Cayman  
Islands and British Virgin Islands, which have faced  
heavy criticism in the past, but also to territories such as  
Bermuda that are responsible for their own legislation  
in this area.

What is the Government's assessment of whether  
sanctions are being adequately implemented and enforced  
in all UK overseas territories and Crown dependencies?  
Will the Channel Islands and Bermuda be responsible  
for their own legislation in this area under a new regime?  
What steps will the Government take to monitor  
implementation and enforcement in the overseas territories?  
Will they commit to reporting regularly to Parliament  
on this matter?

The question of sanctions is important and significant.  
It is a shame that we have not had more clarity from the  
Government today in the form of legislation, but I hope  
that when the Minister winds up the debate, he will be  
able to answer some of our questions.

5.51 pm

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch** (Saffron Walden) (Con): It is  
with humility and excitement that I make my maiden  
speech representing the constituency of Saffron Walden,  
the jewel of Essex. I am honoured to serve the people of  
this beautiful constituency and hope I can repay the  
faith they have placed in me.

I am also burdened by the weight of expectation. You  
see, Madam Deputy Speaker, Saffron Walden has not  
had a maiden speech since Rab Butler's in 1929. He held  
three of the great offices of state, but I am most proud  
that, as a Conservative Minister, he introduced the  
Education Act 1944, which gave every British child a  
statutory right to free secondary education.

I also pay tribute to my most recent predecessor, the  
right hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, who served Saffron  
Walden with distinction for 40 years. He is well known  
to many of us here as a former Deputy Speaker and one  
of the kindest Members to grace this House—the ultimate  
gentleman. He is much loved in the constituency, and  
I am forever grateful to him for being a brilliant mentor  
and helping every day of the campaign, come rain or  
shine. I am still bowled over whenever I remember that  
Sir Alan became a Member of Parliament 10 years  
before I was born. It has been a joy to follow in his  
footsteps—except when we were out delivering leaflets  
and I found myself consistently outrun by an 80-year-old  
man.

19 JULY 2017

931 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

Like you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am proud to be  
an Essex girl. Saffron Walden is a great place and was  
judged the best rural place to live by no less than the  
*Daily Mail*. After seven years of Conservative-led  
Government, unemployment is at an all-time low of  
0.7%, and 99% of children go to a good or outstanding  
primary or secondary school. We also boast the UK's  
oldest land college in Writtle.

The constituency covers rural Chelmsford and the  
major settlements of Thaxted, Great Dunmow and the  
medieval market town of Saffron Walden itself. It was  
called Saffron Walden because of its large saffron crop.  
The spice was worth its weight in gold and was used in  
medicine, in perfume and even as an aphrodisiac. Like  
the saffron crocus, I am not a native of the great county  
of Essex—I come from more exotic climes. While I may  
not have all the attributes of this versatile flower, I hope  
that I will equally take root in the area, bring prosperity  
to the local people and add some colour and spice to  
this Chamber.

Much has changed since then, but more change is  
needed—change to the rickety network on which mobile  
phones operate, change to the inadequate broadband  
service that has left parts of the constituency with little  
access to the outside world, and change to the railway  
line that has become synonymous with being late for  
work. We cannot claim to offer opportunities to rural  
areas if basic infrastructure is not provided. My constituents  
are more likely to get to Spain faster than London,  
because we have Stansted, the country's fourth-largest  
airport. It has brought jobs—and noise—and growth to  
the area on a huge scale, and has cemented my  
constituency's position as the epicentre of business,  
travel and wealth in Essex.

I am often inexplicably confused with a member of  
the Labour party—I cannot think why. I am a Conservative.  
To all intents and purposes, I am a first-generation  
immigrant. I was born in Wimbledon, but I grew up in  
Nigeria. I chose to make the United Kingdom my  
home. Growing up in Nigeria I saw real poverty—I  
experienced it, including living without electricity and  
doing my homework by candlelight, because the state  
electricity board could not provide power, and fetching  
water in heavy, rusty buckets from a borehole a mile  
away, because the nationalised water company could  
not get water out of the taps. Unlike many colleagues  
born since 1980, I was unlucky enough to live under  
socialist policies. It is not something I would wish on  
anyone, and it is just one of the reasons why I am a  
Conservative. I believe that the state should provide  
social security, but it must also provide a means for  
people to lift themselves out of poverty.

As a woman of African origin, I also believe that  
there is a lot that Africa can teach us. Sound money is  
not just a catchy phrase. The lesson of Zimbabwe is  
salient for us today. Money cannot be printed and  
redistribution cannot be successful without first creating  
wealth. Edmund Burke said that society is a contract  
between the dead, the living and those yet to be born. I  
say to colleagues who are wavering on tackling the debt  
and the deficit, “Hold your nerve.” This is part of that  
contract that we owe to our descendants. To leave our  
children carrying the burdens of our debt and excesses  
is morally wrong.

I believe in free markets and free trade. But there is  
more to conservatism than economic liberalism—there  
is respect for the rule of law; personal responsibility;

Exiting the European Union: 932

Sanctions

freedom of speech and of association; and opportunity  
through meritocracy. Those freedoms are being subtly  
eroded in an era when emotion and feeling are prized  
above reason and logic. It is those freedoms that I will  
seek to defend during my time in this House.

There are few countries in the world where you can  
go in one generation from immigrant to parliamentarian.  
Michael Howard spoke of the British dream—people  
choosing this country because of its tolerance and its  
opportunity. It is a land where a girl from Nigeria can  
move, aged 16, be accepted as British and have the great  
honour of representing Saffron Walden.

There are some in this country, and this Chamber,  
who seek to denigrate the traditions of this Parliament,  
portraying this House as a bastion of privilege and  
class, that “reeks of the establishment”, as someone  
said. It is no coincidence that those who seek to undermine  
the institutions of this island—Parliament, monarchy,  
Church and family—also propagate a world view that  
sees Britain, and the values we hold dear, as a force for  
bad in the world. Growing up in Nigeria, the view was  
rather different. The UK was a beacon, a shining light,  
a promise of a better life.

Often we hear the radical reformer John Bright misquoted  
as saying that the House of Commons is the mother of  
all Parliaments. What he actually said was that this  
country is the mother of all Parliaments. Our political  
institutions may not always be held in high esteem, but I  
believe that politics is a mirror held up to society. Yes, it  
can sometimes be unedifying. Yes, we see human weakness  
on display. But it also embodies much that is great in  
our country. When I walk down these corridors and  
stand in this Chamber, once graced by my heroes,  
Winston Churchill, Airey Neave and Margaret Thatcher,  
I am filled with nothing but awe, respect and pride for  
all that it stands for.

As Woody Allen said about sex, “If it's not messy,  
you're not doing it right.” The same is true of democracy.  
It is not always predictable; its results are not always  
elegant; it can throw up results that no one expected—but  
we adjust. The British Parliament always has adjusted,  
and that is why it is the oldest in the world: it takes its  
lead from the British people.

We live in difficult times and face historic challenges.  
People are rightly concerned about what Brexit will  
mean for the country, for their jobs and for their families.  
But I do not believe that winter is coming. I believe that  
the vote for Brexit was the greatest ever vote of confidence  
in the project of the United Kingdom: that vision of a  
global Britain to which the Minister referred. It is a  
project that, as a young African girl, I dreamed about  
becoming part of. As a British woman, I now have the  
great honour of delivering that project for my constituents  
in the greatest Parliament on earth.

6pm

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I warmly welcome  
the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mrs Badenoch).  
She made a fantastic maiden speech, and she is a great  
credit to her community. Her speech was delivered with  
verve and class, and a good deal of wit. While I may not  
have agreed with everything she said, I am sure that her  
contributions will be very welcome to the Chamber.

The world looks at the United Kingdom as the Brexit  
negotiations develop, to see how we will manage the  
situation in which we find ourselves, and what kind of

19 JULY 2017

933 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

*[Hannah Bardell]*relationship we plan to have with the European Union  
and, indeed, the rest of the world. Given that the UK is  
without a coherent strategy and seemingly bereft of  
ideas—and, as we have seen in recent photos, notes—I  
suspect that the external image of how things are going  
is not entirely positive. Our international reputation is  
on the line. SNP Members, however, welcome the  
opportunity to debate the real impact that leaving the  
EU will have on our international influence and clout.

There is a risk that after leaving the EU, the UK will  
be marginalised and diminished on the international  
stage. I know that no one in the Chamber wants that to  
happen, but there will inevitably be a reduction in our  
ability—if not a complete loss of ability—to impose  
meaningful sanctions on our own, or to make any  
meaningful contribution to a progressive international  
agenda. One of the Government's own colleagues, the  
former Foreign Secretary, has called for the UK to keep  
its seat on the EU's Political and Security Committee. I  
hope that the Secretary of State and his fellow Ministers  
will enlighten us as to whether he agrees with his  
colleague.

As has already been pointed out, sanctions rarely  
operate effectively in isolation. Success depends on a  
combination of dialogue, agreement and conflict prevention  
between various countries. Clearly, working with the  
EU presents a broader range of tools than would be  
available to the UK when operating alone. Giving up  
our seat at the sanctions table will see the UK lose the  
ability to apply sanctions with the same breadth and  
weight. It will also lose access to key forums through  
which to push for ongoing momentum and accord  
among fellow EU member states. There must not be any  
serious divergence from EU partners in respect of sanctions.  
The UK must not relax any sanctions that are materially  
more restrictive than existing or new EU sanctions,  
especially when the UK has significant trade with a  
particular country.

Many have expressed fears that the UK may be  
dragged on to the new United States President's rather  
unpredictable turf. For example, as President-Elect he  
severely criticised the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action  
with Iran. If he were to impose new sanctions on Iran,  
there might be pressure on the UK—and our “special  
relationship”—to follow suit. The new President has  
also indicated that the US would ease sanctions on  
Russia. The EU's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini,  
has indicated that the EU will not change its policy on  
Russia, even if the US does. The UK must do likewise.  
Leaning more closely towards an Administration led by  
Donald Trump creates concern for many. We must hear  
from the Government that they will continue to take  
their international obligations seriously, keeping fairness  
and decency at the heart of any new trade deals and  
sanctions policies.

As the largest trade bloc in the world, the biggest  
global aid donor and a notable international investor,  
the EU adds weight to the UK's foreign and security  
policy efforts. Commenting on the possible impact of  
Brexit on the EU's own sanctions policy, Dr Erica  
Moret at the Graduate Institute of International and  
Development Studies in Geneva recently said:

“A Brexit-weakened EU sanctions policy is likely to intensify  
the need to employ other, more expensive, controversial or complicated  
forms of diplomacy, coercion or pressure. It will also likely

Exiting the European Union: 934

Sanctions

strengthen Russia's hand against Europe, as it benefits from a  
fragmented Europe with a weaker toolbox of security instruments  
at its disposal.”

Those comments are deeply concerning and should  
worry us all.

Indeed, a Foreign Affairs Committee report said that  
the United Kingdom's relations with Russia gave an  
interesting insight into trouble ahead for the UK acting  
alone on sanctions. The report concluded that

“it will be increasingly difficult to sustain a united western position  
on sanctions, not least if they become a bargaining point during  
Brexit negotiations.”

Our worry is that there is everything to play for, but also  
everything to lose.

We should all be concerned, because our international  
role and responsibilities extend much further than just  
Russia. On 4 April, the latest in a series of barbaric  
chemical weapons attacks took place in Khan Shaykhun  
in Syria. More than 80 people were killed and estimates  
suggest more than 500 were injured. Just this week in  
Brussels the UK was able to play a central role in  
imposing sanctions against those involved in that horrific  
attack. The EU's Foreign Affairs Council agreed on  
Monday that 16 individuals will be sanctioned, their  
movements restricted and their assets frozen. But after  
Brexit the UK will be diminished and we will have no  
clout to impose meaningful sanctions, resulting in the  
UK losing its opportunity to contribute to a progressive  
international agenda.

After Brexit the UK will need to establish the necessary  
independent policy development and sanctions design  
architecture, for which it has mostly relied on Brussels  
until now.

**Chuka Umunna** (Streatham) (Lab): The hon. Lady is  
making some important points, but does this not underline  
the arguments she is making about the complexity of  
imposing travel bans, asset freezes and so forth, and  
stopping those who are the target of sanctions? Does  
this not underline the argument for a proper transition  
period in respect of our withdrawal? The suite of  
instruments the hon. Lady refers to are complex in  
nature, not least legislatively. I do not see how we are  
going to be able to complete the process of putting in  
place a framework that we can apply independently in  
the tiny timescale that we have before our scheduled exit  
from the EU.

**Hannah Bardell:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
and think he may have been reading my mind, as will  
become clear from my next point.

If the UK Government cannot agree among themselves  
on a transition policy for Brexit and a deal, as we have  
seen this week with the vastly differing approaches of  
the Chancellor and the International Trade Secretary, I  
and others seriously doubt their capacity to design  
sanctions architecture, let alone agree on what and  
where those sanctions should be imposed. And even if  
they do, the effectiveness of UK-only applied sanctions  
will be severely diminished.

The UK Government's own White Paper sets out, in  
pretty stark language:

“The UK needs to be able to impose and implement sanctions  
in order to comply with our obligations under the United Nations  
(UN) Charter and to support our wider foreign policy and  
national security goals. Many of our current powers flow from

936

935

*Exiting the European Union:  
Sanctions*

the European Communities Act 1972 so we will need new legal  
powers to replace these...It is not possible to achieve this through  
the Great Repeal Bill, as preserving or freezing sanctions would  
notprovidethepowersnecessarytoupdate,amendorliftsanctions  
in response to fast moving events.”

And events are moving fast; we have a short period, so  
the Government need to think very carefully and give us  
a response on that transition period.

Any new legislation must be clear about how these  
powers will be developed and implemented and, further,  
what infrastructure and regulation will look like to  
support those new powers. Additionally, the Law Society  
of Scotland has raised a number of pertinent points in  
relation to the UK Government's White Paper. These  
points are significant because they highlight the  
complexity—as the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka  
Umunna) has just said—and scale of the task at hand,  
not to mention just how many sectors and areas of  
competence will be impacted by exiting the EU, and the  
need for a new set of rules and regulations. It is clear  
that lawyers, accountants and consultants will be very  
busy over the next few years—and, no doubt, considerably  
richer. But what estimate have the Government made of  
the cost of training lawyers and accountants to deal  
with the new laws and regulations, and what provision  
has been considered for the teaching of the new regulations  
and laws at our universities, colleges and institutions?  
We need a workforce that will be ready to go when those  
new provisions arrive.

An interesting point about cross-border jurisdiction  
also arises on page 23 of the Government's White  
Paper. The Law Society of Scotland is very concerned  
about this. The White Paper identifies special advocates  
as

“barristers in independent practice of the highest integrity, experience  
and ability, from civil and criminal practices. They are bound by  
the ethical standards of the Bar Council.”

I know that many in the profession would like clarity  
and assurances that special advocates should be able to  
be drawn from the ranks of not only the Bar in England  
and Wales but the Bar in Scotland and Northern Ireland,  
and from suitably qualified solicitor advocates in all  
those jurisdictions, but it appears that the UK Government  
have again—whether by accident or intent—failed to  
recognise at the most fundamental level that the devolved  
nations exist.

According to the Law Society of Scotland, the  
Government's proposed additional power to seize funds  
and assets in order to freeze them appears to be unrelated  
to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. This therefore  
seems like a curious thing to sneak in. Will the Secretary  
of State clarify why this has appeared at this juncture?  
It concerns me and, I am sure, others that the UK  
Government would introduce new legislation that is  
potentially unrelated to the UK exiting the EU. This is  
not good practice, and we need to understand the  
rationale behind it. It is clear that the UK Government  
are going to have very little, if any, time in which to do  
their day job as they deal with the enormity of Brexit,  
but they have some serious questions to answer on how  
they will manage and develop their sanctions policy. It  
is key to our reputation on the global stage, and to how  
we will work with the rest of the world.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** I call  
Mr Andrew Lewer to make his maiden speech.

19 JULY 2017

Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

6.11 pm

**Andrew Lewer** (Northampton South) (Con): Thank  
you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank the hon. Member  
for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) for her speech. It was  
comprehensive, but rather different in its thrust from  
mine. I must not pass up the opportunity to congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden  
(Mrs Badenoch) on her excellent speech and to refer to  
the really great camaraderie that she and I and the rest  
of our intake have enjoyed. I am particularly fond of  
Saffron Walden as it is where my mother went to  
college. In fact, Rab Butler cut the ribbon at the opening  
of her college in 1965. I hope she does not get annoyed  
with me for mentioning the date.

I am truly honoured to have been chosen as the  
Member of Parliament for Northampton South. I have  
big boots to fill, in a town that is rich with an industrial  
history of manufacturing boots and shoes. There is not  
a place in the world where a British man or woman has  
not left their footprint with a Northampton boot or  
shoe, whether in a jungle or a desert, or on a mountain  
or a snow-laden plain. In 1830, there were 40 shoe and  
boot manufacturers in Northampton, and they employed  
a third of all the men in the town. That does not include  
the ancillary industries; they were employed in actually  
making the boots and shoes. The fortunes of the town's  
shoe and boot industry have risen, fallen and risen  
again. Although we are now left with only a handful of  
shoe manufacturers, they produce some of the most  
exclusive and desirable handmade shoes in the world.

My upbringing, most particularly at Queen Elizabeth's  
Grammar School in Ashbourne, taught me the value  
of tradition. Thus—and staying with the metaphor of  
footprints—I would like to acknowledge the work of  
the former Member for Northampton South, Mr David  
Mackintosh. Although his tenure was short, his impact  
and the footprint of his public service to this House and  
to his constituents were significant. When I recently  
visited the Hope Centre, a local homelessness and anti-  
poverty charity in Northampton, I learned that he was  
held in high regard there for helping to push through  
the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and for his local  
work on combating homelessness.

The Northampton South seat was established in 1974,  
and those who represented the constituency are still  
making their footprints on public life to this day. Lord  
Naseby sits in the other place and still has an involvement  
in local public life through his work with Northamptonshire  
county cricket club. Mr Tony Clarke, who succeeded  
Lord Naseby in 1997, was a passionate public servant  
and continues to be so today by educating the young  
adults of the town in the local further education college.  
Then there was Mr Brian Binley, who is well known to  
many here and still centrally involved with the regeneration  
programme, Northampton Alive.

Charles Bradlaugh, whose bust I walked past today,  
was a particularly famous Northampton MP. He was a  
radical, and I came across him many years ago when I  
was doing postgraduate research—he and Charles  
Newdigate Newdegate had some enormous debates across  
the House about the difference between taking an oath  
and taking an affirmation. Previous Northampton MP  
Spencer Perceval is also well known in this Chamber. It  
is interesting that speeches made about him in previous  
years referred quite light-heartedly to his fate. In more  
recent years, of course, that has changed significantly.

19 JULY 2017

937 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

*[Andrew Lewer]*

When we think of Spencer Perceval now, we think of  
much more recent and tragic events, and about the  
continuity of the risks that people run when they enter  
public service.

Francis Crick, who—with James Watson—co-discovered  
DNA, which is now the driving force of so many  
scientific breakthroughs and discoveries, was from  
Northampton, but there are also less well-known people,  
such as Walter Tull, who played for Northampton  
Town football club and then for Spurs. He was the  
British Army's first black officer; he fought in the first  
world war but, after an incredible war record, alas he  
was killed in 1918. Margaret Bondfield, the first ever  
female Cabinet member, briefly served as MP for  
Northampton, so there are big shoes to fill indeed.

The constituency of Northampton South is the home  
of Cosworth, Travis Perkins, Barclaycard and Carlsberg.  
Those are prestigious brands and significant employers  
for the area, but I draw colleagues' attention to another  
business. Under the shadow of the Carlsberg plant is  
the Phipps brewery, which was recently re-established  
after years of dormancy—and a welcome return it is.  
Pickering Phipps II served as the Member of Parliament  
for Northampton from 1874 to 1880. In many ways, his  
brewery and Northampton—because of the tannins  
involved in shoe manufacturing—was responsible for  
the revival of recipes that gave birth to the real ale  
movement, which has been going from strength to  
strength since the 1970s.

Northampton is one of the fastest-growing towns in  
the country, and has been for decades—I noticed that  
all my predecessors made reference to that fact in their  
maiden speeches. As I will, they referred to the pressures  
on public services, challenges for the high street and the  
major issue of housing. With the Deputy Leader of the  
House of Commons, my hon. Friend the Member for  
Northampton North (Michael Ellis), I will be campaigning  
for new and better facilities for Northampton General  
Hospital to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding  
town. We need more housing, better transport infrastructure  
and a more focused regeneration effort. As championed  
by Northampton Borough Council and the county  
council, we need an emphasis on culture and heritage to  
bring new vitality to Northampton town centre.

I hope my time as a county council leader myself will  
be helpful for all that, but—and here is a link to the  
debate topic—just over a month ago I was a Member of  
the European Parliament in Brussels. I have been told—I  
keep saying it and no one has contradicted me yet—that  
I am the only person ever to have served as a council  
leader, a Member of the European Parliament and an  
MP. As an MEP, I specialised in culture, education and  
regional development and fought for things that matter  
to me, such as the possible continuation of the Erasmus+  
programme, or the introduction of a home-grown successor  
if not.

**Helen Goodman:** A very good idea!

**Andrew Lewer:** I do not know whether that is in  
reference to Erasmus+ or the home-grown successor—don't  
answer that!

As an MEP, I also spent quite a lot of time working  
on the revision of the audiovisual media services directive,  
making the case for avoiding the unnecessary burden of

Exiting the European Union: 938

Sanctions

over-regulation while protecting freedom of speech. I  
was also particularly interested in religious freedom and  
highlighted the case of Asia Bibi, who lives under a  
death sentence for blasphemy in Pakistan. I hope in this  
place to continue the work I was involved in to try to  
save her from the terrible situation she is in.

I was a reluctant leaver, but I still believe it is the right  
choice for the UK. In many ways, the complexity of  
leaving, which we are discussing tonight, simply underlines  
how much of our sovereignty we had lost and reminds  
us all that our work here is about not only getting a  
good deal as we leave but being ready to innovate in  
policy areas that this House has not had the lead on, or  
even much of a say about, for many years. Trade,  
environment and agriculture are not just something on  
which we will get a deal, but something on which we will  
need to work and innovate for ourselves henceforth.

Finally, let me go back to the tradition of describing  
one's constituency as the most beautiful. Northampton  
certainly does have some beautiful buildings. It has a  
fascinating history, notably in the medieval period. It is  
my non-conformist and Methodist roots coming out  
when I say that much of its beauty lies in its industriousness,  
and that much of what makes the country as a whole  
great is to be found there. Much of what will challenge  
us as politicians in the years ahead can also be found  
there within its boundaries.

6.20 pm

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): It is a great pleasure to follow two such excellent  
maiden speeches. I congratulate the hon. Member for  
Saffron Walden (Mrs Badenoch) on her speech. We  
share a background and a love for the London Assembly,  
of which we have both been members, and for Nigeria; I  
sense that she shares not just my love for it, but my  
frustration that that wonderful country still faces so  
many challenges. I look forward to working with her  
over the coming years. I also congratulate the hon.  
Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer) on  
his speech. He has described his interesting and illustrious  
predecessors, but his track record, both in Europe and  
as an excellent council leader, augurs well for his future  
here. I am sure that he will be named similarly in future  
maiden speeches. I welcome them both to this place.

Today, we are here to focus on exiting the European  
Union and sanctions. I want to discuss both those  
things—together and slightly separately—because they  
are very connected. I reiterate the comment made by my  
hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen  
Goodman), which is: where is the Bill, Minister? We  
have already seen the publication of the grand repeal  
Bill, but this Bill has a pretty important connection  
with that. We cannot do the one without the other, and  
it really sums up, as the hon. Member for Livingston  
(Hannah Bardell) said, the challenges of how we timetable  
and deliver on this hugely challenging programme for  
our Parliament over the next 20 months. The Minister's  
response to that from the Dispatch Box underlines the  
lack of planning that we have seen on the Public Accounts  
Committee, which I have had the privilege of chairing  
for the past two years, where we have repeatedly heard  
examples from permanent secretaries about the lack of  
planning—a deliberate policy.

For example, on 7 July, the permanent secretary to  
the Treasury confirmed, when questioned, that the Prime

19 JULY 2017

939 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

Minister had said at several points that the civil service  
was not, as a whole, preparing for Brexit. On 13 July,  
Sir Martin Donnelly, the permanent secretary to the  
then Department for Business, Innovation and Skills,  
said:

“We were following the guidance given by Ministers, which  
was not to make contingency plans for this outcome.”

On 26 October, we heard from Jon Thompson, the  
permanent secretary and chief executive of Her Majesty's  
Revenue and Customs, of the eight serious areas that  
his Department has to consider now that Brexit is a  
reality. I will not run through them all, because it is not  
the main point of the debate, but let me just mention  
customs. He said that,

“we run £40 billion-worth of the benefits system in tax credits  
and child benefit. there is excise and the decisions to be made  
there. there is VAT. and the question of what difference this  
would make to direct taxes and state aid.”

He went on to list other big concerns.

Let me take HMRC as an example of the challenges  
that this Government, this Parliament and this country  
face as we move to leaving the European Union over the  
next 20 months. That Department is already going  
through huge change in its estate management, in its IT  
and in the way that it tackles and deals with taxes.

We all know that it takes about 18 months on a fair  
wind to make a major change to the tax system, which  
is why budgets are planned some time in advance for  
those technical points, and yet the permanent secretary  
and the chief executive of HMRC has listed to our  
Committee and to this House eight other serious areas  
of concern—more than one Government Department  
can realistically manage—and that is just one Department.  
I have to say that that permanent secretary was the only  
one who actually had a long list. Other Departments—I  
willnot name them all—mentioned the discussions they  
were having, but nothing really concrete about how  
they were planning to implement our exit from the  
European Union.

**Hannah Bardell:** The hon. Lady is making some  
pertinent points about HMRC and the challenges of  
the customs system going through a transitional phase  
when it is already creaking under the pressure. Does she  
not also share my concern that in constituencies such as  
mine in Livingston, a high proportion of staff who are  
highly skilled in such systems and processes will be lost  
because of the transition the Government are going  
through? If we put Brexit on top of that, it becomes a  
perfect storm that is about to hit us.

**Meg Hillier:** The hon. Lady makes an important  
point. If we add on the other changes in Government  
Departments—the DWP is going through some changes  
of property and where jobs might be—that poses a  
challenge. We face a challenge with skills in this country  
anyway, and we can add to that our exit from the  
European Union and the fact that we have so many  
unanswered questions about what will happen to EU  
citizens residing in the UK and others who need to  
come here. We heard only the other day that the NHS  
needs to bring in a large number of GPs from the  
European Union because we are unable to recruit in  
this country. Whatever one might have thought of these  
policies before, we are now seeing skilled people who  
are potentially unable to move to new locations and we

Exiting the European Union: 940

Sanctions

do not yet have a skills strategy to fill not just those gaps  
but the others we might see as we leave the EU. A  
perfect storm is perhaps a polite way of putting it; I  
could think of fruitier ways of describing it, but I will  
leave the fruity conversation to the hon. Member for  
Saffron Walden, who stretched the boundaries further  
than I will on this occasion.

I will not list every Department and its problems, but  
we have a long list if other hon. Members are interested  
in seeing it, given the challenges that each Department  
faces in its exit from the EU, the lack of planning, and  
the lack of joined-upness across Government. A problem  
in one Department, such as HMRC, will have knock-on  
effects in another, such as the Department for International  
Trade. We cannot see these things in isolation and there  
is not yet a coherent plan.

I hope that when he sums up the Minister can reassure  
me that what I am saying is not true, but the evidence we  
have seen in Committee suggests that this is the reality.  
As I have said, senior civil servants acknowledged that  
they were told very definitely not to plan for the leave  
scenario, which has put us very much on the back foot.

**Chuka Umunna:** Does my hon. Friend agree that this  
reinforces the need for proper transitional arrangements?  
We are talking not only about the time that will be  
necessary. It seems to me that all the points she has just  
made are an argument for this country remaining part  
of the customs union and part of the EEA—the single  
market—at least in the interim, as we make our way out  
of the European Union.

**Meg Hillier:** My hon. Friend raises an important  
point. As we approach the summer recess—with only  
one Bill published for our exit from the EU, with no  
serious plans on the table, and with it becoming apparent  
that when we come back in the autumn we will not get  
going seriously until October—we are getting to a point  
at which we will not even have 18 months to get this  
show on the road. I am assuming and hoping that  
Ministers will work 24/7 over the summer to get us to a  
better place, but even then the timetabling of business  
through this House means that practically—whatever  
one's philosophical view—this cannot be done in time.

I am not saying this because I am a remoaner or a  
doomsayer. I might have been very positive about wanting  
to stay in the EU, as was my constituency, but let us be  
practical about the reality. The delay in delivering the  
sanctions Bill is another of the many concerns.

It is important that I highlight the concerns of many  
of my constituents who are EU citizens about the  
uncertainty they are still facing. Even now people are  
phoning me or coming up to me in the street in tears  
because of their concerns about their future. We have  
heard some degree of certainty from the Prime Minister:  
she has told us that there will be a mechanism for those  
people already living here who are EU citizens to regularise  
their stay, but that will not be published until the end of  
2018 and there is still no certainty about the costs.

I was a Home Office Minister, and much as I like to  
gloss the previous Labour Government as one of the  
best we have ever had, the reality is that the Home  
Office—then and now—faces huge challenges in the  
number of people going through its immigration system.  
I grappled with that as a Minister, and I did not solve it.  
We grapple with it as Back Benchers. I certainly do in

942

941

*Exiting the European Union:  
Sanctions*

*[Meg Hillier]*

my constituency, where I have a high number of people  
going through the system. The idea that, between the  
end of next year and when we leave, all those who so  
wish will be able to go through a regularisation process  
is cloud cuckoo land. It is not surprising that those who  
can afford it are going through the long-winded process  
of regularising their stay, getting residency and applying  
for citizenship.

I spoke at the weekend to a constituent, an international  
banker who has children. It costs £300 to reach the first  
hurdle in the legal process. She told me, “If I'm not  
wanted here I might just leave.” For her, leaving is a real  
option as she could get a good job elsewhere. Other  
good, skilled people who have given up their lives in  
other countries to work in the UK and pay taxes feel  
like turning their back on us. Some who have been  
settled in the UK for 15 or 20 years, whose children  
have grown up here, are very concerned about what the  
future means for them. Despite the Prime Minister  
giving some words of comfort—late in the day, and I do  
not know why this could not have been dealt with  
before—we need to resolve this sooner rather than later.

Sanctions are the main thrust of the debate. I am  
strongly of the view that UK-EU co-operation needs to  
be maintained. I say that not because I am trying to  
rewind the clock on the referendum—much though this  
is not where I wanted us to be—but because of a simple  
question: where would we have differed from the EU on  
sanctions? There are issues with money laundering and  
our approach to big international questions such as  
freezing assets across boundaries, travel bans, trade,  
and market restrictions, which are but a small part of  
that approach.

The timetabling of a sanctions Bill to fit with the  
great repeal Bill is another practical problem. For three  
years, on behalf of the British Government, I negotiated  
home affairs at the table in Europe with 27 member  
states. It took long enough to reach agreement but it  
was possible. However, trying to enact our Bill and  
align us, where we would normally agree with our  
European counterparts, will be incredibly challenging.  
It will be difficult, at this pace, to write that into law.

We must be frank: this House is not very good at  
legislating. The Government draft legislation—often in  
a hurry, and quite a lot will now be written in a  
hurry—the House has little chance seriously to amend  
it but must instead pick on the bits we can most likely  
amend, and as a result it often does not hang together  
very well. We legislate in haste and repent at leisure,  
taking a long time to unpick things. That is not true in  
every case, but as Ministers or Back Benchers dealing  
with our constituents' problems we have seen it often.

Would the UK seriously go it alone? No, I think we  
would not, and I hope the Minister will be clear on that.  
Why do we not find a way of maintaining the status  
quo, for a transitional period at least? I fear how the Bill  
will fit in when it eventually comes before the House.

I have some simple questions for the Minister. How  
do the Government intend to timetable the repeal Bill  
and the future sanctions Bill, ensuring that they can  
work together and there is no contradiction? It would  
be crazy if we ended up legislating on two separate  
issues related to Europe, only to find that they do not  
work together.

19 JULY 2017

Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

6.33 pm

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am grateful for the  
opportunity to contribute to the debate. I add my  
congratulations and best wishes to the hon. Members  
for Saffron Walden (Mrs Badenoch) and for Northampton  
South (Andrew Lewer) on their maiden speeches. They  
spoke with enormous passion, and although their speeches  
were very different in style no one can question their  
commitment to their constituents. I welcome both of  
them to the House. I thought the Woody Allen quote  
was a reference to my attempts at cooking, but perhaps  
that says something about my sheltered upbringing.

Three different things could happen when the United  
Kingdom is no longer automatically bound by European  
Union decisions on sanctions. We can attempt to impose  
sanctions where the EU does not do so, but that will be  
a waste of time because no one will pay any attention.  
We can choose not to impose sanctions where the EU  
does so, but that will probably lead to our dealing with  
some very dodgy characters on the world stage. The  
most likely outcome, however, is that we shall allow the  
EU to take its decisions without any UK input and  
tamely and obediently follow suit. Even that is not  
without its risks.

I am hoping that when he sums up the Minister will  
tell us what assessment has been made of the legal risk  
of the United Kingdom imposing, on its own, sanctions  
that have also been imposed by the European Union. It  
seems to me that an aggrieved party who might be put  
off from taking on the European Union in the courts  
might see an individual stand-alone legislator as a softer  
target. What assessment has been made of the risk that  
the United Kingdom will find itself as the fall guy—being  
sued in the courts every time the European Union does  
something that the bully boys of corporate business do  
not want to take on the EU about? They might happily  
have a pop at one wee tiny island in the north Atlantic.

In his opening remarks, the Minister said that we  
wanted to work with other countries as well as the EU.  
He specifically mentioned the United States of America.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Hannah  
Bardell) has already raised some of the alarms on that.  
We have recently discovered that the President held a  
secret, unlimited, unrecorded meeting with Vladimir  
Putin at the G20. We do not know whether that was in  
the context of a possible trade deal or state visit—maybe  
the President just wanted to catch up with his unofficial  
election agent.

What happens if those talks, which were not talks,  
were about the United States being willing to ease or  
break sanctions against Russia? Where would that leave  
the United Kingdom? Our bestest pal ever across the  
Atlantic says, “Trade with Putin!” The European Union  
says no and our conscience has to say no. Can the  
Minister give an assurance that regardless of what crazy  
crackpot scheme Trump and Putin cook up between  
themselves, until the Russians have returned every last  
square inch of Ukrainian territory into the hands of the  
people and elected Government of Ukraine, there will  
be no lessening of sanctions by the United Kingdom  
unless that has been agreed by the entire European  
Union?

Another concern would be if the UK decided to  
impose sanctions but nobody else did. We have to  
remind ourselves that the United Kingdom is no longer  
a colonial power; the sun sets every day on the British

19 JULY 2017

943 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

empire, which does not extend any further than the  
British isles. There is a real danger that, to prove some  
kind of political machismo, the United Kingdom will  
attempt to impose sanctions on countries for whatever  
reason and nobody else does. I was going to say that we  
would be made to look like a laughing stock, but it is a  
bit too late for that.

Can the Minister name a single example of a country  
where unilateral sanctions imposed by the United Kingdom  
would make a blind bit of difference? It seems to me  
that we are frantically, with a huge amount of hassle,  
taking back control of something. Attempting to exercise  
that control unilaterally and in an isolationist manner  
will achieve absolutely nothing, but it will incur significant  
expense and legal risk for the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston raised  
some of the comments made by the Law Society of  
Scotland. One of the things that it has identified is what  
would happen if the United Kingdom wanted to start,  
on its own, imposing sanctions on countries believed to  
be sponsoring terrorism—I will not mention the secret  
report on Saudi Arabia that the Government appear to  
have commissioned but now will not tell anybody about.  
Of course, there is no suggestion at all that the Saudi  
Arabian Government are involved in anything unlawful  
in Yemen or anywhere else. How could anyone possibly  
suggest that?

What steps are the Government taking to arrive at a  
legally sound definition of what a terrorist-supporting  
state actually is? If that is not clear at the beginning, the  
door is again open for us to be sued by any aggrieved  
party. I am reminded that one of the very few countries  
that Gordon Brown, the previous Prime Minister, used  
anti-terrorism legislation against was Iceland. That shows  
what can happen if a definition of terrorism is a bit too  
vague. I have never known Iceland to sponsor state  
terrorism, but Mr Brown apparently thought that it did.

I understand the need for the Government to talk  
positively and bullishly about every single aspect of  
Brexit, despite the fact that the majority of their own  
party voted against it in the referendum, but we need to  
be realistic. We need to be alert to the fact that the  
United Kingdom's trading position and international  
reputation could be at risk and its economy severely  
damaged.

The Minister chose not to name a single example of  
EU sanctions that the Government would want to lift  
or of where the United Kingdom would want to impose  
sanctions that have not already been imposed by the  
European Union. This appears to be yet another example  
of where the desperation to take back control has come  
before any sensible, intelligent consideration about whether  
in some cases control is better exercised by 28 nations  
acting together than by one tiny little island in the north  
Atlantic that thinks it can do it all by itself.

6.39 pm

**Jenny Chapman** (Darlington) (Lab): It is my first  
opportunity to welcome you to your new seat in the  
Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker; it is great to see you  
there.

We have had a useful and informative debate this  
afternoon, although it has been slightly shorter than we  
anticipated because of other important debates. There  
have been some helpful contributions from across the

Exiting the European Union: 944

Sanctions

House, including the maiden speech of the hon. Member  
for Saffron Walden (Mrs Badenoch), who likened herself  
to her constituency's namesake, spice. I am certain that  
she has a wonderful future ahead of her in this House  
and that her constituents will be, rightly, proud of her  
today. The hon. Member for Northampton South (Andrew  
Lewer) spoke of his pride in his constituency's boot-making  
heritage. His affection for his constituency was obvious  
and it was a treat to be in the Chamber to hear his  
maiden speech. Well done. I welcome both hon. Members  
to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney South and  
Shoreditch (Meg Hillier) spoke of the need for transitional  
arrangements. Surely this argument is all but over.  
There will be a transitional period, and I look forward  
to the day when a Minister stands at the Dispatch Box  
and tells us what we all now know to be inevitable.

The debate has been helpful in that it follows the  
White Paper on international sanctions published in  
April, and precedes the introduction of the Bill. Are the  
Government considering adopting a similar approach  
to the other Brexit-related Bills announced in the Queen's  
Speech? My hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland  
(Helen Goodman) asked: where is the Bill? But perhaps  
this new approach is a welcome sign of a new and  
collaborative approach from the Government. Ensuring  
that Parliament has a sufficient grip on the Brexit  
process is important to the Labour party and to the  
country.

Many of our constituents voted to leave the European  
Union because they want this House to take control of  
our law making. It falls to MPs to take a tight hold of  
the process and not allow the Government to take  
decisions, grab powers or devise processes that exclude  
Parliament. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill  
proposes sweeping delegated powers but lacks effective  
oversight or accountability. This is fundamentally  
undemocratic and unacceptable. The Labour party will  
not wave through Bills that demean our Parliament in  
this way.

The House has yet to see the draft legislation on  
sanctions, but we hope that the Government are not  
developing a habit and do not put something before the  
House that seizes more powers for Ministers than is  
absolutely necessary. The start the Government have  
made with the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is  
bad and needs to change. It is not in the national  
interest to present poor legislation before the House  
and then get upset when the Opposition decline to  
support it. The Government should and must do better.  
Labour agrees that the vital issue of international sanctions  
must be resolved before we leave the EU. We recognise  
that and will not seek to obstruct the forthcoming  
legislation needlessly, but it is vital that we get the  
details right. This is too important to get wrong.

Britain needs the ability to act unilaterally when it is  
appropriate to do so, but when attempting to influence  
or restrict the capabilities of states such as North Korea,  
Sudan or Iran, it is the combined effort of many nations  
that may, over time, prompt the change we want. Britain's  
national security is enhanced by working with our  
European allies, and there is no reason this cannot  
continue after Brexit. The Government need to set out  
detailed plans for future co-operation between the UK  
and the EU. Any decision to impose new sanctions or  
revoke existing ones must be subject to adequate scrutiny

19 JULY 2017

945 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

*[Jenny Chapman]*

and periodic review. The Government need to make  
clear how they intend to enable parliamentary scrutiny  
of decisions when the intention seems to be to make  
regular use of secondary legislation. Does the Minister  
agree that sanctions decisions ought to be subject to a  
debate and a vote in this House? Ministers must not be  
allowed to make it up as they go along. The decision to  
implement sanctions, or not, will have a significant  
impact on the UK's standing internationally, our  
relationships with other nations and our ability to influence.  
The Minister needs to reassure the House that there will  
be a process in place that is transparent, fair and  
accountable to Members of this House. Does the Minister  
plan to provide regular updates to the House on the  
impact of sanctions measures, and will this requirement  
be in the Bill?

It is clearly desirable for the UK to continue to work  
closely with the EU after we leave. Our ability to work  
together to impose sanctions, especially when the UN  
has declined to do so, is extremely important. We also  
need to maintain our ability to influence our EU partners,  
so that sanctions are as effective as they can be. With  
that in mind, do the Government intend these measures  
to come into force on exit day or might sanctions in the  
end form part of the now inevitable transitional period?  
The Government need to make it clear whether or not  
they plan to participate in common EU foreign and  
security policy, and, if so, what institutional arrangements  
they wish to put in place. The EU imposed tough  
financial sanctions on Russia following the illegal annexation  
of Crimea, including a total ban on imports of goods  
originating in Crimea or Sevastopol unless they have  
Ukrainian certificates.

My former constituency neighbour, Lord Hague, has  
said of sanctions on Iran:

“The ability to agree among 28 countries, sanctions that were  
also co-ordinated with the United States made an enormous  
difference to world affairs. Twenty eight countries left to their  
own devices would not have had identical sanctions, or brought  
Iran to the negotiating table. The ability to do that is very  
important.”'

The Government's approach to sanctions policy in the  
forthcoming Bill will be read as a signal of their intent  
to align or distance themselves from working with  
like-minded international partners. Do the Government  
want to work more closely with the US or to continue to  
align with Europe in a common foreign and security  
policy? If so, how? Do we want to negotiate continued  
permanent membership of the EU's Political and Security  
Committee, as Lord Hague has proposed, or do the  
Government envisage a looser parallel arrangement?

The Minister's face seems to suggest that he thinks  
these are big questions for a general debate taking place  
before any legislation is even published. However, these  
are the issues—the extent and nature of collaboration;  
common aims and means with EU and other nations;  
and the use of secondary legislation and the role of this  
House—that the Government must be able to answer to  
win the confidence not just of MPs, but of the country.

6.47 pm

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** I welcome you to the Chair, Madam Deputy  
Speaker. May I start by saluting two exemplary maiden  
speeches that we have heard today? My hon. Friend the

Exiting the European Union: 946

Sanctions

Member for Saffron Walden (Mrs Badenoch) made her  
maiden speech with great confidence, saying it was the  
constituency's first since 1929; I take it that was because  
Sir Alan Haselhurst had previously sat for Middleton  
and Prestwich. Of course I am slightly saddened that  
the population of Sir Alans in this House has reduced  
by one, but her speech was utterly charming and beautifully  
judged, and I can see, as can all of us, why those in  
Saffron Walden have so rabidly taken her to their hearts.  
I said “rabidly” by mistake; of course I meant rapidly. It  
may well be that her locally produced saffron aphrodisiac  
will soon be on sale in the parliamentary shop, and I  
would urge hon. Members to form a most orderly  
queue. Her good sense on economics is a message all in  
this House should heed. I congratulate her on the most  
perfect maiden speech.

I offer similar congratulations to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer), whom  
I have known as the most diligent MEP for the East  
Midlands. He remains local to the East Midlands now  
that he is a Northamptonshire MP. He has a passion for  
high-quality Northamptonshire shoes; may I assure  
him that I endeavour to be a loyal customer? None of  
that Italian stuff for me. We will also try to raise a glass,  
when we can, charged with either Carlsberg or Phipps.  
He can forever be proud of the maiden speech he made  
tonight.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State for Exiting the European Union said in his  
opening speech, the Government intend to continue  
working closely with allies to counter threats such as  
terrorism, conflict and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.  
An effective and targeted sanctions policy is a very  
important means to that end, and a global Britain will  
continue to use sanctions to influence the behaviour of  
others as part of a broad and internationally co-ordinated  
approach.

We currently implement over 30 sanctions regimes,  
targeting specific countries as well as terrorist groups.  
Most of these sanctions result from resolutions of the  
UN Security Council or decisions by the European  
Union. Typically, they involve travel bans, asset freezes,  
and financial and trade restrictions. UN and EU sanctions  
are currently brought into effect in the UK through the  
European Communities Act 1972. The House has heard  
about the principles we apply when imposing sanctions.  
There must be clear objectives linked to wider political  
strategy; solid justification; and careful targeting to  
maximise the intended pressure while minimising the  
unintended consequences. I want to reassure hon. Members  
that the Government remain committed to these principles.

Today's debate is about the principle of whether, once  
we have left the EU, the UK should establish a sanctions  
regime that allows us to replicate the sanctions powers  
currently deriving from our membership of the EU.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Minister  
give a commitment that the 34 sanctions currently  
implemented will be exactly the same after Brexit?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** There are over 30, and the intention  
is to lift and shift, but all will be subject to statutory  
instruments of this House. This House might, if it were  
to use its numbers, reject them, but the intention is to  
remain aligned with the EU—with existing sanctions—so  
that we are in harmony with it.

19 JULY 2017

947 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

**Jenny Chapman:** The Minister said that these measures  
would be subject to votes in this House. Am I to read  
into that that he intends them to be subject to the  
affirmative procedure?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I will come to that in just a moment,  
if I may.

A sanctions Bill will enable the UK to continue to  
impose, update and lift sanctions in response to fast-moving  
events. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will not  
be sufficient to do that, since we need powers to do  
more than simply preserve or freeze existing sanctions.  
The United Nations Act 1946 is also insufficient for  
UN sanctions, because in 2010, the UK Supreme Court  
ruled that it could not lawfully be used to implement  
asset freezes, and that additional powers were needed  
for measures of this kind involving any infringement of  
individual rights. In short, the sanctions Bill will enable  
the UK's continued compliance with international law  
after we leave the EU, ensure that, as a permanent  
member of the UN Security Council, the UK continues  
to play a central role in shaping UN sanctions, and  
return decision-making powers on non-UN sanctions  
to the UK.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said, the Bill  
will focus on powers, not policy. As such, it might be  
described as a framework Bill. It will provide powers to  
implement UN sanctions and to impose UK sanctions  
independently or in co-operation with allies. The question  
of how we use those powers will be addressed later,  
when we introduce secondary legislation applying sanctions  
to particular countries. We are obliged to implement  
UN sanctions, but we will face political choices on how  
far to replicate current EU sanctions.

The Bill will take account of the consultation mentioned  
by my hon. Friend in his opening speech. We envisage  
four main elements: powers to impose sanctions where  
justified and appropriate; powers to ensure that individuals  
and organisations can challenge the sanctions imposed  
on them; powers to exempt or license certain types of  
activity that would otherwise be restricted, such as  
humanitarian deliveries and supplies, in countries that  
might have been sanctioned; and powers to amend and  
adopt regulations for anti-money laundering and counter-  
terrorist financing.

Detailed scrutiny of the Bill can obviously come only  
once it is published. That is why we will have Second  
Reading, Committee, Report and so on, as this House  
always does. However, perhaps I can respond as rapidly  
as I can in the time I have—and I am running out of  
time—to some of the questions that have been asked,  
mainly by Opposition Front Benchers. “Where is the  
Bill?” was one question. We have a consultation. We  
have just had an election and purdah, and we need to  
consider the responses and then decide our final position.  
Only then can we publish the Bill—but we will do so.  
The hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman)  
asked who will lead on it. The Foreign and Commonwealth  
Office will take the lead on foreign policy, including  
sanctions.

On the question by the hon. Member for Darlington  
(Jenny Chapman) about whether the procedures we  
intend to adopt will be affirmative or negative, we  
note—this is very important for the efficacy of sanctions—  
that the delay involved with affirmative procedures can  
lead to asset flight before assets are frozen or caught.

Exiting the European Union: 948

Sanctions

We are considering this issue, and will respond in our  
consultation response, which will be published very  
shortly.

**Hannah Bardell:** Will the Minister give way?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I have no time; I am very sorry.

The hon. Member for Bishop Auckland asked about  
the overseas territories. The UK has responsibility for  
the external relations and national security of overseas  
territories and Crown dependencies, and we will continue  
our policy of ensuring that the overseas territories and  
Crown dependencies apply international and UK imposed  
sanctions. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is chairing  
regular meetings with the overseas territories and Crown  
dependencies on how best to achieve this end. We will  
include a power in the Bill for the UK to continue to  
legislate directly where appropriate.

It was suggested that we would lose the ability to be  
part of international sanctions development. I would  
say very clearly that I believe that we will not lose this  
ability. The Bill is intended to give us all the necessary  
powers to work internationally. We note that the UK,  
with its international allies, was a key player in securing  
the Iran nuclear deal. We will continue our constructive  
and productive relationship with our European and  
international partners after we leave the EU.

The hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) asked  
about the legal risk of the UK adopting EU sanctions—in  
other words, our having a separate regime and doing  
this individually. The UK will take responsibility for the  
sanctions it adopts, including taking on legal risks.  
When working with the EU, we will take all necessary  
steps, co-ordinating sanctions and sharing information,  
to reduce the risk, and if the risk is not acceptable, we  
do not have to follow the EU.

There are some other issues that we have not had the  
chance to discuss, but I am sure we will do so on Second  
Reading and in further consideration of the Bill. On  
civil liberties, for example, there is a very delicate balance  
to be struck between using sanctions to counter threats  
such as terrorism and respecting due process to protect  
the rights of individuals.

Another issue is abuses and violations of human  
rights as a reason to impose sanctions. The Government  
are firmly committed to promoting and strengthening  
universal human rights, and holding to account states  
responsible for the worst violations. Indeed, during the  
previous Parliament the Government amended the Criminal  
Finances Act 2017 to allow law enforcement agencies to  
use civil recovery powers to recover the proceeds of  
human rights abuses or violations, wherever they take  
place, where the property is held in the UK. We also  
have powers to exclude from the UK individuals whose  
presence is not conducive to the public good, and we  
operate a watch list system to support this.

We know that innocent individuals and organisations  
can sometimes be inadvertently affected by sanctions.  
We hear reports of this, for example, from humanitarian  
organisations delivering assistance in countries subject  
to sanctions. We will do everything we can to minimise  
these unintended consequences. We will publish guidance  
to make UK sanctions regimes as clear as possible to  
the individuals and companies affected. We will have  
more flexibility to issue general licences to humanitarian

950

19 JULY 2017

949 Exiting the European Union:

Sanctions

*[Sir Alan Duncan]*

organisations in order to cut bureaucracy and make it  
much easier for them to continue operating in the most  
difficult of circumstances.

The Bill will be published in due course, and the  
response to the consultation will come out soon. I urge  
the House to appreciate that as we look across the  
world and see the dangers of terrorism and misconduct  
of all sorts, having an effective sanctions regime is  
absolutely crucial to our foreign policy and to making  
the world a better place. Replicating a sanctions policy  
once we have left the EU is absolutely essential. If we  
did not do that, the world would be a poorer place.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Exiting the European Union  
and Sanctions.

PETITION

Climate Change Objectives and Obligations

7pm

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I  
rise to present a *petition on behalf of residents of Dulwich  
and West Norwood.*

The petition states:

The petition of the residents of Dulwich and West Norwood,

Declares that there is widespread concern that the Government  
is not on track to meet the fourth or fifth carbon budgets;  
welcomes the Prime Minister's continued verbal commitment to  
the Paris Agreement; notes that in order to meet the UK's  
commitment to achieve the carbon budget action is necessary;  
further notes that the Committee on Climate Change reported in  
June 2017 and concluded that the UK can successfully navigate  
the transition to a growing, low-carbon economy but new policies  
to deliver that transition are overdue; and further notes that much  
domestic legislation for reducing emission and tackling climate  
changes is neither contingent on the UK's membership of the  
European Union or ends in around 2020, including but not  
limited to the levy control framework supporting low carbon  
power, fuel efficiency standards for new cars, renewable heat  
incentives, capital funding for flood defences to protect homes  
and businesses, and targeted biodiversity plans to help build the  
resilience of the natural environment to climate change.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons  
urge the Government to lay before the House their plans for  
meeting the fourth and fifth carbon budgets, as well as committing  
to protecting existing environmental protections.

And the petitioners remain hopeful and expectant that this  
request is granted, etc.

[P002046]

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

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

7.1 pm

**Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): I am grateful  
for the opportunity to raise the issue of the closure of  
the Tesco customer operations centre in my constituency  
of Cardiff North with the loss of up to 1,100 jobs. If  
you will allow me, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall do  
three things: first, highlight the way in which Tesco has  
acted; secondly, describe the human impact of these  
actions; and finally, explore how we respond to these  
things and the next steps.

On Wednesday 21 June, without any warning or  
consultation with either the Welsh or the UK Governments,  
Tesco announced it would be closing its customer contact  
centre in Cardiff in February next year, leading to the  
loss of up to 1,100 jobs, with the possible relocation of  
150 of those jobs to Dundee. The centre deals with  
inquiries from consumers all over the UK, including  
those made via social media. It has a highly motivated  
and skilled workforce who take great pride in their  
work.

On the morning of 21 June, staff went to work as  
usual. On arrival, some were told by visiting management  
to clear the top floor and find somewhere else in the  
building to work. An events management company had  
been brought in to install a PA system. Staff then  
received an email inviting them to a meeting on the top  
floor at 1 pm. To those crowded into that room on the  
top floor, an official statement was read out telling them  
they would all be made redundant. There was no  
opportunity for questions. This shock announcement  
has inevitably had a huge impact on the dedicated staff,  
some of whom have worked there for over 20 years. In  
some cases, two or three members of the same family  
work there.

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend  
share my disgust at the fact that many of the employees,  
including constituents of mine in Caerphilly, only learned  
about the closure on social media?

**Anna McMorrin:** Yes. Some staff members who were  
not there that day only actually found out that they had  
lost their jobs through social media. There also seems to  
have been no formal means of contacting them or  
managing their concerns.

Following the announcement, I met Tesco executives  
to press them on their reasons for the job losses and why  
jobs in Dundee have seemingly been prioritised over  
jobs in Cardiff. We were told that there is more space in  
Dundee and that the company had already taken the  
decision to have one site where customer relations staff  
would be based. They were unable to provide any  
reason why they had not entered into discussions with  
either the UK Government or the Welsh Government.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this  
debate. I, too, have constituents who have been affected  
by this absolutely absurd decision. Does she agree that  
it is completely bizarre for Tesco to not provide those  
reasons, particularly when Cardiff has gained a reputation

951

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

19 JULY 2017

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

952

as an excellent place for customer care centres? Many  
different companies choose Cardiff because of the excellent  
skilled workforce there.

**Anna McMorrin:** I absolutely agree with my hon.  
Friend. I think that these job losses are the latest in a  
string of cuts implemented as part of the so-called  
turnaround plan by Dave Lewis, the group chief executive,  
who joined Tesco in autumn 2015.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): As my hon.  
Friend knows, job losses on this scale will be felt keenly  
not just in Cardiff but across south Wales. A constituent  
of mine who works for Tesco contacted me, saying:

“I believe that what they (Tesco) have told the press is incorrect  
as I know they are outsourcing parts of their business to a site in  
Bury.”

Does my hon. Friend agree that the company should be  
questioned on that, too?

**Anna McMorrin:** I absolutely agree with my hon.  
Friend that it should be questioned on that, and I will  
address the issue later in my speech.

In his first year in charge as the group chief executive,  
Mr Lewis axed nearly 5,000 head office staff and UK  
store management jobs, as well as more than 4,000 roles  
overseas and at the group's banking division. More  
than 2,500 jobs were lost with the closure of 48 so-called  
underperforming Tesco stores, and 3,000 jobs were put  
at risk in April when the chain cut night shifts for shelf  
stackers in some of its biggest supermarkets.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I am grateful to  
my hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour for securing  
this debate. According to last year's Tesco accounts, the  
chief executive, Dave Lewis, was given a £4.15 million  
pay package, of which £2.4 million was a bonus. Does  
my hon. Friend agree that he could have taken a little  
bit less and the company could have kept a few more of  
those jobs? Every little helps.

**Anna McMorrin:** I think it is absolutely the case that  
the company is prioritising management over the hard-  
working workforce, who are highly skilled and motivated.

I suspect that nearly every Member of this House has  
a Tesco store in their constituency. It is one of the UK's  
biggest and most recognisable brands, with a loyal  
customer base.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the  
hon. Lady for bringing this debate to the House. Does  
she agree that there is something obscene about the loss  
of 1,100 jobs at the customer contact centre at Tesco  
House in Cardiff ? On behalf of Tesco employees in my  
constituency, I register my support for her campaign.  
Does she agree that we should ask the chief executive  
officer of Tesco to reconsider his decision immediately?

**Anna McMorrin:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
support.

In his desire to achieve more savings, Mr Lewis needs  
to understand that he has an absolute responsibility to  
treat his employees fairly and with respect. He owes  
them a duty of care and he should listen to what his  
staff are saying.

In the days following the announcement, I went to  
the customer centre to meet the staff affected, along  
with my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff Central  
(Jo Stevens) and my local Assembly Member, Julie  
Morgan. The staff are utterly devastated and feel let  
down by a company to which some have dedicated their  
working lives. One staff member told me:

“We had felt like we were part of one big family and took pride  
in coming to work. This feels like being dumped like an old pair of  
shoes after being promised a secure future. Now we are feeling  
exploited and used.”

Some of the worst-affected households are those  
with multiple members losing their jobs. Some families  
will lose two, three or even four wages from their  
budgets. One couple in their late 20s who had their first  
child less than a year ago are both set to lose their jobs.

**Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): Following the coalition  
Government's halving of the statutory consultation  
period from 90 days to just 45 days, the employees  
whose whole lives will be devastated by these redundancies  
have just 45 days to find another job in a small area  
where there will be more than 1,000 redundancies. Does  
my hon. Friend agree that 45 days is far too short a  
period for employees to find alternative jobs and for  
companies to look at straightforward alternative business  
proposals to fulfil their duty to consult properly with  
staff and look at real alternatives to keep those jobs in  
place?

**Anna McMorrin:** I absolutely agree with my hon.  
Friend about that, which is precisely why I brought this  
debate to the House.

One worker told me:

“We are absolutely devastated as my fiancee is currently on  
maternity leave with the birth of our baby daughter. We have also  
planned to get married next year so this news has come at the  
worst possible time for us in our lives and we are very worried for  
the future.”

Another staff member contacted me on Facebook. He  
said:

“It's been stressful for a lot of us, some more than others. I've  
been made aware that there are options to apply for a store role or  
to move to the Tesco site up Dundee. This is not an option as it'd  
be too much of a drastic life change and there are very few roles  
considering the number of employees in our centre. The announcement  
has also left me wondering, if I moved to another role in the  
business, would I be any less vulnerable to another redundancy  
announcement in future.”  
He went on:

“A lot of my colleagues whose time at Tesco exceed 10 years  
are choosing to stay until the end for their redundancy package as  
they'll get a significantly larger amount but for many employees  
like myself who have been with Tesco just a little over a year, we  
see no incentive in staying as I don't feel valued as an employee  
anymore and barely feel like I'm part of the place now.

The morale has dropped rapidly on my work floor whereas it  
felt like a small community only a year back, and now it feels very  
emptyandmakesmefeelquitedownwheneverI'mintheenvironment.  
I used to love coming to work but now the hours feel longer and it  
just feels like it's getting in the way of the hours I could be using  
to find progression in life.”

Those are just a few of the many messages I have had  
from distraught members of staff who have been affected.

What is going to happen now? The Welsh Government's  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, Ken  
Skates, has announced the formation of a taskforce to  
find new employment opportunities for the staff. That is  
a welcome development. It will pool the knowledge and  
resources of key partners to ensure that the 1,100 people

953

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

19 JULY 2017

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

954

*[Anna McMorrin]*

currently working at the centre are provided with the  
very best support in seeking further employment, as  
well as welfare and emotional support. Following my  
question to the Leader of the House on 22 June, I ask  
the Minister before us to urge the Department for Work  
and Pensions to work with the Welsh Government and  
dispatch its emergency taskforce to help ensure that the  
staff who are affected are fully supported.

While that work goes on, along with the Union of  
Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, I will be making  
the case for Tesco to rethink its plans and for better  
engagement with its workforce. If there is to be any  
outsourcing of jobs, at the very least I would like an  
assurance from Tesco and the management that they  
will go to companies based in south Wales.

**Jo Stevens:** My hon. Friend is being very generous  
with her time. When she and I met staff at Tesco, the  
point about outsourcing was raised. We heard that  
work had been outsourced for the past 12 months and  
that when people left Tesco House, they were not being  
replaced. Does she share my concern about the lack of  
transparency from Tesco management about where the  
work is going, because the number of jobs being lost  
and the jobs being offered in Dundee simply do not add  
up?

**Anna McMorrin:** I agree with my hon. Friend: there  
has been no transparency on this issue, and that is what  
I would like to see. I call on the Minister to request it.

I reiterate my deep disappointment at the way Tesco  
has handled the situation. I struggle to understand its  
rationale for losing such a highly dedicated workforce.  
As a company that supposedly values its workers, it  
should not want to lose decades of experience and the  
specialist skills staff have acquired. We all know Tesco,  
we have all shopped there. It has a loyal customer base  
in Cardiff and its staff deserve more and better than  
this. I hope that the Minister will join me in condemning  
this behaviour and work with me and alongside the  
Welsh Government in making the case to Tesco to  
rethink its plans and offer better engagement and more  
transparency to the workforce.

7.15 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James):** I welcome  
the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin)  
to her place and congratulate her on initiating this  
important debate.

These are worrying times for Tesco staff at the Cardiff  
customer engagement centre and their families—especially  
those families with more than one person employed  
there—and I am sure that all our thoughts are with  
them. As the hon. Lady said, at 1 o'clock on 21 June,  
before it was officially announced at 2 o'clock, Tesco  
notified its staff of its intended plans to simplify its  
customer services operation by expanding its office in  
Dundee and—sadly—closing the centre in Cardiff by  
February 2018. I know that the hon. Lady tweeted,  
shortly after Tesco told its staff, about how shocked she  
was to learn of the proposed closure, and raised the  
issue with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the  
House during business questions.

A 45-day consultation with the unions has begun.  
The Government's focus is to support all those affected  
and to get people back into work as quickly as possible  
through Jobcentre Plus. I can assure the hon. Lady that  
we are working with the Department for Work and  
Pensions to ensure that the maximum service is available.

**Ruth George:** I wish to make the same point to the  
Minister that I made to my hon. Friend. The period of  
statutory consultation, even for such enormous job  
losses, has been halved from 90 days to 45 days. Whatever  
support the DWP and Jobcentre Plus can put in is very  
welcome, but 45 days is far too short a period for so  
many jobs to be found in a city such as Cardiff. Although  
Cardiff has good employment levels, 1,200 good jobs  
cannot be replaced in such a short time. Will the Minister  
look at reviewing that halving to assist companies in  
supporting their employees?

**Margot James:** I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention  
and I did note her earlier remarks. I do not think there  
is any prospect of reversing that decision. I accept that  
it can prove difficult for people to find alternative  
employment within the 45 days, but a lot of support is  
going on in Cardiff, not just from the DWP and the  
Government but from the Welsh Assembly. It is a  
buoyant economy and I hope that people will find  
satisfactory employment within that timeframe.

It is not always easy to find another job, and even if  
people do so it does not alter the hurt they feel at the  
rejection that redundancy always involves. But business  
change is an inevitable consequence of competitive  
markets, and retail is a highly competitive market at the  
moment. Commercial and economic opportunities and  
threats mean that companies will need to reorganise,  
merge, expand and, sometimes, unfortunately contract  
in response. To ensure businesses remain viable and  
profitable, they need the flexibility to respond to the  
circumstances they are facing as best they can. At the  
same time, employees will want to know how the changes  
are likely to affect them, and what their options are for  
the future. It is vital, therefore, that there is effective  
consultation with employees about the potential for  
collective redundancies.

**Jo Stevens:** Is the Minister aware that this is the  
largest single number of job losses that has been announced  
in Wales for a decade? About 100 of my constituents  
are affected by the decision, and they will be very  
disappointed that the Minister batted away the point  
made by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak  
(Ruth George) about the consultation period. Will she  
please reconsider, and talk to her Cabinet colleagues  
about the issue?

**Margot James:** Let me reassure the hon. Lady. The  
fact that this is the worst case for 10 years points to  
the buoyancy of the economy in Wales. That part of the  
country is doing well. When I visited it just two months  
ago, I was very impressed by the dynamism that I found  
in Cardiff and the surrounding area. I do not share the  
hon. Lady's pessimism about the opportunities for people.  
However, as I said earlier, I certainly appreciate that it is  
not a simple case of getting another job and all is well,  
particularly when a whole community is affected as this  
community has been.

955

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

19 JULY 2017

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

956

Let me say something about the legislation. Collective  
redundancy legislation strikes a balance between the  
needs of the business and the needs of employees. It  
applies when 20 or more employees are made redundant  
at one establishment within 90 days. In those circumstances,  
employers have a statutory duty to consult employees'  
representatives about the proposed redundancies.  
The consultation must be with the employees' trade  
union representatives, or with other elected employee  
representatives when there is no recognised trade union.  
It must be completed before any dismissal notices can  
take effect, and it must be undertaken with a view to  
reaching agreement, although sometimes—I recognise  
this—agreement may not be possible. It must include  
consideration of ways of avoiding redundancies in the  
first place, reducing the number of people to be made  
redundant, and importantly, mitigating the effect of the  
dismissals. Employers also have a number of obligations,  
including a requirement to notify the Secretary of State  
for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of the  
proposed collective redundancies before the start of the  
statutory consultation.

Redundancy can be—and usually is—a stressful time  
for those affected. I want to highlight the service offered  
by the ACAS helpline, which can advise people on their  
particular circumstances. ACAS has also produced a  
guide for employers on handling large-scale redundancies  
such as those that we are discussing this evening.

Let me now say something about the support that is  
available to employees who are made redundant.  
Throughout the redundancy process, employers still  
have obligations to their employees, and should be  
thinking about the help that they can offer at all times.  
Employees with at least two years' service who have  
been given notice of redundancy have a right to reasonable  
time off so that they can look for a new job or arrange  
training. The Department for Work and Pensions and  
the local Jobcentre Plus have already been in touch with  
Tesco to offer their support.

I recommend that, in the case of redundancies, employers  
should always contact Jobcentre Plus as soon as possible  
to discuss appropriate support that can be delivered  
locally. All decisions about appropriate support are  
made locally, because a decision based on a specific  
redundancy situation, an individual's own transferable  
skills and experience, and the availability of jobs in the  
local area is far more likely to be the right decision.

**Anna McMorrin:** Does the Minister agree that these  
are not normal redundancy circumstances? Does she  
agree that the DWP should dispatch the emergency  
taskforce to help those affected to seek new employment,  
and work with the Welsh Government as well?

**Margot James:** I very much agree with what is behind  
the hon. Lady's intervention. My right hon. Friend the  
Secretary of State for Wales is taking that forward, and  
has already met the chief executive. The south-east  
Wales district Jobcentre Plus will deploy its redundancy  
response action plan, which includes working with partner  
organisations such as Careers Wales, the Welsh  
Government, the National Employer Partnership Team,  
the local authority, DWP pensions and Tesco trade  
unions to deliver a bespoke package of support, which I  
think is what the hon. Lady is after. The typical support  
provided for individuals is matching people to local

known job vacancies and/or helping to construct or  
improve CVs. Where there is scope to do so, support  
can be delivered on a group basis, for example by  
bringing redundant workers and employers together at  
a jobs fair as well as at group sessions and one-to-ones  
on site, to provide support and information on benefits,  
pensions, support from DWP and Careers Wales. Matching  
current vacancies to the skills and requirements of the  
affected individuals is a key part of the service Jobcentre  
Plus provides. This has been successful in many other  
redundancy situations.

Tesco has assured Government that its first priority is  
to do everything it can to support its colleagues in  
Cardiff, including helping them to find roles within  
Tesco, working with Jobcentre Plus, USDAW and the  
Welsh Government, and connecting with other local  
employers who might have vacancies.

**Jo Stevens:** One way in which Tesco could assist these  
staff members is not to make them redundant six weeks  
before they qualify for their annual bonus payment.  
Does the Minister agree that such behaviour should be  
discouraged?

**Margot James:** I am very sympathetic to that point;  
that seems to add insult to injury. My right hon. Friend  
the Secretary of State for Wales has raised that issue  
with the chief executive of Tesco, and I am sure he will  
raise it again thanks to the hon. Lady's intervention.

The Welsh Government have already established a  
taskforce, which stands ready to support the Cardiff  
workers once the outcome of the consultation is known.  
It is being led by Ken Skates; Fiona Jones, DWP's  
director for Wales work services, is a member of the  
taskforce, too. Tesco has confirmed that it will also  
work closely with the Welsh Government on its redundancy  
action scheme—ReAct—a programme that funds training  
for people living in Wales who are facing redundancy.  
Tesco will be engaging with the Welsh Contact Centre  
Forum and will be keen to reach out to other employers  
who might have vacancies. A significant number of  
businesses have already approached both Tesco and the  
Welsh Government, but the current focus has to be on  
the ongoing consultation process before any detailed  
discussions can progress with other companies. At present,  
Tesco is not able to provide specific details on the  
package available to staff, as this will be considered as  
part of the ongoing 45-day consultation.

In conclusion, I reiterate that retail is a vital sector for  
the UK economy and we are committed to it.

**Anna McMorrin:** Will the Minister join the Leader of  
the House in condemning the way in which Tesco made  
this announcement? When I asked the Leader of the  
House about this shortly after the announcement, she  
was appalled at the way things had been done.

**Margot James:** I do not think I would go as far as to  
condemn that, because I believe Tesco made every effort  
to inform people on a one-to-one basis. Some people  
were away. *[Interruption.]* If I am wrong about that, I  
apologise, but the information I have had is that Tesco  
did make every effort. Some people were away; it did  
contact them. It is appalling that some people found  
out about this on social media—and the situation in the  
Chamber lighting-wise has slightly thrown me off.

957

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

19 JULY 2017

Tesco House, Cardiff: Job Losses

958

*[Margot James]*

I know that the fact that retail is highly competitive  
and buoyant will be of little comfort to Tesco workers at  
the Cardiff customer engagement centre who are facing  
an uncertain future. Every collective redundancy situation  
involves individuals, and their needs need to be managed  
carefully. It is vital that individual workers receive the  
information and support that they need, as and when  
they need it. This Government and the Assembly in  
Wales stand ready to provide every possible support to  
the hon. Lady's constituents and those of other Members  
representing the Cardiff area. I wish them all the very  
best in their search for new employment if the redundancies  
go ahead.

**Stephen Doughty:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy  
Speaker. I apologise for the unusual nature of this point

of order, just before the question is put. Have you or  
Mr Speaker had notice of any statements, written or  
otherwise, to be made tomorrow by the Secretary of  
State for Transport relating to crucial decisions in Wales  
on St Mellons parkway station in my constituency and  
to the worrying rumours about rail electrification in  
south Wales?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I  
am not aware of any notification of statements, but I  
am sure the hon. Gentleman knows that if he has not  
heard anything by tomorrow there will be an opportunity  
to raise the issue, perhaps during business questions.

*Question put and agreed to.*

7.31 pm

*House adjourned.*

959

20 JULY 2017

960

House of Commons

*Thursday 20 July 2017*

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

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr Speaker:** On today's Order Paper it is noted that  
on 30 August 1917, Lieutenant the hon. Francis Walter  
Stafford McLaren, Royal Flying Corps, Member for  
Spalding, died of injuries sustained after his aircraft  
crashed during a training flight off the coast of Scotland.  
We remember him today.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

**Brexit: Environmental and Animal Welfare Standards**

1. **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): What plans he has  
   to ensure that (a) environmental and (b) animal welfare  
   standards are maintained after the UK leaves the EU.

[900586]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** The European Union  
(Withdrawal) Bill will convert the existing body of EU  
environmentalandanimalwelfarelawintoUnitedKingdom  
law. The Government have made it clear that we intend,  
as a minimum, to retain our existing standards of  
environmental and animal welfare once we have left the  
EU. We have some of the highest animal welfare standards  
in the world and I intend us to remain world leading in  
the future.

**Vicky Ford:** In Chelmsford during the recent election,  
more constituents wrote to me about animal welfare  
issues than about all other issues put together. People  
care, and British farm standards on animal welfare are  
world leading. What steps is my right hon. Friend  
taking to ensure that British farm standards are not  
undermined by cheaper, less welfare friendly products  
from other parts of the world after we leave the EU?

**Michael Gove:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on her  
election in Chelmsford and also thank her for her  
dedicated work in the European Parliament on many of  
these issues. I, like her, received many representations  
from constituents about these issues, and my commitment  
is clear: while we want to lead the world in free trade, we  
also want to remain a world leader in animal welfare.  
There will be no compromise on our standards as we  
seek to ensure that we pilot a better position for British  
farming and British trade in the future.

15. [900600] **Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): Fine  
words, but our bee population requires more as the  
research published in the peer review journal *Science*demonstrated just a few weeks ago. Will the Secretary  
of State today pledge to end the use of neonicotinoids  
in the UK and tell us whether the precautionary principle  
adopted by the European Union will be transposed into  
UK law?

**Michael Gove:** I share the hon. Gentleman's commitment  
to ensure that our bee population and our pollinators  
are protected. I pay close attention to the science in that  
report,andwewillensurethatourpolicyonneonicotinoids  
follows existing EU protections and is enhanced in line  
with the science.

14. [900599] **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): Can my right  
hon. Friend confirm that article 13 of the Lisbon treaty,  
which categorises animals as sentient beings, will be  
part of the repeal Bill?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. Before we entered the  
European Union, we recognised in our own legislation  
that animals were sentient beings. I am an animal; we  
are all animals, and therefore I care—*[Interruption.]* I  
am predominantly herbivorous, I should add. It is an  
absolutely vital commitment that we have to ensure that  
all creation is maintained, enhanced and protected.

**Mary Creagh** (Wakefield) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary  
of State to his place and thank him for his visit to  
Wakefield during the recent election. He can rest easy in  
the knowledge that he played some small part in my  
return to this place.

The UK's participation in the EU's registration,  
evaluation and authorisation of chemicals, or REACH,  
regulation system allows us to protect the environment  
and human health, and allows UK businesses to sell  
exports worth £14 billion to the EU each year. It is our  
second biggest export after cars. The Environmental  
Audit Committee's inquiry into the future of chemical  
regulation heard that the legislation cannot be cut and  
pasted. There are severe concerns about market supply  
chain freeze and regulatory disruption. How will the  
Secretary of State regulate chemicals when we leave?

**Michael Gove:** Better.

**Dame Caroline Spelman** (Meriden) (Con): I do not  
envy the Department for Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs the task of transcribing legislation, because 80%  
of what it deals with is at a European level. However, is  
it not the case that there are important stakeholders,  
such as the water industry, that are quite clear that they  
want the whole canon of legislation to be transcribed as  
it is into national law?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. She was an outstanding Secretary of State in this  
Department, and the leadership that she continues to  
show in this area is outstanding, too. She is absolutely  
right: we want to transcribe and read across existing  
protections, including the precautionary principle, and  
then enhance them as and when appropriate.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): Reports this  
week show a massive rise in US-style mega farms,  
suggesting that the industrial farming seen in the US is  
coming to the UK. What is the Minister doing to resist  
that trend?

961

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

962

**Michael Gove:** We need to be aware that there are  
always forces that will lead some small farmers occasionally  
to want to co-operate with others—to meet capital  
investment requirements, for example. One thing is  
clear: I do not want to see, and we will not have,  
US-style farming in this country. The future for British  
farming is in quality and provenance, maintaining high  
environmental and animal welfare standards. We have a  
world-leading reputation based on doing things better,  
and that will not be compromised while I am in this  
Department.

**Leaving the EU: Farming**

1. **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): What assessment he  
   has made of the opportunities available for the farming  
   industry after the UK leaves the EU. [900587]

4. **Luke Hall** (Thornbury and Yate) (Con): What  
assessment he has made of the opportunities available  
for the farming industry after the UK leaves the EU.  
[900589]

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** Leaving the EU presents a major opportunity  
for UK agriculture. We will be able to design new  
domestic policies that benefit British agriculture, the  
countryside and the environment. We have announced  
our intention to introduce an agriculture Bill in this  
parliamentary Session in order to provide stability to  
farmers as we leave the EU. We have pledged to work  
with industry to devise a new agri-environment system,  
to be introduced in the following Parliament.

**Robert Courts:** One of the most promising opportunities  
after we leave the EU will be to expand the range of  
markets available to our farmers, but that will come  
with corresponding challenges. Will the Minister please  
explain what the Government propose to do to open the  
new markets that will be available to the farmers of west  
Oxfordshire while maintaining our high standards, which  
are not always observed in other parts of the world?

**George Eustice:** My hon. Friend makes an important  
point. Since 2015, DEFRA has opened around 160 new  
markets to quality British foods. In the future there  
could be opportunities to export more British produce,  
particularly meat and dairy. However, as the Secretary  
of State has made clear, we value our high standards in  
food production and animal welfare, and they will not  
be compromised as we develop future trade agreements.

**Luke Hall:** Does the Minister agree that once we leave  
the European Union we can adopt a new, more effective  
and more tailored agricultural policy that will benefit  
farmers in south Gloucestershire and right across the  
country?

**George Eustice:** I very much agree. One of the great  
opportunities that we will have after leaving the EU will  
be the ability to design more effective and better targeted  
domestic policies to support our environment and promote  
productive farming.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Does the Minister  
agree that the role played by the massive farming base  
in Northern Ireland—pigs, poultry, grain and dairy—must  
be utilised and enhanced? What discussions have taken  
place with the Ulster Farmers' Union on the needs of  
the farming community post-2019 and vital subsidies?

**George Eustice:** The hon. Gentleman makes an incredibly  
important point. Agriculture is very important to the  
Northern Ireland economy—its dairy and poultry sectors  
are particularly strong. I have previously meet the Ulster  
Farmers' Union leaders. Indeed, I met one of the dairy  
companies from his constituency only yesterday. This  
Saturday the Secretary of State is planning to meet the  
president of the Ulster Farmers' Union.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):  
Tapadh leibh, Mr Speaker. Farming and crofting leaders  
in Scotland hope that agriculture will be fully controlled  
in Scotland post Brexit, and according to fishing leaders  
the Secretary of State has intimated that the Scottish  
Government will control fishing to 200 miles—incidentally,  
Na h-Eileanan an Iar is probably the only constituency  
to reach 200 miles of the exclusive economic zone.  
Therefore, can I have it on the record that the Government  
will indeed be back in this position and that farming  
and fishing for Scotland will be controlled in Scotland  
post Brexit?

**George Eustice:** Some of these matters are obviously  
already devolved. I think that everybody recognises that  
there also needs to be some kind of UK framework to  
protect the integrity of the UK single market. On  
leaving the EU, we will take control of our agriculture  
policy, and there is an opportunity to give all the  
devolved Administrations more control than they currently  
enjoy to be able to do that while protecting the integrity  
of the single market.

**Colin Clark** (Gordon) (Con): Does my hon. Friend  
agree that after leaving the EU we must have a risk-based  
regulatory system based on sound science to ensure that  
UK farmers are world leaders?

**George Eustice:** Yes; my hon. Friend is absolutely  
right. We believe that there should be careful risk-based  
assessment when it comes to regulation. We also have a  
great opportunity to change the culture of regulation.  
The reality of the common agricultural policy, as it  
exists now, is that there are far too many complex rules  
against which farmers are judged. We have an opportunity  
to simplify that and have a much more effective system  
going forward.

**Sue Hayman** (Workington) (Lab): The National Farmers  
Union says that the number of seasonal farm workers  
coming to the UK has dropped by 17%, and a report  
published this week states that

“the silence from Government on the labour question is astonishing.”  
Food production, processing and packaging rely heavily  
on migrant labour—the Office for National Statistics  
states that they make up 41% of the workforce. Why are  
the Government ignoring the industry's warnings? Will  
they compensate for the loss of produce as a direct  
result of this complacency, and will they ensure that the  
food manufacturing industry continues to have access  
to the workforce it needs?

**George Eustice:** There is no silence from the Government  
on this issue—indeed, there was a debate in Westminster  
Hall just last week where we discussed this issue in  
detail. We have the seasonal agricultural workers scheme  
transition group, which monitors seasonal labour

963

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

964

requirements. It met in March, it had informal discussions  
last week, and it will meet again later this week. In  
addition, the Home Office intends to commission the  
Migration Advisory Committee to do a piece of work  
on the labour needs of this country after we leave the  
EU.

**Sue Hayman:** Well, that all sounds marvellous, doesn't  
it? So why does the report say we have a looming food  
crisis if everything is under control? It says we could  
actually run out of some foods after Brexit. One of the  
authors, Professor Tim Lang, accuses the Government  
of a

“serious policy failing on an unprecedented scale”  
for their handling of the food security situation. The  
Secretary of State is notoriously dismissive of expert  
advice, but does he accept the findings of this report,  
and will he meet me and industry representatives to  
urgently discuss the food crisis before us?

**George Eustice:** The issue with that report is that it  
has not looked at the issues as closely as we have in  
DEFRA. We have been studying all these issues at  
tremendous length. The truth about food security is  
that it depends on increasing food production globally  
at a sustainable level and on open markets around the  
world, and those are challenges whether we are in or out  
of the EU. There is nothing about leaving the EU that  
will affect our food security.

**CAP Successor Scheme: Scotland**

1. **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):  
   What recent discussions he has had with the Scottish  
   Government on a successor scheme to the Common  
   Agricultural Policy after the UK leaves the EU. [900588]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** Since being appointed as  
the Secretary of State, I have met the Scottish Agriculture  
Minister and the Scottish Environment Minister at the  
royal highland show. I will continue to work with all of  
the devolved Administrations, and indeed to consult  
more widely, on the design of any new system of agricultural  
support.

**Alan Brown:** Those are nice, kind words from the  
Secretary of State about how he will work with the  
Scottish Government, but the blatant reality is that  
clause 11 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is  
one of the most naked power grabs ever seen, because it  
allows the Westminster Government to impose decisions  
in devolved matters. Will the Secretary of State confirm  
that, despite his rhetoric, this means that Westminster  
can impose a successor CAP system on the Scottish  
Government?

**Michael Gove:** What I can confirm is that the conversation  
I had with the Scottish Agriculture Minister and the  
Scottish Environment Minister was cordial. We have  
committed to working constructively together, and each  
of the devolved Assemblies and devolved Administrations  
has a role to play in helping us to design the successor  
regime to the common agricultural policy.

**Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): The  
greatest agricultural event not just in Britain, but in  
Europe and indeed the world—the royal Welsh show—is  
taking place next week. Does my right hon. Friend

agree with me and with the 250,000 people who attend  
the event that, in a pre and a post-Brexit world, the best  
showcasing of agriculture is taking place in Builth  
Wells?

**Michael Gove:** I can absolutely confirm that to my  
hon. Friend. I am looking forward to going to Builth  
Wells on Monday. It will be my second visit to Wales in  
a week; I was in Cardiff last week talking to NFU  
Cymru, the Farmers Union of Wales, and the Country  
Land and Business Association in Wales. As someone  
whose wife is Welsh, my affection for my hon. Friend's  
constituency—and, indeed, for the royal Welsh show  
and for Welsh agriculture—is second to none.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope the right hon. Gentleman's affection  
will be reciprocated. We very much hope so.

**Michael Gove:** It certainly is by Mrs Gove.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very glad to hear it. We are all  
interested to hear about the very healthy state of the  
Secretary of State's marriage, which was not in doubt.

Animal Welfare

5. **Mrs Kemi Badenoch** (Saffron Walden) (Con): What  
steps he is taking to improve animal welfare. [900590]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** Thank you very much,  
Mr Speaker—*[Interruption.]* Well, I think we are all on  
the same page in the Conservative party and singing  
from the same hymn sheet.

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards  
in the world, and I am continually building on this. We  
plan reforms to pet sales and licensing, to live exports,  
and to welfare at slaughter, and we are considering  
some other animal welfare measures as well.

**Mrs Badenoch:** I thank the Minister for his answer.  
Like many colleagues in the House, I have received huge  
volumes of correspondence on this issue. Will he commit  
to consulting closely with environmental and animal  
welfare groups when establishing these new regulations?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. May I take this opportunity  
to congratulate my hon. Friend not just on her election  
to this House but on her brilliant maiden speech yesterday?  
Consultation with environmental and animal welfare  
groups has been at the heart of the approach that  
DEFRA has taken, and it has also been central to  
developing the new policy agenda that I hope to take  
forward.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): I am very concerned  
about the potential impact on animal welfare in Dudley  
of illegally dumped waste at the Rowan Oak site in  
Shaw Road. Local businesses are furious about the  
amount of time it is taking the Environment Agency to  
deal with this. Will the Secretary of State look at this  
personally, talk to the Environment Agency, and help  
me to get this matter sorted out?

**Michael Gove:** I certainly will. Again—

965

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

966

**Mr Speaker:** I am a little uncertain as to how the  
animals were impacted on by this matter, but I do not  
think any further adumbration on the issue is required  
from the hon. Gentleman; the Secretary of State seems  
at home, so let us hear from the fella.

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Gentleman is a doughty  
champion for his constituents, never more so than in  
raising this case. I have already talked to the Environment  
Agency about the increase in the number of illegal  
waste sites and the damage that that does to human  
and, indeed, animal health and welfare. We are reviewing  
how we investigate and prosecute the criminals behind  
this activity.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): I am sure that people  
will be greatly reassured by what the Secretary of State  
has said today about animal welfare. On the back of  
that, will the Government commit to increase the penalties  
for people convicted of animal cruelty?

**Michael Gove:** I am actively reviewing this matter. As  
my hon. Friend knows, I am not someone who will  
automatically reach for stronger criminal sanctions as  
the only route to dealing with a problem, but there are  
particular cases of animal cruelty where we may well  
need to revisit the existing criminal sanctions in order to  
ensure that the very worst behaviour is dealt with using  
the full force of the law.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Across the country,  
complaints are still frequently made to the police concerning  
the killing and chasing of foxes and hares by hounds as  
part of organised hunts. What steps will the Secretary  
of State take to ensure better enforcement of the Hunting  
Act 2004, which clearly represents the will of the British  
people?

**Michael Gove:** The law of the land must always be  
enforced without fear or favour.

Leaving the EU: Food Security

6. **Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD):  
What assessment his Department has made of the  
potential effect on food security of the UK leaving the  
EU. [900591]

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** Food security depends on global factors including  
increasing global production sustainably, reducing waste,  
and ensuring open markets to facilitate trade around  
the world. With regard to the EU, we are prioritising  
securing the freest trade possible, including an ambitious  
and comprehensive free trade agreement and a new  
customs agreement.

**Tom Brake:** Does the Minister accept the definition  
of “food security” provided by the former Government  
chief scientific adviser, Sir John Beddington—notably,  
that food security is characterised as requiring a food  
system that is sufficient, sustainable, safe and equitable?  
By reference to which indicators of food security will  
DEFRA be judging the food security consequences of  
the post-Brexit food and agricultural system?

**George Eustice:** The Foresight report to which the  
right hon. Gentleman refers set out that this country  
has a high level of food security. We have open markets,  
and a relatively high level of self-sufficiency as well,  
although that is not the key factor in food security. The  
report actually highlighted that there were no issues on  
food security. As I said earlier, we do not believe that  
leaving the EU has any impact on food security at all.

**Mr Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley) (Con): Food security  
can be enhanced by supporting the export of great  
British foods throughout the world. It is no surprise  
that I love British food and drink—particularly Lancashire  
cheese and British beer, both produced in my constituency.  
Will the Minister ensure that as we approach Brexit and  
these trade deals, we do a lot more to ensure that many  
more markets around the world can enjoy the food that  
I enjoy here in this country?

**George Eustice:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
We made it clear in our manifesto that we want to open  
new markets and to produce more and export more  
great British food from this country. He cites some great  
examples from his own constituency. We continue to  
press hard to open new markets and create new  
opportunities.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary  
of State said earlier that he was not in favour of mega-farms,  
yet there has been a 26% increase in the history of this  
Government. This has an effect not only on food security,  
animal welfare and food standards, but on the structure  
of our British farms, including the future of tenant  
farms. What will the Minister say to tenant farmers  
about their security after Brexit?

**George Eustice:** I had a meeting with the Tenancy  
Reform Industry Group just a couple of weeks ago,  
where we discussed in detail the issue of tenancy law,  
including whether we could review the workings of  
existing farm business tenancies and whether we could  
do more to encourage models such as contract farming,  
share farming and franchise farming to create new  
opportunities for new entrants.

**Rural Economy**

7. **Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): What  
steps his Department is taking to support the rural  
economy. [900592]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Therese Coffey):**The Government are absolutely committed to supporting  
and strengthening the rural economy to allow good  
businesses to grow and thrive. We have invested nearly  
£2 billion of public funding in delivering superfast  
broadband. We have the universal service obligation,  
and we will be securing improvements to mobile connectivity  
in rural areas.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** The best way to help the rural  
economy is to keep farmers in business. Will my hon.  
Friend will give me a modest little birthday present  
today, and undertake to be positive about reintroducing  
a deficiency payments scheme? That scheme was very  
popular with farmers before 1972, and the United States

967

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

968

introduced such a scheme after 2002 that was not  
contrary to World Trade Organisation rules. The scheme  
would actually help the rural economy greatly.

**Dr Coffey:** We will study my hon. Friend's comments  
carefully. I must admit that I was born in 1971, so I do  
not have any direct knowledge, but he will know of the  
ongoing support that the Conservative Government  
will continue to give farmers, and we have made a  
commitment to continue that stable support as we  
transition out of the EU.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): One of the best things  
the Government could do to support farmers in my  
constituency, particularly sheep farmers, is just give  
them simple clarity about whether they will be paying  
tariffs on their exports to Europe of sheep products.  
That will be key to their ability to plan their investment  
with certainty during the next 18 months.

**Dr Coffey:** The right hon. Gentleman will be aware  
that the Government have set out the approach we  
intend to seek for a comprehensive free trade agreement  
with the European Union once we depart from it. We  
want to provide such clarity as soon as possible, and he  
will be aware that the negotiations are ongoing.

17. [900602] **Victoria Prentis** (Banbury) (Con): I note  
that the Minister is aware that the cost of the bureaucracy  
related to applying for common agricultural policy subsidies  
has been considerable for farmers over recent years.  
Will she reassure me that this cost under the new British  
agricultural policy, or whatever it ends up being called,  
will be considerably lower and that it will be easier to  
apply for?

**Dr Coffey:** I am very happy to assure my hon. Friend  
that our future agricultural policy will be designed in a  
way that reduces needless and energy-sapping bureaucracy.  
We expect it to be simpler than the CAP, but she will  
recognise that we have a duty to ensure that taxpayers'  
money is spent carefully and transparently. We will  
continue to reward farmers and landowners, who manage  
our precious countryside, in a way that supports the  
best environmental outcomes.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): In the Minister's answer  
to the original question, she mentioned the roll-out of  
rural broadband. May I appeal to the Minister by  
saying that the roll-out is taking far too long in many  
communities, including my own constituency? What  
more will she do to speed up the installation of superfast  
broadband in rural areas?

**Dr Coffey:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that  
the Welsh Assembly Government are working closely  
with local communities and BT Openreach to reach  
such places. I am sure he will be able to follow up on  
that directly, but I will pass on his concerns to my right  
hon. Friend the Minister for Digital.

**EU Markets (West Country Food Exporters)**

8. **Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): What recent  
discussions he has had with food exporters in the west  
country on safeguarding tariff-free access to EU markets.  
[900593]

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have a  
number of leading west country food manufacturers in  
my constituency, including Falfish and Rodda's cream,  
both of which are successful exporters. In addition, we  
are working closely with trade organisations, such as  
the Food and Drink Federation, to understand the  
needs of the industry. We have been clear that we intend  
to put in place a new partnership with the EU, which  
will include a comprehensive free trade agreement.

**Mr Bradshaw:** The Minister will know that 80% of  
west country fish and 30% of our lamb is exported  
straight to EU markets, free—currently—of tariffs and  
other barriers. Those food producers will be extremely  
concerned by the comments today of the International  
Trade Secretary, who appears completely relaxed about  
the prospect of leaving the EU with no deal. Does the  
Minister agree with him, or with the Chancellor, who  
said that this would be a very, very bad thing?

**George Eustice:** As the right hon. Gentleman will  
know, the UK has a significant trade deficit in food and  
drink products with the EU, so the EU needs access to  
our market as well. We have a significant deficit of  
around £18 billion a year, and I believe it is in the EU's  
interests, therefore, to secure a free trade agreement too.

**Mr Speaker:** Ah, how very apposite; the right hon.  
Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) was banging on  
about fish. I call Mr Marcus Fysh.

**Mr Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): I am afraid I am not  
going to speak about fish today, Mr Speaker, but another  
time I will be happy to do so.

Farmers in Somerset expect their Government to  
negotiate continued tariff-free cross-channel trade, and  
hundreds of thousands of farmers across the EU expect  
the same of theirs. What are Ministers doing to secure  
engagement now between Her Majesty's Revenue and  
Customs and Europe's national customs agencies to  
ensure that timely and appropriate data exchange keeps  
agricultural trade smooth after we leave the EU?

**George Eustice:** We have set out plans in this Session  
for Bills dealing with trade and customs, and those Bills  
will address the issues that my hon. Friend has raised. I  
know that colleagues right across Government are working  
in a great deal of detail on customs issues to secure an  
agreement.

Farm Subsidies

9. **Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD):  
What his Department's policy is on farm subsidies after  
2020; and if he will make a statement. [900594]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** The Government have  
committed to providing the same cash total in funds for  
farm support until the end of the Parliament. We have  
also announced our intention to introduce an agriculture  
Bill in this Session to provide stability for farmers as we  
leave the European Union, and of course we will continue  
to protect and enhance our natural environment.

969

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

970

**Tim Farron:** The average hill farm has an annual  
income before CAP payments of minus £10,000, and  
therefore hill farming as a sector is under enormous  
pressure, despite the fact that it is utterly fundamental  
to food security, to the protection of our environment  
and, indeed, to the maintenance of the landscape that  
has just won the Lake District world heritage site status.  
Will the Secretary of State reflect on the fact that  
successive Governments have used the common agricultural  
policy as an excuse for not providing direct, tailored  
support for hill farmers? Will he use this opportunity to  
promise me, the House and hill farmers across the  
country that he will introduce a hill farm allowance to  
protect our uplands and the hill farming industry?

**Michael Gove:** A very well-crafted question, and may  
I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his re-election in  
Westmorland and Lonsdale and take the opportunity  
to pay tribute to the dignified and principled way in  
which he has led his party? He is absolutely right that  
hill farming and upland farming matter. The proposition  
he puts forward is not the only way of ensuring that we  
can maintain the environmental and broader cultural  
benefits that hill farming brings, but I shall do everything  
possible to ensure that as we replace the common  
agricultural policy, the needs of hill and upland farmers  
are met more effectively than ever before.

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I thank  
Members very much for supporting me in becoming the  
Chair of the Select Committee on Environment, Food  
and Rural Affairs. As we reform our support systems  
for agriculture, and our environmental schemes in particular,  
we can make them less complicated—we will not have  
to count trees, work out whether a tree is a sapling and  
so on—and ensure that we can retain water and do  
everything that we want to do with the environment, as  
well as producing food. We have an ideal opportunity to  
do that as we bring the new British farming policy  
together.

**Michael Gove:** I add my voice to those of everyone in  
the House in congratulating my hon. Friend on securing  
re-election as Chairman of the Select Committee. Once  
again, he absolutely hits the nail on the head. As we  
move outside the European Union, our system of  
agricultural support must protect farmers through the  
vicissitudes they face; and, critically, the environmental  
benefits that farmers secure for us every day must be at  
the heart of any new system of support.

**Topical Questions**

T1. [900604] **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland)  
(LD): If he will make a statement on his departmental  
responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** May I wish every Member  
of the House an enjoyable recess and hope that they will  
take the opportunity to sample some of the range of  
great British food and drink that is available, as my hon.  
Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans) pointed  
out, as they holiday in these islands? Over the next few  
days I will be visiting Northern Ireland and Wales, and I  
very much enjoyed my earlier visits to Scotland. Agriculture  
and fisheries are stronger as part of our United Kingdom,  
whichever part of it we are privileged to represent.

**Mr Carmichael:** Of course, the finest food to be  
found anywhere includes Shetland lamb and Orkney  
beef, which are always best eaten in the community of  
their production. Anybody who wishes to join me over  
the summer recess in Orkney or Shetland will be very  
welcome. Those fine products get a lot of protection  
from the protected geographical status and protected  
designation of origin schemes, which we currently enjoy  
as part of the European Union. What is DEFRA doing  
to ensure that our food producers have protection that  
is at least as good after we leave?

**Michael Gove:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a  
very good point. As someone who recently had the  
opportunity to sample Orkney's fine smoked cheese at  
the royal highland show, may I add my praise for the  
produce of the beautiful islands he represents? Geographical  
indicators are of course a very useful tool. We want to  
ensure that, outside the European Union, British food,  
from whichever part of these islands it originates, can  
have its status and provenance protected at the heart of  
effective marketing.

T4. [900607] **Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire)  
(Con): Considering that my right hon. Friend has managed  
to complete 99.2% of the common agricultural policy  
payments in England, what assistance and co-operation  
can he offer the devolved Administration in Edinburgh,  
who have managed only to reach 90.4%?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend makes a very good  
point. It did not surprise me, though it may have  
surprised others, that we increased the representation of  
Scottish Conservatives in this House by 1,200% at the  
general election, not least in the north-east and Ochil  
and South Perthshire, where farmers are suffering as a  
result of the maladministration of the Scottish Government.  
Many of them are asking why the Scottish Government  
cannot learn from the Department for Environment  
and Rural Affairs and, instead of prating on about  
independence and constitutional uncertainty, learn from  
their partners in the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Holly Lynch** (Halifax) (Lab): The Secretary of State  
talks a great deal about gaining control of our waters  
after Brexit, but, as usual with this Government, so  
much of the detail is sadly lacking. Since 2013, three  
British-based vessels of the Royal Navy fishery protection  
squadron have not been exclusively used for fisheries  
enforcement. The Government's own figures show that  
the number of boats boarded by the fishery protection  
vessels has plummeted from 1,400 to just 278 over the  
past six years. Will the Minister explain what, “Take  
back control of our waters,” actually means and why  
fishing enforcement has dwindled so dramatically under  
this Government? Will he agree to conduct an urgent  
review to assist the level of fisheries enforcement required  
now and after Brexit?

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** I can tell the hon. Lady exactly what taking  
back control means. When we leave the EU we  
automatically, under international law, become an  
independent coastal state. That means that we will have  
responsibility for managing our exclusive economic zone,  
which is 200 nautical miles or the median line. We  
already enforce those waters. The hon. Lady raises  
concerns about the number of vessels, but most of the

971

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

972

work these days is digital. We have a control room in  
Newcastle that monitors the movement of every single  
fishing vessel in the country.

T5. [900608] **Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Although  
the Government provide support for cattle farmers  
affected by TB, can the Secretary of State reassure me  
that goat and sheep farmers in Cheshire will get comparable  
compensation?

**George Eustice:** My right hon. Friend is right. There  
is a particular problem in Cheshire, which is why two  
years ago we introduced six-monthly surveillance testing.  
We held a consultation in December on changing the  
way in which we calculate compensation rates on other  
species, including sheep and goats. The pig industry has  
some concerns and we are reviewing and addressing  
them. It is important to recognise that we already pay  
compensation to people with sheep and goat farms  
affected by TB.

T2. [900605] **Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Is  
“thick as mince, lazy as a toad and vain as Narcissus”  
an appropriate description to use for a fellow Cabinet  
member? If hard Brexiteers in our Government are  
falling out in that way, how on earth can the Secretary  
of State expect our European Union partners to take  
our negotiations seriously?

**Michael Gove:** The right hon. Gentleman, I am sure,  
is aware that we are working well together in government—  
*[Laughter]*—and I do not recognise the description he  
just gave as fitting any Member of this House.

T6. [900609] **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): Farmers in  
west Oxfordshire welcome the Government's assurance  
that CAP funding will be guaranteed until 2020 and for  
structural schemes for the lifetime of the scheme.  
Could the Government give further assurance as to  
what assistance will be given to farmers who plan on a  
five-year cycle?

**George Eustice:** I have been very clear to farmers  
that, in moving to a new system, we recognise the  
importance of a gradual transition. We have been very  
clear that we will work with farmers and industry over  
the next year or so as we work out our plans. We will  
then put in place a gradual transition from the old  
system to the new.

T3. [900606] **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Many of my  
constituents in Blaydon have suffered badly from landfill  
sites on their doorstep. What plans does the Secretary  
of State have, first to reduce the amount of waste going  
to landfill, and secondly to ensure that environmental  
protections are not only preserved but strengthened in  
the Brexit process?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Therese Coffey):**I welcome the hon. Lady to the House. I am sure that  
she will be a worthy successor to David Anderson, the  
gentleman with whom I worked previously. I assure her  
that we are working with councils to identify the barriers  
to increasing recycling in their areas. One London borough  
recycles less than 15% of its waste whereas other areas

recycle more than 60%. There are lessons that we can  
share, and I am actively engaged in that, including in  
working with the Environment Agency on the proper  
regulation of landfill sites.

T7. [900611] **Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): My hon.  
Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Chris  
Davies) has drawn the House's attention to the fantastic  
show in his constituency. I wish to draw hon. Members'  
attention to the most spectacular summer's day out in  
Worcestershire, the Hanbury show, which is held in my  
constituency. However, the farming communities in  
Inkberrow, Hanbury and the Lenches, who take part in  
the show with their fantastic produce, are concerned  
that, post-Brexit, there will be standards that affect the  
import and export of their products and have a negative  
impact on their trade. Will the Minister give us specific  
reassurances on that?

**George Eustice:** The Hanbury show is indeed a famous  
and strong agricultural show. The Secretary of State  
addressed the point earlier. We are clear that we prize  
our high standards of animal welfare and food and that  
they will not be compromised in any future trade agreement.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): In Blaenau Gwent,  
we are proud of our Tudor Brewery. However, although  
beers can trade on their Britishness, there is no guarantee  
that they are produced on these shores. With calls to  
buy British ever louder, what are the Government doing  
to ensure that customers know that British brands are  
made in Britain?

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good  
case and I look forward to enjoying a pint of Blaenau  
Gwent-brewed beer before too long. Outside the EU,  
we will have the capacity, should we choose to exercise  
it, more effectively to brand British food as British. As I  
said earlier, Members of all parties recognise that  
provenance matters for food and drink, and British is  
always best.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Last summer, I was  
pleased to meet key representatives from the charity  
Surfers Against Sewage. I congratulate them on their  
battle against plastics in our seas and marine environment,  
including the Solent and the River Itchen in my constituency.  
The summer holidays are due to begin. Will Ministers  
outline the work that we are doing around our coastlines,  
particularly the Solent and the Itchen, to ensure that  
they are safe for water sports and our local wildlife?

**Dr Coffey:** I, too, congratulate Surfers Against Sewage  
on not only its direct activity, but its ongoing campaigns.  
I was therefore pleased to meet Hugo Tagholm in the  
past year. Our beaches are of better quality than at any  
time since the industrial revolution. Last year, we introduced  
tougher bathing water standards, and even under those  
tough standards, 93.2% of England's beaches were rated  
excellent or good. I visited the Itchen last month. I am  
aware of some of the challenges, including the pressures  
of abstraction, but we will do what we can to improve  
the ecological as well as the leisure quality of rivers and  
beaches.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): Further to the  
question from the right hon. Member for Orkney and  
Shetland (Mr Carmichael), will the Secretary of State say  
exactly how he will ensure that products such as traditional

973

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

974

Grimsby smoked fish, produced by the excellent Alfred  
Enderby's traditional smokehouse in my constituency,  
retain their protected geographical indications?

**Michael Gove:** As someone who grew up with the  
scent of smoked fish in their nostrils, because that is  
what my father produced, I am committed to making  
sure that we have the best protection. Only last week, I  
visited H. Foreman & Son, who now enjoy a designation  
as providers and producers of London cure smoked  
salmon. As we have just discussed, we will have the  
opportunity outside the EU to ensure that British food  
can be more effectively branded as British and best.

**Richard Benyon** (Newbury) (Con): Does my right  
hon. Friend agree that the thought that must sit in his  
head as he plans a new management system for our  
fisheries is that it has to be on an ecosystems basis? That  
will allow him to ignore the simple blandishments of so  
many people who claim that there is a one-size-fits-all  
approach to fisheries management, which was the big  
failing of the common fisheries policy.

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend is right. He was  
a brilliant fisheries Minister, who was responsible within  
the EU for ensuring that the common fisheries policy,  
imperfect as it is in so many ways, was reformed to deal  
with discards and to develop our fish stocks on a more  
sustainable basis. Outside the EU, as an independent  
coastal state, we can do even more, but he is right that  
conservation must be at the heart of our policy.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): May I return to the  
issue of animal welfare? The Secretary of State will  
recognise that the use of antibiotics in farming is part of  
an animal welfare regime. However, there is massive  
concern that overuse of antibiotics is destroying their  
effectiveness, both for animals and humans. What can  
be done to reverse this trend?

**George Eustice:** The Veterinary Medicines Directorate  
and our chief vet have been working very closely with  
the Department of Health on plans to reduce the use of  
antibiotics. Great success has been achieved in sectors  
such as poultry, where there has been a substantial  
reduction of some 40% to 50% in antibiotics use. Often  
it is about adopting different approaches to husbandry  
to reduce reliance on antibiotics, but although a lot of  
progress has been made, there is more to do.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

*The hon. Member for Houghton and Sunderland South,  
representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral  
Commission, was asked—***EU Referendum Campaign**

1. **Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): What discussions  
   she has had with the commission on allegations of  
   illegal funding during the EU referendum campaign.  
   [900612]

**Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South):  
The commission has published two reports that include  
its assessment of the rules on campaign funding for the

EU referendum. The commission has also completed  
investigations of issues with a small number of campaigner  
spending returns, none of which related to impermissible  
donations. It is continuing to consider issues with some  
campaigners'spendingreturns,inlinewithitspublished  
enforcement policy. The commission publishes the outcome  
of all investigations on its website once investigations  
have been completed.

**Mr Bradshaw:** Can my hon. Friend confirm—or, if  
not, ask the Electoral Commission—whether it has  
received allegations of illegal financial funding from  
Russia to elements of the leave campaign?

**Bridget Phillipson:** The commission is aware of media  
reports that allege that there could have been Russian  
involvement in the EU referendum. These cover a wide  
range of alleged activities that are beyond the commission's  
remit. Any allegation with evidence that a registered  
campaigner accepted impermissible donations from Russia  
would be investigated in line with the commission's  
enforcement policy, but I am sure that officials from the  
commission would be more than happy to meet my  
right hon. Friend to discuss this matter further.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): Does my hon.  
Friend—and she is a friend—agree that not only is  
illegal funding wrong, but so is electoral fraud? May I  
invite her to ask the commission to conduct a proper  
inquiry into having a national voter register, to ensure  
that people do not double and triple vote in general  
elections and other elections?

**Bridget Phillipson:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.  
He will know that the 381 electoral registers are maintained  
by different electoral registration offices across the country,  
and it is not currently possible to interrogate them  
collectively in order to identify duplicate entries or  
voting in more than one area. The commission will be  
happy to work with the Government to consider potential  
solutions to reduce this risk.

**Election Expenses and Political Donations**

1. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):  
   What recent assessment the commission has made of  
   the effectiveness of the regulation of (a) election expenses  
   and (b) donations to political parties. [900613]

**Bridget Phillipson:** The Electoral Commission continues  
to regulate the rules on UK political finance in a way  
that is fair and proportionate, focusing on helping parties  
to comply with the law. Since 2013 the commission has  
been calling for changes to improve enforcement and  
sanctioning of the political finance rules. It has  
recommended increasing the maximum penalty it can  
impose and extending its enforcement responsibilities  
to some candidate spending rules. The commission will  
publish a report in the autumn on the regulation of  
election expenses and donations to political parties in  
the 2017 general election.

**Martyn Day:** There has been significant media coverage  
of the 2015 general election expenses issue, with the  
Tories being fined the maximum £70,000, and with an  
hon. Member reportedly having been charged. In March,  
the Electoral Commission chair, Sir John Holmes, said:

975

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

976

“There is a risk that some political parties might come to view  
the payment of these fines as a cost of doing business”.

Might it be worth making fine limits proportionate to  
the number of candidates standing for a party at an  
election?

**Bridget Phillipson:** The hon. Gentleman is right to  
make it clear that the Electoral Commission is of the  
view that the maximum fine of £20,000 could well be  
seen as the cost of doing business. The commission has  
called for an increase in the maximum penalty it can  
impose on political parties and other campaigners. It is  
of the view that the penalties should be more proportionate  
to the income and expenditure of larger and well-funded  
campaigners.

**Emergency Proxy Voting**

1. **Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): What assessment the  
   commission has made of the suitability of the rules on  
   emergency proxy vote applications for people who have  
   suffered a family bereavement. [900614]

**Bridget Phillipson:** The commission has recommended  
changes to the qualifying circumstances for appointing  
an emergency proxy since 2011. It recommends extending  
the qualifying circumstances to include those who have  
unforeseen caring responsibilities or who have experienced  
the death of a close relative. In its September 2016  
response to the commission's statutory report on the  
2015 general election, the UK Government confirmed  
that they had no plans to extend the qualifying  
circumstances for appointing an emergency proxy.

**Kevin Foster:** I thank the hon. Lady for her answer.  
My constituent Ruth Jones was unable to vote at the  
recent election following a family bereavement. She was  
attending her grandmother's funeral at the time. However,  
had she been called away for a work emergency, she  
could have qualified for an emergency proxy vote. Can  
the hon. Lady reassure me that the Electoral Commission  
will continue to push for changes to enable a family  
bereavement to be seen as having the same impact on a  
voter as a work emergency?

**Bridget Phillipson:** I am sorry to hear about the  
circumstances that the hon. Gentleman described, and  
the way in which they affected his constituent. I can  
assure him that the Electoral Commission is still of the  
view that there is a gap in the emergency proxy provision,  
and remains concerned about the need to enhance the  
accessibility of the process by extending the qualifying  
circumstances. I am sure that the commission would  
welcome any support that he could offer in that regard.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): Rules and procedures on proxies, emergency  
proxies and postal votes are good only if they are  
followed. What action is the Electoral Commission  
taking to address the shambolic handling of the general  
election in Plymouth, which resulted in 1,500 postal  
votes not being sent out, and 6,500 votes not being  
included in the declaration on the evening of the count?

**Bridget Phillipson:** The commission is collecting  
information from returning officers about their experience  
of the 8 June general election. I am sure that it would

also welcome the views of my hon. Friend, should he  
wish to share them with representatives of the commission,  
either in writing or through a meeting, which I am sure  
they would be happy to attend.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Bearing in mind  
the questionably massive amount of proxy votes used in  
some constituencies in Northern Ireland, including Foyle,  
will the hon. Lady outline the steps being taken to stop  
the alleged abuse by some parties of this vital voting  
mechanism, which I, too, believe could be compassionately  
extended to grieving families?

**Bridget Phillipson:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware  
that different arrangements relating to identity are in  
place in Northern Ireland. However, any concerns about  
possible criminal activity would be a matter for the  
police force, and I suggest that he encourages anyone  
with evidence of criminal activity to report it to the  
police.

**Voter Registration and Boundary Commission Review**

1. **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab):  
   What discussions the Committee has had with the  
   commission on the effect of (a) recent rises in voter  
   registration and (b) the 2017 general election on the  
   conclusions of the most recent Boundary Commission  
   review. [900616]

**Bridget Phillipson:** The Electoral Commission this  
week published a report on electoral registration at the  
June 2017 UK general election. It highlights that online  
electoral registration resulted in a record electorate of  
an estimated 46.8 million people. The commission's  
report argues that further modernisation is required to  
reduce the impact of large numbers of duplicate registration  
applications, and to ensure that the registration process  
is more joined up with other public services. The commission  
does not have any responsibilities in relation to the  
review of parliamentary constituency boundaries, which  
are a matter for the UK's boundary commissions.

**Dr Huq:** As my hon. Friend points out, 2.9 million  
new people registered to vote and became part of a  
record electorate in the recent general election. There  
was a similar spike before last year's referendum. Surely  
we should now heed the Electoral Commission's  
recommendation that boundary reviews take place after  
a major electoral event, to take those new people into  
account and to ensure that the 2022 election does not  
hark back to the outmoded situation of 2015.

**Bridget Phillipson:** The current review of parliamentary  
constituencies is a matter for the boundary commissions,  
but the Electoral Commission has previously recommended  
that Parliament and the Boundary Commission consider  
whether it would be more appropriate to base reviews  
on electoral data taken from the registers used for  
elections, rather than from the register published on  
1 December.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): It is  
perfectly reasonable for students and others to be registered  
in two places if they are normally resident in both. Does  
the hon. Lady agree that it would be sensible to check  
one in 100 late registrations to see whether they are

977

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

978

double-registered and whether double voting has taken  
place? That would give us more scope to determine  
whether and how much fraud took place at the last election.

**Bridget Phillipson:** I am sure that the Electoral  
Commission will take heed of the hon. Gentleman's  
suggestion. It takes seriously any suggestion that an  
individual might have voted twice, but so far there is  
little evidence of widespread abuse in the recent general  
election. As he says, it is possible in certain circumstances  
for people—including students and MPs—to be lawfully  
registered to vote in more than one place. However, it is  
a criminal offence to cast more than one vote on their  
behalf in a UK parliamentary general election.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): One of the most  
efficient organisations in recruiting young people to the  
electoral register is Bite the Ballot. It can register 16 to  
18-year-olds for as little as 25p per elector; by comparison,  
the Electoral Commission's advertising campaigns cost  
£80 to £90 per download. Will my hon. Friend liaise  
with the Electoral Commission and ask whether it will  
develop service level agreements with this excellent  
organisation?

**Bridget Phillipson:** I am more than happy to take up  
my hon. Friend's suggestion. He is a doughty campaigner  
on this issue, and I am sure that he will continue that  
work now that he is back with us in this place.

**Mr Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): The commission is  
correct to highlight the discrepancy between the 1 December  
assessment of our electorate, and the electorate in our  
most recent election. In my constituency, the difference  
between the 2015 and 2017 elections was 8,000, which is  
over 10%. Would the hon. Lady welcome an investigation  
by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs  
Committee into how we deal with such discrepancies?

**Bridget Phillipson:** It will be for the Committee and  
its new members, when it is constituted, to consider the  
best way of examining the issues. We all want to ensure  
that registers are as complete as possible, that people  
are not missed out and that there is no reduction in the  
number of people registered to vote, so that the boundary  
commissions can consider parliamentary constituency  
boundaries based on the best available registers.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

*The right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the  
Church Commissioners, was asked—*

**Fuel Poverty**

1. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What steps  
   the Church of England is taking to tackle food poverty.

[900618]

**The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline  
Spelman):** First of all, may I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Houghton and Sunderland South (Bridget  
Phillipson) on her appointment to her role representing  
the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission?  
I thought she did a very good job of answering  
the questions.

Seventy-five per cent. of churches collect food,  
38% provide volunteers, 29% help to manage a food  
bank, and 21% distribute food vouchers. Churches also

work in partnership with organisations such as Citizens  
Advice and Christians Against Poverty to tackle the  
underlying causes of food poverty.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I thank the right hon. Lady for that  
response. As she will know, the Archbishop of Canterbury  
is the president of Feeding Britain, and I was pleased to  
be able to launch its latest pilot in Bristol on Friday. I  
appreciate the work that churches are doing in providing  
food banks, and the other work that she outlined. What  
more can they do to lobby the Government on the  
underlying causes of food poverty that cause people to  
resort to such measures?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** Christians Against Poverty  
is proactive in trying to tackle the underlying causes by  
offering free debt advice and financial education  
programmes, for example. The charity has just appointed  
Dickens Heath church in my constituency to provide  
those courses over a wide region, so I suggest that the  
hon. Lady may like to approach it about doing the same  
in Bristol.

**Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): Will  
my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating June  
Osborne, the Bishop of Llandaff, who was consecrated  
in Brecon cathedral on Saturday, becoming the second  
female bishop in the Church in Wales?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I am quite sure that the  
Bishop of Llandaff will focus on the needs of people  
who may suffer from food poverty in her diocese, but I  
of course congratulate her on her appointment.

**Mr Speaker:** Very deft.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): The right hon.  
Lady will be pleased to hear that food banks in Stroud  
are run largely through the churches, but they are under  
huge pressure due to the number of volunteers they  
need and the amount of food that they have to collect.  
Will she have a word with the Government about the  
sanctions regime, which is one of the major causes of  
the increase in food bank usage?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** As Members of Parliament,  
it is important that we address the underlying causes. I  
had a letter from the Trussell Trust just last month,  
which said that people

“may be reassured to hear that, on average people are only  
referred to Trussell Trust foodbanks two times in a 12-month  
period”,  
and that the model is

“designed to help people in a crisis”.

As Members, we need to address the nature of the crises  
that make it necessary for people to get help.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

*The hon. Member for Houghton and Sunderland South,  
representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral  
Commission, was asked—*

**Electoral Regulations (Compliance)**

1. **Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): Whether the  
   Commission is undertaking a review of political parties'  
   compliance with electoral regulations during the 2017  
   general election. [900619]

979

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

980

**Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South):  
Prior to the general election, the commission produced  
detailed guidance for political parties to help them  
comply with their statutory reporting requirements.  
The commission also engaged with a number of parties  
to discuss our arrangements for compliance. Its advice  
service for parties was available and well used throughout  
the campaign. The commission will publish parties'  
spending returns for the general election as soon as is  
practicably possible once the deadlines for submitting  
the returns has passed.

**Wayne David:** I thank my hon. Friend for her response.  
She should be aware that serious allegations have been  
made about the use of a call centre in Neath by the  
Conservative party during the general election campaign.  
I want to tell the House that I have heard from the  
Electoral Commission, which has stated in writing that  
South Wales police are formally considering the allegations.

**Bridget Phillipson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend  
for that. He will know that political parties that spend  
over £250,000 at the general election have six months to  
send audited spending returns to the commission, and  
they will need to include details of all party spending on  
campaigning at the election.

It is a potential offence under the Representation of  
the People Acts for there to be paid canvassing on  
behalf of the candidate, and any allegations would be a  
matter for the relevant police force to consider.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

*The right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the  
Church Commissioners, was asked—*

**Rural Parish Growth**

1. **Victoria Prentis** (Banbury) (Con): What funds the  
   Church of England makes available for rural parish  
   growth. [900622]

**The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline  
Spelman):** Rural parish funding is primarily the  
responsibility of the individual diocese, but the Church  
Commissioners have made available national support  
under the strategic development fund. To date, the fund  
hasprovided£34.6millionfor 32 projects in 25 dioceses.

**Victoria Prentis:** As you know, Mr Speaker, I talk a  
lot about my worries regarding the recruitment of  
obstetricians in Banbury, but I am equally concerned  
about recruitment to the rural Church. Can my right  
hon. Friend help me by explaining what more the  
Church can do to encourage the right sort of ordinands  
to apply, and what sort of training can we give them  
when they apply?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** The Church is committed to  
doubling the number of people entering training by  
2020, and it has made very good progress with the push  
on training ordinands. Since 2014, we have seen an  
increase of 14% in the numbers training for priesthood,  
and my hon. Friend may be interested to hear that there  
has been an above-average number of women—14%—and  
that 25% of that cohort is under the age of 32.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): But would not  
growth in the Church of England be easier if it moved  
on from its cruel and outdated approach to both clergy  
and laity who are in same-sex relationships? Will the  
right hon. Lady tell the bishops that simply kicking this  
issue into the long grass for another three years, as the  
General Synod agreed last week, is just not acceptable?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** It is important to see in  
balance the progress that has been made by the Church.  
At the Synod, important decisions were made, including  
on tackling homophobic bullying in Church of England  
schools—the Church is the largest provider of education  
in this country—and on taking steps to ban trans and  
conversion therapies; that was voted on in the Synod.  
The fact that the Church is making progress in this area  
is hopefully an indication of more to follow.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): Rural parish  
growth is being handicapped by the fact that the clergy  
are responsible for six, eight or even more parishes.  
What efforts are being made to ensure that more people  
are recruited to the clergy, and that they are directed  
towards rural parishes?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** As I said, the Church has  
set itself a target—that is the important thing—of doubling  
the number of people entering training by 2020, and it  
is making progress by increasing the numbers coming  
into training.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Church has changed  
the ways in which people can train for the priesthood.  
They can train by residential course, as is traditional,  
but they can also train on the job and through peripatetic  
learning, which makes it generally easier for a much  
wider range of people to train for the priesthood, if  
they feel called to do so.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Oh, very well.

**Michael Fabricant:** On the subject of training, does  
my right hon. Friend not also think that training in  
human resources and personnel is important? She will  
know that the Dean of Peterborough, Charles Taylor,  
was sacked from that cathedral and given only24hours'  
notice to leave the deanery. Does she think that that was  
not only unprofessional on the part of the chapter, but  
very unchristian?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** Obviously, I have sympathy  
with anyone who loses their job, but with the greatest  
respect, those facts are not quite correct. On 2 October  
2016, the dean announced his retirement, and he did  
not leave the deanery, and was not asked to leave it,  
until the following February, giving him six months'  
residence—

**Michael Fabricant:** No, he was not. That is wrong.

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** Those are the facts I have  
been given.

I think we should try to leave this term on a happier  
note, so I conclude by wishing all colleagues a very  
welcome recess.

981

Oral Answers

20 JULY 2017

Oral Answers

982

**Mr Speaker:** I join the right hon. Lady in that. She  
was typically gracious in her comments about the hon.  
Member for Houghton and Sunderland South (Bridget  
Phillipson), whom I warmly welcome to her new  
responsibilities, which, as has been said, have been very  
effectively discharged today. I also thank the right hon.

Lady, who is always courteous, fair and comprehensive  
in responding to inquiries. I hope that both Members  
can take a rest from their onerous duties—both their  
constituency duties, and their duties in respect of the  
matters about which we have heard this morning.

983

20 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

984

Contaminated Blood

10.35 am

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)  
*(Urgent Question):* To ask the Secretary of State for  
Health if he will make a statement on the responsibility  
for establishing an inquiry into the contaminated blood  
scandal.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health  
(Jackie Doyle-Price):** I begin by adding my personal  
apology to those who have previously spoken in this  
House about the tragedy of contaminated blood, and  
by reiterating that the Government recognise the terrible  
impact contaminated blood has had on many thousands  
of lives.

The Government recognise that previous inquiries  
into the events that led to thousands of people being  
infected with HIV and/or hepatitis C through NHS-supplied  
blood or blood products did not go far enough. That is  
why, on Tuesday 11 July 2017, the Prime Minister  
committed to establishing a further inquiry so that the  
causes of this tragedy can be fully understood.

Once established, we want the inquiry to be fully  
independent. Before it is established, however, there is a  
need to define its scope and format so that terms of  
reference may be set by the relevant Secretary of State.  
Given the tragedy's impact on so many lives, it is vital  
that we get this right and that we get it right from the  
start. I am aware of the concerns that have been raised  
this week by those affected, by campaign groups and by  
Members of this House. Indeed, I spoke to the hon.  
Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson)  
on Tuesday about this very issue.

I reassure the House that the Government have as yet  
made no final decisions on the scope and format of an  
inquiry, or on its leadership. I have newly taken on this  
policy area, and I am keen to make sure that all those  
affected are given an opportunity to give us their thoughts  
and opinions. I understand it is normal practice for  
public inquiries to be sponsored by the relevant Department.  
However, we are keen to listen to the concerns that have  
been raised and ensure that they are addressed, which is  
why we are in discussions with the Cabinet Office and  
colleagues across Government to ensure that this inquiry  
does its job, and does it well, under appropriate leadership.

That is why an early consultative meeting was scheduled  
for today, hosted at the Cabinet Office, and the Secretary  
of State and Ministers hope to understand further the  
important views of those affected on the shape and  
establishment of an inquiry. This is the first of several  
meetings that the Government would like to offer over  
the coming weeks. I strongly encourage anyone affected  
to give us their views. Our door is open to anyone who  
wants to discuss the inquiry or raise any concerns they  
may have.

It is important to note that, whatever arrangements  
are agreed for this independent inquiry, safeguards will  
be put in place to ensure independence—for instance,  
by ensuring that the secretary to the inquiry has never  
worked at the Department of Health or any of its  
agencies. I reiterate that we are absolutely committed to  
a thorough and transparent inquiry, and we want to  
establish the best format and remit. That is why we want

to hear as many opinions as possible, and we will work  
with those affected and Members of this House to do  
so.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am grateful to the Minister for  
the clarity of what she has just said. I should emphasise  
that this is not an occasion for a general debate on the  
contaminated blood scandal. We have had that on  
many occasions, and I have also granted urgent questions  
previously to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
North (Diana Johnson) on this matter. The issue is very  
specifically the locus, the responsibility and possibly, at  
a stretch, the scope. If Members can tailor their questions  
accordingly, it would be greatly appreciated.

**Diana Johnson:** Thank you for granting this urgent  
question, Mr Speaker.

Although I welcome last week's announcement of an  
inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal, the vast  
majority of people affected by this scandal, their families,  
campaign groups and legal representatives, plus many  
cross-party parliamentarians, are, like me, dismayed to  
see the Department of Health leading on the establishment  
of this inquiry. The Department of Health, an implicated  
party at the heart of so much that has gone wrong over  
the past 45 years, must have no role in how this inquiry  
is established—in my view, it is akin to asking South  
Yorkshire police to lead an inquiry into the Hillsborough  
disaster. I regret that the Government have not been  
able to understand that putting the Department of  
Health in charge at this time immediately undermines  
their excellent decision to call a public inquiry last  
week. In consequence, contaminated blood campaigners  
boycotted a meeting organised by the Department of  
Health at 10 am today in protest. Another Department  
must surely now take over the responsibility for consulting  
on the remit of this inquiry.

I am pleased that the Government acknowledge the  
overwhelming and unanimous opposition to the  
Department of Health consulting on the inquiry, including  
from more than 250 campaigners and 10 campaign  
groups, the Haemophilia Society, and the law firms  
Collins Law and Leigh Day, which together represent  
716 claimants. Nevertheless, the Minister needs to address  
two questions urgently. Why, on Tuesday 18 July, did  
the Department of Health call a meeting for 10 am  
today, with just two days' notice, in central London,  
and at a time that is most difficult, inconvenient and  
expensive for people affected to attend? When I spoke  
to the Minister, she told me that the Government plan  
to update the House by September and get the inquiry  
up and running as soon as possible. That had not been  
made clear to campaigners or MPs, and I wondered  
why.

I still believe that the case is even more pressing for  
another Department to take over the work of establishing  
this inquiry now. That Department must then have a  
true and meaningful consultation with everyone affected,  
so that they can be fully involved and have confidence in  
this public inquiry.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** As I mentioned, no firm view has  
been taken as to which Department will run the inquiry,  
but as the Minister with responsibility for this area the

985

Contaminated Blood

20 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

986

*[Jackie Doyle-Price]*

House would consider it amiss if I were not having  
meetings and discussions with those affected about the  
inquiry's remit. When the Minister of State, my hon.  
Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), made the  
statement to the House about the inquiry, we made it  
clear that we wanted to progress as soon as possible.  
The Secretary of State called this meeting because we  
want to hear directly from the victims about what they  
want from the inquiry. We are very much in listening  
mode. A decision has not yet been taken as to which  
Department will run the inquiry but ultimately, as a  
Minister, I am accountable to Parliament for what  
happens in the Department of Health in those areas for  
which I have responsibility, and I want to be leading  
from the front, having those discussions.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): I thank the  
Minister for saying that no decision has yet been taken  
about which Department will run the inquiry. Does she  
agree that perception is as important as reality in this  
matter, and therefore will she gain from this occasion a  
mindfulness of the weight placed by hon. Members, on  
both sides of the House, on the idea that the inquiry  
perhaps would be perceived to be more objective if  
some other Department took the lead?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I say to my right hon. Friend,  
and I have repeated this in other discussions as well,  
that the Cabinet Office is very closely involved in this,  
and this opportunity has given me the time to make that  
clear to the House. The Government are listening; we  
want to consult as widely as possible. No decision has  
yet been taken, but the Cabinet Office is closely involved  
in all the consultation we are currently having.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland  
West) (Lab): It is disappointing that we are here again  
today, so soon after last week's announcement. A week  
ago, this House united in agreement to finally facilitate  
justice for those tragically affected by this scandal. Yet,  
as we have heard, in recent days Ministers have reneged  
on last week's promises and run roughshod over the  
affected community.

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip  
Dunne)** *indicated dissent.*

**Mrs Hodgson:** The Minister of State may shake his  
head, but that is how the community feel; we have  
spoken to them. There are three key questions that the  
Under-Secretary before us this morning must answer,  
and I hope she will be more forthcoming with much-needed  
answers than she was to my hon. Friend the Member  
for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson).

Understandably, the community have deeply held  
suspicions when it comes to the Department of Health,  
so why are Ministers ignoring these concerns and the  
demands to facilitate an inquiry through another  
Department, such as the Ministry of Justice? This concern  
has been well documented in the letter to the Prime  
Minister by my hon. Friend, the Haemophilia Society,  
the 10 campaign groups and the law firms Collins Law  
and Leigh Day. Why does the Minister think the  
Government can so easily disregard all these people?

Events over the past few days have shown that last  
week's promise to consult, engage and listen to the  
community was simply warm words. The audacious  
move to hold a roundtable meeting this morning with  
so little notice to potential attendees from throughout  
the UK has hindered many from being involved in the  
process of setting up the inquiry. Will Ministers explain  
why the meeting was held at such short notice? Who did  
they plan to invite so that the meeting was properly  
consultative? In the end, who was scheduled to attend  
following the mass boycott by many of those invited,  
who felt that the offer of a meeting was a slap in the  
face?

It is important that the inquiry is held sooner rather  
than later, but not at the risk of jeopardising justice.  
Will the Minister publicly outline, now, the timetable  
for the inquiry? Do the Government intend to initiate  
the inquiry in September? If so, why has that not been  
made public? Why is it that we must bring Ministers to  
the House again to make this clear? Does that not go  
against everything we were promised last week? The  
Minister must remember the promises made just last  
week and ensure that consultation is central to the  
whole process; otherwise, the Government will fail this  
community, who must have the justice they so rightly  
deserve.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** It is in taking forward the  
consultation that we are delivering on the commitments  
made last week. We made it clear then that we wanted  
to get the inquiry going as soon as possible because,  
frankly, these people have waited long enough for answers.  
We have not ignored the concerns expressed by many  
about the role of the Department of Health in the  
inquiry. I repeat: no decision has yet been made and the  
Cabinet Office is closely involved in taking the matter  
forward.

As for the complaints about the short notice of the  
meeting organised by the Secretary of State this week, it  
is because we want to hear directly from the people  
affected as soon as possible that such a meeting was  
arranged before the House rises for recess. This is just  
the start. We want there to be good, effective dialogue  
because, as the hon. Member for Washington and  
Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) and the rest of the  
House will appreciate, it is important that we all inspire  
confidence in this process. Given the cross-party support  
we had when the inquiry was announced, it is disappointing  
that we are now getting bogged down in the process.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Like others  
in the Chamber, I welcomed the Prime Minister's  
announcement last week of a public inquiry. I am  
encouraged by what the Minister is telling us this morning.  
One of my constituents who was affected has raised the  
issue of which Department should take the lead in the  
inquiry. Will my hon. Friend the Minister confirm what  
role victims, families and campaigners will play? How  
can they best engage with her and the Department at  
this stage?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** We obviously want to hear from  
as many of the affected people as possible, and we will  
reflect on their representations. If they want to be very  
clear and blunt about the role of the Department of

987

Contaminated Blood

20 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

988

Health, we need to hear those representations so that  
we can make the best decision about who takes forward  
the inquiry.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I  
thank the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson) for asking this urgent question and  
pay tribute to her for continuously pushing on this  
important subject to ensure that we get justice for those  
so tragically affected. The inquiry must get the right  
answers, and it must command the confidence of those  
affected. Will the Minister confirm when a decision will  
be made as to which Department will lead on the  
establishment of the inquiry? Does she think it is right  
for the Department of Health to lead it? Will she  
confirm that the inquiry will include the families and  
victims, so that it is sensitive to what they want to  
know? Will the Government ensure that the inquiry will  
have to look at all matters, including documents, patient  
records and things that were altered and hidden, and  
that the things hidden behind public interest barriers  
will be opened up, so that light can be shed on this  
matter, as was the case with Hillsborough?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** To be clear, the Department of  
Health is the sponsoring Department for the inquiry,  
which will be entirely independent. It is yet to be determined  
who will oversee it. Clearly, having made the statement  
and expressed our intention to hold an inquiry, we need  
to consult to make sure that that inquiry reflects on and  
answers the hon. Gentleman's questions. Central to that  
will be the need for it to be seen to be transparent, open  
and fully independent. Once it is established, the inquiry  
will be entirely removed from the Department of Health.  
That should be enough to inspire confidence, provided  
we get the consultation right so that we get the remit  
right.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Two of  
my constituents who were affected by this terrible tragedy  
have already contacted me with concerns about the  
Department of Health's involvement in the inquiry.  
This is a unique situation, especially with respect to the  
time it has taken to bring forward the inquiry, and  
credit should go to the Government for announcing it.  
Nevertheless, it is incredibly important that justice is  
seen to be done, so will the Minister consult members of  
the all-party group on haemophilia and contaminated  
blood with regard to who she determines are the right  
people to oversee the scope of the inquiry?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I am keen to hear from all Members  
of the House and members of the public on how they  
feel the inquiry should be taken forward. That is the  
spirit in which we are embarking on this consultation.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)  
(Lab): I welcome the Government's decision to hold  
this inquiry in response to the campaign led by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North  
(Diana Johnson). I know that the Health Minister is  
acting in good faith, but over many years Department  
of Health officials have advised there is no need for the  
inquiry and no problem at the heart of the issue. Will  
she recognise that because of that it would have much  
greater credibility for many of those who have campaigned  
on this issue if the sponsoring Department were another

Department—be it the Ministry of Justice or the Cabinet  
Office—if all the staff did not come from the Health  
Department, and if one of the other Departments  
could be involved in the consultation, the establishment  
and the remit. This is no criticism of her—I know she  
takes this very seriously—but I advise her to hand this  
one over to another Department and let them run with  
it instead.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I understand the right hon. Lady's  
point and I repeat that the Cabinet Office is closely  
involved with this at this stage. I think she would  
consider it most remiss of me were I not to take a close  
interest as this consultation is taken forward. I cannot  
say this enough: it is essential that the way in which the  
inquiry is established inspires confidence in the people  
affected, and that is what we are trying to achieve  
through the consultation. As I say, we want to hear  
from them and we are completely open-minded as to  
which Department takes responsibility. For now, I want  
to have those conversations because I want to understand  
their concerns with what has happened with the Department  
of Health. As a Minister, I need to give that challenge.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): The  
letter from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull  
North (Diana Johnson) started by expressing gratitude  
to the Government for the progress made so far. That  
would have been welcome decades ago, but it is right to  
acknowledge it now. The letter included three practical  
points that it put perhaps slightly better than the shadow  
Minister. The machinery of government cannot work  
overnight normally and the questions and answers today  
will help the Government and the Prime Minister decide  
whether the right solution is, as has been suggested,  
having another Department or the Cabinet Office take  
on the consultation with the Department of Health  
helping as far as it can. The one point for the Department  
of Health now is whether it can guarantee the third  
point in the hon. Lady's letter, which is that no records  
will be destroyed and that they will all be available to  
the inquiry.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I can certainly give my hon.  
Friend that commitment. Let me reiterate that we have  
made many documents available in public, all published,  
and I can give him every assurance that nothing will be  
destroyed. Having now taken the decision to hold an  
inquiry, we must get it right. I am happy to hear from  
hon. Members at any time if they have any specific  
concerns about whether they think evidence is being  
withheld, so that I can satisfy myself that that is not the  
case.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): This is not a  
matter of challenging the Minister's personal integrity;  
that is not in doubt. What is in doubt is the wisdom of  
the decision to have a Department that is majorly  
implicated in the concerns about what happened in the  
past involved at any point in the consultation and in  
taking the inquiry forward. I hope that before we go  
into recess an urgent statement can be rushed out  
advising that the Cabinet Office or the Ministry of  
Justice will now lead, not only on the outline of the  
inquiry but on the consultation. Then we can have trust  
from those who have been involved.

989

Contaminated Blood

20 JULY 2017

Contaminated Blood

990

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** It is quite without precedent at  
this stage—so shortly after announcing an inquiry—for  
such a decision to be made. It is normal practice for the  
sponsoring Department to embark on the consultation,  
and I repeat that the Cabinet Office is closely involved  
from the perspective of propriety and ethics and the  
Department of Health is not working alone.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I warmly welcome the  
fact that the inquiry is now happening, and that the  
Government made the decision to undertake it, given  
the decades that have gone past since this issue first  
came up and the scandal occurred. Will the Minister  
reassure the victims that, in terms of any judicial  
involvement, which is almost certain in this case, the  
identity of the judge concerned will be selected by the  
Lord Chief Justice, and not by any Government  
Department?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** That would be the normal procedure,  
so yes, I can give that commitment.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): Will the  
Secretary of State assure us that, in the responsibility of  
this inquiry, there are real powers, which will enable the  
inquiry to ensure that it has proper access to all the  
witnesses and documents necessary? That will be vital  
to developing a just settlement for all those affected and  
their families. Can we also have an assurance that a fair  
financial system will be in place to support them, because  
this could take some time?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** We are really looking to settle  
that question in this consultation. One decision that  
needs to be taken is exactly what shape the inquiry  
should take. Clearly, we would normally do this through  
a statutory inquiry, which would have the powers to  
which the hon. Lady referred, but equally, Members of  
the House have made representations that we should  
have a Hillsborough-style inquiry, which, by definition,  
would be more fleet of foot. One reason why we are  
pushing forward with this consultation is to get exactly  
that feedback, so that we put together an inquiry that  
inspires confidence among those who have been  
campaigning for this for so long.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): Far from being  
negative, the Government should be applauded for their  
very swift action—recently, not in the past. They are  
listening and have already committed extra compensation,  
sorted out the complex system that we had before, and  
announced an inquiry. Can the Minister give an assurance,  
particularly to my constituents, that the right Department  
will be chosen, because we do have to give them confidence  
that we will not all be here again discussing this? We  
have the chance to sort it out now.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** The purpose of the consultation  
is to allow people to make their points about which  
Department should be chosen to oversee the inquiry,  
and then we will respond accordingly. All I can say is:  
please encourage people to participate in this consultation.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): If the consultation with  
interest groups unanimously says that the inquiry should  
be held by another Department, will the Minister respect  
that view?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** We need to understand exactly  
what the concerns are and we will only achieve that  
through dialogue. I can reiterate that we are here to  
listen to those concerns. Now that we have decided to  
go ahead with the inquiry, I want to make sure that we  
get it right.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): May I put on record  
how pleased I am, for my constituents and their families,  
about the commitment to hold this inquiry? I thank the  
Minister for listening to me on this yesterday. Does she  
agree that it is only by listening to those most affected  
that we can finally get the answers that the victims and  
their families are seeking?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** We can only gain from having  
dialogue. It is in that spirit that we want to have as many  
conversations with those people affected as possible. It  
is disappointing that this morning's meeting was not  
attended, but I hope that, in the future, we will have  
some meaningful dialogue.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): May I  
ask the Minister to reflect on the fact that it is not  
reasonable to ask campaign groups from Scotland to  
attend a meeting at two days' notice? May I also point  
out that there is a distinct legal system in Scotland? Has  
there been any thought about that or any discussions  
with Scottish campaign groups and/or the Scottish  
Government?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** As I have said, that was the first  
of what I hope will be many conversations. Arrangements  
were made for the campaign groups in Scotland to dial  
into the meeting, so that they could participate. I have  
already started discussions with the Scottish Government  
about how this inquiry will play out and affect the  
position in Scotland. I am pleased to say that we are  
having those discussions in a spirit of healthy co-operation.  
In particular, we are looking at how we can make use of  
what has already been gone through with the Penrose  
inquiry. We will continue to have dialogue, and we are  
very sensitive to those issues.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con):At the weekend, I saw  
my constituent, Sue Wathen, whose case I raised in the  
debate last week. She was delighted with the Government's  
commitment. The one issue that she particularly wants  
to see considered is that of access to appropriate treatments  
for victims. For most victims, that is the most important  
issue. Will my hon. Friend feed that back?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** My hon. Friend makes a good  
point. That is exactly the sort of thing we need to hear  
from this consultation when we are setting the scope,  
and clearly access to treatment is very important. I  
encourage him to ask his constituent to write in and  
make those points.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): I think there is  
a consensus across the House, because everyone has  
made the point very clearly that they do not have  
confidence in the Department of Health running the  
inquiry. I expect an announcement from the Minister  
soon. If the Cabinet Office is appointed, it does have a  
track record of taking rather a long time with inquiries,

991

Contaminated Blood

20 JULY 2017

992

so quite often that is used to kick things into the long  
grass. Can she assure us that it will be a speedy but  
thorough inquiry?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** The speed at which the inquiry  
reports will be determined by the chairman, because it  
will be independent—that is the point. At the moment  
the Department of Health is leading on conversations,  
but the inquiry will be independent; it will not be run by  
the Department of Health.

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): Health is a devolved  
matter, so can the Minister give the House a commitment  
that there will be maximum co-operation with all the  
devolved institutions across the UK?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I can give the hon. Gentleman  
that commitment. I have already discussed this with the  
Welsh Minister. It is a UK-wide inquiry and health is a  
devolved matter, so obviously we will need to work  
closely to ensure that we all respond to what the inquiry  
finds.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister  
for her statement and commend the hon. Member for  
Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for her  
tenacity on this issue. Although only last December the  
Northern Ireland Health Minister allocated funding for  
contaminated blood victims to put us on a par with  
compensation paid on the UK mainland, it is essential  
that any UK investigation includes the Northern Ireland  
victims—I am speaking on their behalf—so that it is  
not done on an England-and-Wales-only basis. Can she  
confirm that that will be the case?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I can reassure the hon. Gentleman  
that we are very sensitive to the facts as they apply to  
Northern Ireland, and we will by all means ensure that  
the requisite dialogue takes place so that we can deal  
with it sensitively.

Fox-Sky Merger

11.2 am

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and  
Sport (Karen Bradley):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I  
would like to make a statement on the Fox-Sky merger.  
Three weeks ago, I came to the House to set out my  
initial decisions in relation to the proposed merger  
between 21st Century Fox and Sky plc. Having referred  
the bid for a phase 1 investigation by Ofcom and  
the Competition and Markets Authority in March, the  
decision before me was whether or not to refer the  
merger to a fuller phase 2 investigation by the CMA.

I told the House then that, following Ofcom's advice,  
I was minded to refer the merger to the CMA on the  
grounds of media plurality, and minded not to refer on  
the grounds of commitment to broadcasting standards.  
At the same time, I confirmed that I had received a set  
of undertakings in lieu of referral from the parties and  
was minded not to accept them.

I also set out the steps that I would follow for the next  
phase of the decision. I said that, as required by legislation,  
I would allow the parties to the proposed merger the  
opportunity to make representations on my position on  
media plurality. In the interests of transparency and  
ensuring that all the evidence had been considered, I  
would allow all interested parties, including the public  
and parliamentarians, to have their say, particularly on  
the question of commitment to broadcasting standards.  
I set last Friday as the deadline.

As the House knows very well, decisions by the  
Secretary of State on media mergers under the Enterprise  
Act 2002 are made on a quasi-judicial basis. That  
means that I must take my decision only on the basis of  
evidence that is relevant to the specified public interests.  
I must act independently and follow a process that is  
scrupulously fair and impartial. I have sought throughout  
this process to be as transparent and open as possible,  
and I have kept the House informed at every available  
opportunity. In keeping with that spirit, I have come to  
the House today to give as full an update as I possibly  
can before it rises for the recess.

I can confirm that I have received detailed representations  
from 21st Century Fox and a letter from Sky, which I  
will aim to publish, subject to statutory and confidentiality  
requirements, once I have taken my final decision. I also  
received a letter from Lachlan and James Murdoch on  
Friday last week, and a further letter from 21st Century  
Fox this Monday, which it has since published.

The detailed representations from 21st Century Fox  
raise a number of points on Ofcom's public interest  
test report and the analysis underpinning Ofcom's  
recommendations, contesting Ofcom's view that the  
transaction raises public interest concerns that justify  
referral to a phase 2 investigation by the CMA. Neither  
of the parties has offered any further or amended  
undertakings in lieu of referral. I have received a substantial  
number of responses in relation to my referral decision.

In coming to my decision on this case, I must take  
account of all relevant representations made to me. As  
a result, my final decision on referral can be made only  
after I have fully considered all relevant evidence on  
both the plurality and the commitment to broadcasting  
standards grounds. Given that the consultation closed

993

Fox-Sky Merger

20 JULY 2017

Fox-Sky Merger

994

*[Karen Bradley]*

only on Friday, there has not been time to consider all  
the representations, and I am not in a position today to  
make my final decision on referral.

What I can do, however, is confirm to the House that,  
having carefully reviewed the parties' representations,  
and in the absence of further proposed undertakings, I  
am currently still minded to refer on the media plurality  
ground and still minded not to accept the undertakings  
in lieu of a referral.

To be clear, as I have said, I must fully consider all  
relevant representations before reaching a final decision,  
and I will take the time I need to look at the many I have  
received, balancing the need for careful consideration of  
relevant evidence with the merger parties' legitimate  
need for a prompt decision. However, I have prioritised  
considering the parties' representations and the detailed  
points they have made to me. While some of the points  
they have raised may benefit from closer examination  
by the CMA at phase 2 in the event that the merger is  
referred, there was nothing in their representations that,  
at this stage, has led me to change my mind about the  
appropriateness of referral. Unless new evidence from  
other representations changes my mind in the coming  
weeks, the bid will therefore be referred to a phase 2  
review on at least one ground—media plurality. I thought  
it would be helpful to set out my current view to the  
House, given the public interest in this case, and also to  
the parties so that they can be as clear as possible about  
my intentions and the likely next steps for this bid.

Bearing in mind the obligation to act promptly as  
part of this quasi-judicial process, I expect I will be in a  
position to come to a final decision on referral, including  
in respect of the broadcasting standard ground, in the  
coming weeks, and potentially during summer recess.  
Should this prove to be the case, and as I did previously  
where stages of the merger have taken place outside of  
the House sitting, I will write to the parties informing  
them of my decision, as well as to the Leaders and  
Speakers of both Houses, to the hon. Member for West  
Bromwich East (Tom Watson) and to the Chair of the  
Culture, Media and Sport Committee, whom I was  
pleased to see reappointed last week.

As I have said previously, I trust that making this  
statement to the House gives another welcome opportunity  
to discuss this important issue, and further cements my  
undertaking to ensure openness and transparency. I  
commend this statement to the House.

11.7 am

**Tom Watson** (West Bromwich East) (Lab): Mr Speaker,  
good morning to you. As this is the last day before the  
recess, I thank you and your staff for the welcome you  
have given my new colleagues who were elected in the  
general election.

I thank the Secretary of State for her statement. I am  
grateful to her for returning to the House before the  
recess to update us on progress—even if there is not  
much progress to update us on. The last day of term is  
sometimes called “Take out the trash day”. Well, this  
appears to be “Keep the trash in the office day”.  
Nevertheless, this is one piece of Government indecision  
that we welcome. It is right that the Secretary of State  
has taken her quasi-judicial responsibilities seriously.

She will be aware that, whatever decisions she makes,  
there is a strong possibility of judicial review by one  
side or the other. No doubt that has influenced her  
decision to tread carefully and slowly, and we respect  
her for that.

The lawyers at 21st Century Fox have already written  
a somewhat intimidating letter to the Secretary of State,  
trying to bounce her into a decision. We know that that  
aggression is the Murdochs' modus operandi; we have  
been on the receiving end of it in this House, and we  
urge the Secretary of State to keep standing firm. In  
particular, there is absolutely no need for the Secretary  
of State to announce a decision during the summer  
recess. Parliament must have the opportunity to scrutinise  
any decision she makes. It is not her job to operate to  
21st Century Fox's corporate timetable; it has to abide  
by the parliamentary timetable. She should demonstrate  
to the company that she, as an elected representative of  
the people, is in charge, not 21st Century Fox.

Last time the Secretary of State came to this House,  
she said that she was minded to refer the bid to a  
phase 2 investigation on grounds of media plurality, as  
she said again this morning, but that she was not  
minded to refer on grounds of broadcasting standards.  
She then said that she had invited representations on  
both grounds by last Friday. It is right that a phase 2  
investigation on media plurality grounds goes ahead,  
but the broadcasting standards investigation should go  
ahead too. Compelling arguments for that have been  
made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster  
North (Edward Miliband), the right hon. Member for  
Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable), and the right hon. and  
learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). Does the  
Secretary of State agree that that is as distinguished a  
cross-party alliance as anyone can imagine? Does she  
also agree that it is absurd that Ofcom is currently  
refusing to meet my right hon. Friend the Member  
for Doncaster North so that he can share his concerns  
with it?

The truth is that the Murdochs have a history of  
regulatory non-compliance and of corporate governance  
failure, and that calls their commitment to broadcasting  
standards into serious question. Ofcom itself says that  
there are significant concerns about Fox's approach to  
ensuring Fox News content compliance with the  
broadcasting code. We saw in the phone hacking scandal  
that senior employees and executives at News International  
failed to comply with the criminal law, with acceptable  
standards of journalistic conduct, and, frankly, with  
basic human decency. We see the ongoing sexual and  
racist harassment at Fox News in the United States,  
where very senior employees behaved appallingly over  
decades and nothing was done—evidence of what Ofcom  
calls “significant corporate failure”.

Of course, the best way to get to the bottom of this  
corporate failure would be to proceed with the inquiry  
that has already been promised and that is specifically  
intended to look into it—part 2 of the Leveson inquiry.  
Will the Secretary of State undertake today to get on  
and just do it? I note that, although the Conservative  
manifesto promised not to go ahead with Leveson 2, a  
recent parliamentary answer to me indicated that the  
Government are still considering the consultation on it.  
I hope that this is another of the Prime Minister's  
many dropped manifesto commitments. It is not too

995

Fox-Sky Merger

20 JULY 2017

Fox-Sky Merger

996

late for the Secretary of State to do the right thing, and  
if she does go ahead with Leveson 2, she will have our  
full support.

The influence of the Murdochs on this Government  
is still a matter of serious concern. Only this week, in a  
letter to me, the First Secretary of State refused to deny  
that Rupert Murdoch had asked the Prime Minister to  
put the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael  
Gove) back into the Cabinet. I expected the allegation  
to be denied. It was not denied. We will be drawing our  
own conclusions from that. I have consistently—  
persistently—asked the Secretary of State to publish  
the minutes of the meeting between the Prime Minister  
and Rupert Murdoch in the US in 2016. Will she  
commit to do that now?

The Secretary of State now has the opportunity to  
demonstrate that we live in a democracy, not a  
Murdochracy. Will she now undertake to prove who is  
in charge by not making any decision until the House  
returns in September?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman asks a number  
of questions and I will attempt to address as many as I  
can in the time that we have; there were a number of  
questions there—I am sure he would agree.

I think it is worth my repeating that I am acting in a  
quasi-judicial basis under the Enterprise Act. We are  
also reflecting, in our behaviour as a Government, the  
recommendations of Sir Brian Leveson in his part 1  
report, where he was very clear about the way in which  
Government should operate in relation to media mergers.  
We have been cognisant of those recommendations  
throughout.

One of the things that I am required to do under the  
Enterprise Act is to act without undue delay, in the  
interests of all parties. That is why I am here today to  
say that nothing I have seen so far has changed my  
mind, but I am going to look at all the representations  
that I have received, which are in the tens of thousands.  
Many of them are identical, I have to say, but they all  
need to be looked at, and I will do so in order to see  
what evidence they provide.

I was also clear that the Ofcom report on the commitment  
to broadcasting standards test was clear. It was unequivocal.  
There were no grounds on which I could refer. I am  
therefore looking at whether new, substantive evidence  
comes to light following my statement. I will ensure that  
I consider all the representations. However, in the interests  
of all parties, I will have to make sufficiently speedy  
progress in making a decision to ensure that we can deal  
with these matters in line with the Enterprise Act. That  
may mean I have to make a decision before Parliament  
returns, which is why I am in the Chamber today being  
as open and transparent as I can be. I want to ensure  
that I am as clear as I can be with Parliament and with  
colleagues about the situation.

The hon. Gentleman asked a question about the right  
hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband),  
whose letter I had sight of this morning. As I understand  
it, the right hon. Gentleman has asked for a meeting  
with Ofcom to discuss its report on the fit and proper  
test, and I am surprised that Ofcom is not able to meet  
him to do so. The fit and proper test is not part of what  
I have to look at—the test under the Enterprise Act is  
different: it is about the commitment to broadcasting

standards, not the fit and proper test. Ofcom has to  
undertake an assessment of whether a company is fit  
and proper on an ongoing basis. I am surprised that it is  
not willing to meet the right hon. Gentleman and other  
parliamentarians, but I am sure it will have heard my  
comments on that matter in the House.

All Ministers' meetings with journalists are minuted—  
sorry; recorded—and the meetings that they have had  
are in the public domain.

I will be as open and as transparent as I possibly can  
be, which is why I am in the Chamber today. I had  
hoped it would be possible to announce a firmer decision  
today, but the quantity and volume of the representations  
received mean that that simply has not been possible.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
May I commend my right hon. Friend for not becoming  
a party to the socialist vendetta against the Murdoch  
family? When considering media plurality, will she bear  
in mind that there were four channels when Sky launched,  
but that there are now hundreds, and that the real  
opponent of media plurality is the bloated—taxpayer-  
funded—BBC, which likes to gives millions of pounds  
to presenters some of us have never heard of ?

**Karen Bradley:** I know you do not want me to stray  
on to the BBC, Mr Speaker, so I will not respond to that  
point. The report that I asked Ofcom to prepare as part  
of the phase 1 inquiry found firm grounds for concerns  
about media plurality. In the absence of further  
representations with evidence that might change my  
view, it is important to say that I am still minded to refer  
the merger on the grounds of media plurality. Should I  
make the final decision to refer the merger for a phase 2  
investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority  
will be able to flush out the evidence on all those points.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I want to join  
colleagues in wishing you, Mr Speaker, and your excellent  
staff in the House a very good summer recess. All SNP  
MPs wish you well for the summer recess. I also want to  
congratulate England's women on their resounding win  
over Scotland last night. The 6-0 result was excellent.  
We put up a good fight, but unfortunately it was not  
enough on this occasion.

I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of  
her statement. She will be aware of my specific constituency  
concern, given that Sky is the largest private employer  
there. My constituents who work at Sky will want to  
know that any deal is properly scrutinised and that their  
jobs will be secure.

Three weeks ago, the Ofcom report stated that the  
public had serious concerns about the concentration of  
media ownership in fewer and fewer hands. We share  
the public's concern about that and about the dilution  
of the diversification of media content. At the time, we  
welcomed the fact that the Secretary of State was  
minded to refer this to the Competition and Markets  
Authority on the grounds of diminishing plurality in  
the UK media. We still believe that that would bolster  
public confidence, and we very much believe it should  
happen.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary of State  
has come to the House and delivered her statement,  
but we are very disappointed that there has been no  
final decision. We understand the need to examine

997

Fox-Sky Merger

20 JULY 2017

Fox-Sky Merger

998

*[Hannah Bardell]*

representations from all parties, but the fact that a  
decision is likely to be made during the summer recess  
speaks to a developing pattern. As we saw during the  
election, there is a developing pattern in the making of  
major decisions, and it is not good governance. The  
decision has been kicked into the long grass, and Members  
of this House will not get an opportunity to scrutinise  
it. The Committees of the House have yet to sit, and  
there should be an opportunity for the relevant Committees  
to scrutinise any decision made. Plurality and transparency  
within the media should be one of the Secretary of  
State's key motivations, but it seems that a decision will  
not be subject to maximum transparency when it comes  
to telling the House. Given that it looks as though she is  
running away from scrutiny, will she commit to making  
a decision when the House is back from summer recess  
so that we can properly scrutinise the deal?

**Karen Bradley:** I join the hon. Lady in congratulating  
England's women. I am disappointed for her sake that  
the wearing of a football shirt did not produce the luck  
for which she hoped for Scotland's women, but as an  
England woman I am delighted by the result.

The hon. Lady has a constituency interest, with Sky  
being the largest employer in her constituency. I, too,  
want to make sure that the merger is properly scrutinised  
and dealt with so that we have certainty for employees  
such as her constituents. She says that we have shied  
away from taking decisions with full scrutiny, but that is  
simply not the case. For example, I originally asked  
Ofcom to report to me on Sky in May, and I delayed the  
date of the report until after the election campaign so  
that I could come to the House. I had hoped to be here  
today making a final decision, but the sheer volume of  
representations—all of which I need to go through,  
even though a large number of them are identical  
campaign emails—means that I cannot make that decision  
today. I have to make the decision with due consideration  
of time, because it is important for the parties to the  
merger and all concerned that a decision is taken.

**Mr Speaker:** It is, I think, the Secretary of State's first  
appearance at the Dispatch Box since the Wimbledon  
final last Sunday. I am sure she will want to congratulate  
the great Roger Federer on his new record—the latest of  
many records established by the great man over the last  
14 years.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I thank the Secretary  
of State for the openness and transparency at the heart  
of the statement. Media plurality is vital, and transparency  
is vital. On pay within the media, would she like to  
remind all employers that we have equal pay laws which  
state that people from all backgrounds doing the same  
job should be paid equally?

**Karen Bradley:** Of course I will join you, Mr Speaker,  
in congratulating Roger Federer. I was lucky enough to  
see him play on Friday, and I know you were there as  
well. I should also congratulate Lewis Hamilton. I was,  
unfortunately, not able to be at the Wimbledon final  
because I was at the grand prix, where I was able to  
congratulate Mr Hamilton personally on his great success.  
Four British grands prix in a row is a fantastic achievement.  
I am sure the whole House will join me in celebrating

what is turning into the most incredible summer of  
sport for Britain and British athletes—and Roger Federer.  
I think he is almost an honorary Brit at this stage.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh  
(Mims Davies); I think Wimbledon is one of the places  
that have equal pay for men and women. I want to see  
gender disparity removed from all employers, and I was  
as surprised as she was by yesterday's annual report.

**Edward Miliband** (Doncaster North) (Lab): The Culture  
Secretary has just shown us why she has an enviable job  
in Government. She is the Minister for tickets, as well as  
for many other things. May I wish you—and your staff,  
as seems to be the fashion—a happy summer, Mr Speaker?

I welcome what the Secretary of State said about  
plurality and the fact that she is minded to refer on  
plurality grounds. I welcome what she said to Ofcom  
about meeting me and colleagues regarding the fit and  
proper issue. She needs to make the decision on broadcasting  
standards in a timely way, but she needs to look at some  
detailed issues. When she invited representations, she  
said in her statement to the House that she wanted new  
evidence, or evidence on Ofcom's approach. My argument,  
and that of my right hon. and hon. colleagues, is that  
Ofcom's approach is flawed and that she needs to do  
what it did not, which is to look at the evidence—including  
the evidence about Fox and the *News of the World*—on  
the basis of the right legal threshold; look at the evidence  
about James Murdoch, which she asked it to do and it  
failed to do; and, indeed, look at the wider concerns  
about Sky News becoming like Fox News. I think that  
that will take a bit of time.

On those grounds, as well as those of parliamentary  
accountability—she has shown a desire all along to be  
accountable and open to Parliament on this issue—the  
Secretary of State can come back at the beginning of  
September, after having a good summer and scrutinising  
these issues, and tell us her decision. That is the right  
thing to do, and she should not, as my hon. Friend the  
Member for West Bromwich East has said, give in to the  
old tricks of the Murdochs, which are to bully people  
into making wrong and rushed decisions.

**Karen Bradley:** I should wish you a happy summer,  
Mr Speaker, as it appears that that is the order of the  
day. *[Interruption.]* And Roger, of course.

I have been as transparent as possible. As I said in my  
statement, I may make a decision over the course of the  
summer recess, but it may take longer. I am taking the  
time to consider all representations, including the right  
hon. Gentleman's, those of the right hon. Member for  
Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) and those of my right  
hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe  
(Mr Clarke), who is not in his place. I will look at the  
evidence and make a decision on that basis.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): In my right hon.  
Friend's previous statement, she emphasised that it was  
indeed the evidence that she would look at, and she  
mentioned quality not quantity. She has said in today's  
statement that part of the reason for the delay is the  
volume of communication she has received; she mentioned  
tens of thousands of items. What percentage of those  
tens of thousands of items were roughly original evidence  
and what was simply 38 Degrees or similar emails,  
which are all identical and not original?

999

Fox-Sky Merger

20 JULY 2017

Fox-Sky Merger

1000

**Karen Bradley:** I am not able at this stage to give  
precise figures, but of the more than 10,000 responses  
that have already been coded and looked at, a very large  
number were identical. I said in my previous statement  
that I would look not at those who shouted loudest but  
at those who provided the evidence. It is a shame that I  
opened my inbox one morning to find 10,000 unread  
messages on this matter, almost all of which were  
identical. That gets in the way of my being able to be a  
constituency MP; constituents' messages could simply  
get lost in those many tens of thousands. Clearly, however,  
I have to look at all those representations, but it is a  
shame that people who, in good faith, want to have  
their voice heard get drowned out by those who simply  
press a button and send an automatic message.

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): Can the Secretary  
of State reassure the House that she will not proceed to  
a decision until she has received a report from the  
Information Commissioner that the 13 million datasets  
that will be handed over to Fox as a result of the  
takeover cannot be misused or misapplied for political  
purposes? She will know that that concern was raised  
recently by senior Members of another place.

**Karen Bradley:** I am aware of those concerns. The  
right hon. Gentleman will know from his previous role  
as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills,  
which has been replaced by the Department for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy, the terms of the Enterprise  
Act 2002 on the pieces of evidence I can look at. On the  
public interest test, it is very clear about what evidence I  
can look at.

**Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): Does the  
Secretary of State agree that British broadcasting regulations  
mean that even a hypothetical Fox News UK would be  
a very different broadcaster from the US version?

**Karen Bradley:** Broadcasters in the United Kingdom  
have to comply with the broadcasting code. There are  
very strict rules and regulations. They are regulated by  
Ofcom and the broadcasting landscape is very different  
from that of other countries.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): This is the  
second urgent question today in which the issues have  
been openness, transparency and trust. The importance  
of obtaining that public trust and buy-in to the decision  
that the Secretary of State is going to make means that  
it is absolutely essential that it comes back to Parliament.  
May I also remind the House that the BBC has never  
been investigated for phone hacking or other breaches  
of honesty and decency?

**Karen Bradley:** Just to be clear, I have come here of  
my own volition—this is a statement, not an urgent  
question—to be as open and transparent as I can. I  
wanted to be able to make a decision before the House  
rose for the summer recess, but it simply has not been  
possible. I will now take time to look at the representations  
and ensure that we make the right decision. However,  
my “minded to” decision, about which I came to talk to  
the House three weeks ago, has not changed.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary  
of State for her statement. Does she appreciate the great  
concern about the supposed impartiality of the media,  
which is fostered by independent news stations? That

concern is felt by many, if not all hon. Members. Will  
the Secretary of State take the opportunity to allay  
those fears about impartiality in the media?

**Karen Bradley:** All broadcasting, including the BBC  
now, is regulated by Ofcom. There is an obligation on  
all broadcasters to be impartial. I suggest that the hon.  
Gentleman alerts Ofcom to instances in which he feels  
that that has not been the case, and I would be happy to  
be copied in so that I am aware of his concerns.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): There is a  
great deal of disappointment that the Secretary of State  
has not yet committed to come back to the House to  
explain matters to Parliament and allow the scrutiny  
and transparency that she says are so important. The  
need for speed should not undermine the democratic  
process, so will she reassure us that she will not allow  
that to happen?

**Karen Bradley:** I have been as transparent as I possibly  
can within the confines of the parliamentary calendar.  
However, the parliamentary calendar cannot be allowed  
to dictate what I do in my quasi-judicial role as Secretary  
of State. I will continue to be as open and transparent  
as I can and I will ensure that Parliament is fully  
informed of any decisions I make. I am always happy,  
when Parliament is sitting, to come to the Chamber and  
for my decisions to be scrutinised.

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I  
thank the Secretary of State, certainly for the first part  
of the statement, which was about deferring the decision  
to refer. If she is having problems with her emails, such  
as getting 10,000 from 38 Degrees, I will happily take  
her ticket for Wimbledon so that she can spend more  
time in the office.

I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member  
for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson) and my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward  
Miliband). The issue is very serious for us all, and  
certainly for the public. There is clear evidence of significant  
corporate failure and—dare I say it?—systemic operational  
problems with corporate governance. That takes much  
more time to tackle. Given the gravity of the matter, we  
cannot rely on just receiving a summer postcard notifying  
us of the decision. I urge the Secretary of State to wait  
six weeks and have the decency to announce the decision  
to the House.

**Karen Bradley:** As I have said, commercial decisions,  
a quasi-judicial process and the terms of the Enterprise  
Act 2002 are not defined by the parliamentary calendar.  
If I make a decision before Parliament returns, I will go  
through the process, as I have done previously, of notifying  
the Leaders and Speakers of both Houses, the Chair of  
the Select Committee on Digital, Culture, Media and  
Sport and the hon. Member for West Bromwich East. It  
may be the case that I make the decision when we  
return; I simply do not want hon. Members to expect  
one thing or the other.

**Mr Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover) (Lab): If the Secretary  
of State had to make the decision today, what is in her  
mind? Is she for it or against it?

1001

Fox-Sky Merger

20 JULY 2017

1002

**Karen Bradley:** First, I should have welcomed the  
right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable)  
back to the Chamber—my apologies for not doing so.  
My decision so far is that I am minded to refer on the  
basis of media plurality. I have not moved on that, but I  
have not yet made a final decision.

**Damian Collins** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): Although  
I appreciate the Secretary of State's offer of sending me  
a letter during the recess if she makes a decision, I am  
sure that she understands that it is never the same as  
seeing her in person. Will she commit to making herself  
available to appear before the Select Committee, perhaps  
in September if it is formed, to discuss her handling of  
the matter if she has made a decision by then?

**Karen Bradley:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his  
re-election as Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and  
Sport Committee. Of course, I am always happy to be  
called by the Select Committee to give evidence.

Business of the House

11.34 am

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):**With permission, I should like to make a statement  
about the business for the week commencing 4 September.

MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER—The House will not be sitting.

TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER—Consideration in Committee  
and remaining stages of the Telecommunications  
Infrastructure (Relief from Non-Domestic Rates) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER—Motion to approve ways  
and means resolutions relating to the Finance Bill.

THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER—Second Reading of the  
European Union (Withdrawal) Bill (day 1).

FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER—The House will not be sitting.

The provisional business for the week commencing  
11 September will include:

MONDAY 11 SEPTEMBER—Conclusion of Second Reading  
of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill (day 2).

I should also like to inform the House that the  
business in Westminster Hall for 7 September will be:

THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER—Debate on the transparency  
of the BBC followed by a debate on 16-19 education  
funding.

I congratulate all Members from across the House  
who presented their private Member's Bills yesterday. I  
know that many of them are on subjects that Members  
care deeply about, and I wish them well. I can confirm  
that, through the usual channels, the Opposition have  
been offered an Opposition day in the short September  
sitting, and we also plan to provide further Opposition  
days in October and November.

Finally, as this is the last business questions before  
the summer recess, may I send my best wishes to you,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, and colleagues across the  
House for a productive, and also a restorative, summer  
break from Parliament? I also thank the hard-working  
staff of the House, whose efforts in supporting us are  
greatly appreciated by colleagues on both sides of the  
House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Iam  
sure the whole House will join the Leader of the House  
in thanking the hard-working staff who look after us so  
well and wish them a restful time over the summer  
without us.

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader  
of the House for giving us the forthcoming business. I  
am afraid I have not been informed of any Opposition  
day—not even a careless whisper. Let me make it clear  
again: the Opposition had to call a debate on Monday  
because there was no discussion with the Government  
on our right to have those Opposition days. The  
Government need not have had that debate; they could  
have said, “Yes, have your Opposition day on Monday.”

This is a Government struggling to get a grip. Back  
Benchers are calling for the sacking of the “donkey  
Ministers”, with Tory grandees describing them as ferrets  
in a sack. The EU knows that the current Government  
are without authority, with the Prime Minister having  
to call for calm. Is this the image of the country that we  
want to present to the world?

1003

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1004

The Conservatives do not want to debate major  
policy issues; they would rather discuss the leadership  
crisis than debate or appoint to their Select Committees.  
We already have our Chairs in place and have decided  
our membership of the Committees. The Chairs could  
have called a meeting this week to set out their programme,  
and then had a meeting in the next sitting. The public  
cannot even present their petitions.

In the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member  
for Bristol North West (Darren Jones), he said:

“I have found a group of middle-aged men protecting their  
egosinabidtotakeoverfromalameduckPrimeMinister.”—[*Official  
Report*, 17 July 2017; Vol. 627, c. 628.]

The Leader of the House in her subsequent point of  
order confirmed that she is one of the group trying to  
take over, and did not even support her Prime Minister  
by saying that she was not a lame duck Prime Minister:  
still the nasty party. This obviously is a Portillo moment:  
not putting in the phone lines, but a run on SIM cards. I  
would contrast that and seven years of a Government  
who are not working for the many with our vision for all  
stages of life spelled out in 124 pages of a manifesto  
that is on its third reprint. *[Interruption.]* I have five  
minutes.

The electorate believed us, not the robotic tautological  
mantras. That is why we need an Opposition debate to  
clarify some myths. Let me list some. Who actually is  
responsible for the financial crash? Not the Labour  
party. *[Interruption.]* Listen. The United States investment  
bank Bear Stearns collapsed in March 2008. In September  
2008, Lehman Brothers collapsed. The problem was  
cheap money, house price bubbles, financial deregulation  
and sub-prime mortgages—remember those?

May we also have a debate on the NHS, please? Last  
week, a point of order was raised suggesting that my  
hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and Acton  
(Dr Huq) had described the NHS as a Labour institution.  
What she actually said was that it was a Labour-created  
institution. I refer hon. Members to the excellent book,  
“Nye: the political life of Aneurin Bevan” by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds),  
and to chapter 10, page 133, which deals with the  
creation of the NHS. Let us contrast that with the book  
written by the Secretary of State for Health, who wants  
to privatise the NHS.

What about a debate on that other myth—namely,  
that the deficit is larger under a Labour Government?  
The deficit is the difference between what the Government  
spend and what they receive. According to House of  
Commons Library information based on Office for  
Budget Responsibility and Office for National Statistics  
figures, the sum of all annual deficits between 1997 and  
2010 was £437 billion, or £506 billion after adjusting for  
inflation. However, the sum of all annual deficits between  
2010 and 2017 was £690 billion, or £728 billion after  
adjusting for inflation.

As women seem to be in the news at the moment, I  
want to mention some notable women who have passed  
away recently and to whom we have not yet paid tribute.  
Simone Veil was born in France and sent to Auschwitz.  
She carried the camp number that was tattooed on her  
arm. As a result of her experiences, she was passionate  
about peace in Europe and became the first female  
president of the European Parliament and established a  
woman's right to choose in France, in very difficult  
circumstances. Sheila Michaels promoted the use of the

title “Ms”. Maryam Mirzakhani became, in 2014, the  
first woman under 40 ever to win the Fields Medal for  
mathematics. Mary Turner was a trade unionist who  
fought for all of us to have a better life. She started her  
working life as a dinner lady and became president of  
the GMB, president of the TUC and chair of the  
Labour party. She was a giant of the Labour movement.  
She was formidable, and I can only ever remember her  
smiling. She will be sadly missed.

Those women's inspiration lives on in the six schoolgirls  
from the Afghan robotics team who beat the Trump  
ban and took silver in the first global robotics event, as  
well as in England's cricket team in the world cup final  
and our football team in Euro 2017 this Sunday. I think  
that the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell)  
played alongside some of the Scottish team. Maybe she  
should have been in the team! This month we also  
celebrate 100 years of the Women's Army Auxiliary  
Corps. And not only can we drive trains, but we are now  
driving the Tardis.

I want to thank everyone from the Speaker's Office,  
the Speaker and all the Deputy Speakers, the Office of  
the Clerks, and the Doorkeepers, all of whom make our  
lives very easy. I also want to thank *Hansard,* the House  
of Commons Library and of course all our staff. I say  
to every hon. Member on both sides of the House that  
we had a very difficult time during the lockdown and we  
then went straight into the general election. I know that  
it has been very difficult, and I wish every Member, new  
and old, a peaceful and restful summer.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I join the hon. Lady in celebrating  
the achievements of women, not least yourself, Madam  
Deputy Speaker and the shadow Leader of the House. I  
also welcome the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin  
Smyth) to her position as the new shadow Deputy  
Leader of the House. I wish her every success and look  
forward to working with her. I want to add one other  
greatladyto those on that lovely list, who I am delighted  
to join in celebrating. It is Jane Austen, who will feature  
on the new £10 note. She is one of our greatest living  
authors—*[Laughter.]* Greatest ever authors! I think  
many of us wish that she were still living; I absolutely  
share that sentiment. It is fantastic that we are at last  
starting to recognise this.

It has been a problem that the Opposition have  
sought to criticise process at a time when in fact there  
has just been business as usual in a new Parliament. The  
general election took place in June, and we have had  
18 sitting days so far. Six of them were given over to the  
Queen's Speech debate, whose topics for debate were  
selected by the Opposition. That leaves 12 sitting days,  
during which we have had three debates under Standing  
Order No. 24, 10 urgent questions, 17 Adjournment  
debates, 19 oral statements and 21 departmental oral  
questions sessions. In addition, this is our fifth—hopefully  
feisty—business questions session in the Chamber. I am  
sure that the shadow Leader of the House will look  
forward, as I do, to the normal Committees of the  
House getting up and running as soon as we get back in  
September.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): May I  
thank the Leader of the House for her efforts to get  
business on track as quickly as possible? Connected to  
that, as Select Committee memberships will finally be

1005

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1006

*[Dr Julian Lewis]*

settled on the first day back, which is the Tuesday, may  
we have an assurance that the relevant motion will be  
tabled at the earliest possible opportunity, namely the  
Wednesday, so that we can have meetings in the first  
week back? That would enable us to get approval,  
possibly even for public hearings in the normal way, in  
the second week back, rather than having to wait until  
October.

**Andrea Leadsom:** We all share my right hon. Friend's  
desire to get the Select Committees up and running. He  
will be aware that the 1922 committee has some say in  
holding elections for the Conservative Committee members.  
We are all keen to see those elections, and I am sure that  
they will be held as soon as possible.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I  
thank the Leader of the House for announcing the  
business for the start of the *Daily Mail* fortnight. We  
break for the long summer recess in a matter of hours,  
but the Select Committees are still not up and running  
and we still do not know the arrangements for Standing  
Committees. Every single piece of business has had to  
be taken on the Floor of the House. Regardless of what  
the Leader of the House said, we could have done all  
that—we have always done it. I have never known a  
Parliament so lax in putting together the normal structures  
and arrangements of the House, so the Leader of the  
House should vow and pledge that one of her priorities  
for when we come back in September will be to get this  
House back working properly.

At least we made it to the summer recess pretty much  
intact and with a Prime Minister in place. I do not know  
a group of people more in need of a summer holiday  
than this beleaguered Conservative party and its  
Government. A couple of weeks in the sun might quell  
their feuding desires and put a stop to the leadership  
contests. With their daiquiris and margaritas in hand,  
they might even agree to a temporary ceasefire to some  
of the briefings and counter-briefings across Whitehall.  
However, this might be the last summer bar one for the  
ordinary freedom of movement right across Europe. All  
sorts of special arrangements might be put in place for  
our constituents in 2019 as they try to enjoy their time  
on the costas and the playas but, as the repeal Bill  
comes forward, we see the reality of the hard Brexit as  
we move closer to it. We should therefore ensure that we  
can enjoy our summer holidays unburdened by having  
to worry about freedom of movement.

I wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and all in the  
Speaker's Office the best possible summer recess. I  
extend that sentiment to the Leader of the House, who  
has been kind and courteous to me since she became the  
Leader of the House, and to my friend the shadow  
Leader of the House. We have not done too badly as a  
team over the course of the past few weeks. I also  
extend that to staff right across the House. We have  
become so accustomed to being looked after so diligently  
and so well, and they have kept us safe. It has been one  
hell of a year, so I wish my colleagues all the best over  
the next few weeks.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for his remarks. We all share that desire to come back  
ready to go, having had a break, and with a new vigour  
to make the most of leaving the EU in a way that works

for the entire United Kingdom. The negotiations will  
obviously be tough and will require us to work together  
to achieve success. As I have said both privately and in  
the Chamber, I am keen to work across the House to  
enable ways of improving the legislation and to ensure  
that we get the best possible deal for the United Kingdom.

**Mr Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley) (Con): Thanks to the  
Prime Minister's insistence that the salaries of those  
who earn over £150,000 working for the BBC ought to  
be declared, I learned today that a gentleman called  
Derek Thompson, who apparently plays Charlie in  
“Casualty”, earns up to £400,000 a year, and yet real  
nurses earn around £23,000 a year. There is a double—  
*[Interruption.]* I am getting to that. There is a double  
injustice when somebody who makes real life and death  
decisions on a daily basis earns a fraction of the salary  
of an actor playing somebody who makes such decisions.  
May we have a debate as soon as possible about top-slicing  
£1 billion from the BBC's taxpayer licence fee revenue  
and giving it to the national health service and people  
who really deserve bigger salaries?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend makes an incredibly  
important point. We have had a lot of discussions about  
public sector pay and about people who are just about  
managing. It has been a difficult number of years in  
which this Government have been trying to deal with  
the deficit and the debt that we were left in 2010, and it  
has been a case of trying to balance giving decent pay  
rises to our public sector workers, who do such a good  
job for us, with trying to make sure that we live within  
our means.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right about BBC pay,  
the pay of actors and so on, and about the Government  
urging transparency in pay. We were successful with  
boardroom pay and now with BBC salaries, and all  
Members will want to see more clarity around what is  
fair, both between women and men and between different  
public sector workers.

**Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab): The Minister  
for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation this  
morning delivered a major speech to a think-tank,  
Reform, setting out major developments in the Higher  
Education and Research Bill. He did that not having  
made an oral statement in this House, not having laid a  
written ministerial statement in this House and not  
having spent any time in his 32-minute speech yesterday  
on this area alluding to those developments.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you might think, I might  
think and many of us might think that that is a contempt  
and abuse of this House. It is the second year running  
that this Government have tried to make major statements  
about higher education on the last day of term, with the  
intention of evading scrutiny. Will the Leader of the  
House prevail upon the Universities Minister or another  
Minister to come to the House today and explain why,  
for example, the Government will make major changes  
to the teaching excellence framework, for which they  
are laying material today, and the Office for Students?  
*[Interruption.]* The chuntering Whip says from a sedentary  
position, “It is far too long”. We have had far too little  
from—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
We do not need “chuntering” Whips. I know that the  
question is too long; I am sure the hon. Gentleman will  
now conclude.

1007

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1008

**Gordon Marsden:** May we therefore make sure that  
the Universities Minister or some Minister actually  
turns up today to say something about that speech and  
those developments this morning?

**Andrea Leadsom:** In the hon. Gentleman's “speech”  
on the subject, he made a number of very important  
points. On his substantive point about a speech that the  
Universities Minister has given, there was, of course, a  
three-hour debate in this Chamber yesterday, so he will  
be aware that the Universities Minister talked about  
current policy.

The Government's record on universities has been  
exemplary, with more students going to university,  
particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds—up by  
more than 40% since 2010.

The hon. Gentleman criticises the number of written  
statements brought forward at the end of term, so I just  
point out that in 2007 there were 30 written statements;  
in 2008, there were also 30; in 2009, there were 33; and  
today I believe there are 22. Of course, as he will  
appreciate, it is vital for many Departments that they  
bring forward important—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order.  
The hon. Gentleman asked a serious question. The  
Leader of the House is answering it. It is simply rude to  
shout.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.  
The point that I was trying to make was that, as the  
hon. Gentleman and indeed all hon. Members will  
know, it is important that hon Members get the chance  
to see the last update possible before the House rises, so  
that they have the latest information, Department by  
Department.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): Early-day  
motion 189 on Krishna Maharaj's federal evidentiary  
hearing in Florida has the support of many Members.

*[That this House recalls parliamentary support over  
20 years for Florida and the US' reviews of the 1987  
murder convictions and sentencing of British citizen Krishna  
Maharaj, born on 26 January 1939, including asking for  
the overturning of the initial death sentence, for an appeal  
on the grounds of innocence and defects in the investigation,  
of ineffective defence representation and of significant  
concerns in the prosecution, including critical non-disclosures  
and of questions about the conduct of the original judges;  
welcomes the recent Federal Appeal Court order for a full  
evidential hearing by the Federal Court in the state of  
Florida; notes the helpful initiative by hon. Members and  
Members of the House of Lords for the Amicus Brief in  
support of Reprieve and its director Clive Stafford Smith  
who are making the case for the issue of innocence to be  
sufficient reason for Krishna Maharaj to be released after  
30 years of imprisonment; and trusts that the evidence  
and arguments for innocence will now be considered  
effectively and fairly.]*

May I suggest to the Leader of the House that the  
Foreign Office be encouraged to work with Clive Stafford  
Smith of Reprieve to help the Americans to decide that  
innocence is a sufficient ground to release Krishna  
Maharaj after 30 years, after they have had the hearing?

On early-day motion 207, can we have a debate on  
leasehold and commonhold legislative reform and sector  
regulation? We need to make sure that responsibility for

commonhold moves from the Ministry of Justice to the  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, that  
the abuses of the leasehold sector are stamped out and  
that effective advice is given both to those who are  
doing the abuse and to those who will benefit when that  
abuse has ended.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am not completely aware of the  
issues that my hon. Friend raises, but he will be aware  
that there is a pre-recess debate this afternoon. He  
might want to raise those issues then.

**Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): Dangerous  
driving is a blight on the roads of my Bradford South  
constituency. The consultation of the Ministry of Justice  
on strengthening the punishment for drivers who kill or  
seriously injure others on our roads closed on 1 February  
2017. Is the Leader of the House aware of when the  
outcome of that consultation will be published? Will  
she commit to making parliamentary time available to  
debate that important matter?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a critical  
point about dangerous driving. She is right that many  
of us have experienced the awful tragedies and outcomes  
of dangerous driving. On her behalf, I will look into  
when we can expect to see a response.

**Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): The United  
Nations Human Rights Council special rapporteur on  
Sri Lanka published a report following his recent visit  
to that country, in which he described progress on  
fulfilling resolution 30/1 as “slow” and the use of torture  
in Sri Lanka as “endemic”. Can we have a debate in  
Government time on the human rights situation in Sri  
Lanka in the lead-up to the next session of the UNHCR  
in the autumn?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend has done a lot of  
work in this area, and I congratulate him on his new  
position as chairman of the all-party parliamentary  
group. The Minister for Asia and the Pacific, my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and  
Westminster (Mark Field), has registered our serious  
concerns about the special rapporteur's findings with  
the Sri Lankan high commissioner this week, and the  
FCO's annual human rights report, which is published  
today, sets out our full assessment of the situation. I  
assure my hon. Friend that we continue to encourage  
the Sri Lankan Government to deliver against all their  
UN Human Rights Council commitments.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): News has recently  
emerged that the patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox  
Church has been released after 10 years' incommunicado  
house detention. He appeared at a mass on 16 July,  
following an alleged reconciliation with the Eritrean  
Government. The mass was billed as a celebration of  
that reconciliation and as an indication of his release  
from detention but, according to local sources, Patriarch  
Antonios was surrounded by guards, did not speak at  
the event and has made no statement about the supposed  
reconciliation. That has led many human rights  
organisations to believe that Patriarch Antonios has not  
been released but, rather, that his sudden reappearance  
is an attempt by the Eritrean Government to alleviate  
international pressure. Will the Leader of the House

1009

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1010

*[Jim Shannon]*

allow for a statement on the discussions between the  
Government and the Eritrean Government on how  
Patriarch Antonios's detention still continues?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman, as he often  
does, raises an important human rights issue, which I  
urge him to take up at the next Foreign Office questions  
as a very specific issue to which those Ministers will be  
able to respond.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): Although I welcome  
the clarity we now have on phase 2b of the High  
Speed 2 rail project, I am sure my right hon. Friend will  
agree it is unacceptable that my residents, some of  
whom have lived in the same home for more than  
40 years, are being offered just two thirds of the value of  
their property. Will she therefore consider a debate in  
Government time immediately after the summer recess  
to scrutinise the property compensation schemes that  
are now on offer?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises the important  
issue of compensation for those affected. I have taken  
up a number of cases in my South Northamptonshire  
constituency, so I am very sympathetic to her. I am  
aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State  
for Transport has said that he will take up individual  
cases, and I urge my hon. Friend to contact him about  
her specific points.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Two  
women a week are murdered at the hands of their  
current partner or ex-partner, many of whom have had  
previous histories of abuse and stalking. The Home  
Office produced a consultation paper last December,  
recommending introducing new legislation, including a  
stalkers register. In this year's Queen's Speech, the issue  
of domestic violence was mentioned, yet we have seen  
no legislation about this issue nearly a year after the  
consultation. Is it not about time the Government found  
time for us to debate this issue and allowed the House to  
vote on it, because we face a very serious situation?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is right to say  
that this is an incredibly serious issue. He will know that  
tackling the horrors of domestic violence and domestic  
abuse is an absolute priority for the Prime Minister, and  
that the Queen's Speech mentioned that we intend to  
introduce legislation on this issue in this Session.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): I know that the  
Leader of the House agrees with me that strengthening  
families and giving every child the best start in life are  
very much the business of government, given the cost of  
family breakdown and the impact that the early years  
and family relationships can have on children's mental  
health and life chances. A number of Conservative  
colleagues will be producing a families manifesto in the  
first week of September, immediately after the recess,  
providing the Government with practical and realistic  
policies that could make a significant difference in this  
area. Could parliamentary time be found to debate this  
important issue in the days after the recess?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I could not agree more with my  
hon. Friend, and I commend her on the work she is  
doing. She and I share a passion for ensuring that all  
children have the best start in life, and I would love to

see her families manifesto when it is published. She will  
be pleased to know that all Departments are committed  
to making progress, including the Department of Health,  
which has committed an additional £1.4 billion for  
mental health services for children, young people and  
new mothers for this Parliament. That will make a huge  
difference to families.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): We are  
now too late for the implementation of the draft Value  
Added Tax (Refund of Tax to Museums and Galleries)  
(Amendment) Order 2017, which was announced as a  
provision in the Budget in March 2016. Glasgow Women's  
Library in my constituency applied for this and was  
informed in September last year that it was successful,  
but it is still waiting for the Government to act. This  
measure was supposed to come into force in June. The  
library stands to lose tens of thousands of pounds if it  
cannot claim back and backdate under this provision  
the VAT for capital works it has carried out. Will the  
Leader of the House give some certainty as to when this  
statutory instrument will come before the House and  
when other galleries and museums listed under early-day  
motion 224—about 30 across the whole UK—will actually  
be able to make use of this provision?

*[That this House notes that the draft Value Added Tax  
(Refund of Tax to Museums and Galleries) (Amendment)  
Order 2017 has not yet been laid before the House;  
understands that the draft Order was announced in the  
Budget on 16 March 2016, the consultation closed on  
21 April 2017 and that the Order was due to come into  
force under the negative resolution procedure on 1 June 2017;  
believes that the Order will provide revenue that is vitally  
important to many museums, including the Athelstan  
Museum, Burns House Museum, Callendar House,  
Cumbernauld Museum, Dean Castle, Dick Institute, Elgin  
Museum, Glasgow Women's Library, Kilsyth Heritage,  
King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Kirkcaldy Museum  
and Art Gallery, North Lanarkshire Heritage Centre, the  
Pier Arts Centre, Pittencrieff House Museum, the Regimental  
Museum of the Royal Highland Fusiliers, Shotts Heritage  
Centre, Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stockwood  
Discovery Centre, Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial  
Life, the Fergusson Gallery, Wardown Park Museum, the  
West Highland Museum, the Library and Museum of  
Freemasonry, the Royal Academy of the Arts, the Royal  
College of Music, the Perth Museum and Art Gallery,  
Towner Art Gallery, the University of Nottingham and  
the Yorkshire Sculpture Park; and calls on the Government  
to lay the Order for the approval of Parliament prior to  
the Summer recess.]*

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady is raising an important  
point, which clearly has significant relevance in her  
constituency. If she would like to write to me about it, I  
will be able to look into it further for her.

**Sir Paul Beresford** (Mole Valley) (Con): Will my right  
hon. Friend consider a debate on electoral fraud, including  
double voting? Understandably, all MPs have a personal  
interest in this, especially if their constituency is a  
marginal one. I realise that the Electoral Commission  
watches us carefully, but such a debate just might  
concentrate minds a little.

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is a very important point. We  
have one of the oldest and proudest democracies in the  
world, and it is important that we continue to have

1011

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1012

rigorous electoral processes that cannot be fraudulently  
abused. I am sure my hon. Friend will find a way to have  
that debate and I encourage him to do so.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): The Leader of the  
House will doubtless be aware that today the Transport  
Secretary has issued a written statement saying that  
electrification of the line between Cardiff and Swansea  
will now not be taking place. That has huge significance—  
not just for my constituency, but for constituencies right  
across the south Wales belt. Will she find time when we  
come back for the brief period before the conference  
recess for the Transport Secretary to come to the Floor  
of the House to explain why this promise to the people  
of Wales has been broken, despite multiple promises  
having been made by him and the Welsh Secretary?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Our decisions on electrification  
reflect how advances in technology are enabling a different  
approach that is less disruptive to passengers and to  
communities. Specifically on the Cardiff-Swansea route,  
although we are not proceeding with electrification at  
the present time, we are working to build a better and  
bigger railway for Wales so that passengers in Wales will  
see the benefits of electrification sooner, when brand  
new and more spacious*—[Interruption.]* The hon. Member  
for Ogmore (Chris Elmore) is clearly not listening.  
Perhaps he does not want to hear the answer, but there  
is a clear answer: there will be benefits for passengers in  
Wales as a result of brand new and more spacious  
bi-mode, intercity express trains, which will begin to be  
introduced in October 2017. These state-of-the-art trains  
will make journeys faster along the whole route sooner,  
without the need for wires and gantries and the disruption  
involved in erected them. So the advantages for passengers  
will be felt sooner, and that is as a result of changes in  
technology.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger** (Bridgwater and West Somerset)  
(Con): My right hon. Friend will agree that the safeguarding  
of democracy is vital at all levels. Will she therefore  
please make time for a debate about the dangerous  
antics of Taunton Deane Borough Council and its  
leader, John Williams? His council is trying to force a  
merger that has not been properly consulted on and  
certainly does not have universal approval. Frankly, this  
is municipal rubbish! May we please have time for a  
debate, because this sort of carry-on cannot be tolerated?  
We are proud of two levels of government and we are  
proud of the job they do. This is being run through  
roughshod, so Government time should be made available  
to discuss this important issue.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend again raises an  
important local constituency matter; he may well wish  
to seek an Adjournment debate to explore it further.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): Further to the question  
of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris  
Elmore), may we have an early debate about rail transport?  
The rail system from Rochdale is grossly inadequate—the  
quality and quantity is not acceptable for a town such  
as Rochdale. We need an early debate so that the  
Secretary of State for Transport can explain the  
Government's strategy for not only Wales but the north  
of England.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sure the hon. Gentleman will  
recognise that the Government have put billions into  
new road and rail projects, and we continue to do so. He  
and his Front-Bench colleagues may wish to choose an  
Opposition day opportunity to debate that matter, but I  
have tried to explain to the hon. Member for Ogmore  
(Chris Elmore) that we are looking at what improvements  
technology can offer ahead of the disruption that the  
installation of electrification would undoubtedly cause  
for passengers.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I know that my right  
hon. Friend is aware of the problem with sleep-in shifts  
for careworkers and of the looming crisis for several  
of the companies involved because Her Majesty's Revenue  
and Customs is demanding extremely large payments. There  
is no time for a debate or statement on this issue, so will  
she raise it with her colleagues in Government—in the  
Treasury and, indeed, in the Department for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy—to ensure that this  
crisis is averted?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises an important  
issue. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all  
the careworkers who do such a fantastic job looking  
after elderly and disabled people. He is right to raise this  
matter and it is certainly something the Department are  
looking at carefully.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): May we  
have a debate in Government time on UK relations with  
Turkey? The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has  
failed to meet the two-month deadline for responding  
to the Foreign Affairs Committee report published on  
25 March, and the Select Committees are not likely to  
be able to deal with the matter for some time, so it is  
incredibly important that the Government explain whether  
they support the mass arrests, purges and arrests of  
Members of Parliament currently going on in Turkey.  
They must not hide behind the fact that we have not yet  
set up the Select Committees.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman will no doubt  
wish to raise that issue at the next Foreign and  
Commonwealth Office questions. With the House rising  
today, he may also wish to raise it at the pre-recess  
summer Adjournment debate this afternoon. Other than  
that, he can of course write to the Department and seek  
their specific advice.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con):  
The staff of Parliament have quite rightly been thanked  
by many Members today, but I have heard a rumour  
that the police officers who serve us so well and are part  
of the parliamentary family may be moved after a  
five-year stint. Many right hon. and hon. Members  
value enormously the continuity of service that we get  
from the police constables, so will my right hon. Friend  
use her influence and make every effort to ensure that  
those who have served us for a long time are able to  
stay?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is exactly right to  
mention the police and how well they look after us in  
this place. Our thanks and gratitude extend to them. On  
the other hand, he will appreciate fully that how the  
police operate on the Palace grounds is an operational

1013

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1014

*[Andrea Leadsom]*

matter. Although we are involved as an interested party,  
it is nevertheless for the police to decide how to manage  
their operations.

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): I have repeatedly  
sought clarity on rail electrification to Swansea. A  
succession of Transport Secretaries and Secretaries of  
State for Wales responded that I had only to look out of  
the train window to see that electrification was on its  
way. Today, sneaked out in a statement, came the news  
that my worst fears have been realised and rail electrification  
is not coming to Swansea. Will the Leader of the House  
ensure that the Transport Secretary comes before the  
House to explain to my constituents and the people of  
Wales why he has misled them on this issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I say very gently to the hon. Lady  
that there is no such thing as sneaking out a statement.  
It is a statement; it is designed to inform the House.  
Statements come out before the House rises because all  
Secretaries of State and Ministers are conscious of the  
need to keep the House informed as far as possible  
while it is sitting.

On the hon. Lady's substantive point, as I have said  
to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Chris Elmore) the  
point is that as technology changes there are ways to  
improve passenger services earlier for Welsh train users,  
so it is vital that we seize those opportunities to deliver  
improvements earlier in a more cost-effective way and  
with less disruption to passenger services.

**Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): Many of my  
constituents were delighted to see the Queen's Speech  
and the announcement of trade, agriculture and fisheries  
Bills, as were many constituents across the west country.  
However, the Question Times for the Departments for  
Transport, for Exiting the European Union and for  
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have been some  
of the shortest in this Parliament. Given that she is the  
former Environment Secretary, will the Leader of the  
House consider extending the time allowed for those  
questions during this important time as we leave the  
EU?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend shares my passion  
for the success of the agricultural and fishing sectors as  
we leave the EU. There are huge opportunities there and  
he is certainly a keen advocate for them. All the timings  
for oral questions are kept under review and they are  
adjusted as demand changes, so I can assure him that  
that will be considered in due course.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): The Leader of the  
House has already heard from my colleagues about the  
fury there is in south Wales and Rochdale—and also in  
the east midlands, in Nottingham—about the Government's  
reneging on promises that were made about rail  
electrification. Clear promises were made: it was not  
just, “Oh, it might happen.”

Communities were promised, rail communities were  
promised and MPs were promised and the Secretary of  
State should come to this House and explain to each  
and every one of us why he has gone back on that  
promise. I urge the Leader of the House to speak to the

Secretary of State for Transport and tell him that he  
needs to make a statement at the earliest opportunity.  
We have had investment denied us; it is not good  
enough. The Government have broken their promises  
and they should stop it.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am slightly astonished that Opposition  
Members do not seem to appreciate that the decisions  
on electrification reflect how advances in technology  
are enabling a different approach that is less disruptive  
to passengers and communities. In particular, bi-mode  
train technology offers seamless transfer from diesel  
power to electric that is undetectable to passengers and  
means that we no longer need to electrify every line to  
achieve the same significant improvements to journeys.  
Opposition Members should welcome the fact that  
technological advances mean less disruption to passengers  
and that improvements can be delivered sooner in the  
same way as those offered by electrification.

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): I was  
disappointed that Monday's debate on abuse and  
intimidation during the recent general election did not  
happen as we ran out of time, not least because I  
wanted to raise the issue of graffiti on bridges and walls  
in my constituency. Will the Leader of the House update  
us on whether we will have another opportunity for a  
debate in Government time?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right  
to raise this matter. It was a very important debate and  
it was disappointing that the Opposition chose to squeeze  
it out earlier this week. The vile abuse that candidates  
suffered during the election is unacceptable and a threat  
to our democracy. We will look to reschedule the debate  
as soon as possible after the summer recess, possibly as  
early as September.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): On rail  
electrification, it is clear that the Transport Secretary  
has broken the word of the then Prime Minister, David  
Cameron, who gave us an assurance that there would be  
electrification. Larger, heavier diesel trains will now run  
to Cardiff and switch on their diesel engines there,  
which is not environmentally friendly.

Will the Leader of the House admit to the House that  
the Public Accounts Committee has the solution to the  
problem? The project is £2 billion over budget and has  
been delayed by a year because the Department for  
Transport bought the trains before laying the track and  
did not anticipate that there were bridges in the way.  
The incompetence of the Transport Secretary has led to  
a slap in the face for the people of Swansea and Wales.  
Will the Leader of the House admit it and will she get  
her colleague to answer questions in this Chamber,  
rather than pushing out, under the cloak of darkness,  
stupid press releases that mislead people?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I do not for the life of me see why  
the hon. Gentleman thinks that earlier improvements  
for passengers with less disruption can possibly be a  
slap in the face. The Department for Transport is  
acknowledging that technology is enabling it to deliver  
less disruption and earlier improvements for passengers.

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): Growing  
public anger at the BBC is made worse by the fact that  
the public know that the BBC is funded by a highly

1015

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1016

regressive television tax. May we have an early debate  
not just on the accountability of the BBC but on its  
funding, with a view to getting rid of the television tax,  
which at the moment results in 10% of all cases in the  
magistrates courts and particularly impacts on women?  
Some 70% of the victims of that tax are women.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right  
that as a public service broadcaster funded by the  
licence fee the BBC has a responsibility to set an example  
for others and lead the way in promoting equality in the  
workplace. He might well wish to have a further debate  
on how the licence fee is working, and he will be aware  
that the recent debates on the BBC charter took up that  
very issue. If he wants to seek further discussion, he can  
do so in Westminster Hall or through an Adjournment  
debate.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): My 18-year-old  
constituent is severely diabetic and has been battling for  
a much-needed personal independence payment for more  
than two years. He has won two appeals, but the Secretary  
of State is challenging the decision in court. My constituent  
wants to live an independent life and experience university,  
in common with his peers. May we have an urgent  
debate in Government time to address the effect of this  
Government's unfair practices towards those with  
disabilities?

**Andrea Leadsom:** That sounds like a very sad case.  
All Members have cases that they take up on behalf of  
their constituents, and from this Dispatch Box I urge  
people with similar problems and challenges to talk to  
their MP, because we can often help in individual cases.  
I am sure that the hon. Lady is taking this up with the  
Department separately. As for the bigger picture around  
disability, the hon. Lady will be aware that Conservatives  
are absolutely committed to supporting disabled people,  
and spending on disability benefits will be higher in  
every year to 2020 than it was in 2010. We spend more  
than £50 billion a year on benefits to support disabled  
people and people with health conditions, which is up  
more than £7 billion since 2010. I think we have a good  
track record, but I absolutely accept that there are  
always individual cases that we as representatives need  
to take up on behalf of our constituents.

**Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): Like all hon. Members, I  
care passionately about the future of my local hospital.  
The hospital trust in Telford has spent four years  
deliberating over plans to invest in the future of hospital  
services, but, regrettably, the trust has been paralysed by  
indecision, bureaucratic incompetence, and a complete  
failure to communicate with my constituents. The proposals  
have descended into disarray, with local MPs, councillors,  
and clinicians losing confidence in the management's  
ability to deliver. Can we please have an urgent debate  
to consider this important issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I know that that matter has been of  
great concern to my hon. Friend, and I commend her  
for raising it. I believe that, recently, she met the senior  
responsible officers of NHS Future Fit to discuss progress  
and a revised timetable. I understand that the Future  
Fit programme board will meet on 31 July to hear the  
outcome of the independent review and the work relating  
to the women and children's impact assessment. The Joint

Committee will then meet on 10 August to consider the  
recommendations made by the board and the next  
steps, including public consultation. She is absolutely  
right to keep raising this matter.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): Can we have  
a debate on nuclear disarmament? My constituent,  
Brian Quail, is currently being held at HMP Low Moss,  
and his colleague, Angie Zelter, in HMP Cornton Vale  
after they took part in a peaceful protest against the  
nuclear weapons store at Coulport. Does the Leader of  
the House recognise the moral outrage against weapons  
of mass destruction that drives campaigners to these  
lengths? Can this House be given the opportunity urgently  
to reconsider the immoral and unjustified renewal of  
Trident?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware  
that, in this place, we absolutely do not interfere with  
matters of criminal justice. If someone is involved in  
breaking the law, it is very important that it is the police  
who decide what happens to them. On the substantive  
point about nuclear disarmament, I do not share his  
view. My personal view, and the view on the Government  
Benches, is that a nuclear deterrent is exactly that—a  
deterrent. It is an ultimate insurance that protects our  
people, and the security of the people is the first duty of  
any responsible Government.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I am sure  
that Members on both sides of the House are aware of  
this behaviour, but, over the past year, I have had to dial  
999 three times in my surgery to remove people. I have  
had death threats—a gentleman was convicted of  
harassment. Only a week ago, walking down a high  
street, someone swore at me. What really has annoyed  
me, though, is what happened last Friday. I had a  
surgery in which three people were being disruptive. I  
asked them to leave. One stood face to face with me, like  
a prize fighter, threatening to hit me, and he called me a  
monkey. That sort of behaviour is not acceptable. What  
would have happened if a Member of Parliament had  
done that to a constituent? I absolutely urge the Leader  
of the House—I know that Members on both sides  
suffer from this—to ensure that we have this debate on  
abuse. In the general election, I was assaulted when  
defending a female Conservative candidate. This sort of  
behaviour has to end.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right;  
this has gone beyond any reasonable level of disagreement.  
The intimidation, death threats, violence, abuse and  
disgusting acts, as well as the lower level anti-democratic  
pulling down of posters and putting graffiti on them  
and so on, were at unprecedented levels in the recent  
general election. As my hon. Friend knows, we scheduled  
a debate for Monday. Unfortunately, it could not take  
place because of an emergency debate on procedure  
that was called by the Opposition. It is fully our intention  
to reschedule that debate as soon as possible, because I  
know that many Members on the Government Benches,  
and some on the Opposition Benches, have suffered  
utterly unacceptable abuse. We need to have that discussion.  
The problem needs to be aired, and if people are  
involved in criminality, they need to be prosecuted.

1017

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1018

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): Currently, it is  
taking a minimum of 48 weeks for people appealing  
Home Office decisions denying them asylum status to  
have their appeal heard. When they get a date, it is many  
months ahead. This is completely unacceptable. During  
that time, they cannot work or contribute to the UK  
economy, as many of them are capable of doing and  
wish to do. Can we have a debate in Government time,  
as soon as we return from recess, to discuss this serious  
issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a very important  
point. As all hon. Members know, we are often asked to  
take up cases on behalf of constituents, and it is right  
that we should do so, as we then have some success in  
improving the speed of the process. Since the end of  
2014, we have consistently met our ambition of deciding  
98% of straightforward cases within six months. If she  
is seeing some very bad examples, then of course she  
should raise them directly with the Home Office.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I am  
sure that the Leader of the House is aware that there are  
Conservative MPs who believe that cutting corporation  
tax somehow increases tax take. Lines have been parroted  
to that effect all week, with some dodgy analysis provided  
to prove it. If it does increase tax take, why does the last  
Budget show that the measure to cut corporation tax to  
19% will cost the Treasury £23.4 billion? Will she make  
a statement, outlining where the magic money tree  
Budget lines are that offset the £23 billion and show the  
massive increase in tax take?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We on the Government Benches  
have been absolutely focused on ensuring that we get  
our economy back on track and that we start again to  
live within our means. Let us be absolutely clear about  
this: when we came into office in 2010, we had the  
highest ever peacetime deficit of £150 billion a year  
more being spent than we take in in tax revenues. Under  
this Government, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs  
has massively improved its ability to take in tax revenues  
from avoidance measures, and from companies and  
individuals failing to pay. Significant billions of pounds  
of taxes have been gathered. What we have sought to do  
is to make the UK highly competitive so that companies  
come here to start businesses and people in this country  
start businesses. This has been a remarkable success  
story. Our deficit each year is now down by three  
quarters as a percentage of GDP. Not only that, but we  
have the highest employment figures ever and the lowest  
unemployment since the 1970s. Youth unemployment is  
down, and people are doing considerably better than  
they were in 2010. There is a lot more to do, but we are  
determined not to leave the next generation with the  
problems of this generation.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): The Government  
have shaken the magic money tree bare to buy their  
majority. Is that not the reason why, at midnight on the  
last day of Parliament, they had to sneak out a statement  
on the cancellation of a long-established promise to the  
people of south Wales and then deny the House a  
proper debate on the subject? That is a disgraceful way  
to behave. When can we debate the other promises they  
made during the election, including the one to scrap the  
Severn Bridge's toll. Will they rat on that promise as  
well?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Let us be clear about this: it is the  
Conservatives who have always said that there is no  
magic money tree. Labour Members talk about a magic  
money tree, but it is their tuition fee promise that was  
going to shake the magic money tree to find £100 billion.  
That was a false promise, which they immediately retracted  
after the general election. On the Government Benches,  
we are looking at measures to make our economy a  
success. I have answered the question on the electrification  
of trains four—possibly five—times. Perhaps the hon.  
Gentleman did not hear me. We are trying to bring  
forward improvements earlier that cause less disruption  
so that passengers and communities can benefit sooner.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): I am not  
going to make any progress with an inquiry into bimodal,  
back-to-the-future trains for south Wales, so I will ask  
for something else. May we have a public inquiry into  
the recent report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation  
on community rehabilitation companies, their inability  
to provide through-the-gate service outcomes for offenders,  
such as settled accommodation, the rise in reoffending,  
the rise in recalls to prison, the unrealistic workloads  
and the stressful working conditions? Is it not time we  
admitted that this experiment is an absolute disaster  
and looked at it again?

**Andrea Leadsom:** That is an incredibly important  
topic. Probation officers do a very difficult job, and  
they do very well in very trying circumstances. I understand  
that the hon. Lady intends to raise the matter with the  
Justice Committee so that it can consider it carefully  
once the Select Committees are up and running in  
September.

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): Only a week ago the  
Secretary of State for Transport told me that  
“electric trains will arrive in Cardiff and Swansea this autumn”—  
[*Official Report*, 13 July 2017; Vol. 627, c. 410.],  
so I am not going to ask a question on that. The  
Government are reneging not only on their commitment  
to reducing pollution from diesel engines, but on their  
commitment to reducing carbon emissions, by delaying  
a decision on the Swansea bay tidal lagoon. This false  
promise shows that they have no interest in Wales. May  
we therefore have an urgent statement when the House  
returns after the recess on the Government's plan to  
secure the Swansea bay tidal lagoon?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her  
place and look forward to working with her in the  
Chamber. The Swansea bay tidal lagoon, as she will  
know, is an enormous, incredibly ambitious and very  
expensive project. When I was an Energy Minister it  
had already been discussed for many years. There are  
challenges, from the perspective of value for bill payers'  
or taxpayers' money. Charles Hendry carried out a  
review, and the Government's response will be brought  
forward as soon as possible.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):  
Many individuals who convert to another religion or  
renounce faith altogether face being ostracised by sections  
of their community and even by family members, making  
them more vulnerable to hate crime. May we have a  
statement or a debate in Government time on what is  
being done to tackle crimes motivated by anti-apostasy?

1019

Business of the House

20 JULY 2017

Business of the House

1020

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think that all Members across the  
House would respect the right of any individual to  
choose to worship as they wish, so I think the hon.  
Gentleman would have a lot of support if he applied for  
a Westminster Hall debate and there would be a lot of  
interest.

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): As the  
House rises for the summer recess, many of my constituents  
are today mopping up properties that have once again  
been flooded, 18 months after Storm Desmond hit  
Lancashire. During that time the Government applied  
for EU emergency funding to support communities and  
flood resilience, but my local authorities, Lancashire  
County Council and Lancaster City Council, have been  
prevented from bidding for that money. May we have a  
debate in Government time on how we can improve  
flood resilience and flood defences in communities affected  
by flooding?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a very important  
point. When I was Environment Secretary I visited  
Lancashire and other parts of the country that had  
been flooded. It is absolutely devastating, and we have  
seen yet more examples in recent days. She will be aware  
that we have a six-year commitment of £2.5 billion in  
flood defence projects to better protect an additional  
300,000 properties by 2021. There are a number of  
projects and a number of sources of funding for them. I  
am sure that she will want to raise the specific case in  
her constituency at the next Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs Question Time.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I  
point out to the Leader of the House that bimodal  
trains are not some modern technology; they were first  
patented in 1989. I am sure that she will know that  
Crossrail is costing £202 million per mile to complete  
and that High Speed 2 is now estimated to cost £403 million  
per mile. By contrast, rail electrification between Selby

and Hull would cost only £3.2 million per mile. May we  
please have a debate on why Conservative Ministers  
blocked the Hull scheme, even though it was privately  
backed with funding, lower in cost and much better  
value?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The level of interest in this topic  
from the Opposition Benches suggests that it might be a  
good candidate for an Opposition day debate. I have  
answered this question six times now. The Department  
for Transport is spending billions on road and rail  
infrastructure, and delivering early wherever possible,  
and with the least disruption to communities.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** And  
the prize for patience today goes to Dr David Drew.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, and I wish you a happy recess.

On the subject of abuse, will the Leader of the House  
take up the situation in Gloucestershire County Council,  
where a couple of weeks ago the Conservative Councillor  
Lynden Stowe referred on his Facebook page to the  
Leader of the Opposition as being comparable to Hitler  
and likened the Labour party's campaign to attract  
younger voters to national socialism and other allied  
movements. Mr Stowe, who is also a cabinet member,  
has removed the comments but refuses to refute them.  
Given that abuse is a big topic on the Conservative  
Benches, would she like to have a word with the high  
command in Gloucestershire and get rid of him?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very  
specific case that I obviously know nothing about. Let  
me say again that abuse and intimidation is completely  
unacceptable, from whoever it comes and to whomever  
it is directed. Certainly, many colleagues on the Conservative  
side of the House have been subjected to vile abuse, and  
it is something that the House definitely needs to consider.  
We all need to work together to put a stop to it.

1021

20 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower

1022

Grenfell Tower

12.36 pm

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** With permission, Madam  
Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on  
Grenfell Tower and fire safety.

Five weeks have now passed since the tragedy at  
Grenfell Tower. Nothing that has happened in those  
five weeks will have diminished the grief of those who  
lost loved ones. Nothing will have negated the trauma  
of those who lost their homes. But across the public  
sector, in local and central Government, in the emergency  
services, in hospitals, in schools and more, dedicated  
public servants have been doing all they can to deal with  
the aftermath and help the community recover.

Over the past five weeks the Government have  
endeavoured to keep the House up to date with these  
developments. This is the third oral statement that I  
have made on the subject. The House has also heard  
from the Prime Minister and the Housing Minister, who  
also answered questions in Westminster Hall before  
Parliament formally returned. There has been a full  
debate in the Commons, four written statements and a  
number of letters that have been sent to all Members.  
My aim today is to provide an update before the House  
rises, and another opportunity for hon. Members to ask  
questions. I would also like to let the House know  
exactly what action we will be taking over the summer.

1The police continue to list 80 people as either dead  
or missing and presumed dead. Thirty-nine victims  
have so far been formally identified, with 39 inquests  
opened by the coroner and adjourned pending the  
public inquiry and the police investigation. Two adults  
remain in hospital. I know that some local residents  
remain concerned that the number of people in the  
tower that night has been underestimated. I continue to  
urge anyone with further information to come forward.  
We have been very clear that we do not mind if those  
affected were subletting or have immigration issues; all  
we care about is getting to the truth.

Turning to the re-homing programme, everyone who  
lost their home in Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk  
has been made at least one offer of good-quality, fully  
furnished temporary accommodation in the local area.  
As of 10 o'clock this morning, 35 of these have been  
accepted and 10 families have moved in. Those numbers  
are slightly down on the figures published recently, as  
some people have changed their minds, as they are  
perfectly entitled to do. Where residents have turned  
down an offer, we are finding them suitable alternatives.  
Where residents are not yet ready to engage in the  
process, because they do not want to make a decision  
right now or they would rather wait for a permanent  
home to be offered, we will of course respect that.

At Communities and Local Government questions  
this week, the quality of the accommodation being  
offered was raised. I repeat the Housing Minister's offer  
to those on the Opposition Front Bench to visit some of  
these homes so that they can inspect them for themselves.  
I do not believe that they have taken us up on that offer  
so far, but it still stands.

In the long term, we are continuing to seek out and  
secure suitable permanent accommodation. The first  
such homes for Grenfell families will be ready within  
days, and specialist teams are ready to start matching  
them to families and to start making the offers.

At the town hall, we are continuing preparations to  
return control of the recovery effort from Gold Command  
to Kensington and Chelsea Council. I have spoken at  
length with the new leader of the council and been very  
clear that Gold Command will not hand over the reins  
until it is clear that the council is ready and able to cope.  
We saw last night the raw anger that some in the  
community still feel towards the council. That is entirely  
understandable; as the Prime Minister herself has said,  
the initial response from the local authority was simply  
not good enough.

There is not a lot of trust there, and not a lot of  
confidence, and that is why, when Kensington and  
Chelsea Council takes over the recovery operation, it  
will do so under the supervision of the independent  
Grenfell recovery taskforce. It is important to stress that  
the role of the taskforce is not to investigate the causes  
of the fire or to apportion blame—that is for the public  
inquiry and the police investigation. Rather, the taskforce  
is there to provide advice and support and to see to it  
that the council does the job that is required of it. We  
are in the process of finalising the taskforce membership,  
and I hope to make an announcement soon. I can  
confirm that the handover from Gold Command to  
Kensington and Chelsea will not happen until the taskforce  
is up and running.

Away from Kensington, the fire safety testing programme  
continues. We now believe that no more than 208 local  
authority and housing association residential blocks  
over 18 metres tall have been fitted with aluminium  
composite material cladding. Some 189 of these have  
had cladding samples tested by the Building Research  
Establishment, have been tested by proxy or have already  
had their cladding taken down. None of them has passed  
the limited combustibility test. Samples from a further  
12 towers have been submitted this week, and they are  
now being tested. The BRE has yet to see samples from  
seven towers, all of them managed by housing associations.  
A month after the tests began, that is simply unacceptable,  
and I expect to see all those housing associations submit  
samples without any further delay.

On the advice of the independent Expert Advisory  
Panel on Building Safety, the BRE is now undertaking  
system testing, which will help establish how combinations  
of different types of ACM panels with different types of  
insulation behave in a fire. An explanatory note setting  
out the process and the timetable for further advice will  
be published shortly. It has taken a short time to design  
and set up the test, but we expect the first results to be  
available next week. As soon as results are available, we  
will share them first with the local authorities and  
housing associations that have confirmed that their  
properties are clad in the same combination of materials  
that were used in the test. We will also, of course,  
inform the local fire and rescue service. The results will  
provide further information that building owners and  
their professional advisers can use to take decisions  
about what, if any, remedial action is required.

Although legal responsibility for fire safety enforcement  
lies with local authorities, I do have the power to direct  
an authority to consider these test results as part of its  
duty to keep housing conditions under review. If necessary,  
I will not hesitate to use this power, which could lead to  
enforcement action being taken against a landlord if a  
fire risk is not dealt with. I do hope it will not come  
to that.

1.*[Official Report, 5 September 2017, Vol. 628, c. 2MC.]*

1023

Grenfell Tower

20 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower

1024

Moving on to the public inquiry, Sir Martin Moore-Bick  
is continuing his preparatory work. I welcome his decision  
to extend by two weeks the consultation period for the  
terms of reference. While we are all anxious for the  
inquiry to get under way, it is important that the remit is  
appropriate, and that everyone affected has had an  
opportunity to share their views.

With the House due to rise later today, this is the last  
statement I will be making before the summer recess,  
but work on the recovery effort and the testing regime  
will obviously continue at pace while Parliament is not  
sitting. My Department will be writing regular letters to  
all Members to keep them abreast of progress.

Finally, I pay tribute to the many Members on both  
sides of the House who have assisted with the emergency  
response and the recovery effort so far. They have  
provided insight, support, scrutiny and a voice for their  
constituents, both in public and behind the scenes. The  
weeks, months and even years ahead will be unimaginably  
difficult for those who were caught up in the fire and  
those who have lost family and friends. There is nothing  
that any of us can do to bring back those who died or to  
erase the trauma of that terrible night, but I am sure the  
whole House shares my determination to take care of  
those who have been affected by the fire, to make sure  
that the truth comes out and that justice is done, and to  
see to it that a tragedy like this never, ever happens  
again.

12.45 pm

**John Healey** (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I thank  
the Secretary of State for the advance copy of his  
statement.

This is the fourth time in less than four weeks that we  
have had to encourage the Secretary of State or his  
Ministers to make a statement on Government action  
following the Grenfell Tower fire. He praises the scrutiny  
provided by Members on both sides of the House, but  
how will he keep Members informed over the next six  
recess weeks? More importantly, how can we get answers  
to the continuing, serious concerns we have from our  
constituents and from the Grenfell Tower families and  
survivors? Round-robin letters are simply not sufficient.

The Secretary of State calls today's statement an  
update on progress, but in truth there has been next to  
no progress. After this truly dreadful fire, the Secretary  
of State had two urgent, overriding responsibilities:  
first, to ensure that everyone affected from Grenfell  
Tower had the help and rehousing they needed; and  
secondly, to reassure all the people living in tower  
blocks around the country that their homes were safe or  
that the work necessary to make them safe was being  
done. More than five weeks after this fire, he is failing  
on both fronts.

We have learned today that 169 families lost their  
homes in Grenfell Tower, but that only 10 have moved  
out of emergency hotels and hostels, while 25 more have  
been offered a temporary home they feel they can  
accept. I accept that the reasons may be complex, but I  
am still getting reports of residents being told they will  
be made intentionally homeless if they refuse an offer,  
despite the Government's word that this will not happen;  
residents being offered accommodation with damp, leaks  
and a lack of full furnishing; residents being shown  
somewhere with too few bedrooms for their children;  
and residents being made an offer, but then being told  
that the details will follow only afterwards.

As for the Government's fire safety testing programme,  
the more we are told, the worse it gets. The Secretary of  
State's statement raises more questions than it answers.  
The Prime Minister said:

“We can test over 100 buildings a day”.

So why have only 259 tests been done? Why can councils  
and housing associations not get non-ACM cladding,  
or insulation, tested? Why is the Secretary of State  
ignoring the views of fire safety exports, landlords and  
residents, ignoring the potential fire risk in thousands  
of other tower blocks, and only narrowly testing ACM  
cladding? How many of the 259 blocks that have failed  
have had their cladding removed? Where blocks have  
failed the first, samples test but passed the second,  
systems test, is the cladding still safe to leave in place?

Have the Government agreed any financial support  
for any council or housing association to help with the  
costs? Has the Secretary of State persuaded the Treasury  
to agree access to the Government's Contingencies Fund,  
or will any costs have to come from within the Department's  
existing budgets?

We know from the report on the Lakanal House  
fire—I suspect we will see the same with Grenfell Tower—  
that the problem was not just cladding. The Government's  
testing programme is simply too slow, too narrow and  
too confused. It is simply not fit for purpose. Ministers  
must therefore act. They must widen the testing programme  
to reassure all high-rise residents that their homes are  
safe; fund the necessary work on cladding and on fire  
safety to make them safe; review the system of approved  
inspectors for building control checks, starting with all  
the cases where the cladding has failed but had been  
signed off previously; and start the overhaul of building  
regulations, which the coroner reporting on the Lakanal  
House fire recommended to Ministers four years ago,  
and which can later incorporate any findings from the  
fire investigations or the public inquiry into Grenfell  
Tower.

The Secretary of State talked about the pace of what  
is being done. In truth, Ministers have been three steps  
off the pace in responding to the tragedy of Grenfell  
Tower at each stage. I fear that without the scrutiny of  
Members on both sides of the House that he praised,  
the Government's pace will slacken over the recess  
weeks at the very time when it is clear that he needs to  
do a great deal more to deal effectively with the complex  
problems and consequences of the Grenfell fire tragedy.

**Sajid Javid:** So far, the right hon. Gentleman has  
taken a fairly constructive approach to this very, very  
important issue. I would urge him very much to maintain  
that in the weeks and months that lie ahead, and not to  
adopt the approach of his right hon. Friend the shadow  
Chancellor, who has shown just how out of touch he is  
on this issue. That is not what the public want to see.

The right hon. Gentleman asked how I can make sure  
during the recess period that all hon. Members in all  
parts of the House are kept in touch or informed and  
are able to ask questions. Obviously he knows that  
because Parliament will be in recess, some of the usual  
channels will not be there. However, I am determined to  
ensure that we make use of what is available, whether  
through regular communications with all Members of  
Parliament or through my Department's own operations  
in issuing press releases and explanatory notes. In addition,  
my colleagues and I will be available during the summer

1025

Grenfell Tower

20 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower

1026

*[Sajid Javid]*

recess to meet or talk to any hon. Member who has any  
questions. I have already planned to meet the hon.  
MemberforKensington(EmmaDentCoad)nextweek.  
I will be happy to talk to the right hon. Gentleman at  
any time, or to meet to discuss with him any of the  
issues pertaining to Grenfell Tower and this terrible  
tragedy.

On housing, the right hon. Gentleman will know that  
huge efforts have been made by Gold Command, by my  
Department and by Kensington and Chelsea Council to  
make sure that the needs of all the residents are met and  
that their wishes are respected in terms of temporary  
accommodation and permanent accommodation, whether  
they were social tenants or leaseholders. Very shortly,  
within just a matter of days, Kensington and Chelsea  
Council, with the support of the Government, will issue  
a fresh document to every resident that will make it very  
clear how this process can work going forward, answer  
a lot of the questions that residents will naturally have,  
and make sure that all the information is in one place. A  
lotof thatworkhasbeenputtogetherafterconsultation  
with many of the residents to try to make sure that all  
the questions they would naturally have are answered,  
including some of the key questions around the allocation  
policy of some of the permanent housing that has been  
identified.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the testing  
process. This is a very comprehensive, detailed and, by  
its very nature, complex process. At every stage, we have  
been led by advice from the independent expert panel.  
These are the people we should all rely on to give the  
best advice on how testing should be prioritised. The  
clear advice, right at the start, was to prioritise testing  
of cladding that may be similar to that which was on  
Grenfell Tower. I think it was right to prioritise that.  
That does not, of course, preclude tests on other types  
of cladding. The BRE facilities are not the only test  
facilities available in the country. Landlords, whether  
they are local authorities, housing associations or private  
landlords, have a legal responsibility to make sure that  
their buildings are safe. That is why, on the back of the  
advice and explanatory notes that we have issued,  
landlords—I know of this happening in many cases—are  
already taking further action to make sure that even if  
their buildings do not have ACM cladding, they have  
still done everything they can to re-check that they are  
safe. With regard to the systems tests, I mentioned that  
we will be publishing an explanatory note that will go  
into much more detail about exactly how those tests will  
work, and how their results will then be used.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about funding. I  
have made it clear from the Dispatch Box a number of  
times that if any local authority or housing association  
has to take any action to make sure that its buildings are  
safe, we expect them to do that immediately. If they  
cannot afford it, they should approach us, and we will  
discuss how to make sure that they have the support  
that they need. To date, as far as I am aware, not a single  
local authority or housing association has approached  
me or my Department to ask for any assistance. If they  
did, of course we would take that very seriously. If he is  
aware of any local authority that has a funding issue,  
then he should encourage it to contact me.

On the building regulations, the right hon. Gentleman  
again rightly said that we need to learn the lessons from  
this terrible tragedy—whether they come from the public  
inquiry, the police inquiry, or the fire inspection work  
that has happened—and make sure that where changes  
are required in the building regulations or the enforcement  
of those regulations, they are made as swiftly as possible.  
There will be further news on that in due course.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his interest. I  
repeat that he can approach me at any time during the  
summer recess period.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I welcome my  
right hon. Friend's statement and congratulate him on  
keeping the House up to date with progress thus far.

My right hon. Friend is right in saying that there is a  
lack of confidence in the local authority in Kensington  
and Chelsea. The taskforce that he is going to nominate,  
hopefully later today or tomorrow, is vital to restore  
confidence. Will he update the House on the exact  
powers that the taskforce has? Clearly, if control is  
passed back to Kensington and Chelsea Council, that  
raises the question of who can direct the council to do  
things, and what happens if there is a dispute over what  
is done. For example, the shadow Secretary of State  
mentioned individuals almost being blackmailed into  
accepting a property that they do not want. Does the  
taskforce have the power to direct the local authority to  
take certain actions, and will my right hon. Friend  
personally intervene if it needs extra help?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to  
raise the importance of the taskforce and the work that  
is required of Kensington and Chelsea going forward.  
As I said, there is a very low level of confidence among  
the residents—perfectly understandably so. We saw that  
last night at the local council meeting. The taskforce  
will comprise experienced people independent of the  
council to provide the council with strategic advice,  
particularly on rehousing and community engagement,  
and it will report independently to me. I have made it  
very clear from the start that, if it believes that the  
council is not up to the job, I will not hesitate to take  
further action.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I  
thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his  
statement. I have confirmed in response to previous  
statements that the Scottish Government and Scottish  
local authorities have in hand the safety of Scotland's  
high-rise flats, and that the Scottish Fire and Rescue  
Service is undertaking fire safety and incident planning  
visits to all high-rises in Scotland.

I am sure that many hon. Members will, like me, have  
received intimations of concern from constituents about  
a number of aspects of this terrible disaster. One question  
that I hear over and again is, “Where was the infrastructure  
in the borough to deal with such a disaster, and where  
was the plan for dealing with its aftermath?”Constituents  
and members of the public askmewhatwas goingon in  
sucha wealthy borough thatitdidnotseemable to cope  
with such a disaster on its doorstep. Was this just a  
failing of one out-of-touch Tory council, or is it an  
endemic problem? What steps are the UK Government  
taking to ensure that such an inept and incompetent  
response to such a terrible disaster could not happen  
again in what is really a very wealthy area?

1027

Grenfell Tower

20 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower

1028

Another concern to all our constituents, I am sure, is  
the BBC report earlier this week saying that less than  
£800,000 of the £20 million donated has been disbursed  
in the past five weeks. That is leading to growing  
scepticism among residents, with the chair of the residents  
group saying recently that she feels that the public's  
generosity “is being betrayed”. Can the Secretary of  
State assure us that there will be full transparency with  
regard to how the funds donated by the public and  
business are being put to use, and that any administrative  
and bureaucratic obstacles that are preventing that money  
from being distributed promptly are removed, so far as  
is reasonably possible?

**Sajid Javid:** The Scottish Government and the Scottish  
Fire and Rescue Service have done a commendable job  
in responding to this tragedy and in ensuring that the  
lessons are learned in Scotland, too.

On the hon. and learned Lady's wider questions, it is  
fair to say that, with a tragedy on this scale, of this size  
and proportion, almost any local authority in the country  
would be overwhelmed. Despite that, however, there are  
certainly things that any reasonable person would have  
expected of Kensington and Chelsea Council. As I said  
earlier, there were failings, and that is why there is a  
need for an intervention of the type I have described.  
There are longer-term lessons to learn not just for  
boroughs in London, but more widely to ensure that, as  
a country, we are better prepared for civil emergencies  
of this type. That work, led by the Cabinet Office, has  
already begun.

The hon. and learned Lady talked about charity  
funding. It is great that so many people have contributed  
to help the people hurt by this tragedy. The Charity  
Commission has been working with a number of charities  
to ensure that there is a co-ordinated response. All of  
them are working together to get the maximum benefit  
from the donations that have been made, and I think  
that is right. We were asked to make it clear that any  
donations through the co-ordinated response of charities—  
funds raised by the *Evening Standard*, the Rugby Portobello  
Trust and others—would not have an impact on benefits.  
We have done what was asked of us. We were asked to  
disregard donations from the point of view of benefits,  
and we have done exactly that.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): The  
residents of Grenfell Tower have of course been very  
badly affected by this terrible tragedy, and they need  
help in a number of areas, such as financial help—  
immediate financial assistance—as well as rehousing  
and emotional support. Would it help if individual  
caseworkers were deployed—or has the Secretary of  
State already deployed some—to provide one-to-one  
support through this process to ensure that residents get  
the assistance they need?

**Sajid Javid:** Yes. Right at the start, Gold Command  
very quickly brought in key workers for every family  
affected, whether they were in Grenfell Tower, Grenfell  
Walk or other nearby housing. One part of the transition  
process—this has already begun—will be making sure  
that Kensington and Chelsea Council puts in place  
permanent key workers for each family for as long as  
the families require that support. That is essential, and  
it has been supported by the Government.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): This  
morning, I met a number of local government leaders,  
who said they were completely in the dark about the  
circumstances in which central Government would help  
them to pay for essential work on tower blocks. The  
Secretary of State has said that local authorities should  
go ahead and that, if they cannot afford to pay for such  
work, the Government will help in those circumstances.  
The Secretary of State knows that the funding comes  
out of housing revenue account. Rents are capped and  
borrowing is capped, so for many authorities the only  
way in which they will be able to pay for extra work on  
tower blocks is by stopping important work on other  
properties. Does he accept that, in those circumstances  
where work on tower blocks would mean not doing  
important work elsewhere, central Government will pay  
to help local authorities to do the necessary work?

**Sajid Javid:** Of course we want other essential work,  
such as on maintaining social housing, to continue. The  
clear starting point, however, is that it is the legal  
responsibility of local authorities and housing associations  
to ensure that their properties are safe. They should  
already be doing that work. Where they have found that  
that is not the case and they need to take action, they  
should take such action. As I have said, if they need  
help because they cannot afford it, they should approach  
us. So far, however, I am not aware of a single local  
authority that has done so.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I thank the Secretary  
of State for his detailed statement, and for having kept  
the House so fully apprised of recent developments. I  
am horrified to hear that some housing associations  
have not yet, despite requests to do so, sent in samples  
for testing. Is the Secretary of State considering taking  
any further action? Perhaps the time has come for  
naming and shaming, for example.

**Sajid Javid:** If such action is required, I will not  
hesitate to take it. In the past few days, since we have  
been a lot more public about pushing those that have  
not come forward with the relevant information, I must  
say that information has flowed in very quickly, especially  
during the past 48 hours. I believe we are still waiting  
for information on seven buildings managed by housing  
associations. I understand that all those properties are  
privately owned but managed by housing associations,  
so I recognise that they may be different from and more  
complex than others, but we still expect the information  
to come in right away.

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I  
commend the Secretary of State for coming to the  
Chamber again, and indeed the Minister of State,  
Department for Communities and Local Government,  
the hon. Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma), for  
being very accessible to colleagues on this issue. However,  
they still seem to be in denial about the review of  
approved document B, the fire guidance for building  
regulations. Ministers have been promising a review  
since 2011, and the Lakanal House coroner recommended  
it in 2013. As recently as 2015, the then housing Minister  
said that work would start in 2016 and that it would be  
published in 2017. One can only assume that either the  
independent panel of experts is telling them not to do it  
because it is not necessary, or the Government believe

1029

Grenfell Tower

20 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower

1030

*[Jim Fitzpatrick]*

that the public inquiry will conclude that we do not  
need to do it. Which is it? The work will take time, and  
the Government could get ahead of the curve by starting  
the work now, so that when the public inquiry recommends  
doing so—many of us expect the inquiry to recommend  
it—they can say, “Here's the work.”

**Sajid Javid:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
comments. As usual, he has raised a very important  
point. The purpose of the independent expert panel is  
to provide any advice that might require emergency  
action. If it does so in terms of building regulations or  
enforcement, we will certainly do that. As I said in  
response to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and  
Dearne (John Healey), I accept that there are clear  
issues around building regulations and enforcement  
and that, to make perhaps longer-term changes, we  
should act more swiftly and not necessarily wait for the  
outcome of a public inquiry, because with an independent  
inquiry the Government do not control the timing of  
that. I am looking at what further steps we can take to  
ensure we learn the lessons very quickly.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): This  
terrible fire has affected not just the people who were  
unfortunate enough to live in the block itself, but the  
residents living around Grenfell Tower. They must have  
been horribly affected by seeing the fire and by its  
aftermath. What support is being given to local residents  
to help them to live with this tragedy?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to  
raise that point. The immediate support was to provide  
emergency accommodation in hotel rooms for all families  
who required it, and that has been done. Many of them  
are still in hotel rooms; that is what they decided to do.  
The council has designed an offer for people in many of  
the nearby blocks. Specific offers have been made to  
families in three of them— Barandon Walk, Hurstway  
Walk and Testerton Walk—to allow them to return to  
their homes and to provide them with the support they  
need.

**Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): The  
Government intervened in housing providers' budgets  
by imposing a rent cut that reduced their income. Because  
of that and other factors, we already know that repairs  
and maintenance budgets have fallen by almost a fifth  
since 2010. If tenants and residents are not to fear that  
fire safety will be compromised by budgets or that  
repair and maintenance budgets will not be compromised  
by fire safety, will the Secretary of State assure us that  
all housing providers will know that they do not have to  
squeeze further other essential repairs and maintenance  
work in order to install sprinklers and carry out other  
remedial fire safety work?

**Sajid Javid:** I have been clear that it is clearly the legal  
responsibility of all local authorities and housing  
associations to ensure that their residents are safe and  
that they are meeting all safety regulations, including  
fire safety regulations. If there are instances where they  
cannot afford such work, they should approach us.

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): I thank my  
right hon. Friend for his detailed statement. This fire is  
a terrible tragedy that will have a huge impact on many  
aspects of future Government policy. I have always  
been a passionate believer in the important role of  
urban regeneration in a holistic housing policy. Will he  
confirm that, for schemes that are brought forward in  
future and in our wider housing policy, we have to learn  
all the lessons of what happened at Grenfell Tower and  
ensure that we have the most robust possible fire measures  
in place?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There  
are many lessons to learn from this terrible tragedy. We  
have talked already about a number of them in the  
House, and one certainly concerns our wider and longer-  
term approach to social housing.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary  
of State's willingness to keep us all updated over the  
next few weeks. Does he agree that local authorities and  
housing associations have a real duty to keep the residents  
and tenants in those blocks updated? Some local authorities  
are better than others, and there is huge concern about  
times when testing has not been reported back or results  
have not been received. It is absolutely crucial that local  
authorities report back over the summer.

Has the Secretary of State agreed that the Fire Brigades  
Union should be a main participant in the inquiry, to  
which it can bring all its expertise, knowledge and  
willingness to help to get to the bottom of this terrible  
tragedy?

**Sajid Javid:** The decision on the FBU's role in the  
public inquiry will be for the judge. With the extension  
in the terms of reference, he is keen to ensure that he  
speaks to all interested parties, but the decision will  
ultimately be his to make. I agree 100% with the hon.  
Lady that all local authorities and housing associations  
must do everything they can to keep their residents  
informed. Many residents will, naturally, be worried  
and have concerns. I have seen good examples of local  
authorities and housing authorities keeping their residents  
up to date, but, as she says, there are some not-so-good  
examples. If she or any other hon. Member is aware of  
councils or housing associations that are not doing a  
good job, please make me aware of that.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): I welcome the  
Secretary of State's clear, informative statement, but I  
wonder whether he might give us a little more indication  
of what progress has been made in the provision of  
temporary accommodation for those who have lost  
their homes in this tragedy. It does seem as though some  
are still facing difficulties. Could he give me an assurance  
that all efforts are being made, especially when it comes  
to replacing homes on a like-for-like basis?

**Sajid Javid:** The initial response was to provide emergency  
accommodation and to ensure that people were offered  
temporary accommodation within three weeks, and  
that certainly happened. More than 200 units of temporary  
accommodation, all of which were of high quality and  
fully furnished, were identified in the local area. As I  
have mentioned, some families have taken up the offer.  
Otherswishtomovestraighttopermanentaccommodation,  
and others say that they are not ready. We will respect

1031

Grenfell Tower

20 JULY 2017

Grenfell Tower

1032

their wishes. This is one of the biggest jobs for Kensington  
and Chelsea and for the Government, who are working  
together to ensure that all the families affected have  
accommodation available that is of high quality and,  
importantly, on the same terms as that which they had  
before. That is certainly what we are pursuing.

**Tom B rake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Electrical  
safety is of paramount importance in rented  
accommodation, particularly when it is high rise, and it  
appears as though the Grenfell Tower incident was  
caused by a fire in a fridge freezer. Will the Secretary of  
State commit to introducing mandatory electrical safety  
checks in rented properties, bearing in mind the fact  
that the Department for Communities and Local  
Government working group that was looking at the  
matter has concluded?

**Sajid Javid:** My right hon. Friend the Business Secretary  
is looking at product electrical safety, including product  
recall, and I will ensure that he knows about the right  
hon. Gentleman's concerns.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): I get the impression  
from previous answers that I have received from my  
right hon. Friend that local authorities have been very  
good at meeting the different requests that Government  
have made of them, but can any specific pressure be  
applied to non-compliant housing associations? We simply  
cannot take any chances with safety.

**Sajid Javid:** Local authorities have generally been  
good in their response. Of the buildings mentioned  
earlier that have had their cladding tested or proxy  
tested, 46 are local authority buildings. Some local  
authorities have been very helpful in working with  
housing associations, but where that can help, we will  
certainly look at it further.

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The  
West Midlands Fire Service has recommended that  
extensive work be carried out on 213 tower blocks in  
Birmingham containing 10,000 households. That work  
must be done as a matter of priority, but it will be very  
challenging indeed for the city, given the pressure on its  
budget. May I ask the Secretary of State, therefore—having  
spoken with the leader of the council, John Clancy, this  
morning—whether he is prepared to receive an all-party  
delegation from the city, consisting of Birmingham's  
Members of Parliament and the leadership of Birmingham  
City Council, so that we can say to tenants in Birmingham,  
“Everything necessary will be done to ensure you are  
safe”?

**Sajid Javid:** Whether in Birmingham or in any other  
part of the country, we expect local authorities and  
housing associations to do any necessary work. If their  
local fire and rescue service says that such work is  
necessary, of course they should pursue it. I know the  
leader of Birmingham City Council well already, and if  
he wants to approach me, he should do so.

**Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): I thank the  
Secretary of State for giving us an update. I also thank  
the Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Reading West (Alok Sharma), who has responsibility

for housing, for his assiduous attention in the aftermath  
of the tragedy. People in Chaucer House, one of the two  
council-owned tower blocks in Sutton, have rightly  
been asking questions after the failure of the sample  
that was tested. In particular, they were not quite sure  
what the grading of 1, 2 or 3 meant. Residents in  
Balaam House nearby will also be asking questions  
when their results come back. Can the Secretary of  
State give me further details about the systems testing  
procedure that the Government have introduced?

**Sajid Javid:** It is perfectly reasonable to ask such  
questions. Because the tests are being done on the back  
of expert advice, some of them are naturally complex  
and require proper explanation. That is why we have  
already issued an explanatory note on the tests of the  
core material of the ACM cladding, and it is why I have  
also decided to issue an explanatory note on the new  
systems test, which will be available very shortly.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): In Plymouth there are three tower blocks with  
combustible cladding. Plymouth Community Homes  
has acted quickly in fire testing and installing additional  
safety upgrades, but it needs additional information  
from the Government about the technical specifications  
of new cladding, if it is to be installed. Plymouth  
Community Homes and Conservative-run Plymouth  
City Council have written to the Government asking for  
financial assistance to enable them to do that. When  
will the Government be able to give them clarity about  
the technical specifications of new cladding and assistance  
with funding?

**Sajid Javid:** Two weeks ago, we issued clear guidance  
on what the limited combustibility test results mean and  
what action should be taken. As I said a moment ago,  
an explanatory note on the next set of tests—the so-called  
system tests—will be coming out shortly, and it will no  
doubt help Plymouth to make decisions. On funding,  
Plymouth should absolutely be getting on with any  
necessary work. If it has an affordability issue, it should  
approach us.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Can my right hon.  
Friend assure the House that the safety of tenants in the  
private rented sector will also be taken into account in  
the independent expert advisory panel and in the  
Government's future actions? Tenants living in private  
rented homes also deserve to feel safe.

**Sajid Javid:** Yes, I can absolutely give my hon. Friend  
that assurance. The testing facilities have been made  
available for free to the private sector, and a number of  
landlords have used those facilities. The housing Minister,  
other Ministers and I have met many representatives  
from the private sector to ensure that they are fully  
informed and that they receive all our guidance.

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): Will my right  
hon. Friend advise us what engagement his Department  
has had with the many charities looking to support  
survivors of the Grenfell tragedy?

**Sajid Javid:** As I mentioned earlier, a number of  
charities have set up dedicated funding efforts to provide  
help and support to the victims of this tragedy.

1033

Grenfell Tower

20 JULY 2017

1034

*[Sajid Javid]*

The Department has been working across Government;  
for example, we are working with the Charity Commission  
to help to co-ordinate the use of those funds as they are  
distributed, and with the Department for Work and  
Pensions to ensure that they are disregarded for benefits  
purposes. Over the next weeks and months, we will  
continue to do what we can to help those charities to  
help the victims.

Points of Order

1.19 pm

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): On a point  
of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On Monday night  
we had the farce of the Secretary of State for Transport  
being dragged to the Chamber to face questions about  
HS2. Today, the last day of the Session, a written  
statement has been sneaked out which is of massive  
economic detriment to the country. It lays waste to any  
semblance of industrial strategy; it totally conflicts with  
what was said about electrification at the Dispatch Box  
on Monday night; and it smashes to bits the Government's  
promises to the people of the north and the midlands  
and especially to the people of south Wales. For the  
Secretary of State to drop this bombshell on the British  
people without affording Members the opportunity to  
hold him to account by way of an oral statement before  
we break for the summer is completely disrespectful to  
this House. I seek your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker,  
as to how the Secretary of State can be held to account  
for his gross omission and explain this disastrous U-turn.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): Further  
to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Once  
again the Secretary of State has made a major  
announcement outside the Chamber on an issue that  
affects my constituents in Sheffield. The electrification  
of the midland mainline has been on and off for a  
number of years; it was on and then paused, then it was  
on and now apparently it is off again. A written statement  
has been sneaked out, but no statement has been made  
in the House. The Secretary of State's predecessor always  
came to this House to make such statements. Can you  
require the Secretary of State to come to this House to  
explain what is going on with this electrification, which  
once again has been put on hold?

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Further to that  
point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can we have a  
statement on the impact of this decision on the proposed  
electrification of the south Wales valley lines? The  
statement that has been sneaked out today is appalling.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Hon.  
Members know that the matter of when a Minister  
comes to the House is not for me, Mr Speaker or any  
other occupant of the Chair. The matters that were just  
raised in three points of order were raised many times  
during today's business questions and answered by the  
Leader of the House, who is once again in her place. I  
am sure that she will have conveyed the feelings of the  
House to the Secretary of State. The hon. Gentlemen  
know very well the methods by which Members can try  
to insist on a Secretary of State coming to the House,  
and I am sure that they will pursue the matter in that  
way. I can do nothing further from the Chair, but I am  
certain that the Secretary of State for Transport knows  
the opinion of hon. Members.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): On a  
point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Government  
are required by the High Court to publish an air quality  
strategy next week because they are in breach of European  
Union air quality standards, which has led to 40,000  
premature deaths and costs £20 billion a year. Yesterday

1035

Points of Order

20 JULY 2017

1036

some 60 MPs wrote to me in support of a clean air Bill  
asking the Secretary of State for Environment, Food  
and Rural Affairs to incorporate those provisions in  
such a strategy. When will we have a chance to debate  
those matters, and why has a statement not been made  
today on the issue, given that the House will not have an  
opportunity to debate it before the deadline imposed by  
the Court? We knew this would happen and it has such  
deadly consequences for British people.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Again, the hon. Gentleman  
knows that I cannot require someone to come to the  
House on the back of a point of order. Of course, if  
the hon. Gentleman wished to ask a question about the  
timetabling of business matters, he should have asked  
the Leader of the House when she was at the Dispatch  
Box earlier.

**Geraint Davies:** I asked her about another matter.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I know that and have every  
sympathy for the hon. Gentleman. He has drawn his  
concerns to the attention of the Leader of the House,  
who is in her place. It is not a matter for me.

Parliamentary Commissioner for  
Standards

1.24 pm

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I beg  
to move,

That Kathryn Stone be appointed Parliamentary Commissioner  
for Standards on the terms of the Report of the House of  
Commons Commission, HC 294, dated 19 July 2017.

The motion is in my name, as spokesperson for the  
House of Commons Commission, and those of other  
commissioners and of the right hon. Member for Rother  
Valley (Sir Kevin Barron), the recently re-elected Chair  
of the Committee on Standards.

In 2003 the House decided that the office of  
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards should be  
held for a non-renewable term of five years. As the  
House will be aware, the commissioner's principal  
responsibilities include maintaining the Register of  
Members' Financial Interests and other registers;  
monitoring the operation of the code of conduct and  
proposing possible modifications to the Committee on  
Standards; and receiving and investigating matters relating  
to the conduct of Members and reporting findings to  
the Committee where appropriate. The appointment of  
the current commissioner, Kathryn Hudson, comes to  
an end on 31 December and the House therefore needs  
to appoint a new commissioner.

I should begin by expressing the appreciation of the  
House of Commons Commission for the work Kathryn  
Hudson has done during her tenure as the Parliamentary  
Commissioner for Standards. During that time she has  
handled a wide range of complaints against Members  
and has also contributed to the development of the  
standards system as a whole, including through instituting  
greater opportunities for training Members and their  
staff, and working on the respect policy and review of  
the code of conduct and guide to the rules.

Kathryn Hudson took up her post at the same time  
as the first lay members arrived on the Committee on  
Standards, and she has played a full part in ensuring the  
success of those new arrangements in addressing standards  
issues in the House. Throughout her time in office she  
has demonstrated great integrity, resilience, patience  
and persistence, and she will be remembered for her real  
dedication to public service. I am sure that the House  
would wish to join me in thanking Ms Hudson for her  
work.

The recruitment process for her replacement was  
rigorous. Advertisements were placed on the websites of  
*The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian*, and a range of  
other web-based methods were used to attract applications.  
In total, 81 applications were received. The process  
included the right hon. Member for Rother Valley,  
Dr Jane Martin, who was an external member of the  
recruitment panel and is a member of the Committee  
on Standards in Public Life, and members of the  
Commission. Full details of the recruitment process are  
available in the Commission's report.

Kathryn Stone is currently the chief legal ombudsman  
of England and Wales, a post she has held since  
January 2016. Prior to that, Ms Stone held posts as an  
independent police complaints commissioner and as  
the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors for Northern

1037 *Parliamentary Commissioner for  
Standards*

*[Tom Brake]*

Ireland. The Commission is confident that Ms Stone  
has the necessary experience and skills for the role, and  
that she will bring to it the authority, independence,  
discretion and strength of character required.

Ms Stone's appointment will commence at the beginning  
of 2018, if the House approves the nomination. I am  
confident that Ms Stone will fulfil her responsibilities to  
the same high standard as her predecessors, and I  
commend this nomination to the House.

1. pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):**Let me begin by putting on the record the gratitude of  
the House for the work undertaken by Kathryn Hudson  
since her appointment in 2013. She has played an  
important role in the work of the House. New Members  
will be able to testify to her valuable advice on their  
conduct and responsibilities. She has investigated and  
reported on complaints with all the diligence that we  
and the public would expect of her. She has also, of  
course, ensured transparency through the operation of  
the Register of Members' Financial Interests and the  
other registers.

I would also like to make it clear that we owe a debt  
of gratitude to the staff of the House who support the  
commissioner in delivering standards, and to the Chairman  
of the Standards Committee for his work.

Although I have not personally been involved in the  
recruitment process, I am encouraged by the remarks of  
the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington  
(Tom Brake). We are all grateful to the selection board  
for sifting the candidates. Kathryn Stone will no doubt  
serve the House with the same diligence as all her  
predecessors. On that basis, I hope that the House will  
endorse the motion.

1. pm

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): I welcome the  
comments of the right hon. Member for Carshalton  
and Wallington (Tom Brake) and the Leader of the  
House. On behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition, I echo  
the thanks to the outgoing Parliamentary Commissioner  
for Standards, Kathryn Hudson. From my personal  
experience of meeting Kathryn when I was a new Member,  
I know just how important the role is in supporting all  
hon. Members. I thank her for her work.

I also thank all those who sat on the interview panel  
for following a robust process and selecting a successor,  
Kathryn Stone. Her Majesty's Opposition welcome and  
endorse the appointment of Kathryn Stone and wish  
her well in her new role.

1. pm

**Sir Paul Beresford** (Mole Valley) (Con): As a member  
of the Commission and, for some time, a member of the  
Committee on Standards, I support the motion. I endorse  
the positive comments about Kathryn Hudson, who  
worked extremely hard. She arrived at a difficult time,  
when the Standards Committee first had lay members;  
there was a steep learning curve for the lay people and  
for Kathryn Hudson. She faced problems because every  
time she was perceived to have slipped, the press were

20 JULY 2017

Parliamentary Commissioner for 1038

Standards

after her. It is a difficult role, which she played exceptionally  
well. I wish her well in her retirement and thank her on  
my behalf and on behalf of the Standards Committee. I  
suspect that the right hon. Member for Rother Valley  
(Sir Kevin Barron) will support the motion shortly.

As has been said, applicants were extensively sought,  
and 81 were reduced to six. Those six appeared before a  
small panel for interview. It included two Members of  
Parliament —the right hon. Member for Rother Valley  
and me. It was chaired by the Principal Clerk of the  
Table Office, whom I thank for her exceptional  
chairmanship. All interviewees were put through their  
paces gently—and sometimes not quite so gently. All  
their advantages and, indeed, some foibles, were drawn  
out. The panel's final decision on the two who went  
forward for final selection was unanimous and solid. I  
endorse Kathryn Stone's appointment. Having been  
part of the interview process, I believe that she will  
prove an excellent choice and I look forward to her  
joining us in due course.

1. pm

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): I am very  
pleased to support the motion to appoint Kathryn  
Stone as the next Parliamentary Commissioner for  
Standards. As the former Chair, and now the Chair-in-  
waiting of the Committee on Standards, I was involved  
in the appointment process during the initial selection  
stage and the first round of interviews, when we greatly  
benefited from the help of an external member of the  
board, Dr Jane Martin. I would like to record the  
House's appreciation of Jane's wise advice.

We recommended two highly able and appointable  
candidates for the final stage interviews so the Commission  
could not go wrong, but I am very pleased that Kathryn  
Stone has been put forward. I believe that her experience  
in some very sensitive situations and her personal qualities  
will form the foundation for a successful and effective  
term of office as Parliamentary Commissioner for  
Standards. I wish her well in the role, subject to the  
House's approving the motion today.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to another  
Kathryn, the outgoing Commissioner, Kathryn Hudson.  
Kathryn was the first Commissioner to be appointed  
after the establishment of the Independent Parliamentary  
Standards Authority. She has, we hope, overseen the  
last of the legacy cases from the expenses scandal and  
has helped guide the House into calmer waters on  
standards.

There have been major changes, such as the introduction  
of lay members to the Committee on Standards and  
some major challenges, from inside and outside the  
House. Kathryn has acted throughout with great integrity  
and exemplary fairness and thoroughness. She has played  
a full part in developing the standards system and  
addressing the culture change needed to embed standards  
in everything we do and win back the confidence of the  
public.

I know that Kathryn will be sorry if the Committee  
on Standards cannot complete its work on the new code  
of conduct and guide to the rules before she departs in  
December. The general election has made that timetable  
very tricky, but whenever the new code and guide emerge  
for the House's approval, we will all appreciate the  
thoughtfulness and dedication that Kathryn put into

1039 *Parliamentary Commissioner for  
Standards*

making it more relevant, more clearly expressed and  
more user-friendly than previous versions. Perhaps I  
could take this opportunity to ask that the Committee  
be re-formed as soon as possible to continue this work.  
My understanding is that it does not need a Committee  
of Selection to sit for that to happen. I hope that it can  
happen quickly.

The standards system has changed for the better in  
recent years, and no doubt it will continue to evolve as  
the equality of numbers between lay and elected members  
on the Committee on Standards makes itself felt. Some  
outside the House continue to call for the regulation of  
standards to be taken out of the hands of Parliament  
altogether; others question the multiplicity of regulators  
involved in overseeing the conduct of MPs.

Some 20 years after the first Commissioner arrived in  
the House, it may be time to start thinking about how  
the system as a whole works, but I am clear that the  
Commissioner's independence is something of great  
value, which has proved its worth. For the system to be  
effective we need a strong, fair Commissioner, whose  
integrity is beyond doubt. Kathryn Hudson has fulfilled  
that brief and I look forward to the new Commissioner  
continuing the tradition.

1.35 pm

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I, too, recognise  
the important role of the Commissioner for Standards  
in building and maintaining public confidence in the  
House and in Members' conduct. The public sometimes  
understand the phrase, “an hon. Member” to be some  
sort of honorific or title that Members enjoy, but I often  
reflect to constituents or visitors to this place that it is  
an injunction to us as Members to conduct ourselves  
honourably and to live up to the highest standards in

20 JULY 2017

Parliamentary Commissioner for 1040

Standards

public life. Kathryn Hudson certainly impressed that  
responsibility on me and my colleagues on our election  
in 2015. On behalf of the Scottish National party, I pay  
tribute to her work over the years. The right hon.  
Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake)  
mentioned some of the effective innovations, such as  
training. I thank Kathryn Hudson for all the help and  
support that she has provided to colleagues in her time  
as Commissioner and wish her all the very best for the  
future.

Kathryn Hudson's successor is recommended by the  
House of Commons Commission. I thank our outgoing  
Member of the Commission, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie), for his work in recent  
years. This may be my best chance in the Chamber to  
pay tribute to my predecessor as SNP Chief Whip,  
Mike Weir. I thank him for all his wisdom, support,  
advice and friendship before and since the general election.  
I am conscious of having big shoes to fill and I am glad  
to have my hon. Friends the Members for Motherwell  
and Wishaw (Marion Fellows) and for Glasgow East  
(David Linden) to help me.

I join other Members in warmly welcoming the  
appointment of Kathryn Stone, who was clearly a very  
well qualified and highly respected candidate. She met  
with the approval of the interview panel and the House  
of Commons Commission, and we wish her all the very  
best for her term of office. I hope that, if we as Members  
live up to the standards that are expected of us, her case  
load will be appropriately light.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That Kathryn Stone be appointed Parliamentary Commissioner  
for Standards on the terms of the Report of the House of  
Commons Commission, HC 294, dated 19 July 2017.

1041

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1042

Summer Adjournment

*Motion made, and Question proposed,*

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the  
forthcoming Adjournment.—*(Craig Whittaker.)*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Before I call the first colleague  
to speak, I draw it to the House's attention that a great  
many people wish to speak, that we have a limited  
amount of time and that, if colleagues wish to be  
courteous, it would be helpful if they spoke for no more  
than seven or seven and a half minutes. If everybody  
takes about seven minutes, all colleagues will have a  
chance to make the points that they wish to make. I  
realise that it is not fair because the first speaker has  
not had previous warning, but I am sure that he can  
tailor his remarks accordingly. I call Mr Ian Liddell-  
Grainger.

1.38 pm

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger** (Bridgwater and West Somerset)  
(Con): Madam Deputy Speaker, I saw the way you  
looked at me and I realised that I was front gunner on  
this one. First, I wish you and all colleagues a happy  
recess.

This debate is always important. It is the one time of  
the year when Members can say pretty much what we  
like to try to get the points across. I will try to keep  
within the time limit, but I will fail dismally. Please  
forgive me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I appreciate the chance to address the House on a  
matter of considerable concern to 35,000 of my constituents  
in West Somerset. Our local district council is in mortal  
danger. Three years ago, it was lured into a relationship  
with Taunton Deane. Now West Somerset could lose all  
its staff, its offices and above all, its pride. The relationship  
with Taunton is starting to turn abusive. I am sorry to  
say that that was predictable. Taunton Deane has a very  
bad reputation. It was always a grubby and unsuitable  
partner, and it has wanted only one thing. I am sorry  
that my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane  
(Rebecca Pow) is not in her place—I understand that as  
she has a lot to do. Yesterday, however, she was singing  
the praises of Taunton Deane at Prime Minister's questions,  
including talking about its house building record. There  
are certainly thousands of houses and plans for thousands  
more, but there is nothing in the way of infrastructure,  
schools or surgeries—there are just houses.

Taunton Deane is actually run by a builder, God help  
us, who offers a friendly nod and a wink to any other  
builder he knows. Left to his own devices, Councillor  
Williams would lay concrete all over Somerset. The  
suspiciously close relationship between the leadership  
and certain big players in this industry is legendary.  
When I first mentioned the names Summerfield and  
John Williams in Parliament some months ago, I got a  
quick response from both of them. It was a co-ordinated  
denial; they had obviously talked and responded in  
unison. Actually, they could almost be brothers with a  
genuine family connection—perhaps they are. They are  
certainly brothers in aprons, not that being a mason is a  
crime.

But it is curious how many big projects in Taunton  
Deane go Summerfield's way. It builds a new premises  
for Taunton Deane's direct labour force—a nice little

earner. The latest wheeze is Nexus 25, next to junction 25  
of the M5, designed to be a business park. Summerfield  
owns the land, which prompts the question: why did it  
buy it? For years building anything on that side of the  
M5 has been considered out of bounds; a very small  
amount of social housing was possible, understandably,  
but nothing else. Back in 2007 Summerfield bought the  
social housing arm known as My Home and applied to  
Taunton Deane to build an estate of affordable houses  
near Henlade. Then an upright planning officer looked  
at the plans and put his foot down: “Too big,” he said,  
“Too many houses. Make it smaller.” Oh dear. Summerfield  
refused to downscale; instead, it walked away.

It was not until around 2012 that a different housing  
association secured permission for a smaller development  
in the same area. But Summerfield probably never  
surrendered its interests in the land, and recently paid  
£1 million for a large plot of land near Henlade—which  
could never, surely, be built upon. It has no obvious  
access, unless, of course, Summerfield has already taken  
out options on land that adjoins it. I do not know; I  
would probably need to talk to a very well-connected  
land agent to find out. I wonder if, perhaps, my hon.  
Friend the Member for Taunton Deane knows of one.

Anyway, this Summerfield land is surely safe from  
housing unless a big dual carriageway ever gets built—and,  
abracadabra, yesterday my hon. Friend was on her feet  
going all gooey-eyed about the investment in the A358.  
I know that Highways England has proposed a scheme  
to upgrade the A358, and I also know that my hon.  
Friend has been publicly saying that it is the wrong  
scheme. She also mentioned Taunton's record on  
unemployment; actually, it is a record regularly beaten  
by Sedgemoor. Yesterday the hon. Lady unfortunately  
failed to tell that to the Prime Minister, but never mind.  
I have seen the true face of Taunton Deane and its  
leader, and I do not like what I see. Why West Somerset  
fell for Councillor Williams and his smooth patter, I will  
never fully understand.

The leadership of my council would not consider  
taking help from any of our neighbours, including its  
nearest, Sedgemoor, which happens to be one of the  
best run councils in the United Kingdom. Sedgemoor  
has very healthy finances and would have helped sort  
out West Somerset's problems and treated it with the  
respect my constituents deserve. But the old guard  
preferred to deal with Taunton. Now West Somerset  
risks being raped.

“Rape” is a strong word indeed, but it accurately  
describes what is happening in the relationship with  
Taunton Deane. The people of West Somerset have not  
been properly consulted, so Taunton can never claim it  
has had meaningful consent. Taunton Deane has muscled  
in like the bully that it is, and West Somerset has had to  
lie down and submit to a full-blown merger.

West Somerset is, I am proud to say, the smallest  
authority in England. The council has always found it  
hard to balance its books, because there are not enough  
people to pay the bills—I am one of the taxpayers.  
However, with intelligent planning and skilful cost cutting,  
West Somerset has made a budget that works—which is  
a great accolade to some of the councillors. They are on  
target for the budget to be properly balanced this year  
and probably next year, too. They do not need an  
abusive, aggressive partner.

1043

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1044

Taunton Deane was—and still is—desperately short  
of money. It is squandering huge sums on a worthless  
head office and this week started procuring millions of  
pounds-worth of new computer equipment. It does not  
need either. Its mismanagement of money is a standing  
joke in local government. In the long term, I believe that  
Taunton Deane wants to get its greedy hands on the  
Hinkley Point business rates. For West Somerset this is  
rape followed by robbery, all planned by Taunton's  
dodgy leader, Councillor John Williams.

Councillor Williams has a long and undistinguished  
record for getting everything wrong. He was an enthusiastic  
supporter of Southwest One, an appalling IT project  
that cost the taxpayers of Somerset £80 million and  
saved nothing. The regime he runs smiles on developers  
and reeks of shady deals. My constituents will not have  
the wool pulled over their eyes. They are not stupid;  
they can smell a rat—they know what one looks like,  
and, if they were given the chance, I am sure they would  
reject this half-baked scheme.

My hope is that the Secretary of State will opt for a  
sensible option and allow thorough independent scrutiny  
by the Boundaries Commission and a proper consultation  
with the public. My constituents want to keep their  
council—and so they should.

1.45 pm

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to  
follow the hon. Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset  
(Mr Liddell-Grainger) and I eagerly want to visit his  
constituency to meet all these house builders with whom  
he is in dispute. I do not think they stand much of a  
chance, being up against the hon. Gentleman.

I welcome the presence on the Labour Front Bench  
of the new shadow Deputy Leader of the House, my  
hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth),  
who will be making her maiden contribution in this  
debate, and, of course, the ever-present Deputy Leader  
of the House, who will be winding up. I have to apologise  
for the fact that, unfortunately, I have an unbreakable  
commitment in Leicester and might not be able to be  
here for the winding-up speeches. However, I will read  
*Hansard* with great care. I also had no idea I was going  
to be called so early.

I make no apology for starting this debate by talking  
about the situation in Yemen. Despite the catastrophic  
situation within the state, we are currently experiencing  
an even worse crisis. In the course of Yemen's civil war  
there have been well over 10,000 civilian deaths, 19.4 million  
Yemenis are without access to healthcare, 3 million are  
now suffering from acute malnutrition, and over 3 million  
are internally displaced. One child dies every 10 minutes.

Last week the United Nations announced that there  
were 300,000 cholera cases in Yemen countrywide, in  
22 of Yemen's 23 provinces. If current rates of cholera  
stay the same, from the time we enter recess to when this  
House returns on 5 September, up to 225,000 extra  
cases will be added to that number. The United Nations  
calls this the worst cholera crisis in the world.

Along with the spread of the disease, there has been  
the chronic destruction of medical infrastructure caused  
by the civil war, which has exacerbated the crisis. Despite  
the assistance given by organisations such as Medecins  
sans Frontieres, Islamic Relief, the Yemen Safe Passage  
Group, the UNHCR, and the Red Cross, the situation

in Yemen is getting much worse. We heard only today  
that a number of journalists had been prevented from  
landing in Sana'a.

While we go to our constituencies to do the work that  
all Members have to do during the recess, we must not  
forget what is happening in Yemen. I hope that a  
message from the Front Bench will go back to the  
Foreign Office that we expect to see Ministers fully  
engaged in the crisis that continues to unfold.

This week I was elected chair of the new all-party  
group on immigration and visas, and I am delighted to  
see the vice-chair of the group here, the hon. Member  
forHarrowEast(BobBlackman).Iamalsoverypleased  
that the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk  
(Martyn Day) was elected as the secretary. The group's  
purpose is to raise, on an all-party basis, issues of  
concern about the way in which our immigration and  
visa system operates. We all have critical constituency  
cases involving people who wish to travel, or whose  
relatives are not allowed to come into the country. For  
instance, the wedding of a constituent of mine is taking  
place at the end of August, but the best man is not being  
allowed to come here. Trying to convince officials who  
are thousands of miles away is extremely difficult.

I hope this group will, in a measured way, explore  
these circumstances, especially the role of the account  
managers and the issue of same-day service. I have a  
case of somebody who applied for a same-day visa, paid  
the fee of £500 on topof the fee of £1,000for their visa,  
and six months later the situation has not been resolved.  
It is important that we look at these issues in a constructive  
way.

I hope that, over the summer, Ministers in the  
DepartmentforExitingtheEuropeanUnionandtheHome  
Office will be trying to fashion a plan for the 3.2 million  
EU citizens living in the United Kingdom. We have  
heard the Prime Minister's welcome assurance that they  
will be allowed to stay, but the process of issuing the  
necessary documentation could take a long time. There  
is now a backlog of 100,000 cases at the Home Office.  
Some of those citizens arrived here without passports  
because they could enter the UK with identity cards  
from EU countries. Getting them processed will be  
extremely difficult.

I hope that those Ministers will also look into the  
suggestion of a pilot scheme for allowing EU citizens to  
register at local level. They could take their passports  
along to the local authority and get themselves checked  
and registered. That information could then be handed  
on to the Home Office. The Deputy Leader of the  
House of Commons, thehon.MemberforNorthampton  
North (Michael Ellis), is a former member of the Home  
Affairs Committee, and he will be well aware of these  
issues. I hope that he will pass that suggestion on.

I want to make two quick constituency points before  
I end. The first concerns the continuing campaign being  
led by Amy Morgan, a young mother in Leicester  
whose son, Tyler, was stabbed to death a year and a half  
ago. Another of my constituents, Isaac Williams, was  
stabbed to death in April this year. We need to do more  
to tackle knife crime. I introduced a Bill to increase the  
length of time people spend in prison for carrying a  
knife. Statistics show a 24% rise in the incidence of  
knife crime. That is a huge increase, with 12,074 offences  
and 2,381detentionslast year. Secondly, I amhopingto  
organise a meeting in my constituency involving those

1045

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1046

*[Keith Vaz]*

who have control of our theme parks, following the  
death earlier this year of my 11-year-old constituent,  
Evha Jannath. It is extremely important that families  
who visit theme parks should be as safe as possible.

Speaking as the chair of the all-party parliamentary  
group on diabetes, and as someone who has type 2 diabetes,  
let me end by issuing a challenge to Members. I want to  
commend the Pioppi diet, and I will write to the  
100 Members who have the most diabetics in their  
constituencies about this. Of course, we all have diabetics  
in our constituencies, but the Library has provided me  
with statistics for the top 100. I think that Doncaster  
might be on that list, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall  
ask those Members to take up the challenge of the  
Pioppi diet, which is named after a village in Italy where  
people live on average to the age of 97 as a result of  
their Mediterranean diet. It involves getting rid of sugar,  
which is a killer, keeping away from potatoes—and, for  
me, rice—and concentrating instead on the good food  
that is available around the Mediterranean. We have  
wonderful farms and food makers in this country, but  
we do not spend enough time looking at what we eat.

We have a diabetes epidemic in the United Kingdom.  
There are 4 million people with type 2 diabetes in this  
country, and 500,000 more—some of whom are in this  
House today—who do not know that they have the  
condition. My hon. Friend the Member for Strangford  
(Jim Shannon) is an officer of the APPG, and I am sure  
that he will be taking up the Pioppi diet challenge—

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): If it helps me to  
live to 97, I definitely will.

**Keith Vaz:** I know that all Democratic Unionist party  
Members would like to live to be 97, especially in the  
current climate.

I will be writing to those 100 Members, urging them  
to take up that challenge. I want to thank Dr Aseem  
Malhotra, the world-famous cardiologist, and Donal  
O'Neill, a renowned film-maker from Ireland, for writing  
the incredible book, “The Pioppi Diet”. I want everyone  
to take it up for 28 days in August and to see, when they  
come back, whether it has made a difference. With that,  
Madam Deputy Speaker, I should like to wish you, the  
Leader of the House, the shadow Leader of the House,  
all Members and all Officers of the House a happy and  
peaceful recess. We hope that nothing will bring us back  
during the recess, as has happened in the past. We want  
a bit of political stability so that we can enjoy our  
summer.

1.54 pm

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): Before the  
House adjourns for the summer recess, I wish to raise a  
number of points. Putting it mildly, the general election  
was not a great success for the party to which I belong.  
Against that background, there were also terrorist attacks  
that affected us all, and when we returned here, the  
Grenfell disaster happened. I hope that the Deputy  
Leader of the House of Commons, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Northampton North (Michael Ellis) will  
ensure that the recommendations of the all-party  
parliamentary fire safety and rescue group on the retrofitting

of sprinklers, the reviewing of building regulations and  
the insistence that sprinklers are put into all new school  
buildings are acted on.

At the heart of my personal general election campaign  
was a local row about whether our accident and emergency  
provision had a future. I told my constituents that, just  
as I had worked with others 20 years ago to ensure that  
Basildon A&E did not close, this time I would work to  
ensure that Southend hospital would not be downgraded.  
I am pleased to tell the House that at 1 o'clock today, a  
press release was issued by the Success Regime stating  
that it was going to develop

“a revised model that would enable all three current A&E departments  
to continue to treat people who need emergency hospital care,  
including continuing to receive ‘blue light' emergency patients  
with serious conditions.”

I thank all those constituents and others who came to  
see me in my surgery to make representations about this  
issue. I know that the news will also please colleagues in  
neighbouring constituencies. We were pleased to have a  
visit from the Countess of Wessex to the foetal medicine  
unit at Southend hospital. That was greatly welcomed.

I have a constituent who is suffering from the effects  
of asbestos. His health was damaged during his time  
working for the National Dock Labour Board a long  
time ago. As his Member of Parliament, I will not give  
up until we get justice from the board, because his  
health has been ruined.

Recently a constituent who is a music artist was  
verbally abused and mugged on a C2C train travelling  
from West Ham to Leigh-on-Sea. I hope that the Deputy  
Leader of the House will make representations to the  
Secretary of State for Transport to ensure that we can  
have security on local train services.

Another constituent has contacted me about the  
situation in Venezuela. A Supreme Court ruling in  
March 2017 saw the Venezuelan Parliament stripped of  
its democratic powers, and the regime is attempting to  
introduce a new constitution without consultation. I  
hope that the House will unite behind the people of  
Venezuela, whose democracy is being absolutely ruined.

A number of parliamentarians gathered in Paris last  
month, and we attended a rally hosted by the National  
Coalition of Resistance to support its leader, Maryam  
Rajavi, who is asking for justice for the 1988 massacre  
of Iranian citizens and calling for an end to the ballistic  
missile programme in Iran. Those are pressing concerns  
there.

Two months ago, I went on a trip to Switzerland—it  
seems as though I am travelling the world, Madam  
Deputy Speaker—where I and other colleagues met  
representatives of the World Trade Organisation. We  
learned at first hand how the problems that are being  
shared among colleagues about the difficulty of our  
leaving the European Union and being unable to secure  
good trade deals are a lot of nonsense.

Locally, parents are concerned about primary school  
catchment areas. I regret the stresses being put on  
parents at Chalkwell School, in Leigh-on-Sea and in the  
west Leigh catchment areas. As a Conservative Member  
of Parliament, I believe that all schools should be able  
to expand if at all possible, and I hope that the heads  
and governing bodies will reflect on that. Three wonderful  
headteachers in Southend are retiring, having dedicated  
their lives to educating our young people. I pay tribute

1047

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1048

to Margaret Sullivan of Our Lady of Lourdes, Jenny  
Davies of Westborough and Margaret Rimmer of our  
very special Kingsdown School, where the wife of my  
hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend  
East (James Duddridge) is the chair of the governing  
body.

Yesterday at Prime Minister's questions I heard my  
hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward  
Leigh) urging the Government to fulfil their manifesto  
promise to lift the 50% admission cap on free faith  
schools, so that more excellent Catholic schools can  
develop in our constituencies. I am delighted that we  
now have a new school run by the Figure of Eight  
Education which works with local secondary schools to  
provide individual, personalised education for young  
people who are under threat of being permanently  
excluded.

I and other Members are absolutely sickened by the  
pay of certain senior employees at the BBC. I am  
absolutely horrified and would be happy to offer my  
services on a part-time basis to host any number of  
shows.

I am delighted to say that the Royal British Legion's  
“Poppies: Wave” event was a huge success in Southend,  
with thousands coming to see it. I am also happy to say  
that Bob O'Leary, the honorary secretary of the local  
Royal British Legion, successfully applied for heritage  
lottery funding for a Southend schools festival of  
remembrance, which will be run by the not-for-profit  
organisation Blade Education. I know that it will be a  
great success.

I support local residents who are going to work  
together to restore our magnificent Grand hotel.

I hope that most people know that Southend is the  
alternative city of culture. Just before the general  
election, stilt walkers went non-stop from Southend to  
No. 10 Downing Street to ask for Southend to be made  
a city. Why we are not a city already I do not know—it  
must be an oversight. We had a wonderful fashion show  
in Priory Park recently, where wonderful models wore  
garments made from Buckingham Palace's discarded  
tablecloths, curtains and so on. Southend carnival will  
be celebrating an event in August, which coincides with  
the 125th anniversary of the borough. If any colleagues  
want something to do, come to Southend-on-Sea.

N-Act, a theatre-in-education organisation, is doing  
a wonderful job providing interactive tours for schools  
and using drama to explore current affairs. The Kings  
Money Advice Centre is doing a wonderful job locally  
in Southend. Carillion has been responsible for providing  
about 3,000 people with Warm Front assistance, bringing  
many of them out of fuel poverty. Seetec is also doing a  
wonderful job of ensuring that young people in Southend  
secure suitable employment. The Village Green event in  
Chalkwell Park was attended by more than 15,000 local  
residents and was a great success.

Finally, I wish Mr Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, all  
colleagues and the wonderful staff who work in the  
House of Commons a great summer rest.

2.2 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am  
pleased to follow the hon. Member for Southend West  
(Sir David Amess), who chairs the all-party parliamentary  
fire safety and rescue group, of which I am the secretary.  
I am pleased that he managed to mention us in his

contribution. I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member  
for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) to her place on the  
Opposition Front Bench; it is good to see her there this  
afternoon. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak  
briefly in this debate, and I am confident that, like the  
hon. Member for Southend West, I will be able to finish  
within the seven-minute limit prescribed by Madam  
Deputy Speaker earlier. I want to discuss four issues:  
the Island Health Trust scandal in my constituency;  
leasehold reform; fire service duties, including approved  
document B; and the accountability of housing associations  
and registered social landlords.

Island Health Trust is the landlord for a health centre  
in my constituency. The trust's main sources of income  
are the rent paid by the NHS and service charges paid  
by the doctors. From that, the Island Health Trust has  
accumulated a surplus of some £1.3 million. Despite  
those reserves, the landlord is charging the practice an  
unaffordable service charge, leading it to vacate the first  
floor of the health centre and a loss of services. The  
trust was originally managed by local trustees, and any  
surplus was used to fund local health initiatives through  
a modest grants programme. That changed on 1 April  
2016 when the chair, Suzanne Goodband, appointed a  
new board of people with no local connection. Serious  
allegations have been made relating to the governance  
and business management of the trust, including trustees'  
personal financial advantage. In 2015-16, the chair was  
paid £179,176 for consultancy services in a charitable  
trust with a turnover of just £270,000. Many believe  
that the health centre, the land upon which it stands and  
the £1.3 million reserves are public assets, that the trust  
should be run by local trustees, and that the £1.3 million  
should be invested to support patients and health services  
for local people. I have written to Health Ministers and  
to the Charity Commission asking for urgent meetings  
to discuss intervention to prevent asset stripping and  
personal profit by individuals who seem to be more  
interested in their own wellbeing than that of the NHS  
and local patients.

The Government have been sending some positive  
signals on leasehold reform. The housing White Paper  
and the Conservative party manifesto both refer to  
greater fairness and transparency for leaseholders. In  
reaction, several housing developers have voluntarily  
addressed the rip-off known as the doubling of ground  
rents and, to their credit, have changed their policies,  
but regulation is still urgently needed in this area. Other  
areas that need attention include a fairer land valuation  
tribunal system, rights for leaseholders against exorbitant  
service charges, events fees, refurbishment costs and so  
on, protection for pensioners in retirement homes, and  
protection against unfair forfeiture proceedings for  
vulnerable leaseholders. Those and many other matters  
rightly deserve Government action and the all-party  
parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold  
reform, which I co-chair with the hon. Member for  
Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and which now  
has more than 90 members, will welcome some progress.  
Indeed, the Prime Minister's written statement this morning  
on “Machinery of Government Changes” included moving  
commonhold law from Ministry of Justice to the  
Department for Communities and Local Government,  
which seems a sensible step.

I commend the hon. Member for Worthing West on  
EDM 207 regarding commonhold reform, and I encourage  
hon. and right hon. Members from across the House to

1049

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1050

*[Jim Fitzpatrick]*

support it. I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member  
for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders), who is  
the new vice-chair of the APPG. He has submitted a  
number of searching parliamentary questions on the  
topic, and his keen interest, along with that of so many  
other colleagues, is welcome.

Questions have arisen about the accountability of  
housing associations and registered social landlords.  
Accountability and transparency in this growing sector  
are overdue for examination. The Government's drive  
towards mergers and takeovers of smaller housing  
associations is taking social landlords further from their  
tenants and residents. While there are some good example  
of RSLs, especially in my constituency, others are not  
so good, and I hope to secure a debate with other  
colleagues after the recess to discuss that with Ministers.  
Perhaps the Backbench Business Committee will be  
interested in supporting it. As an example of unwelcome  
new initiatives, I received an email this morning from a  
constituent saying that one RSL is now offering loans  
to residents at 99.9% APR. I am unsure whether that is  
an appropriate thing for RSLs to do and will explore  
the matter further outside the Chamber, but I would  
have hoped that social landlords would be more interested  
in promoting the credit union movement and helping to  
set up more local credit unions than becoming loan  
agents.

The review of the building regulations fire guidance  
contained in approved document B is well overdue, and  
the hon. Member for Southend West has been campaigning  
on that with the all-party parliamentary fire safety and  
rescue group for some time. I will not bore the House  
with the history of these matters, which is well documented,  
but ministerial statements from 2011 promised that a  
review would be complete by 2017. The Lakanal coroner  
recommended that that happen, and there have also  
been more recent recommendations. The review will be  
required whatever the findings of the public inquiry, so  
the sooner it can be started, the better.

Finally, I repeat my view that the fire service should  
be tasked with a statutory duty to deal with floods.  
They play a key role in every flood that happens, and  
they should not only have their work recognised, but get  
resources from the Government to do the job properly.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you, other colleagues,  
the staff of the House and those who look after us a  
very decent break over the recess. We all know that it is  
not a holiday, but we are entitled to a break.

2.9 pm

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): It is a pleasure  
to follow the right hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse  
(Jim Fitzpatrick)—*[Interruption.]* Not right honourable?  
It is only a matter of time. He gave a typically robust  
and informative speech, demonstrating the value of  
these types of debates at the end of a parliamentary  
term. I want to raise several issues relating to aspects of  
parliamentary work that I have been and will continue  
to be involved in.

At the end of the previous Parliament, just before  
the general election, almost the last Act passed was the  
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which I had the  
honour of piloting through this House; my hon. Friend

Lord Best piloted it through the other place. There are  
many measures that still require secondary legislation  
before the Act comes fully into force, which of course  
will be a revolution in the way homeless people are  
treated in this country. There is still a lot of work to do,  
including on statutory instruments that must be put  
before the House, but I trust that, even with the great  
repeal Bill and the forthcoming SIs, we will find sufficient  
time to ensure that the Act is brought to fruition,  
because many thousands of people up and down this  
country are desperately awaiting help.

There has been a flurry of annual general meetings of  
all-party groups in the last few weeks. I will just run  
through a few of the groups that I am involved with.  
The right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz)  
referred to one group of which I succeeded in becoming  
vice-chair, following a hard-fought election. On the  
other groups, I am delighted, on behalf of the Action  
on Smoking and Health group, that the Government  
have at last announced the tobacco control plan. I  
congratulate the new Minister for public health, my  
hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine),  
on doing something that his three predecessors could  
not do, namely publishing the plan so that we get  
control of the tobacco industry, with some very strong  
targets towards a smoke-free Britain, which will be  
warmly welcomed by all concerned.

However, there is a deep threat to smoking cessation  
services across local authorities. Therefore, we should  
reiterate our call that it is vital that those services  
continue, and continue to be funded by local authorities.  
In my own borough, there is a threat to remove funding  
from the smoking cessation service, despite the fact that  
in the last four years 1,751 local people have been able  
to give up smoking. Yet we still have a high prevalence  
of smoking in my borough and it would not be good  
enough if the service ceased.

Equally, the all-party group for justice for Equitable  
Life policyholders met recently. We have 185 members  
in this House. May I send a strong signal via my hon.  
Friend the Deputy Leader of the House of Commons  
that we will not cease in our work until justice has been  
done for every single one of those individuals who  
suffered from this scam? We are not going away, and we  
are not happy that there is still a huge sum of money—  
£2.7 billion—owed to the victims.

The all-party group on Azerbaijan heard of the dreadful  
attack that took place in the hotly disputed and illegally  
occupied territory of Nagorno-Karabakh earlier this  
month. A two-year-old girl and her grandmother were  
deliberately killed by Armenian forces. The reality is  
that that is a war crime, which needs to be thoroughly  
investigated by the authorities, and the perpetrators  
should be brought to justice in front of the International  
Criminal Court.

There are several other issues that the Government  
need to bear in mind. The UN's Human Rights Council  
will meet from 11 to 29 September, shortly after we  
return to this House. There are a number of issues for it  
to consider. I have mentioned Azerbaijan, but there is  
also the issue of justice for Tamils in Sri Lanka, and the  
absolutely outrageous and disgraceful genocide of political  
prisoners in Iran in 1998, which needs a thorough  
international investigation. I hope that there will be a  
debate in Government time before the UN's HRC meets  
on the UK's priorities for that particular body and its

1051

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1052

work, because we need to spread our message that  
human rights are vital. Under the last Government, it  
took six months for the Joint Committee on Human  
Rights to be set up in this House. It is a Government-  
appointed Committee and it is vital that it starts its  
work very soon and very quickly on an all-party basis.

When we come back after the recess, there will be an  
ongoing consultation—the Government have wisely enabled  
it to be extended—on removing caste as a protected  
characteristic from our equality legislation. I believe  
that consultation will now conclude on 14 September,  
having originally been due to conclude by the end of  
July. It is vital that the message goes out from this  
House that British Hindus have an opportunity to input  
to the Government consultation, so that the Government  
have the evidence they require to ensure we remove this  
ill thought-out, divisive and unnecessary legislation.

**Keith Vaz:** May I congratulate the hon. Gentleman  
on his re-election as chair of the all-party group on  
British Hindus? I share his concern about that part of  
the legislation, which is causing concern among the  
Hindu community, as Harrow and Leicester are very  
similar in terms of their Hindu population, and I pledge  
my support for the campaign he has launched.

**Bob Blackman:** I thank my right hon. Friend—I will  
call him that here—for that intervention and I trust that  
he can persuade the members of his own party, not only  
in this House but in the other place, to support the  
Government on doing what we want to see happening  
for British Hindus up and down the country.

The final area I will touch on is the situation in  
Jammu and Kashmir. I have tabled an early-day motion,  
which I believe seven other hon. Members have signed,  
in relation to the attack on innocent Hindu pilgrims in  
Anantnag by Lashkar-e-Taiba, an internationally recognised  
terrorist group, led by Abu Ismail. The UK must stand  
with India to combat this international terrorism and to  
prevent the situation from escalating still further. There  
have been attempts in this country to celebrate Burhan  
Wani, who died last year. He was a murderous Islamic  
terrorist and the commander of Hizbul Mujahideen.  
There was an attempt in Birmingham to hold a  
demonstration about his death, which would have been  
a direct challenge to the UK's values of harmony and  
tolerance. I am delighted that that demonstration was  
shut down before it happened, but the Government  
must do more to target all those who celebrate terrorists.

Madam Deputy Speaker, may I wish you, your  
colleagues—the other Deputy Speakers and Mr Speaker—  
and all right hon. and hon. Members in the House a  
very happy recess? We will all be working in our  
constituencies, as has been mentioned, on behalf of our  
constituents, with—no doubt—a brief holiday in the  
next few weeks.

2.17 pm

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): I am pleased to  
follow the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman)  
and I welcome his support for both smoking cessation  
and human rights around the world. I also thank Madam  
Deputy Speaker for the opportunity to make my maiden  
speech this afternoon.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Rob Wilson, who was  
our MP in Reading East for 12 years. He was the  
Minister for civil society and I thank him for his public

service. I will also mention other former colleagues:  
Jane Griffiths, the Labour MP, who served before Rob;  
and Gerry Vaughan, the Conservative, who predated  
her. Other illustrious MPs from the Reading area include  
Martin Salter and Labour's Ian Mikardo, who represented  
Reading in the post-war period. Going slightly further  
back in history, I am particularly proud to follow in the  
footsteps of the first Labour MP for Reading, the  
surgeon Somerville Hastings, who was elected in 1923,  
and whose ideas about the state funding of healthcare  
were an early forerunner of the NHS.

During its long history, Reading has changed beyond  
all recognition. Once home to one of the largest abbeys  
in England and the burial place of King Henry I, it later  
grew to become a light industrial town. Many years  
ago, our local economy consisted of brewing, biscuit-  
making and horticulture—the “three B's”, as they were  
then known, with the word “bulbs” replacing “horticulture”.

While the terraced streets and Victorian town centre  
remain, in the late 20th century Reading became home  
to insurance firms, and more recently the IT industry.  
Several international IT and telecoms firms are based  
nearby and they play an important role, both in the  
local economy and in the economy of the UK as a  
whole.

We have a youthful population, with many young  
people and families moving to our area to make their  
home in the town. People come from across Britain,  
from across Europe and indeed from around the wider  
world.

Several issues loom large for our community, which is  
young and mobile: first and foremost, the need for  
properly funded public services; the desire to avoid a  
hard Brexit; and, as other Members have mentioned,  
the importance of affordable and safe housing.

Local people rely on and, indeed, expect high-quality  
provision of public services, and the general election  
was a resounding vote against austerity and poorly  
funded services—that was felt and heard very loudly in  
our part of the world. I remind the Government that  
parents were angered by the wave of school cuts, and  
parents in my area remain deeply concerned, despite the  
window-dressing offered by Ministers last week. Meanwhile,  
many other residents are fearful of the state of our local  
NHS, and they certainly have no time for the dementia  
tax.

Our town is proudly international in outlook, with  
significant numbers of residents from the EU and,  
indeed, from the Commonwealth. Reading voted  
overwhelmingly to remain in the European Union, and  
many local people oppose a hard Brexit, including  
many who voted to leave. Our residents are not impressed  
by the Government's cavalier approach to the negotiation  
with the EU, and they expect something much better,  
which I hope we will soon see.

Although it is well known that IT and science workers  
in the south of England command high salaries, house  
prices are also high and not all work in our area is well  
paid. In fact, many people exist on very modest earnings  
indeed. Reading, rather like London, regrettably suffers  
from considerable income inequality, which leads to  
even greater issues with housing affordability. As a  
result, there is a desperate need for more affordable  
housing: council houses, affordable homes to buy and,  
indeed, homes to rent. Our local renters particularly  
deserve a fair deal.

1053

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1054

*[Matt Rodda]*

The Government's record on housing is extremely  
poor. In recent times, George Osborne effectively stopped  
Reading's Labour council building 1,000 new council  
houses, despite significant need in the area. More recently,  
the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
has allowed developers to reduce the proportion of  
affordable homes in new developments, which is an  
important point in an area with a lot of extra building  
going on. I am proud to say that Reading and, indeed,  
Conservative West Berkshire Council have taken legal  
action to oppose that reduction. I hope that hon. Members  
on both sides of the House will note that, although I  
wish to work with the Housing Minister, the hon.  
Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma), I will be  
holding him to account for matters relating to housing,  
particularly the local situation in the Thames valley.

As some colleagues may know, I have been campaigning  
to save a much-loved local secondary school that was  
threatened with closure, and we have had some good  
news this week. Chiltern Edge School is in Oxfordshire  
but, as in many urban areas, many pupils cross our  
boundaries. Earlier this year, I was shocked to find out  
that Oxfordshire County Council was planning to shut  
the school, which would have affected 400 Reading  
children. I have always believed that its proposal was  
both irresponsible and misguided, and I cannot understand  
why any local authority in an area—such as the south of  
England—with rising school rolls would want to consider  
a school closure at this time. The only plausible explanation  
is that selling off the land would have allowed the  
council to deal with short-term financial pressures caused  
by austerity.

However, after a great deal of work by campaigners,  
supported by me and the hon. Member for Henley  
(John Howell), we have been successful and Oxfordshire  
County Council has now decided to shelve the plans. I  
am grateful for that decision, and I thank colleagues  
who signed my early-day motion opposing the closure  
and who have supported the “save our Edge” campaign.  
Although that is one small local campaign, I believe it  
shows something of great value: it underlines the importance  
of our public services; it shows how a well-fought local  
campaign can achieve results; and above all, it shows  
that real change is possible in our country.

I am honoured to represent my community, and I am  
grateful for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. I  
look forward to raising other matters of importance  
when the House returns in September. I wish all my  
colleagues a very happy recess.

2.24 pm

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Reading East (Matt Rodda) on his  
maiden speech, in which he paid tribute to his  
predecessor—his predecessor was well known to  
Conservative Members—and to many other predecessors.  
I am sure we will be hearing much from the hon.  
Gentleman, perhaps particularly on the key aspects of  
Reading's regeneration. Those of us who travel regularly  
through Reading appreciate the work that has been  
done on Reading station. Anything he can do to keep  
the station working smoothly will be much appreciated.

Ten years ago to this very day, 12 continuous hours of  
heavy rainfall downloaded 78 mm of rain in Gloucestershire  
during what our local paper, the *Citizen*, rightly called

“the worst natural disaster in the county's living memory.”  
It followed the wettest June and July since records  
began in 1766. It is worth recapping what happened,  
what has happened since and the wider lessons that we  
should have learned—I hope we have learned them.

I will start by recalling what happened on that day,  
which is as clear in my memory now as it was on the  
day itself. Some 10,000 motorists were stuck between  
junctions 10 and 12 of the M5. I remember afterwards  
meeting a deaf constituent who had been trapped in his  
car on the M5, and who did not hear the police when  
they came to ask everyone to move their vehicles. As so  
often in a crisis, a combination of accident, the situation  
at the time and a particular individual's health resulted  
in a sort of comic-tragic misunderstanding, of which  
there were many during this extraordinary period of  
natural disaster.

Some 500 people were stranded at Gloucester rail  
station. Severn Trent's Mythe water treatment centre  
lost power, and 350,000 people were without running  
water for 18 days. The Castle Mead electricity substation  
was overwhelmed, cutting power to almost 50,000 of  
my constituents. Some 4,000 houses, 500 businesses and  
20 schools were flooded, and three people died.

There was a precedent. Curiously, 400 years earlier, in  
1607, there was a great flood in Gloucestershire in  
which huge and mighty hills of water some 25-feet high  
swept up the Bristol channel, spread over 200 square  
miles of land and killed 2,000 people. The great  
Gloucestershire flood 400 years later, in July 2007, was  
different and resulted in much less loss of life, but its  
impact on all of us was huge, and it almost led to a  
national crisis. I make no apology for saying that what  
was important then—and is important now in  
Kensington—was to start with absolute objectivity in  
looking at what happened, rather than trying to use  
disaster as a party political opportunity.

The critical moment in Gloucester was when Severn  
Trent's water was knocked out. The Army came in to  
deliver water and bowsers, and a number of us got  
involved in organising volunteers to distribute the water  
in the supermarket and other carparks. I organised a  
group of about 25 volunteers, and it all went fairly well.  
The council then asked me to organise taking water to  
elderly people at home, which was all set up and ready  
to start when somebody from the city council asked  
whether we all had Criminal Records Bureau checks. I  
said that I had no idea but that I would sign a bit of  
paper personally guaranteeing that no one in the volunteer  
group was either a granny basher or a paedophile. That  
was not good enough, and our volunteers had to stand  
down. I wondered then, and I still wonder now, at what  
point exactly in a civil disaster situation comes the  
moment when organisations drop the normal bureaucratic  
checks because something has to be done fast and we  
have to cut corners and accept some risk in order to save  
lives. Leadership at all levels in natural or other disasters  
is critical, as we have been reminded since the ghastly  
inferno at Grenfell Tower.

Meanwhile, down at the tri-service centre at Waterwells  
in Quedgeley, the then Chief Constable, Tim Brain, as  
Gold Commander, had powers to organise national and  
local bodies in one building. For the first time in a long  
time, the Army got seriously involved, particularly in  
sandbagging the electrical substation at Walham and  
delivering capabilities across the area. These Gold

1055

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1056

Command structures are crucial, but they work only if  
residents trust the lead individual and organisation. If  
that does not happen, the Government have to step in  
and bring in other individuals and organisations, as we  
have seen in Kensington.

After the floods, the Pitt review was undertaken to  
analyse the issue, learn the lessons and make  
recommendations on how to mitigate floods of the  
future. The Government of the day were slow to implement  
those, but much progress has since been made, with  
brooks and streams cleared; willows cut back; riparian  
responsibilities better known; Flood Re established to  
handle insurance issues; and Victorian sewers and drains  
replaced, notably in the city centre, in the wards of  
Westgate and Kingsholm, at a cost of some £13 million,  
absorbed by Severn Trent. Those are huge improvements  
and there has been no flooding in Worcester Street or  
Kingsholm Road since, despite two years of considerable  
new floods, although not on the same scale.

The major Government and county council-financed  
additional infrastructure is the new diversion lake close  
to Elmbridge Court, which is on the road towards the  
neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the Member  
for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), where surplus water coming  
down the Horsbere brook is automatically transferred.  
That has already successfully prevented flooding in  
Longlevens and Elmbridge twice since 2007, as well as  
adding a superb walk and birdwatching site to our city's  
leisure facilities. Lastly, the Environment Agency has  
improved its mapping, modelling and communications  
no end, thanks to better technology. Anyone living near  
the Severn can now get regular email and text alerts,  
and I encourage all my constituents to do so; they just  
need to go on to the EA's website and sign up.

There are things still to be resolved, such as the  
height of the wall protecting homes by the river at Pool  
Meadow, on the northern side of Gloucester—that has  
still to be sorted. We also know that, if extraordinary  
events happen again, such as the 1607 surge or mini-  
tsunami, Gloucester and Tewkesbury would once again  
be in the eye of the storm. Therefore, we must ensure  
that watercourses are kept clear, man-made defences  
are maintained, crisis planning is kept up to date, structures  
are reviewed, substations are protected and contingency  
plans are in place. We also need to be cautious about  
giving planning permission for homes on floodplains  
and to consider the remotest contingency, as who could  
have anticipated the events of 1607 or 2007? We may  
not have to wait 400 years for the next natural disaster.

It is worth highlighting the role of local media in  
providing brilliant information during crises of this  
kind, and I know that today all regional media will be  
running huge articles and reports on what happened  
10 years ago. They will highlight the value of resilience;  
the power of communities; and the importance of everyone  
pulling together in a crisis. That is relevant to us all here,  
as parties, as constituencies and as a country. The Brexit  
negotiations are different from the Gloucestershire floods  
or the Grenfell Tower inferno, but for them and for all  
other crises we still need resilience, leadership and shared  
purpose, in order to get through the crisis. The word  
“crisis” translates as “danger opportunity” in Chinese.  
We have to deal with the danger and realise the opportunity  
to be much better prepared for the next challenge that  
life throws at us all. Today, across Gloucestershire, we

will remember what happened, reflect on the lessons  
and pray that other communities do not face such  
natural disasters as the one we faced 10 years ago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I join others in wishing  
colleagues time with their families and constituents  
during the recess, and in thanking all staff in Parliament  
for all their hard work and kindness, not least in looking  
after our security here.

2.33 pm

**Mary Creagh** (Wakefield) (Lab): May I welcome you  
to your post in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I  
believe this is the first time I have had the privilege of  
speaking under your chairmanship? May I also say  
what a pleasure it is to see the shadow Deputy Leader of  
the House in her place and welcome her to her position?

It is a pleasure to follow such excellent speeches,  
including the one made by the hon. Member for Gloucester  
(Richard Graham). Wakefield, too, was hit in those  
terrible 2007 floods. We had £13 million of flood defences  
put in and we have so far escaped further flooding.  
Resilience, citizenship and leadership—the things he  
mentioned—are all too alive and well in the minds of  
people in Wakefield today as we remember those floods.  
It was also a pleasure to hear the maiden speech from  
my hon. Friend the Member for Reading East (Matt  
Rodda). He will be a doughty fighter for his constituents.  
I certainly learnt something about Reading's history; I  
thought it was just the prison, but brewing, biscuits and  
bulbs sounds like a sound base for economic development  
for his city.

I want to talk about CAPA College, an outstanding  
school in Wakefield but one that sadly will not be able  
to take lower-sixth students in September and whose  
future hangs in the balance after Ministers attempted to  
move the college to Leeds. What a sorry, sad tale this is.

CAPA College has been the sixth-form provision at  
Cathedral Academy, a Church of England secondary  
school in Wakefield, for the past 10 years. It is the only  
sixth-form in the city of Wakefield. It delivers 28 hours  
a week of specialist performing arts teaching, and it is  
unique in West Yorkshire and, dare I say it, in the whole  
of the north of England, for the standard of performing  
arts teaching it provides. I pay tribute to my constituent  
Claire Nicholson, CAPA's director, and the brilliant,  
sublime production of “West Side Story” by 16-year-olds  
which I had the privilege of watching a couple of weeks  
ago. It was the most wonderful performance of that  
show that I have ever seen.

In September 2015, CAPA College and its sponsor,  
the Leeds diocese, through the Enhance Academy Trust,  
received permission from the Minister to open as a free  
school. A year later, the Department for Communities  
and Local Government made a conditional agreement  
for the sale and purchase of a site in Leeds city centre,  
and the Education Funding Agency agreed to provide  
two years' interim funding to allow CAPA College to  
stay in Wakefield until the site in Leeds obtained the  
necessary planning permissions—the new free school  
could open in September 2018. However, documents  
that I obtained from Leeds City Council show that,  
after the planning application was submitted, it emerged  
that the building is on the route of HS2. Leeds City  
Council rejected the planning application because of  
concerns about road safety and congestion; it is not a

1057

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1058

*[Mary Creagh]*

suitable site for a school. We are talking about the  
former home of KPMG in Leeds. KPMG obviously  
got out; it sold it on to a German consortium. That  
consortium realised that it had perhaps bought a pup  
and sought to sell it on to someone else—and who  
better than the UK Government to know what the UK  
Government are doing!

The Education Funding Agency has rescinded its  
two-year funding offer to my local school until CAPA  
College has found a new building. That has forced the  
trust to inform potential new students that places will  
not be available to them; in effect, there is no year  
12 student admission to CAPA college this year because  
of this building fiasco. The college has had to issue  
redundancy notices to staff, whose employment will  
end on 31 August. I know that the trust is working with  
Wakefield Council and the EFA to find a new permanent  
home for CAPA in Wakefield; we made it, we grew it,  
we developed it and we want to keep it. But why did the  
EFA continue with a planning application after being  
told that the site would have a high-speed rail line  
through it by 2032? Is this seriously a good use of  
taxpayers' money? Why was another site for CAPA  
College not identified as soon as it was known that  
there was a problem with this one? How much has the  
EFA spent on this site? Has the EFA completed the sale,  
even though HS2 will run through it and Leeds City  
Council has refused the planning application? If so,  
how much has it paid, or has it pulled out of the  
contract—in which case, how much has it lost?

I wrote to the Education Secretary in March to seek  
answers to those questions, but I have not received a  
reply. I hope that the Deputy Leader of the House will  
take my concerns back. The announcement this week of  
extra funding for England's schools is based on the fact  
that money that will be taken from the budget for new  
free schools, so there may be less money to enable  
CAPA College to find its new home in Wakefield. The  
fiasco has left CAPA College on the brink of closure,  
and dozens of dedicated staff and students unsure  
about their future. I have received letters from distraught  
students, alumni, parents and grandparents. The closure  
of CAPA College would damage the life chances of  
young people in Wakefield who aspire to go into the  
arts and would mean the closure of the only sixth form  
in Wakefield city centre.

The alumni have the chance to go on to perform in  
west end shows and tour all over the world, and I do not  
want to see the dreams of young people in Wakefield  
turned to dust. This September, we will see the opening  
of the advanced innovation and skills centre in Wakefield  
to deal with the historically low levels of tertiary  
education—higher education—in the city. We do not  
want to see one door opening in Wakefield while another  
one closes. I would like a substantive reply from the  
Minister and firm action from the EFA, so that those  
excellent teachers and that outstanding provision can  
be kept.

I pay tribute to the headteachers of the four secondary  
schools in my constituency: Miriam Oakley at Horbury  
Academy; Alan Warboys at Ossett Academy; Elizabeth  
Ford at Wakefield City Academy; and Rob Marsh at  
Cathedral Academy. I also pay tribute to Clare Kelly,

whose Dane Royd Junior and Infant School I visited  
recently. I wish all GCSE and A-level students good  
luck with their results when they come out in August.

I conclude by congratulating Simon Wallis, the director  
of the Hepworth gallery in Wakefield, which was crowned  
Art Fund museum of the year 2017. I think Wakefield is  
the only city to have had two Art Fund museums of the  
year—we also received the honour in 2013 for Yorkshire  
sculpture park, run by Pete Murray. Should Channel 4  
consider a move to west Yorkshire, Wakefield stands  
readywithopenarmstogiveitawarm,performance-related  
welcome. I wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the staff  
and, in particular, the builders who are beginning to put  
up the scaffolding on the Elizabeth tower, a safe and  
productive recess.

2.40 pm

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): It is a pleasure  
to follow the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh),  
whose contribution highlights how useful these pre-recess  
debates can be for emphasising the important issues  
that face our constituents.

I want to highlight two or three constituency issues,  
but first I wish to raise a point of national concern,  
although it has sufficiently irritated a number of my  
constituents over the past 24 hours that they headed for  
their keyboards and sent me messages. I refer, of course,  
to the BBC and its somewhat extravagant use of licence-  
payers' money. We would all acknowledge that talent  
has to be paid for, but I question some of the figures we  
have seen. For example, I normally watch “News at  
Ten” if I am at home. If I am a bit late home, I might  
watch it an hour or two later on the BBC News channel.  
It is the same news reports, but there just happens to be  
a different news reader who it seems earns tens of  
thousands, perhaps even hundreds of thousands less  
than his colleague who read the news an hour or two  
earlier. I question the somewhat unconvincing responses  
from BBC executives that have been broadcast over the  
past 24 hours.

The same applies to “Match of the Day”, which I  
watch most weeks. Gary Lineker was an extremely  
talented footballer and could command enormous salaries  
when he was on the pitch. His latter-day role presenting  
“Match of the Day”, which he does perfectly well, is  
fine, but other Members who watch the programme will  
have noticed that occasionally he has a holiday and  
someone comes off the subs' bench to present the  
programme. We see the same football and that person  
asks Alan Shearer or whoever exactly the same questions;  
does someone really need to be paid almost £2 million  
to do that when it is clear from the figures that somebody  
else is prepared to do it for £200,000 or £300,000, which  
would be a pretty well-paid job anyway? I have made  
my point, so I shall turn to some constituency issues.

Every constituency in the country has to contend  
with the issue of Travellers and their sites. Members  
from all parties will be well aware of how it irritates our  
constituents. It is not necessarily about the individuals  
themselves who, provided that they act responsibility  
and within the law, are perfectly entitled to their way of  
life; what annoys my constituents, quite justifiably, is  
that when they arrive on a site in Cleethorpes or wherever,  
the authorities leap into action to provide services for  
them that the rest of the community has to pay for.

1059

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1060

It comes down to the simple fact that council tax payers  
often pay enormous amounts of money for services that  
in recent years have been cut back for all the reasons of  
which we are well aware, but councils always find money  
to spring into action to provide services for those who  
in most cases are not contributing.

I have no doubt that the Minister will tell us that the  
Government have made improvements to the legislation  
over the past six or seven years, and I am perfectly  
happy to accept that, but I urge the Deputy Leader of  
the House, when he reports back to other Ministers, to  
at least draw their attention to what I think my constituents  
and others would appreciate, which is what I shall call a  
more robust approach. The Government should not  
just say, “Oh, it's up to councils to provide a site and so  
on”; that is fine, but let those who use that site understand  
clearly that they must contribute towards the cost.

Having been somewhat critical of it, perhaps I can  
praise the Government for the northern powerhouse  
initiative. It may have its faults, and it is concentrated  
too much on Leeds and Manchester, forgetting some  
other towns and cities in the north, but a few days ago  
*The Yorkshire Post* carried a story about a report by the  
Centre for Economics and Business Research and the  
law firm Irwin Mitchell that shows that in the past year  
or two northern cities have been growing faster than  
London. It praises George Osborne's northern powerhouse,  
saying, for example, that the economy in Leeds has  
grown by 8% since the initiative was launched in 2014.  
It also mentions that Sheffield, York, Bradford and  
Hull have performed particularly well.

It is good news that, in the short term at least, our  
northern cities are contributing more and growing faster,  
but I urge the Deputy Leader of the House to convey to  
his colleagues that it is not only the cities in the north  
but the provincial towns and coastal communities that  
need help and support to grow. If they had a little extra  
help, I am sure that the northern powerhouse would be  
even more successful.

One way to make the initiative more successful for my  
constituency would be to provide us with a direct train  
service to London. With local authorities of all political  
colours, I have been involved in a long-running campaign  
on this issue. I recently met representatives from Virgin  
Trains, and I am hopeful that the new appraisal of the  
benefits to the economy that I hope the local authorities  
and local enterprise partnerships will produce will contribute  
to the overall goal. As we all know, better road and rail  
connections are crucial to the local economy. A little  
nudge from the Deputy Leader of the House, who is an  
influential person, could make an enormous difference.  
With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you and all  
staff and Members a happy summer break.

2.47 pm

**Stewart Hosie** (Dundee East) (SNP): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship in this summer  
Adjournment debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. As everyone  
else has, I wish colleagues and staff all the best for the  
recess. Of course, many of our colleagues—and their  
staff—who lost their seats might not have quite such a  
happy summer, as they face in some cases quite uncertain  
circumstances. I wish to say a little about the arrangements  
for non-returning MPs and their staff, and I hope it will  
command support from both sides of the House.

Before I do, though, I have always taken the view that  
an MP's salary should be broadly in line with comparable  
professions and sufficient to meet the needs of living in  
two places—including in London, which is one of the  
most expensive cities in the world—but it should not be  
so high as to be the prime motivator for anyone seeking  
to become an MP. By and large, I believe, the current  
salary does that. The office allowance and travel  
arrangements are absolutely appropriate, and the allowance  
for staff should be sufficient to employ the correct  
number of caseworkers and other staff in our constituency  
offices. Again, since IPSA has given a rather generous  
increase to the staff allowance, that has most certainly  
been achieved.

Of course, the advent of the Fixed-term Parliaments  
Act 2011 has, or rather should have, provided more  
certainty for people seeking election or to work for an  
MP when they give up careers, professions and trades to  
do that. It is also worth noting that the recent salary  
increase for MPs was combined with changes to the MP  
pension scheme and the removal of the old resettlement  
allowance. At face value that is all fair and reasonable  
and, for the most part, it is. The reality of how easily the  
terms of the Act were overturned casts a bit of a  
shadow over what happens in practice, particularly for  
those who lose their seats, in the event of a short  
Parliament.

Irrespective of the expectation of a five-year term for  
Members and staff, the reality in the last Parliament  
was that many MPs' staff members were entitled to  
precisely nothing—zero—by way of redundancy because  
they were employed for less than two years. That was  
inevitable, given that the Parliament itself was barely  
two years old. That simply cannot be right. As one  
non-returning MP put it:

"My own staff position seems to be typical; I have five in my  
team of whom four are to be paid no redundancy at all. This is  
because they worked less than two years (in some cases missing  
the cut by only a few weeks.)...Many staff members gave up jobs,  
others gave up homes and moved to London, and some took out  
mortgages”

on the basis of a five-year contract made in good faith.  
They are now made redundant on terms that he says

“would disgrace the most unscrupulous private corporation.”

Indeed, were there to be another election before 2019,  
which is certainly not inconceivable, any staff employed  
by a new MP of any party elected for the first time this  
June would likewise be entitled to absolutely nothing if  
the MP lost his or her seat. I would suggest, and I hope  
that this would command support, that at the very least  
in future redundancy should be paid to staff as per the  
contract, in the circumstances of a short Parliament, as  
if the members of staff had been employed for five  
years, particularly as the circumstances of a short Parliament  
are outwith the control of the staff, outwith the control  
of Members—and, given what we now know, were  
outwith even the knowledge of half the Cabinet when  
the Prime Minister called the election.

Likewise, the decision to call an election within the  
five-year timescale has left a number of non-returning  
MPs in a very difficult position, with many new ones  
being entitled to less than £3,000. Although IPSA is  
right to try to put things on a par with other workplaces,  
where we have ended up with the terms of redundancy  
for MPs appears to bear absolutely no relation to any  
professional contract I have ever seen.

1061

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1062

*[Stewart Hosie]*

To put into some kind of context the combination of  
circumstances in which ex-MPs and their staff find  
themselves, I can tell the House what two have told me.  
One said:

“we are now trying to support staff who are receiving no help  
from IPSA—while not being paid ourselves to do so”.

He hopes that consideration can be given to finding the  
means to provide additional support to staff. Another  
said that he would not

“abandon my staff and former constituents, nor walk away from  
my responsibilities. But, it seems, that I am expected to manage  
my staff as their boss full time until the 8th August entirely  
unpaid. That cannot be right or fair.”

I am not arguing for a return to the old resettlement  
allowance regime, but the current situation must be  
changed. I believe it needs to be changed not just to  
help those who lost their seats in practical terms but to  
address a more difficult issue. If this situation continues  
and there is a series of short Parliaments leaving people  
in this position, massive limits will be placed on those  
choosing to stand for election or to work here. The huge  
strides all the parties have made to ensure that Parliament  
more accurately reflects society could be reversed, and  
that goes for staff as well as Members. If it is clear to  
those who might wish to come here that MPs who lose  
their seats after a short Parliament will come away with  
less than one month's salary and their staff, in some  
cases, will come away with literally nothing at all, the  
only people who might seek election will be the  
independently wealthy or the kind of zealots who would  
do it for nothing. Nothing, but nothing, could be more  
different to society than a Parliament of MPs and staff  
drawn from such narrow groups.

Urgent action needs to be taken to ensure that staff  
redundancy is paid on the basis of a five-year contract,  
irrespective of how long a Parliament lasts, and MPs  
need to have a comparable professional termination  
package based on length of service but with a minimum  
safety net, not merely a few weeks' salary. Let me repeat  
that I am not calling for the re-introduction of the old  
resettlement allowance, but the prospect of surrendering  
one's career or trade to enter Parliament, losing one's  
seat when it is not one's fault and then being presented  
with less than one month's salary will be a massive  
disincentive to others who would seek to do this public  
service. IPSA needs to be flexible.

Finally, a winding-up allowance of around £50,000  
or so is available to each MP, but it appears from  
non-returned colleagues that there are huge restrictions  
on how that can be used. My judgment is that, with  
little imagination, IPSA could easily pay staff redundancy  
for those who serve less than two years in the event of a  
short Parliament. I am talking about a modest termination  
package to allow ex-MPs to fulfil their obligations to  
those staff and to adjust to life outside Parliament  
without any significant increase to the funds that IPSA  
already sets aside. This is not special pleading; it is a  
matter that can and will affect all parties. It is something  
that we must review and repair quickly, given that the  
fixed nature of our parliamentary terms is rather less  
robust than many of us had expected.

2.55 pm

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): It is a real pleasure to  
follow the hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart  
Hosie) who is a tenacious parliamentarian. He has used  
the opportunity of this debate very effectively and has  
raised some important issues that must be considered.  
All Members of this House—both current and former—  
have an obligation and a duty to their staff.

We have seen lots of variety in this afternoon's debate.  
I wish to focus on one particular issue that is incredibly  
important to my constituents in Corby going into this  
summer recess. I am talking about the Corby urgent  
care centre, which many colleagues will know, because I  
have raised it in questions on many occasions in this  
House. When I went back through my speaking record,  
I was interested to note down how many times I had  
raised it in different contexts.

Let me provide some background: the Corby urgent  
care centre was first opened in 2012 under the coalition  
Government with a Conservative Health Secretary—I  
am incredibly proud of that. It is a flagship facility,  
class-leading, hugely popular and a beacon of best  
practice. It is also the envy of many other communities  
across the country. My hon. Friend the Member for  
Wellingborough (Mr Bone), who is in his place, would  
like to have exactly the sort of facility that we have in  
Corby at the Isebrook site in Wellingborough.

Perhaps most importantly, the biggest advantage of  
the Corby urgent care centre is the enormous impact  
that it has in relieving pressure on the A&E at Kettering  
general hospital, which, as we all know, has been under  
some strain in recent months and years. The urgent care  
centre makes a big difference. Let me give Members an  
idea of its impact. Last year, the urgent care centre in  
Corby saw more than 70,000 patients. Of all those who  
came, only 6% had to be referred to Kettering general  
hospital for further treatment. That shows how many  
people are dealt with in Corby that would otherwise  
have to go across to Kettering.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that such great  
alarm was caused by this press release issued by the  
clinical commissioning group. Issued on 13 July, it said:

“As has been reported previously, the contract between the  
Commissioners...and Lakeside +, the current provider of services  
at the Urgent Care Centre, expires on 30 September 2017.

In order to ensure service continuity and to safeguard the  
future of the centre, the Commissioners ran a competitiveprocurement  
inviting bids to continue the service for a further 12 months.  
Unfortunately, the only bidder in the process formally withdrew  
their bid yesterday and so the process has failed to generate any  
bidder willing to continue to provide the service.

In light of these developments, the Commissioners will be  
considering what options exist forthe Corby Urgent Care Centre.”  
Interestingly, that runs completely at odds with what I  
was told earlier in the year by the commissioners. We  
have known for some time that there has been a contractual  
dispute between Lakeside Plus and the CCG, and we  
have always known that the current contract with Lakeside  
Plus would finish at the end of September, so there has  
been plenty of time to plan for this.

The earlier reply that I received on 22 March said:

“I can confirm that Corby Urgent Care Centre is not closing.  
The organisation running the Urgent Care Centre, Lakeside Plus,  
have given notice that they wish to withdraw from their contract  
at the end of March, but it is not their role to decide whether the  
service comes to an end. That decision rests with the CCG as

1063

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1064

commissioners of healthcare for the people of Corby, and we will  
ensure that the service continues—with another provider if necessary.  
We are now working urgently to make that happen.

We have been expecting Lakeside Plus to continue the service  
until November, as stated in the contract notice issued by the  
CCG last year. We appreciate that this sudden announcement will  
be a cause of some disquiet for the people of Corby, who are  
always our primary concern. We therefore regret the alarm that is  
being caused by misleading suggestions that the Urgent Care  
Centre is to close, and would appreciate your help in putting  
people's minds at rest.”

The statement issued last week is inconsistent with  
the reassurances that I was given earlier in the year. The  
current position is much more ambiguous, so I wrote to  
the commissioners on 13 July, seeking reassurance for  
my constituents and clarity on what the future might  
hold. Their reply was equally ambiguous:

“Following withdrawal of the remaining bidder for the caretaker  
contract, we are urgently considering the options available. It is  
therefore not possible at this stage for me to say exactly what  
services will be in place on October 1st, when the existing UCC  
contract expires. I realise that this does not give you the absolutely  
clarity you and local people are seeking, but it is very important  
for me to be honest with you. The CCG is facing an unprecedented  
situation, with a very challenging timescale and a highly restrictive  
legal and commercial environment.

As you know, the CCG is also looking at how the healthcare  
system in Corby can best meet the needs of the community. The  
CCG is in the process of engaging with the community on this  
issue.”

To my mind, that is wholly unacceptable. I have  
written again, pressing for reassurance, seeking details  
about the contingency plans, which earlier this year I  
was assured were in place should agreement not be  
reached by 30 September—I was told that it was all in  
hand—and requesting an urgent meeting. I am currently  
awaiting a reply.

People in Corby and the surrounding areas are very  
worried about this. With the summer holidays coming,  
people are coming together to campaign on the issue. I  
am going to meet the Save Corby Urgent Care Centre  
campaign group, which already has a huge social media  
following. We are working cross-party. Tom Beattie, the  
Labour leader of Corby Borough Council, and I are  
dusting off our joint campaigning attire and getting  
ready to campaign together on this, as we have done a  
number of times on the steel issue. I am grateful to him  
for being so willing to work together on this, because it  
is relevant to all our constituents, regardless of how  
they vote, or indeed whether they vote at all.

One of the points that Tom raised with me was the  
challenge of housing growth in our area. Our health  
infrastructure needs to keep pace. The Corby site is very  
relevant in the context of the hub-and-spoke model that  
Kettering General hospital is trying to develop, with a  
new urgent care hub at Kettering General, a hub in  
Corby and hopefully a hub in Wellingborough.

What needs to happen? We need urgent reassurance  
from the commissioners that the current service will be  
not only protected, but further improved in the years  
ahead, and that the quality that we have become used to  
will continue. We must always review our health  
infrastructure, but to my mind it is unthinkable that the  
urgent care centre would not be a key component right  
at the heart of our local health infrastructure. Given  
that the procurement for the new contract was for only  
12 months in any event, surely it cannot be beyond the  
wit of man to sit down with the current providers and

try to come up with an agreement—I have offered to  
help facilitate that process—or, failing that, to put in  
place the arrangements that I was previously told were  
available. What we need is a bit more dialogue, properly  
listening to local people, because local wishes are  
exceptionally clear on the matter. The CCG was set up  
to advance Corby's cause. It represents only the borough  
of Corby—it is the smallest CCG in the country—so I  
would like to think that its key focus would be on  
listening to local people and putting them first without  
having to take into account the needs of wider north  
Northamptonshire.

Therefore, over the summer recess I plan to be—to  
use a variant of a phrase—a bloody difficult man on  
this issue. I am going to stand up for my constituents. I  
really hope that the commissioners will be listening to  
me this afternoon and to my constituents—please do  
not let us down.

3.4 pm

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the  
hon. Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove), who I am  
very sure could be a bloody difficult man. I also congratulate  
the hon. Member for Reading East (Matt Rodda) on his  
thoughtful maiden speech.

I want to take this opportunity to raise three issues.  
The first is the closure of Her Majesty's Revenue and  
Customs offices. Last week, we had a positive and  
upbeat debate in Westminster Hall about the future of  
the 30-odd new towns across the UK, but as I said then,  
one massive dark cloud hanging over the future of my  
new town—Cumbernauld—is the threatened closure of  
the tax office. It is not just Cumbernauld that is affected,  
and the situation is the same in towns across the UK.  
We are not talking about just trimming a small, obsolete  
office or two; we are looking at an extraordinary  
degradation in the HMRC estate, taking it from 170 offices  
to 13 regional centres and a network of many hubs, all  
with the loss of around 8,000 jobs.

Much has been said on previous occasions about why  
these plans are, to put it bluntly, absolutely bonkers.  
That includes the centralising of staff in expensive city  
centre accommodation, ridiculous assumptions about  
how far staff can travel, and the complete lack of any  
assessment of the effect of closing these offices on the  
local economy. Just prior to dissolution, the Public  
Accounts Committee published an excellent and  
comprehensive report on the subject, making not only  
the points I have made, but many more. Has HMRC  
listened? Not at all. Without addressing any of the  
concerns raised by the Committee, it has battered on  
regardless, even signing contracts for some of the new  
premises during the purdah period.

We need a halt to this closure programme, and we  
need an opportunity for this Chamber to debate the  
Public Accounts Committee report in full, as well as  
any response HMRC cares to offer. The 1,500 employees  
in my constituency deserve that, as do the 60,000 across  
the UK and the communities in which those offices are  
based.

The second issue I want to raise is the immigration  
rules relating to spouses, partners and their children. As  
Members will probably know from their own casework,  
we have among the most draconian family immigration

1065

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1066

*[Stuart C. McDonald]*

3.9 pm

rules in the world, with an extraordinary income  
requirement, and ludicrously complicated rules and  
ridiculous restrictions on how that income requirement  
can be met. Over 40% of the UK population would not  
be entitled to live in this country with a non-EU spouse  
were they to marry one; in fact, in some parts, including  
Northern Ireland, the figure would be over 50%.

The Children's Commissioner for England wrote a  
damning report about the 15,000 Skype children, as she  
called them—there are probably more than15,000now—  
who get to see their mum and dad only via the internet,  
with terrible consequences for their wellbeing.

Back in February, the Supreme Court, while not  
striking down the rules entirely, did make it clear that  
applying them in certain cases, especially those involving  
children, could breach the right to respect for family  
life. A glimmer of hope perhaps? Actually, for five  
months, this has caused even more anguish for certain  
families, as the Home Office has told applicants that  
their cases are paused while it

“takes time to study the judgement”

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister managed to insert a  
commitment into the Conservative manifesto to make  
the rules even more draconian, increasing the financial  
threshold and breaking up even more families—a strange  
way to try to win votes.

But today—surprise, surprise—on the last day of  
term, the Immigration Minister has made a written  
statement saying that changes to the immigration rules  
are to be tabled to implement the Supreme Court ruling.  
The rules were not made available until 2 pm, when this,  
the final debate of the term, had started, so I have had  
just the briefest opportunity to look at what really are  
22 pages of gobbledegook. At first glance, I am afraid it  
does not appear that the Government have moved very  
far. The treatment of these families, and indeed their  
elected representatives, has been totally disgraceful, and  
I look forward to returning to this issue after the recess.

The third and final issue I want to raise is the refugee  
and migration crisis. As Brexit continues to dominate  
the agenda, it almost seems as if we have forgotten that  
the search for safety from war and persecution, and for  
opportunities that cannot be found at home, still drives  
millions of people to travel to other parts of the world,  
in many cases towards Europe. Over 2,300 people have  
already drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean  
this year, and over 100,000 have made the crossing  
successfully.

The SNP will continue to argue for the provision of  
safe legal routes, the extension of the Dubs scheme,  
expanded family reunion rights, and participation in  
EUrelocationschemes.Whateverourviews,andwhatever  
our thoughts on the best way to tackle this crisis, we can  
surely agree that this is one of the most pressing and  
urgent issues of our time, and we should debate and  
scrutinise the response of the Government and the EU  
as a whole not just now and again, but week in, week  
out—otherwise, talk of global Britain will be empty  
talk.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you, all  
right hon. and hon. Members, and all the staff of the  
House as restful a recess as possible.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Today I want to talk  
abouthowaConservativeGovernmentwithaConservative  
Member of Parliament in Congleton and a Conservative-led  
council in Cheshire East are working together to deliver  
effectively for people in my constituency and the wider  
Cheshire East area.

Let me give as a first example this week's Government  
announcement on school funding. I spoke in the Christmas  
recess debate, onthisveryspot, ofhowtheGovernment's  
proposed national funding formula would not serve  
well the school pupils in my constituency and the wider  
Cheshire East area. In January, I took a delegation of  
headteachers to meet the Minister for School Standards,  
and the leader of Cheshire East Council, Councillor  
Rachel Bailey, came with us. The Minister listened and  
asked what annual amount those headteachers considered  
would be needed to provide senior school students with  
the education they need and deserve. The answer they  
came back with was £4,800—exactly the amount that  
this week the Secretary of State for Education has  
confirmed will be provided by Government for our  
pupils. As she told me, this is a very good settlement for  
Cheshire. Ministers responded to our concerns, and I  
want to thank them, just as local headteachers have  
thanked me for this result, which shows a Conservative  
Government working with a Conservative MP and  
Conservative councillors to deliver for local people.

I turn now to planning matters, noting that 27 July is  
the date scheduled for adoption by Cheshire East of its  
local plan. This will come after one of the most lengthy  
and complex examinations in the country. It is true to  
say that in the past I have not held back in this place  
from saying that areas in my constituency have been  
blighted by developers keen to grab green space and  
agricultural sites for inappropriate development. However,  
now that the local plan inspector has found that a  
five-year housing land supply has been identified, that  
battleground should—and, I believe, will be—a thing of  
the past. This is a new day. I call on the Secretary of  
State for Communities and Local Government to uphold  
the inspector's view of a five-year Cheshire East housing  
land supply, and the terms of the local plan, together  
with the further several neighbourhood plans in place  
locally, and to reject any planning appeals to develop  
further greenfield or green space sites. This should now  
provide an effective means whereby inappropriate  
developments are stopped once and for all in my  
constituency and beyond.

I give credit to neighbourhood planning groups and  
town councillors such as Mike Benson in Sandbach,  
who have worked so hard, as I have here, to ensure that  
neighbourhood plans have a real impact. In Sandbach,  
where there is no housing need, there should now, in  
future, be the inference that no additional housing will  
be permitted other than in accordance with NDP—  
neighbourhood development plan—policies. Indeed, that  
is already happening. We need only witness the way in  
which the former housing Minister recently rejected a  
planning application for land to the rear of Park Lane  
and Crewe Road in Sandbach, directly on account of  
the need expressed in the Sandbach neighbourhood  
plan for an area of separation. Again, this shows a  
Conservative Government working together with a  
Conservative MP and Conservative councillors to deliver  
for local residents.

1067

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1068

I turn now to the many transport improvements in  
the area. Let me first set the record straight once and for  
all: it was local Conservatives—MP and councillors—who  
obtained money to improve junction 17 of the M6, and  
not any other party or person. I know, because I was  
there at the very first meeting of the Highways Authority  
when I requested funding to prevent future accidents—in  
particular, for the southbound exit of the M6, which, as  
I clearly identified to the Highways Authority, was  
becoming dangerous. Action was taken and funding  
was provided. Similarly, a Conservative MP working  
with a Conservative council obtained from a Conservative-  
led Government £46 million for the Congleton link  
road—one of the highest road grants under that  
Government—thereby reducing congestion, reducing  
air pollution, and opening up employment land for new  
and expanding businesses. Work will start next year,  
with a planned completion date of 2020.

The same effective joint working resulted in £1.25 million  
being provided for the Middlewich eastern bypass business  
case. That extremely convincing business case showing  
wide economic and wellbeing benefits was produced by  
Cheshire East Council this spring. I need not go into  
further detail about that now, as I have spoken about it  
several times in this House. I am grateful to the roads  
Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and  
South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman) for meeting me  
again this week and listening so carefully as I pressed  
for funding from the Government towards the construction  
costs of approximately £56 million. That would unlock  
employment land for up to 2,000 jobs and support the  
reopening of Middlewich railway station for passengers,  
linking it to a Crewe hub for HS2, which, in turn, would  
be a springboard for wholesale economic development  
and connectivity across the region.

Cheshire East Council, together with the Cheshire  
and Warrington local enterprise partnership, is working  
hard to ensure that the HS2 hub is built at Crewe, but to  
ensure that it realises its full economic potential we need  
at least five trains an hour from London to Crewe. My  
hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and  
Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), the Minister with responsibility  
for rail, is a good listener, and I am sure that he will take  
that on board, together with my oft-repeated request  
that the line to Middlewich be reopened to passengers. I  
thank him for agreeing to meet me and representatives  
from the mid Cheshire rail link campaign about the  
matter.

Ease of transport is essential for people's wellbeing,  
and so Government funding has been provided to improve  
Cheshire East's roads. No less than £92 million has been  
invested over the past five years to improve them radically,  
and they are now among the best in the country. On  
Monday 24 July, £1 million-worth of improvements in  
and around the pedestrianised areas of Congleton town  
centre will begin. Local councillors are delighted that  
Congleton has two new minibuses after obtaining £50,000  
of national funding from the Department for Transport.  
A Conservative Government, working with a Conservative  
MP and Conservative councils at both county and town  
level, are delivering for our residents in real and tangible  
ways to improve their quality of life.

I finish by thanking the Government for the funding  
given to our local schools, most recently £1.7 million for  
improvements at Eaton Bank Academy and more than  
£100,000 to refurbish Havannah Primary School. Our

schools merit this; 96.2% of them are good or outstanding,  
and they are in one of the top 20 authorities nationally.  
A Conservative Government are supporting well a  
Conservative MP and a Conservative council, working  
for the real-life benefit of residents.

3.16 pm

**Mary Glindon** (North Tyneside) (Lab): As this is the  
first time that I have spoken when you have been in the  
Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you  
on your election and wish you well in your new role? I  
also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol  
South (Karin Smyth) on her appointment as the shadow  
Deputy Leader of the House. It is always an honour to  
follow the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce),  
who is a fantastic advocate for her constituency, as she  
proved by what she said today. I should also thank my  
new hon. Friend the Member for Reading East (Matt  
Rodda), who is not in his place at the moment but who  
made an excellent maiden speech. I think he will be a  
very caring and determined Member for the people of  
Reading East.

I want to talk first of all about the soft drinks  
industry levy that the Government plan to introduce,  
which is better known as the sugar tax. I have great  
reservations about the tax, and I believe that my concerns  
are not unfounded. In his Budget statement earlier this  
year, the Chancellor admitted that the estimated amount  
of income from the levy would be half that which was  
originally predicted. The Chancellor acknowledged the  
excellent work being done by the soft drinks industry to  
combat the level of sugar in soft drinks.

In other countries where such a tax has been introduced,  
such as France, the US and Mexico, the impact has  
been minimal. In this country, the tax is badly targeted;  
some of the most sugary drinks, such as milk-based and  
yoghurt-based drinks, as well as fruit juices, have been  
excluded. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has suggested  
that consumers may even substitute some of those  
other products to get their fix of sugar. The levy does  
nothing to help to educate consumers on reducing  
sugar in their diets.

I commend the soft drinks industry—I do not have a  
soft drinks factory or anything like that in my constituency,  
but I feel it is important to say this—for the work that it  
has done so far to address the sugar content of soft  
drinks. In 2015, it was the only sector in the food and  
drink industry that had an ambitious plan to reduce  
calorie intake from its products by 20% by 2020. The  
sector has been particularly proactive in reducing the  
sugar consumed in its products through reformulation,  
promoting diet versions of drinks and smaller portion  
sizes—actions that have been acknowledged by Public  
Health England. More than 60% of drinks now have  
reduced or even zero calorie content.

Independent analysis shows that the levy will lead to  
more than 4,000 job losses across the UK and a decline  
of £132 million in the UK economy, predominantly in  
retail and hospitality, including pubs and corner shops.  
Although this is planned to be a long-term tax, it is  
massively unstable and the IFS expects that, by 2021,  
because of general consumption trends and the work  
done by manufacturers to reduce sugar in their drinks,  
there will be a huge black hole in the funding of school  
health improvement initiatives and sports dependent on  
income from the levy.

1069

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1070

*[Mary Glindon]*

The McKinsey report on tackling obesity ranked a  
sugar tax as 12th of the 16 least effective options in  
tackling obesity. If the Government are serious about  
their child obesity plan, they must find a more certain  
and secure form of funding for the many activities it  
needs to support, rather than the ever-decreasing levy.

There are other ways to tackle obesity. I would like  
the Government to consider the review of the research  
on the impact of milk on children's development carried  
out by Northumbria University, which suggested that  
milk consumption generally improves children's nutritional  
status. Children who regularly drink milk have lower  
body mass indices, lower body fat percentage and lower  
waist circumferences than children who rarely drink it.

In a Westminster Hall debate earlier this year, I asked  
the then Education Minister if the review of the standards  
of the child obesity plan, which is due in September,  
could include a commitment that children will be guaranteed  
access to milk in school at least once a day. I ask for that  
commitment again today.

On a separate issue, I want to refer to four early-day  
motions that I tabled immediately after the Queen's  
Speech to draw attention to issues raised by the drugs,  
alcohol and justice cross-party parliamentary group,  
which I co-chair. EDM 20 called for the Government to  
publish their long-overdue drugs strategy, and I am  
pleased to say that they have finally obliged. Regrettably,  
however, they have yet to act on EDM 22, which focuses  
on the funding crisis faced by the drug and alcohol  
treatment sector. Consequently, they risk undermining  
the delivery of their new strategy. The strategy gives  
scant regard to alcohol misuse. Ministers should correct  
that by following the advice of EDM 18 to publish a  
bespoke alcohol strategy that protects and promotes  
treatment services and introduces minimum unit pricing.

Lastly, EDM 21 draws attention to hepatitis C, which  
is now completely curable, and calls on the Government  
to publish a strategy to help meet the World Health  
Organisation target of eliminating hepatitis by 2030.  
Perhaps Ministers will reflect on that next Friday 28 July,  
which is World Hepatitis Day.

I will finish by wishing everyone a wonderful recess. I  
hope we all get some rest, even though we will be quite  
busy I should imagine.

3.22 pm

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con):  
It is a pleasure to follow the pop and fizz of the soft  
drinks speech by the hon. Member for North Tyneside  
(Mary Glindon), although I do urge caution. As a  
type 2 diabetic, I am sympathetic to not having too  
many sugary drinks, but there are lots of evils in those  
soft drinks that do not have sugar in them. When  
walking around my local Asda or another supermarket,  
I note the paradox that it is still possible to buy fizzy  
drinks cheaply, despite what the hon. Lady said.

I want to thank not only the staff of the House but  
all the personal staff in our offices, who do so much  
work. I have been immensely fortunate in my nearly  
13 years in the House to have recruited an exceptional  
individual, Lucy Paton-Brown, who is sadly leaving me  
in September. She has done a fabulous job for me. I am  
particularly conscious that for one year a few years ago

I was either in hospital or in bed at home, unable to do  
my job properly. Usually when that happens, a neighbouring  
Member of Parliament takes over the constituency  
burden and casework while the Member recuperates.  
Lucy managed to do all that work for nearly a year on  
my behalf. She will be sorely missed.

I want to talk about some campaigns in Southend.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David  
Amess) mentioned the very good news that clinicians  
have decided that, under the strategic transformation  
programme for the local hospital, blue-light ambulance  
services will continue to be directed to local hospitals in  
Southend, Chelmsford and Basildon to receive the best  
immediate care. The election came in the middle of a  
big consultation on the matter, but political campaigners  
who were more interested in garnering votes than the  
quality of our local health service used A&E scurrilously.

We were told locally that Southend hospital would  
close, then that A&E would close, then that A&E would  
be downgraded and then that there would be nothing  
more than a nurse with a first aid box. My hon. Friends  
the Members for Castle Point (Rebecca Harris) and for  
Southend West (Sir David Amess) and others reassured  
the public, but that message did not entirely get through  
and lies dominated the campaign.

Some key organisers in the campaign perpetuated the  
lies. I feel for Opposition Members who have to put up  
with some of the more disreputable elements of  
Momentum. Many decent, honest people were involved  
in the Save Southend A&E campaign, but it was misused  
by Momentum, which was aggressive and tried to  
intimidate. There was a public meeting outside my  
house, with someone using a loudhailer, to try to intimidate  
me—the tweets asking people to go there specified  
that—into backing down from saying that all decisions  
should be clinically led. The circumstances were appalling.  
I am sorry for Opposition Members because sometimes  
the wrath that leads to “red on red” is even fiercer than  
that which causes “red on blue”.

I want to talk about a train. I will not go all “Thomas  
the Tank Engine” on hon. Members, but all trains  
should be like the 7.18 from Shoeburyness to Fenchurch  
Street, travelling from the sea to the city in under  
60 minutes. It gets in after 58 minutes. If it did not stop,  
the journey could be made in 32 minutes. That would  
transform the local economy.

When I was first elected in 2005, Southend airport  
covered one destination and had 40,000 passengers. It  
now has 30 destinations and 1.2 million passenger  
movements, which will increase to 2.5 million in 2018,  
with more than 40 destinations worldwide. That will  
regenerate the area. We need to do more to work with  
the surrounding community and business parks to get  
businesses around the airport.

Time is short, so I thank everybody for brevity in the  
debate and you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your early  
days in the Chair.

3.27 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I  
am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol  
South (Karin Smyth) has taken her rightful place on the  
Front Bench. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member  
for Reading East (Matt Rodda) on his maiden speech.

1071

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1072

He spoke with great sincerity and knowledge about his  
constituency and the challenges facing it, particularly  
pressure on housing and public services.

I wish to raise just one subject—leasehold—which  
affects not only a number of my constituents, but many  
other people throughout England and Wales. My hon.  
Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim  
Fitzpatrick) has already touched on it. I spoke about it  
in the Chamber last December, when I described the  
emerging leasehold scandal as the PPI of the house  
building industry. However, having seen more of the  
serial failures, deceptions and obfuscations, I believe I  
may have understated culpability right across the board.  
The developers, of course, are public enemy No. 1, but  
the lenders, the solicitors and even the Government all  
have to take some share of the blame for a scandal that  
has the potential to fundamentally destabilise the housing  
market if it is not tackled soon.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and  
Limehouse said, I am now vice-chair of the all-party  
parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold  
reform, which he brilliantly chairs alongside the hon.  
Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley). They  
have been superbly assisted by the Leasehold Knowledge  
Partnership in bringing the matter to the attention of  
parliamentarians. There now seems to be some consensus  
across the House that these abuses need to be tackled.  
I understand that the Government will be coming  
forward shortly with plans to tackle some of the abuses  
in the leasehold sector, but it is vital that they create not  
only a clear and fair framework for new builds, but a  
strategy to deal with the rotten mess that developers  
have created.

There at last appears to be some self-awareness by  
developers that leasehold homes are becoming toxic,  
with many now pledging voluntarily not to sell any new  
homes on a leasehold basis. But that will not assist my  
constituents who have already bought their homes and  
have been quoted extortionate sums to buy their properties,  
obtain permission to alter the property, or even ask a  
question of their landlord, nor will it assist the many  
who are already trapped because they have onerous  
leases that purchasers are no longer interested in signing  
up to, and that some building societies will no longer  
lend on. It will also not assist us in holding to account  
the guilty men and women who must have known that  
creating this second lucrative income stream for developers  
would ultimately be at the cost of their customers.

Developers are beginning to acknowledge their  
responsibility. Taylor Wimpey voluntarily announced  
in April that it was going to set up a process whereby  
those with the most onerous leases had the opportunity  
to convert them into new leases where the ground rent  
would increase by only RPI, instead of doubling every  
10 years. Sadly, however, that announcement is where  
the credit stops, because three months on, progress has  
been painfully slow. In the intervening period, I have  
been contacted by at least one constituent whose ground  
rent has doubled since the announcement was made,  
which means that if it ever does get converted to an RPI  
lease, those RPI increases will be applied to a ground  
rent that is twice what it could have been. This has  
ongoing consequences should my constituent ever be in  
a position to purchase the freehold outright, and if she  
does try to purchase it, she will still have to negotiate

with the owner of the freehold, whoever that is, and  
navigate the fiendishly complicated and lengthy process  
currently in place.

The lease may still contain other punitive clauses  
aside from the ground rent, which, as we have seen from  
some examples, can include charges of up to £3,000 just  
to get permission for an extension. This is all before we  
consider those who are not covered, such as second-  
generation purchasers where Taylor Wimpey are not  
the freehold owners. Where do they stand? There is  
going to need to be an active Government strategy to  
deal with everyone affected by this scandal.

The Government have a financial interest in sorting  
this out. At the end of March 2017 the number of Help  
to Buy purchases on leasehold properties stood at just  
over 28,000, of which 11,641 are houses. Some 23% of  
all Help to Buy purchases are on leasehold properties,  
and given concerns about the drop in value of some of  
the properties with the most onerous leases, there is a  
real question whether the Government will get all their  
money back eventually. To my astonishment, there has  
not yet been any suggestion of an outright ban on Help  
to Buy funds being used to purchase leasehold houses.

Let us be clear: sorting out the immediate consequences  
of onerous leases must be the start of the process, not  
the end of it. We need to learn the lessons, and if  
necessary legislate, so that the worst excesses of capitalism  
that we have seen here are not allowed to infect our  
society again. There needs to be a much easier, quicker  
and cost-effective way, so that people can purchase their  
freehold outright, and then we need to bring in an  
outright ban on houses being sold on a leasehold basis.

But there also needs to be a long, hard look at how  
we got into this position in the first place. I would like  
there to be a full Select Committee inquiry into how this  
practice developed. At the moment, we do not even  
know the extent of it. Developers must be required to  
give evidence about why this systematic duping of their  
customers was allowed to start in the first place. Who  
were the authors of those leases that now nobody will  
sign up to? How many properties were made leasehold  
needlessly? How much profit have they made out of this  
scam? And who exactly are the beneficiaries of the  
leases now?

These properties are being passed around from one  
company to another. Some are based outside this country,  
and there is secrecy about who the ultimate recipients  
are of the substantial incomes coming from the leases.  
There is an old saying that an Englishman's home is his  
castle, but it now seems that an Englishman's home is in  
fact a revenue stream for an offshore company operating  
from a tax haven.

What is very clear to me is that when people bought  
their houses they thought they were doing just that—buying  
a home. What they never contemplated for a moment  
was that actually the true owner of their home would be  
someone they might never know the identity of, who  
can sell on their interest in the property to somebody  
else without their knowledge or consent. It sounds like  
something out of feudal society, not 21st-century Britain.

That brings me to what I would like a Select Committee  
inquiry to look at: the legal profession. Speaking as a  
former solicitor, I know that mistakes are made, but it  
seems incredible to me that so many people make the  
same complaint about the advice they received at the

1073

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1074

*[Justin Madders]*

time of their purchase. I surveyed my constituents in  
leasehold properties and a staggering 80% of them did  
not know the true nature of what they were buying. I  
think those figures demonstrate that there is a compelling  
need for further examination of the advice that was  
provided. I have heard of developers offering incentives  
to use particular solicitors. Why would they do that,  
and what led to such a collective failure in the legal  
profession?

What advice was given to the lenders, whom solicitors  
also have a duty to? We now know, for example, that  
Nationwide will no longer lend on properties with  
doubling ground rents. That rather raises the question  
of what their and other lenders' exposure is and, crucially,  
why they granted mortgages on these properties in the  
first place. None of the developers will tell us how many  
properties they have built with these onerous clauses  
attached. We need to know the scale of the problem; the  
stability of the housing market rests on the back of  
that.

I hope I have demonstrated the range of issues that  
need to be dealt with in respect of this scandal. A full  
Select Committee inquiry is the way ahead. This has not  
happened by accident and we need to know why it  
started.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish you, all other  
Members and, in particular, all the staff who work so  
hard to keep this place running smoothly, a restful and  
peaceful summer.

3.35 pm

**Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): We have had  
some excellent speeches, including a great maiden speech  
from the hon. Member for Reading East (Matt Rodda).  
I was at university in Reading, and I spent a lot of time  
drinking pints in The Nob, going to the kebab shop and  
eating Champ's burgers. I studied chemistry and food  
science, and I think I took the food part a bit too  
literally. We have also heard from my hon. Friend the  
Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers), who raised  
the issue of BBC salaries. Earlier today, my hon. Friend  
the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans) talked about  
Derek Thompson's salary. Doctor Who is now a woman.  
It is only in the world of the BBC that a nurse gets paid  
more than a doctor. But I am not going to talk about  
the fictional hospital in “Holby City”. I want to talk  
about a real hospital: my local hospital, St Helier.

Just before the election, I brought the Secretary of  
State for Health to St Helier. I was pleased that he took  
me up on my invitation to come to see the best and the  
worst of the hospital. He saw that we have the best  
A&E in London in terms of achieving its targets. He  
saw the fantastic work of the staff there, and the award-  
wining fracture unit. He also saw how the multi-disciplinary  
patient reviews are setting a really good example for  
other hospitals.

However, the Secretary of State also saw the hoarding  
around the back of the building, which is crumbling.  
The hoarding is there not because of construction work  
but because we cannot rely on bits of masonry not  
falling off. When a building has the ability to make  
people more ill, that is not a good thing. There is a  
fantastic renal unit at St Helier, but the area with the

sickest patients is dysfunctional because the lifts do not  
work properly. A modern-day hospital bed does not fit  
inside the lifts, so the trust is paying something like  
£10,000 a week for ambulances to move people from the  
back of the hospital to the front. This is a building that  
predates antibiotics, and it will never be what most  
people would think of as a modern-day healthcare  
facility. We really need to find a solution to this.

I am delighted that a solution is starting to present  
itself. We have had review after review, but now, for the  
first time, the trust has been allowed to engage with the  
public on an option that does not include St George's in  
Tooting. There are six MPs whose constituents are  
served by the St Helier and Epsom hospitals and they  
disagree on a lot of the detail, but they do agree that  
people needing A&E or maternity services should not  
have to go to Tooting. St George's is already overloaded,  
and it is also incredibly difficult to get there in the rush  
hour as it involves heading into London. The option is  
to build a specialist acute unit on one of the three sites  
that the trust owns. It could be at St Helier or at Epsom,  
or it could be a co-located site involving the Royal  
Marsden, which could add extra benefits to the services  
provided there.

Apart from reacquainting myself with the family and  
trying to get a bit of rest, I will be spending the summer  
back out on the stump speaking to as many people as  
possible, because what we need at this stage is for people  
around Sutton to be asking the NHS to support the  
trust's vision and saying, “Yes, we want that level of  
investment.” The work will cost between £300 million  
and £400 million. Trying to extract that sort of money  
is not easy, but we have to find the local will to start  
talking about where to locate the specialist acute facility  
and about how to get the money, which could come  
from the Treasury or from loans, or we could leverage  
money from pension funds. My local council's pension  
fund invests in at least three shopping centres, so why  
not invest that money in local infrastructure? However  
expensive the project might be, I think we can all  
discount PFIs, which have been discredited over the  
past few years.

In engaging with the public, the trust has ruled little  
out, but what it has ruled out is really significant: it has  
ruled out closing St Helier hospital. We have had lots of  
campaigns to save St Helier, but its closure has been  
ruled out. The trust is spending £12 million on refurbishing  
the back of the building, and it has applied for grants to  
get more money. The trust has asked for about £80 million  
to cover costs, £40 million of which—if secured—will  
help to keep St Helier open for at least another 20 years.  
That has to be good news for the people of Sutton.

The trust has also ruled out doing nothing. I have  
said that the building is crumbling and that it cannot be  
turned into a modern facility, so I know that the trust  
will do what it can to make the hospital last, but we  
have to do something for my constituents, for the boroughs  
of Sutton and Merton and for the surrounding areas.  
The trust has also ruled out building on the land that it  
solely owns on the old Sutton hospital site in Belmont,  
because it is too small. That is why the trust is looking  
at co-locating with the Royal Marsden hospital, the  
benefit of which is that extra facilities will be added for  
the Royal Marsden, which does superb work in cancer  
treatment—having an acute facility right on the doorstep  
will be good news.

1075

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1076

In conclusion, I will be going around speaking to as  
many people as I can, and I hope the constituents will  
look at my website, come and speak to me and really get  
involved. By the time we get back after the conferences,  
we will hopefully have completed the first stage of  
getting new healthcare facilities in Sutton. Mr Deputy  
Speaker, I wish you and everybody else a very restful  
summer break.

3.41 pm

**JimShannon**(Strangford)(DUP):Itisalwaysapleasure  
to speak in these Adjournment debates, and I look  
forward to each one. People say that I always speak in  
Adjournment debates, but there you are. In the past, I  
have taken this opportunity to talk about Northern  
Ireland's history and culture, and it is important to get  
that in *Hansard*. I have spoken about the Apprentice  
Boys and the Orange Order, but today I want to speak  
about the Royal Black Preceptory. People will know  
about 12 July, which is a bank and public holiday in  
Northern Ireland. It is a celebration of our culture,  
history and heritage and, for people who may not be  
aware, it is important to those who wear a collarette and  
walk down a certain street. I want to speak about why  
members of the Royal Black Preceptory put on their  
collarettes and hold their head high and walk at parades  
in the so-called marching season.

The Royal Black Preceptory, or the Institute of the  
Imperial Grand Black Chapter of the British  
Commonwealth, was formed in Ireland in 1797, two  
years after the formation of the Orange Order in Daniel  
Winter's cottage, Loughgall, County Armagh. Its  
headquarters remain in Lurgan, County Armagh. It  
ran on an informal basis until 14 September 1846, when  
the Royal Black Institution was placed on a permanent  
basis through its reconstitution at a meeting held in  
Portadown.

From that point, the institution was infused with new  
life, vitality, inspiration, discipline and a foundation,  
which has helped it to stand the test of time and to  
expand to the worldwide membership that exists today.  
The tiered structure of the institution has its foundation  
in the local preceptory. Each preceptory has a unique  
number, which is allocated by the governing body when  
a new warrant is issued. The preceptory elects officers,  
who represent their membership at the next tier, namely,  
a district chapter. Officers from the various local district  
chapters come together and form a county or provincial  
grand chapter. My Royal Black Preceptory is number  
675, Ballywalter Crimson Arrow. I have been a master  
and a district master and am currently the register.

The officers of the various county or provincial chapters  
constitute the membership of the governing body known  
as the Imperial Grand Council. One of the institution's  
most colourful and well-attended events is the annual  
demonstration at Scarva in County Down, which is  
traditionally held on 13 July. Preceptories from Portadown,  
Newry, Tandragee, Markethill, Banbridge, Rathfriland  
and Lower Iveagh take part along with many national  
and international visitors.

Exceptional numbers of people turned out this year. I  
believe that across the whole Province there has been  
more interest in our culture and history this summer  
than ever before. The numbers who attended and took  
part in the demonstrations or parades have been  
phenomenally larger than normal.

Other demonstrations attended by the majority of  
preceptories in Northern Ireland are organised on the  
last Saturday in August each year, usually across six  
different venues. A demonstration is also organised for  
the second Saturday in August in Fermanagh, attended  
by preceptories from Fermanagh, Cavan, Donegal and  
Monaghan. There is also one in Scotland, attended by  
all Scottish preceptories.

I will quote the official website of the Royal Black  
Institution:

“At the beginning of the 21st century, the Royal Black Institution  
is poised to continue its valuable role in maintaining its witness  
for the Christian Reformed Faith and fostering friendly relations  
among people of a common heritage on what is truly a worldwide  
scale.”

The basis of the Royal Black Institution is the promotion  
of scripture, the principles of the Protestant Reformation,  
and religious freedom, democracy and liberty for all.  
The Royal Black Institution has preceptories throughout  
the world, mainly in the major English-speaking countries,  
and is particularly strong in Newfoundland, Canada.  
The society is also popular in Scotland—I see that some  
of my colleagues from Scotland are here today—where  
60 preceptories exist, organised into 11 districts across  
the country. In Glasgow alone, 26 marches by the Royal  
Black Institution took place in the year 2009-10.

We walk on the last Saturday in August. This year,  
the demonstration will be held in Comber, which is in  
my constituency, for the whole of County Down. For  
those who love marching bands, the preceptories  
demonstration always brings an exceptional quality of  
bands. The Royal Black Preceptory members are well  
turned out, in suits, ties and in some cases bowler hats.

The society is formed from Orangemen and can be  
seen as a progression of that order, although they are  
separate institutions. Anyone wishing to be admitted to  
the Royal Black Institution must first become a member  
of an Orange Order Lodge, and many people are members  
of both. The Royal Black is often referred to as  
“the senior of the loyal orders”.

The Black's foundations are scriptural and it does not  
involve itself in politics or take “political” stances that  
sway towards one particular political party or another,  
while the Orange Order has traditionally been seen to  
play a more prominent role in Unionist politics. When  
people talk about “political rallies”, that is why many  
Black preceptory members do not associate with such  
rallies.

I am a proud member of the Royal Black Preceptory  
675, along with my brother Keith, and I walk proudly,  
understanding that when I walk I carry with me the  
weight and history of our nation. The fact is that the  
underlying principle of the Black is religious freedom,  
which I greatly appreciate and often speak about in this  
House. It means a lot to me and to all the other people  
whose fathers and grandfathers have proudly stood  
under the scriptural banners of the lodges. Although  
there may be some on either side of the divide who seek  
to make such walks a political action, as a politician I  
can proudly say that that is not my purpose when  
wearing my collarette. My purpose is to declare that I  
hold to the tenet of religious liberty for all, and cling to  
the right to express and celebrate my heritage and  
culture as a man who loves God, loves scripture, loves  
his community, loves culture and loves our marching season.

1077

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1078

*[Jim Shannon]*

I will give a note to anyone in this House—right hon.  
Members or hon. Members— who invites me to any  
events on 12 July or the Black Saturday. For some  
reason, I will not be available. On those two occasions  
back home, I have a long-standing engagement of  
celebrating who I am. Although I really appreciate such  
invitations, I am sorry that I will not be able to take  
them up.

I thank Mr Deputy Speaker, the other Deputy Speakers  
and Mr Speaker, and the staff of this House, for their  
kindness to all of us as right hon. and hon. Members,  
including the catering staff, the security staff and especially  
*Hansard*, who often translate my Ulster Scots into  
English, which I appreciate very much; *Hansard* does  
very well. I wish all right hon. and hon. Members a very  
relaxing and peaceful holiday. They deserve the break.  
What a privilege it is to come to this House to represent  
our constituents. We are very privileged to do so and I  
thank the people of Strangford for giving me the chance  
to do that again.

3.48 pm

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
follow all the hon. Members, on both sides of the  
House, who have expressed their passion and commitment  
to their constituencies today. As a new Member of this  
House, who has been here for only a few weeks, may I  
also express my thanks for the kindness and advice that  
everyone has offered me. Members from all parties and  
the staff, particularly in the Lobby but also elsewhere,  
have helped me. Every time I look a bit lost, someone  
comes to my aid and directs me to the Tea Room.  
Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all so much.

Before we go into recess, I know that some Members  
may be thinking about deck-chairs and warm prosecco,  
but I will not. Those pleasures will have to wait, because  
in Redditch my constituents are working, thanks to the  
record low levels of unemployment, which are now at a  
42-year low. That means people in Redditch are working  
hard.

I pay tribute to our fantastic entrepreneurs in Redditch.  
I have made it my priority to back small businesses, and  
I have already visited two in my constituency—Ubi-Tech  
and Heartbeat—that are creating jobs at a record rate,  
which I welcome. We have seen unemployment in Redditch  
fall to a low of 2.1%, which is lower than the national  
average. That is fantastic news for all the residents who  
are taking advantage of opportunities to progress themselves  
and fulfil their potential.

I want to go further. I want to help everybody in  
Redditch who wants to get on in life, so I will be  
launching my Redditch mentor scheme over the summer  
recess. The scheme will be an opportunity for local  
entrepreneurs to work in schools and colleges to further  
young people's skills and raise their aspirations, and I  
am pleased to have already had some support from  
local businesses.

Young people sometimes face barriers to getting on  
in life, and we all need to do more. We talk a lot about  
mental health in this House, and I support and applaud  
those efforts, but we know we need to do more on the  
ground. I am also making it a focus to visit the wonderful  
organisations in Redditch that work so hard to help the

vulnerable people in our communities, notably: the  
Where Next Association, a charity that works with  
young people and older members of society with learning  
disabilities; Victim Support; Boys2Men; and the Sandycroft  
Centre. They are doing fantastic work on the ground,  
and I look forward to helping them join those efforts  
together so that everyone in our society can take advantage  
of the opportunities on offer.

We have seen our economy creating jobs at a record  
rate, and we have seen what happens when the economy  
does not work for everyone. We see youth unemployment  
across the rest of Europe spiralling out of control and  
blighting lives, so I welcome our Government's work to  
keep youth unemployment down, which helps all young  
people get a good start in life.

As other colleagues have said, fake news has sometimes  
blighted our election campaigns—the hon. Member for  
Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge) also  
alluded to this point. During the election, I struggled  
with a campaign to save the Alexandra, our local hospital.  
In truth, the Alex has never needed saving. The Alex is a  
fantastic hospital, and it was a very difficult issue for us  
to address in the election campaign. I call on everyone  
to stop using the national health service as a means to  
gather votes, because it does not help the hard-working  
doctors and nurses who have to deliver health services  
for patients in Redditch. It does not help them to  
address the issues that they are tackling admirably.

I thank the Secretary of State for Health and his  
Department, which yesterday announced that it would  
support our health services in Redditch and across  
Worcestershire by investing £29 million. That will help  
our hospital in Redditch to proceed with and deliver the  
results of the consultation that the clinical commissioning  
group decided on. I, like many others, was not happy  
with the consultation, which went against the wishes of  
Redditch people but continued for five years. There was  
so much uncertainty hanging over the people of Redditch  
that we now need to move on. We need to see the new  
services and investment delivered into our hospitals,  
which will ultimately see better care and better treatments  
for people in Redditch.

Finally, I say to all the EU citizens working in our  
national health service in Redditch, “You are welcome  
here, and we value the work that you do in treating our  
citizens in Redditch. We know you will be able to stay in  
this country after we leave the EU. We want you to feel  
welcome. We know that only 5% of NHS workers are  
from the EU, but you make a very significant contribution,  
so thank you for all the work you do.”

I wish everyone a very peaceful recess.

3.54 pm

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): First,  
I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the new Member for  
Reading East (Matt Rodda) for an eloquent and informative  
maiden speech.

The issue I want to talk about is the Government's  
consultation on “Driving offences and penalties relating  
to causing death or serious injury” by dangerous driving.  
The consultation began in December 2016 and concluded  
on 1 February 2017. This year's snap election has resulted  
in many casualties, one way or another, and it would  
seem that this consultation is yet another. In response  
to a written question I tabled on 21 June 2017, asking

1079

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1080

when the Ministry of Justice planned to publish its  
response to the consultation, I received the following  
reply:

“The government is now considering the consultation responses.  
Any announcement will be made in due course.”

Dissatisfied with that response, I raised the issue at  
business questions last week. The Leader of the House  
appeared to share my concern and promised to write to  
me, but as yet I have not received a letter—I am sure it  
will arrive at my office soon.

I raise this issue because of the tragic death of my  
constituent Joseph Brown-Lartey in November 2014.  
Joseph was killed, at the age of just 25, by a 19-year-old  
uninsured, unlicensed driver in a hire car who ran a red  
light at 80 mph in a 30 mph zone. He hit Joseph's car.  
The impact was so great that the car was cut in two and  
Joseph was killed instantly. Just the previous day, that  
driver had posted a picture on Snapchat of his speedometer  
at 142 mph on the M62, with a boast that he had driven  
from Leeds to Rochdale in just 11 minutes. He was  
sentenced to just six years' imprisonment, of which he is  
likely to serve three. He will very probably soon be  
released, but Joseph's family are serving a life sentence  
with the loss of their beloved son.

I wrote to the Attorney General on behalf of Joseph's  
family, asking for this sentence to be reconsidered, but  
the ruling was that it was in line with current guidelines  
and was therefore not considered to be “unduly lenient”.  
It is the belief of Joseph's parents and myself, and many  
other affected families, that these guidelines are outdated  
and that the penalty does not match the severity of the  
crimes committed by dangerous drivers. The maximum  
sentence is 14 years, yet it is very rare that even this  
maximum sentence is imposed. Joseph's parents, Dawn  
and Ian, have campaigned tirelessly under their “Justice  
for Joseph” campaign, championed by local radio station  
Key 103, to try to ensure that other families do not  
suffer the same sense of burning injustice that they  
have. They have handed in a petition, signed by more  
than 20,000 people, to 10 Downing Street, calling for  
tougher sentences for dangerous drivers. They have  
given the wreckage of Joseph's car to Greater Manchester  
police, and it is being used to educate drivers, particularly  
young drivers, about the dangers of driving dangerously.  
Members may have seen the car outside Parliament in  
July last year and may, rightly, have been shocked to see  
it split completely in two. The road safety charity, Brake  
has given its full support to the campaign and has  
launched its own parallel campaign, “Roads to Justice”.  
Gary Rae, from Brake, has said:

“There are too many families who suffer the double trauma of  
losing a loved one in a sudden and violent way and then witness  
the judicial system turning its back on them.”

There was relief when the Government finally announced  
in December last year that a consultation was to be  
held, with the possibility of life sentences for those  
causing death or serious injury by dangerous driving.  
However, it is now July 2017, we are about to go into  
recess and still there is no sign of the outcome of the  
consultation. In the meantime, many families sadly  
have been and continue to be affected by this gross  
injustice.

At the launch of the “Roads to Justice” campaign, I  
met a constituent of the Prime Minister. Mark Hollands'  
daughter Bryony was tragically killed by a drunk driver  
who came off the road and struck her while she was

walking along the pavement. Bryony's killer was given  
an eight-year sentence, of which he will serve four.  
Bryony was a 19-year-old music student. Since her  
death, her father has campaigned tirelessly for tougher  
sentences and raised funds for the music therapy charity  
Nordoff Robbins, in his daughter's memory. Bryony's  
father contacted me today to say that the family should  
have been attending her graduation ceremony in Sheffield  
this very afternoon.

In Aldershot in November last year, two young runners,  
Lucy Pygott and Stacey Burrows, were killed by a  
drunk driver while out training. Their killer, a soldier,  
got just six years, of which he will serve three. As Lucy's  
mother said:

“The British Army trains soldiers to kill—this man killed with  
his loaded weapon of a hot-hatch car.”

Sadly, the list goes on and on. I recently wrote to the  
Secretary of State for Justice to ask for information on  
the progress of the consultation, and I highlighted two  
more cases. One was in Oldham; two young girls aged  
11 and 12 were killed, yet the driver, who fled the scene,  
received a sentence of just four years, of which he will  
serve two. One was in St Helens in May this year; a  
four-year-old was killed and her grandmother seriously  
injured by the driver of a stolen car that mounted the  
pavement at speed, with the driver also fleeing the scene.  
When he was finally arrested and charged, he received a  
sentence of nine years, of which he will serve four and  
a half.

While the Government delay, the families who lose  
loved ones in such horrific and entirely avoidable  
circumstances should not be made to suffer the added  
injustice of such lenient treatment of the killers. I am  
keen for the Government to make clear their intentions  
as soon as possible, for the sake of the victims and their  
families, who have suffered enough. I am extremely  
grateful to have had the opportunity to raise this hugely  
important matter today.

4.1 pm

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): I pay tribute  
to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz  
McInnes), not only for that moving speech, but for  
showing a lot of fight on behalf of the victims in those  
terrible cases. I pay tribute to her campaign for justice,  
which I hope she continues with; we will all support her  
in that endeavour.

I wish to raise the case of a constituent, Mr Chris  
Francis of Constable Road in Sudbury. He contacted  
me almost a year ago today to express his concerns  
about a large metal barrier that had been erected across  
the garden gate at the rear of his property. When I first  
heard about it, I thought it was perhaps just another  
constituency case, but he explained that he is blind and  
used the gate to safely and easily access his property  
with his guide dog, Nimbus. Central to his concern  
about the barrier was the fact that he would no longer  
be able to use his back door as an exit in an emergency—I  
emphasise that we are talking about an emergency.  
Mr Francis was not notified or consulted by Calibre  
Homes, the company that erected the barrier.

I went out to Constable Road to see the houses, all  
ex-council houses that back on to an estate called  
Suffolk Court. The company that manages the estate  
had erected the barriers outside rear gates that had been

1081

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1082

*[James Cartlidge]*

used for many years. Suddenly, the residents of these  
houses woke up to find that they could not open or  
close them. The barriers were covered in anti-burglar  
paint, they were ugly and, in my view, the way they had  
been built was aggressive.

In November, I went back to see Mr Francis to  
update him on the progress of his case, or lack of it. I  
had been telling Babergh District Council that I thought  
the residents had a right of way, and asked the council  
to help me to prove that; the council was going through  
the inevitably slow legal process of doing so. When I  
went to see Mr Francis in November, I was shocked to  
discover that he had suffered a severe stroke—a right-sided  
total anterior circulation infarct. Mr Francis is 62 and,  
as I said, blind. He is a Royal Air Force veteran: he was  
a parachuting instructor in the RAF for 10 years. He  
then set up his own parachute school. He was a very  
active man and has lived a brilliant life.

When I saw him that day, he was in a most distressing  
state. His sister, Anne, who has been a stalwart by his  
side, explained to me the circumstances of his stroke.  
She came to Mr Francis's property to find that he had  
collapsed at the front door. She could not go through  
the front door because his key was in it, so immediately  
called the ambulance service, which tried to access the  
house from the rear.

The report states that

“the delay in getting into the property was due to a tall metal  
fence, which obstructed their ability to get through to the back of  
the property. It was in fact so high it was unsafe for them to climb  
over to gain entry. Therefore, they requested the attendance of the  
Police to gain access.”

The police report states:

“There was no safe entry point to the front of the property as  
the male had collapsed by the front door. Efforts to get to the rear  
of the property to assess an entry point were severely hampered  
by the large fencing. I was eventually able to scale it after using a  
wheelie bin to get some extra height. Not all officers would have  
been able to do this. In relation to delay, I would say the fencing  
added about 10 minutes to police gaining entry. This would have  
removed a delay of medical attention by about 30 minutes as  
Ambulance on arrival would have been able to go straight into the  
property.”

In other words, if the barrier had not been there, there  
would have been an extra 30 minutes for an ambulance  
to attend to this man suffering a stroke. Everyone in the  
Chamber will know that the NHS has an acronym for  
treating stroke, and that is FAST, because the speed of  
treatment is critical. My constituent suffers from significantly  
reduced mobility, speech and wellbeing. He relies on  
considerable assistance from his sister and family and  
requires a wheelchair.

My main reason for raising this case is that I believe  
that Calibre Homes—I have corresponded with the  
company and it has shown no willingness to remove the  
barriers, has been unable to justify them and, in my  
view, has been most aggressive—has in effect contributed  
to the severity of the stroke suffered by my constituent,  
a blind veteran. That is absolutely shocking. In fact, it  
has continued with that rather belligerent attitude. Anne  
Francis, the sister of my constituent, has been in  
communication with Calibre Homes, pleading for the  
removal of the fence to help him have a better quality of

life. Indeed, the Suffolk County Council occupational  
therapist has reported on access possibilities, stating  
that

“the front wheelchair access is not practical in part due to the  
shared porch and part the gradient required. I would think they  
have a strong case if disability is the issue, and the rear is the only  
wheelchair access” .

Mr Francis requires an electric wheelchair that needs to  
be housed outside but requires rear access. We have  
asked Calibre Homes, which has refused to grant this  
permission or remove the fence.

I ask Members to bear in mind that, in my view, that  
barrier is unjustified because those residents have a  
right of way. They had been walking out of the back of  
their homes for donkey's years and suddenly they woke  
up to find these things straight out of an American  
penitentiary centre stuck in the concrete at the back of  
their houses, covered in burglar paint. It is absolutely  
reprehensible.

I want to finish with a point about Calibre Homes. I  
have been in correspondence with the company. It is  
aggressive in the way that it writes, it could not care less  
about my constituent and it has shown not a shred of  
humanity or compassion for someone who is suffering  
severely and has served this country. I wish Mr Francis  
well in his recovery, I will work with Babergh District  
Council to try to prove the right of way for those  
residents and I will fight his corner. He is vulnerable  
and needs me to do that. I will fight for him and my  
constituents against this company, which has no scruples.

4.7 pm

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): I echo the  
comments of the hon. Member for Redditch (Rachel  
Maclean) about the warm welcome that has been extended  
to new Members. I pay particular tribute to our staff in  
the SNP Whips Office, who have supported me in my  
meteoric rise to deputy assistant junior Whip.

I want to mention the proposed closures of Parkhead  
and Easterhouse jobcentres within my Glasgow East  
constituency. These proposed closures are ill-thought-out  
and will have a deeply damaging impact on some of the  
most vulnerable communities in Glasgow's east end  
where access to transport and digital connectivity are  
major barriers. Ministers on the Treasury Bench would  
do well to come to Glasgow and see for themselves the  
havoc that these proposals would cause to an already  
fragile community. My main subject today is a difficult  
and deeply upsetting one. I must confess, I even thought  
twice about whether to speak about it at all, but it is  
incumbent on me to speak up because those who I want  
to speak for cannot speak up for themselves. They are  
the children and babies with life-threatening and life-limiting  
conditions, children who never live long enough to go  
to nursery or school.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will have experienced  
the joy of becoming a parent. Most, if they are lucky,  
will have a trouble-free pregnancy and a safe delivery.  
Some of us have gone through a difficult pregnancy,  
and the child is born prematurely or in dangerous  
circumstances. My own son Isaac was born prematurely  
and spent the first two weeks of his life in an intensive  
care and special care unit. We are indebted to the staff  
at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde for all of the care,  
love and support they provided to him during that time.

1083

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1084

Isaac eventually left hospital, and he is a happy, if  
cheeky, little boy. However, on or before birth, some  
parents have to face the sobering, tragic reality that they  
will outlive their children, which is utterly unimaginable,  
yet, sadly, a reality for the families of approximately  
50,000 children on these islands.

In preparing for this debate, I was incredibly grateful  
to my constituent and friend, Louise Gillan from  
Springboig, who shared with me her personal experience  
of having a child with complex health needs. Her daughter,  
Erin, was diagnosed with a rare condition at the age of  
two.

Across the UK, there is a mixed picture when it  
comes to the funding of children's palliative care. Together  
for Short Lives quite rightly wants the UK Government  
to follow the lead of the Scottish Government, who  
have allocated £30 million over five years to children's  
hospices, so that there is parity of funding with adult  
hospices. Children in England, Wales and Northern  
Ireland deserve the same recognition, opportunity and  
support as those in Scotland.

At this juncture, I want to pay tribute to the hon.  
Members for Colchester (Will Quince) and for Eddisbury  
(Antoinette Sandbach) for speaking so personally and  
movingly about their own experiences of being bereaved  
of a child. The hon. Gentleman did excellent work in  
the last Parliament to build interest and momentum  
around the concept of parental bereavement leave, which  
both Labour and the Conservatives included in their  
election manifestos. I am pleased that, in the past  
24 hours, the Government have committed to introducing  
bereavement leave and supporting the private Member's  
Bill of the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin  
Hollinrake).

The main issue I want to raise today is the cruel  
anomaly of not paying the mobility component of  
Disability Living Allowance for children under three  
years old. This has been dubbed the baby benefit bar.  
Children under three with life-shortening conditions  
often depend on ventilators and large equipment to stay  
alive.Somebabiesandchildrenhavepermanentwheelchairs,  
as they are not able to use buggies suitable for well  
children of the same age. The wheelchairs are heavy  
because of the equipment needed to secure them to a  
vehicle.

All this leads me to conclude that exclusion from the  
mobility component of DLA is as inherently unfair as it  
is illogical. Calling on the UK Government to include  
the under threes in the mobility component of DLA is a  
small ask, but it is one that could enormously support  
and transform the lives of the families of children with  
short lives. These additional mobility needs are already  
recognised in other areas of Government policy. Children  
under three who depend on bulky medical equipment,  
or need to be near their vehicle in case they need  
emergency medical treatment, are already eligible for a  
blue parking badge, so excluding them from the DLA  
component is clearly an anomaly.

What we are talking about here is the difference of  
just £58 a week, which is a drop in the ocean for the  
Government when we consider just how few families  
this will affect, but it will have the potential to move  
some of those families away from unnecessary poverty.

I want to share with the House this testimony from a  
parent of a child receiving palliative care. They told us:

“My daughterhas had a tracheotomy with a ventilatorattached  
24/7 since the age of eight months. She needs these for an  
undiagnosed neuromuscularcondition. She cannot support herself  
at all. Carrying her, hervent, her suction machine, her oxygen, her  
emergency equipment to our car and back for two years was  
extremely difficult. We ended up selling our family car and  
purchasing a wheelchair accessible vehicle privately as it just  
became too hard to carry her as she grew.”

Time is not on the side of these families. The best that  
we can do is to be on their side.

4.13 pm

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): It is a pleasure to be  
called to speak in this debate. One person who must be  
looking forward to the recess is the speech writer of the  
hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who is  
sadly no longer in his place, given the number of  
contributions that the hon. Gentleman makes in Parliament.  
He is probably busy writing an intervention for tonight's  
Adjournment debate. It was certainly interesting to  
hear the hon. Gentleman's comments.

I have three issues that I wish to raise. Hopefully, they  
will be the subject of some attention before we return in  
September. The first is the school funding formula. It  
was great to hear the announcements that were made  
earlier this week, which reflected much of the lobbying  
that had been done by Torbay schools. The next part is  
ensuring that we get the detailed figures for what it  
means per school, especially as it will mean that we can  
rebut some of the stuff that has been put out on the  
internet. I am looking forward to seeing the figures, and  
I know that many schools in Torbay will appreciate  
having the certainty that they will represent.

The key issue that I hope will be worked on over the  
summer relates to transport issues in my constituency.  
The first is around finally sorting out the remaining  
funding needed to deliver the first new station in Torbay  
for decades—at Edginswell. There is a strong business  
case, with local enterprise partnership support and  
£4 million in match funding, and the council has been  
told that delivery would be relatively easy, with planning  
permission in place and a site that is ready to go. I hope  
that the Department for Transport will decide to cut at  
least £1.5 million off the total cost of delivery by  
insisting that Network Rail covers the costs of realigning  
the track, which locally we suggest is a maintenance  
task.

The project has gone through all the GRIP—governance  
for railway investment projects—stage 3 documentation  
for Network Rail. The moment there is an announcement  
on funding from the new stations fund, a start could be  
made. I know that the council is keen to invest and the  
operator is keen to provide services. It would send a  
huge message about our ambitions in the bay, not least  
in developing the business park at Edginswell and  
supporting the nearby hospital, which has had numerous  
staff access issues, because a convenient train service  
would make a real difference. New housing estates are  
being built nearby, so the station would open up  
opportunities for residents to find jobs in the bay and  
slightly further afield. I hope that we can take the  
project forward when we return in September.

I also hope that by the time we return in September  
there will have been some progress on CrossCountry's  
proposals for a new train timetable. The initial proposals  
produced last year were nothing short of disgraceful.

1085

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1086

*[Kevin Foster]*

CrossCountry attempted to portray them as an  
“improvement to your services”, even though that poster  
was on a platform at Torquay station from which all the  
services would be scrapped. I was pleased that those  
proposals were withdrawn, but discussions are still ongoing.  
I hope that by September we will have received confirmation  
that Torbay will definitely stay on track. I hope that  
families coming to the bay for a holiday will not have to  
change trains with their luggage at a busy Exeter St David's  
station to what is joyfully called a “metro service” but is  
actually a commuter train that is likely to be overcrowded  
at particular times of the day and on which seats cannot  
be reserved.

One of my priorities over the recess will be to campaign  
with local residents on another transport issue: reinstating  
the bus services that were lost when Local Link, a local  
operator, ceased all its local routes back in April. Many  
have been reinstated—I am thinking of the No. 60, in  
particular—with a community bus operator or an  
alternative operator, but residents in Torbay Park,  
Ellacombe and the Lichfield Avenue area of Barton are  
still waiting. Given the topography of Torquay—the  
town of seven hills—someone might not be all that far  
from a bus route as the crow flies, but if that journey  
involves walking up a steep hill, for many elderly residents  
their bus pass becomes almost useless. If getting to the  
bus stop is fine, coming back might not be. I have  
started a petition, which I hope to present to the House  
in September. It is vital that we campaign for the return  
of those services, particularly given the information I  
have received that a route on a not-for-profit basis  
could well be viable. It is about sorting out capital  
funding for a new bus that would allow the service to be  
delivered.

Politics in Torbay is always at its best when we are  
talking about policies and delivery, not bickering about  
structures and personalities. That point will have particular  
prominence today back in the bay, given a meeting that  
is going on. I hope that all those elected to serve the  
most beautiful bay in the UK will remember that that  
must be the focus of their time and energy, and I hope  
that people see that it is the focus of my energies in this  
House.

I am conscious of time and know that other Members  
wish to speak, so I will draw my remarks to a close. I am  
looking forward to the recess because, as some Members  
will know, I got married on 10 June. [HON. MEMBERS:  
“Hear, hear.”] Thank you. Many things had to be  
cancelled because of a decision made by the other  
woman in my life—Mrs May, not Mrs Foster. For  
example, my stag night ended up being an election  
count, Hazel's hen night was cancelled and our honeymoon  
was postponed. Hopefully we will find some time over  
the recess to have our honeymoon—as Hazel pointed  
out, the trip up to London this week to cover my office  
for a couple of days was not really what she was looking  
forward to. Recess will certainly be busy. I wish everyone  
in the House, including you, Mr Deputy Speaker, a very  
enjoyable and productive break.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Happy  
honeymoon.

4.19 pm

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): May I, on behalf of  
all the House, start by warmly congratulating my hon.  
Friend the Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster) on his  
wedding and wish him a very happy honeymoon, whenever  
that takes place?

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity  
to raise a few issues that can be crowded out in the  
ordinary course of busy parliamentary business. In  
doing so, I will unapologetically focus on Cheltenham,  
because one thing I have learned over the last two years  
is that, for all the cynicism about our democratic process,  
Parliament does, indeed, remain the forum in which we  
can seek effective redress for our constituents and speak  
truth to power. We saw that in action with the Government's  
welcome decision last week to allocate more frontline  
funding for our secondary schools, and my hon. Friend  
the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) and I  
saw it in the last Parliament, with the passage of legislation  
to extend the maximum sentence for stalking, following  
the terrible ordeal of a Cheltenham GP.

I would like to take the opportunity at the outset to  
congratulate all the students who are receiving awards  
at the National Star College leavers award ceremony in  
Gloucestershire. The National Star College, for those  
who do not know it, is an independent specialist further  
education college for people with physical disabilities,  
acquired brain injuries and associated learning difficulties.  
It is an extraordinary place; no one who visits it can fail  
to be moved by what is being achieved by staff and  
students alike.

What I want to talk about specifically today is  
Cheltenham General Hospital. We in Cheltenham value  
our hospital greatly. Members might think that that is a  
truism, but it is particularly the case in a town of  
115,000 people. Only this morning, I received a message  
from a constituent, who referred to Cheltenham General,  
stating:

“My wife has been admitted there four times in the past two  
years—three times for surgery—and on each occasion—from the  
first visit of the paramedics to the A&E staff and on the various  
wards she has received the most wonderful attention—professional,  
kind, caring and patient.”

What a wonderful tribute, and it is not unusual. It is  
echoed by the findings of the recent Care Quality  
Commission report. Inspectors describe staff as  
“committed, caring and compassionate”. They also  
observed “exceptional teamwork”, particularly when a  
department was under pressure.

However, there is an issue about our night-time A&E.  
In 2013, Cheltenham General's A&E service was  
downgraded. Blue light services were diverted to  
Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. Although night-time  
A&E notionally remained, and indeed remains, open  
for GP referrals and walk-ins, the reality is that a major  
service change took place. The emergency nurse  
practitioners, who do a magnificent job of holding the  
fort, do not have doctor support to assist them. That is  
important, because in the CQC report I referred to a  
few moments ago, medical and nursing staff raised  
concerns with inspectors about medical cover at night.  
To their great credit, consultants regularly work longer  
hours to support their junior colleagues. The CQC was  
not convinced that that was sustainable, and nor am I.  
That is notwithstanding the fact that the care that has  
been delivered is co-ordinated and multi-discipline.

1087

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1088

What needs to be done? There is a clear problem with  
the recruitment of middle-grade doctors in A&E not  
just in Cheltenham but across the piece—the trust has  
made that clear, and the evidence bears it out. That is  
why I have called for a debate on the issue in this place,  
and I take the opportunity to raise it now.

Improving incentives for middle-grade A&E doctors  
is a crucial part of the long-term solution. In the short  
term, I welcome the fact that the trust is looking closely  
at providing an urgent care centre at Cheltenham General  
Hospital—something that was reported in the local  
paper, the *Gloucestershire Echo*, in March this year.  
Only today, we heard my hon. Friend the Member for  
Corby (Tom Pursglove) extol the virtues of urgent care  
centres, because they provide urgent care, as the name  
might suggest, and, crucially, divert patients from accident  
and emergency—something we all have an interest in.  
An urgent care centre would see emergency nurse  
practitioners supported by GPs, which I welcome. However,  
that will take place only if we as a country increase the  
pipeline of GPs in our surgeries, and that means addressing  
the issue of rising GP indemnity—or insurance—premiums,  
which I have referred to previously.

The key point is that the people of Cheltenham want  
Cheltenham's A&E to be preserved and enhanced. I  
have made that point in the past and I will continue to  
make it. Some have raised with me a concern about  
whether the downgrading of night-time A&E was simply  
the thin end of the wedge that would presage the end of  
A&E in Cheltenham. After my election in 2015, I met  
representatives of the trust to make precisely that point  
and to raise precisely that concern. I was given a clear  
assurance regarding A&E's future; there was no suggestion  
of its demise. That was also the case in the following  
year, 2016, when I met the then chief executive, who  
described rumours of A&E closing as “blatant  
scaremongering” and confirmed:

“What we said to you on 5 June 2015 still stands and the board  
has not changed its position on A&E at Cheltenham General.”  
I welcome that robust commitment to A&E. It must  
remain in place. Crucially, it must remain in place  
notwithstanding the recent finding of financial  
mismanagement at the trust—which, I should stress,  
predates the appointment of the current chief executive  
and chairman, who are doing an excellent job in uncovering  
these problems.

Retaining and enhancing A&E at Cheltenham General  
must remain a service priority. I say that because the  
idea that a resident in Battledown, Oakley, Charlton  
Kings or Charlton Park to the east of Cheltenham can  
readily get to A&E at Gloucestershire Royal hospital,  
having to travel all the way down the Golden Valley  
bypass and the A40 in a big traffic jam, is for the birds.  
Those of us who live there know that that is not a  
realistic or optimal solution.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to two constituents of  
mine, Lynda and Philip Hodder. Mr and Mrs Hodder  
are the parents-in-law of a young Australian woman  
who, in June of this year, was, very sadly, killed in  
Borough Market in the terrorist atrocities. The young  
woman who was killed was referred to by some as “the  
angel of London Bridge” because of the way that she  
sought to aid others who were coming under attack.  
The dignity, fortitude and courage shown by my constituents  
has been enormously humbling. It is what has fortified  
me in making the representations that I have made

about how we go about addressing the issue of those  
who are suspected and even convicted of terrorist offences  
in this country.

The point that my constituents have made to me, with  
a power that only people in that position can, is that  
while of course in a free society we rightly take account  
of the human rights of all people who come into  
contact with our criminal justice system—and yes, that  
must mean people who come into contact with it for  
terrorism offences—let us never forget that the most  
fundamental human right of all is the right to life of  
people who are innocent, decent, hard-working, law-abiding  
members of our community doing nothing more than  
going about their business, whether at Borough Market  
or anywhere else. Their rights must always be put first.

It is a huge privilege to be able to raise the concerns  
of my constituents in this great place, and to seek  
redress on their behalf. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker,  
for giving me the opportunity to do so. I wish you and  
all Members of this House a very happy and restful  
recess.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** I call Nigel  
Evans.

4.28 pm

**Mr Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley) (Con): Tail-end Charlie.  
*[Laughter.]* Me, not you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

We have heard some powerful speeches here today,  
especially from my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham  
(Alex Chalk). I, too, lost a constituent, at the Manchester  
Arena. We need to do a lot more to support the families  
of those who survive after the loss of loved ones. The  
hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes)  
made a brilliant speech. If she wants to go to see any  
Ministers about increasing the sentences of these killers  
in motor vehicles, there are a lot of Conservative Members  
who will go with her to give support to that. The hon.  
Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) and I have a  
lot in common. He said he had a meteoric rise; I had a  
meteoric fall. I know which one I would prefer. I wish  
him good luck in his new job.

I have just two issues to raise. First, I am sure  
everyone in the Chamber was sickened by the news of  
the death of Cecil the lion two years ago, and today the  
news has come out that the son of Cecil has been shot  
by a trophy killer. What is wrong with the people who  
get any pleasure whatsoever from killing these beautiful  
endangered animals? If they want to shoot a lion, they  
should use a camera, and future generations would then  
be able to enjoy these wonderful creatures. I hope the  
Government will bring pressure to bear on the Governments  
of countries that allow such killers into their countryside  
to kill these beautiful creatures.

The second issue I want to raise is exactly the same as  
that mentioned by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port  
and Neston (Justin Madders)—the leasehold freehold  
scam in our country. What is going on in Ribble Valley  
was brought to my attention before the general election.  
I do not know whether it is a north-west thing or is  
going on throughout the entire country. People are  
being recommended by builders to solicitors who then  
do not, funnily enough, point out or indeed emphasise  
the fact that the ground rents they will pay, which may  
start off at a relatively modest amount, will double

1089

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1090

*[Mr Nigel Evans]*

every 10 years for the next 50 years, so at the end of that  
period they may be paying £10,000 a year in ground  
rent to live in a house that they have paid for. It is an  
absolute scandal.

This is blighting the properties that people are now  
trying to sell. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to  
say that some building societies will not touch them or  
lend anybody money to buy them. Even worse, when  
people are about to buy a property, they are told, “Oh,  
you can buy the freehold later on. Don't worry about  
that.” What has happened in the Ribble Valley? People  
went to Taylor Wimpey and said, “You said we had two  
years to buy the freehold. Well, we'd like to buy it.”  
They were expecting to pay £4,500, but they were told  
that the leases had been sold on to another company for  
a sum of money, and we are now talking about a  
considerable sum of money that the people wanting to  
buy the freehold will have to pay to an independent,  
third company. They were not told by Taylor Wimpey  
that that would happen.

I want to give one vivid example, which is the test  
case of Trevor and Margaret Knowell, who live on  
Calderstones Green in Whalley. They bought their property  
in 2011, when they were informed that they had a  
two-year window within which to buy the property's  
leasehold. They contacted Taylor Wimpey's legal team  
before the two years had expired, and they were told  
they were unable to purchase the leasehold because the  
negotiations with a third party were “too far gone” to  
halt and the leasehold was then sold to E & J Estates for  
£7,000. Having contactedE&JEstates, Mr Knowell  
bought the lease for £38,000, just months after the lease  
had been sold for £7,000.

I say to the Government—our manifesto said that we  
would get some reforms in this area—that this scam  
must be made illegal. We have to protect people  
unknowingly and unwittingly buying these properties  
who are then left wide open to being fleeced by a third  
party. The developer does not appear to care at all  
about putting people in an invidious position, and in  
any case should they really suggest solicitors to act on  
behalf of people who are buying their properties? That  
should also be made illegal, so that people get proper,  
independent advice. Had they been warned about this  
in the first place, such people would not have touched  
these houses, and the developers would not have been  
able to fabricate a scam that is now inflicting misery on  
so many people around this country.

4.33 pm

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): I am pleased to be  
making my first appearance at the Dispatch Box as the  
shadow Deputy Leader of the House. I am very grateful  
to Members on both sides of the House for their kind  
words. I look forward to playing my role in continuing  
to ensure an open, modern Parliament, and one that  
reflects the priorities of the many in this country, not  
the few.

This is an important moment for our country and  
our democracy, and indeed for Parliament. Clement  
Attlee once said:

“Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only  
effective if you can stop people talking.”

The interim Prime Minister tried that with her call for  
“no running commentary” on Brexit, but this Parliament  
and the people who send us here have been clear that we  
will discuss, debate and vote on the most significant  
change to legislation our country has seen in the past  
40 years in this Session. Where it is in the interests of  
those we are proud to represent, we will be very pleased  
to work with Government Members. Our duty in this  
place is not yah-boo, but can-do. If by collaborating we  
can improve the lives of working people, that is what we  
must do.

I know from my own experience of working with  
Ministers since I came to the House two years ago, on  
issues such as the safety of towed trailers and improving  
apprenticeship opportunities, that we can make progress  
together. Where we have common ground, we must and  
will continue that approach. Since last we recessed, we  
have our new permanent memorial to our friend Jo Cox  
here to remind us that we do, indeed, have more in  
common.

Although hon. Members will be taking a vacation  
this summer, the daily struggle of millions of people to  
pay the bills knows no summer break. That is why  
colleagues from all parts of the House will, I know, be  
working hard to continue to help constituents.

Wehaveheardthisafternoonfrommanyhon.Members  
about the issues that are close to their hearts, and it has  
been a pleasure to listen to Members from all parts of  
the House. We have had a magnificent maiden speech  
by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading East (Matt  
Rodda), who talked about austerity and its effect on  
Reading, and the need for a good relationship for the  
people of Reading as we leave the United—*[Laughter.]*That would be a step too far; I meant the European  
Union. I am a very collaborative person. My hon.  
Friend also spoke about the need for more affordable  
housing, particularly in the south of England. I am  
delighted to have another Labour colleague further  
down the M4, as we repopulate the M4 corridor with  
Labour Members.

We have heard a number of excellent speeches. My  
right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith  
Vaz) talked, as he does so eloquently and regularly,  
about Yemen and the effects of cholera there at the  
moment. He is sending us all away on the Pioppi diet for  
the recess, and I am looking forward to partaking of  
that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse  
(Jim Fitzpatrick) talked about the NHS trust in his area  
and leasehold reform. He was joined in the latter by my  
hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston  
(Justin Madders), who described what is going on with  
leasehold reform as

“the PPI of the house building industry”

and pointed out that if it continues, an Englishman's  
home will no longer be his castle; it will be a revenue  
stream for offshore companies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mary  
Creagh) spoke eloquently about the CAPA provision  
for sixth-formers in her constituency, and I hope that  
she will be able to ensure that the dreams of the young  
people of Wakefield are realised. My hon. Friend the  
Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glindon) talked  
about the sugar tax and the need to combat the obesity  
epidemic. My hon. Friend the Member for Heywood

1091

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1092

and Middleton (Liz McInnes) spoke very movingly, as I  
have heard her do in other debates, about the need for  
justice for people who are severely affected by dangerous  
driving. I, too, look forward to the Government's  
consultation on that important issue.

If there was a theme among the many speeches that  
we have heard today, it was austerity and its impact.  
Several Conservative Members talked about urgent care  
centres and the impact of austerity on A&E departments,  
which is also a serious concern in my constituency. The  
hon. Members for Rochford and Southend East (James  
Duddridge), for Corby (Tom Pursglove) and for  
Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) talked about those matters. I  
welcome the hon. Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean)  
to the House. She talked about the importance of EU  
citizens in her constituency.

As we head into the summer recess, it is worth  
reflecting on the contrasting nature of the weeks ahead,  
and comparing Labour Members with Conservative  
ones. I suspect that Conservative Members may be in  
for a more torrid and turbulent time. While I and my  
Labour colleagues will be returning to our constituencies  
to prepare for government—*[Interruption]*—focusing  
squarely ahead on the priorities of those we represent,  
Conservative Members will be looking over their shoulders  
for the next leadership bid, the next denial of ambition  
or the next briefing against, while perusing the latest  
betting odds that might tell them who to back in the  
inevitable contest.

Hon. Members who have spoken in previous summer  
Adjournment debates have offered sage vacation advice.  
Indeed, we have been invited to Southend to join in this  
year's carnival. My constituency of Bristol South is not  
known as a tourist destination, but if colleagues find  
themselves there, they might find time to visit the excellent  
Windmill Hill city farm and the splendidly rebuilt Ashton  
Gate stadium, where they could watch quality  
championship football when Bristol City kick off against  
Barnsley on 5 August. It will be the first step, I am told,  
in this year's promotion quest.

Finally, I wish hon. Members, the men and women  
who protect us, and the staff who serve us so well in  
these Houses a peaceful summer, and thank them for all  
that they do. In particular, may I congratulate and  
thank all those involved in suddenly closing down  
Parliament for the election and then resuming the services  
for continuing and new Members? It was a massive  
management and operational task. We should be grateful  
to them and I wish them some well-earned rest.

4.40 pm

**The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Michael  
Ellis):** It is always a pleasure to be under your jurisdiction,  
Mr Deputy Speaker.

May I start by warmly welcoming the hon. Member  
for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) to her position as  
shadow Deputy Leader of the House? I look forward to  
working with her on those collaborative and common-  
ground issues on which we can work together. I am sure  
we will continue to do that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater and  
West Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger) started this  
afternoon's debate. He puts his views extremely powerfully  
on the record. I am not going to say anything more  
about that.

The right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith  
Vaz) spoke once more about Yemen, an issue that is  
very close to his heart. He is a doughty campaigner, a  
powerful advocate for a wide variety of causes. He is  
not in his place because he has business elsewhere. The  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office is fully engaged on  
the issue of the appalling cholera epidemic in Yemen  
and, of course, this Government are honouring the  
0.7% GDP commitment to international development.  
I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his newly  
elected position on the new all-party parliamentary  
group on immigration and visas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West  
(Sir David Amess) spoke about a very wide variety of  
issues, from a visit from Her Royal Highness the Countess  
of Wessex to his belief that the BBC would be somewhat  
cheaper if he had a presenter's job. I think that is  
probably true, and maybe he should consider making  
an application. He always thanks and congratulates a  
wide variety of people in his constituency, and I know  
that they will very much appreciate being mentioned in  
this House. He is such a superb representative of his  
constituency and works very hard to represent everyone  
there.

The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim  
Fitzpatrick) spoke next. He too is a powerful advocate,  
especially on the issue that several Members mentioned—  
leaseholders and freeholds and land rights. He is a  
doughty force as co-chair of the APPG on leasehold  
and commonhold reform. He does a powerful job as an  
advocate in that area, and I congratulate him on his  
work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob  
Blackman) was, of course, responsible for the Homelessness  
Reduction Act 2017. He got it on the statute book,  
which is a great accolade and a huge credit to him for  
his work in that quarter. He spoke about his fight for a  
smoke-free Britain and about war crimes, the importance  
of human rights and the issue of caste. He speaks  
regularly on issues that cross party divides—issues that  
we can all understand and support. I know that he is  
widely admired and respected by all quarters of society  
in his constituency, particularly those of the minority  
ethnic community, who very much appreciate his powerful  
representation on their behalf.

The hon. Member for Reading East (Matt Rodda)  
gave his maiden speech, on which I congratulate him. I  
welcome him to this place. He spoke proudly of his  
constituency and spoke very well of his predecessors. I  
wish him well. I am sure that he will be an asset to his  
party. One of his predecessors whom he did not mention  
was none other than Rufus Isaacs, whose priorities,  
although more than 100 years ago, also included land  
reform, before world war one, as well as the legal  
standing of unions. He was a Liberal Member, but  
history remembers him very kindly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard  
Graham) spoke powerfully about the flood disaster in  
2007. Everyone remembers it as an appalling incident.  
He described how he organised a group of people to  
help his community and we thank him for that. He  
encouraged people to sign up to the Environment Agency's  
text alert system, and I join him in that. He spoke of the  
importance of local media. As constituency Members  
of Parliament, we all know how important our local

1093

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1094

*[Michael Ellis]*

media are. My hon. Friend spoke of resilience, communities  
sticking together, leadership and a shared purpose. I  
support him and second his comments.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) spoke  
about a performing arts school in her constituency and  
how she had greatly enjoyed a production of “West Side  
Story”. She spoke so compellingly about it that I wish I  
had seen it. I have looked into the matter that she raised  
and she should receive a reply. She said that she had not  
received one and I shall follow that up. I will also  
forward her concerns to the Department for Education.  
I note that she said that she would welcome Channel 4.  
I hope her area could pay salaries commensurate with  
what might be expected.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin  
Vickers) also spoke about BBC salaries. That is, of  
course, a matter for the BBC, but there is disappointment  
about apparent gender disparity. Lord Hall has said  
that it was not where they wanted to be. My hon. Friend  
also spoke about Travellers and acknowledged that the  
law has dramatically improved in that area, but he  
wants a further robust approach and I think that many  
people in and outside his constituency would support  
him in that.

It was typically kind and considerate of the hon.  
Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie) to think of  
the staff of Members who were not returned at the  
election. There is a unique contractual situation in this  
place for those staff—it is not the most secure position.  
Of course, it is the responsibility of the Independent  
Parliamentary Standards Authority to keep those matters  
under review and I encourage him to speak to IPSA. He  
made some points with which I saw colleagues from  
different parties nodding in agreement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove)  
is a frequent and powerful contributor in the Chamber.  
He spoke about the Corby Urgent Care Centre, where  
there are 70,000 patients, only 6% of whom needed to  
be referred on to hospital. The centre clearly does a  
good job. I am concerned that my hon. Friend is worried  
about it. I strongly recommend that the clinical  
commissioning group in the area meet him and that  
they work together. He is another doughty campaigner  
and he should get the support of everyone in his community  
in working for the wider interest there and the valuable  
urgent care centre.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) spoke about  
the refugee crisis around the world and issues that are  
important to his constituency, including HMRC and  
immigration rules. Doubtless, many will have noted the  
power of his comments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona  
Bruce) was full of praise, rightly, if I may say so, for  
Ministers—I think it was for Ministers in other  
Departments, not for me—as regards school funding.  
She said that there was more for schools in her constituency.  
There is more for other constituencies across the country,  
thanks to this Government. She is working with other  
Conservatives in her area to achieve a great deal for her  
constituency.

The hon. Member for North Tyneside (Mary Glindon)  
was complimentary to the soft drinks industry for the  
work it is doing on a plan to reduce sugar. There is

always more that can be done, of course, as I am sure  
she would accept. She is right to fight against the  
problem of obesity, which is life-limiting and has an  
adverse and deleterious effect on the health of young  
people—on the health of people of all ages. No doubt  
she will continue her fight in that quarter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend  
East (James Duddridge) spoke very fondly and movingly  
of Lucy, his staff member. I would like to mention her  
from this Dispatch Box as well. I do not know her, but I  
have no doubt that she has done a wonderful job for  
him. He also spoke of the aggression and intimidation  
he has received in his constituency. I know that that will  
not succeed against my hon. Friend. He is a powerful  
advocate for everyone in his constituency, and will no  
doubt reject and completely oppose those who use  
aggression and intimidation to try to get their way. The  
hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin  
Madders) proposed some radical reforms to leasehold,  
and no doubt he will pursue his cause with the passion  
that I know he has in this quarter. We will have to see  
where that takes us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam  
(Paul Scully) spoke about St Helier Hospital, and said it  
had the best A&E, with wonderful staff, I am sure. He  
spoke of the fracture and renal units there. I take this  
opportunity to thank the staff at that hospital and all  
our NHS staff around the country for the work they do  
to help those who need medical attention. There is work  
to do for that hospital, my hon. Friend said, and I am  
sure he will be a powerful advocate for it.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)  
spoke about the Royal Black Preceptory, which was  
formed in 1797, and is apparently often called the  
senior of the loyal orders fraternal societies. I know that  
all Members in this House would want to wish everyone  
and all the communities in Northern Ireland all the very  
best.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel  
Maclean) is a new Member and I welcome her to this  
place. She says that her priority is to support small  
businesses, and rightly so. The unemployment rate in  
her constituency stands at 2.1%, so she is obviously  
doing a good job. She also spoke about fake news. We  
have to stop false or fake news reports worrying voters  
unnecessarily. Other Members also mentioned that. I  
know that my hon. Friend will be an advocate for her  
constituents' interests in this House, hopefully for many  
years.

The hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz  
McInnes) spoke very movingly about the death of Joseph  
and many others. There was an appalling collision in  
Joseph's case and in other cases. Understandably, she is  
concerned about the apparent disparity between the  
sentencing and what those in society whom she is  
campaigning with would see as right. My heart goes out  
to all the families she mentioned, and there are so many  
others. Law changes take time. She is a powerhouse of a  
campaigner, and I am sure she will continue her work. I  
understand that a response to the consultation is hoped  
for soon.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James  
Cartlidge) spoke about an important piece of constituency  
casework. I recommend that Calibre Homes conduct

1095

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

Summer Adjournment

1096

themselves with appropriate care when it comes to my  
hon. Friend and have respect for his role as Member of  
Parliament for his constituency.

The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden)  
spoke movingly and powerfully about children with  
complex needs. I know that Her Majesty's Government  
are working with Motability on the particular point  
that he raised. He also spoke movingly about his son.  
His family must be proud of him for being here, and it  
must be difficult for him to be some distance from  
Glasgow East when he is serving his constituents in this  
House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster)  
had a list of local issues. From his speech, it will be  
obvious to anyone who did not already know it that he  
is an active local representative. He spoke of the beautiful  
bay that he represents and mentioned the fact that he  
was married on 10 June. I congratulate him and wish  
him well. I presume that his being here today is part of  
his honeymoon. I hope that he will be keeping an eye on  
his emails in the weeks ahead. I wish him all the very  
best.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex  
Chalk) was one of a number of Members who spoke  
passionately about their local hospital. He is fighting  
for, and with, Cheltenham General Hospital. His is a  
powerful voice, and he is a hard-working Member here.  
He says that he has been given repeated assurances  
about his hospital. He also spoke about the dignity and  
fortitude of the relatives of people who have been  
killed, particularly in terrorist attacks. I endorse what  
he said, and I offer the respect of everyone in the House  
for those family members. Our hearts go out to them in  
these difficult times.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley  
(Mr Evans) said that, as the last Member to speak, he  
was the tail-end Charlie. Others have called him other  
things, but one thing he certainly does is speak powerfully  
in the House. I know that millions will agree with what  
he said about Cecil the lion's son being killed by a  
poacher. We all hope that the maximum force of the law  
will be applied to those who kill wildlife and endangered  
animals in that way. My hon. Friend also spoke about  
ground rent issues. I would say that those he is up  
against in his constituency and elsewhere ought to be  
careful, because he is one of the men in grey suits who  
are spoken of apocryphally and who get things done in  
this place and elsewhere. In all seriousness, the scams  
that are perpetrated on our constituents must be dealt  
with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity  
to thank you, Mr Speaker and the other Deputy Speakers,  
as well as all the staff—the parliamentary staff, the  
constituency staff and the civil service staff—and I wish  
everyone all the very best for a peaceful summer.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** I, too, wish  
everyone a very safe recess. Please take your safety and  
security seriously over the summer, and we look forward  
to September. I thank all the staff involved in keeping  
us safe, fed and looked after in this House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the  
forthcoming Adjournment.

4.59 pm

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): On a point  
of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I should like to associate  
myself with what you and the Deputy Leader of the  
House have said in thanking everyone for looking after  
us. I have a question on a bit of procedure. It is a shame  
that Mr Speaker is not in the Chair, because he might  
have been able to give me a slightly more forceful  
answer. You have just put the Question to the House at  
the end of our debate. I understand that when more  
people are in favour, you say, “The Ayes have it, the  
Ayes have it”, and when more are against, you say, “The  
Noes have it, the Noes have it.” What happens if there  
are equal numbers on each side? Would you say, “The  
ties have it, the ties have it”?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Very good!  
No, what I would say is, “I have it. I have it.” And if  
anyone wants to join the big five group, there is a new  
all-party parliamentary group that has been formed  
today by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans).

**PETITIONS**

**Higham Ferrers General Practice Surgery**

5pm

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): In my  
constituency, many of the doctors' surgeries provide  
excellent availability and quality of service, but there is  
a problem in one area. If I read the petition, the  
situation will be made clear.

The petition states:

The Humble Petition of residents of Higham Ferrers,  
Northamptonshire and the surrounding area,

Sheweth,

That the Petitioners believe that the Higham Ferrers General  
Practise Surgery is facing significant strain and requires support  
to meet its waiting time and quality of care obligations to  
patients.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House  
urges the Department of Health, NHS England and the Higham  
Ferrers Surgery to work together to ensure that waiting times are  
reduced and the quality of care improves at the Higham Ferrers  
Surgery.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

[P002048]

**Planning application in Irthlingborough**

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): A similar online petition  
echoes the concerns outlined in this petition and has  
received 359 signatures.

The petition states:

The petition of the residents of the UK,

Declares that the planning application 17/00969/OUT should  
be rejected; further that local roads are not suitable for increased  
traffic flow, and already pose issues for emergency vehicles;  
further that local schools are already at full capacity; further that  
local doctors and dentists are already at full capacity; further that  
the land is situated next to the Nene Wetlands conservation area  
and it is known that various species live on or around that land;  
further that the land is on a flood plain and the developer has  
been unable to satisfy the requirements outlined by the Environment  
Agency in respect of this; further that, the land was sold for use as  
agricultural or equine land, and it is believed that when the land

1097

Summer Adjournment

20 JULY 2017

1098

*[Tom Pursglove]*

was put up for sale an interested party approached the council to  
seek outline planning permission to build stables on this land and  
permission was denied; and further that the developer has not  
carried out an acoustic survey in relation to the electrical transformer  
as requested by environmental protection.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons  
urges the Government to compel East Northamptonshire Council  
to reject the planning application to build 124 houses on green  
belt land to the rear of Nicholas Road, Irthlingborough.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002049]

**Continuation of local bus services in Congleton  
Constituency**

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): I rise to present a  
petition on behalf of over 200 residents, expressing  
concern about the review and potential closure of local  
bus service 315 from Alsager. It echoes similar concerns  
that I have received from constituents regarding the  
78 from Rode Heath to Leighton Hospital and the  
319 through Goostrey, Holmes Chapel and Sandbach.  
The petition declares that the closure of the 315 would  
have a disproportionate impact on the local community  
and requests support for retention of the service.

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of the UK,*

*Declares that it is the opinion of Alsager residents,  
shop keepers and market traders that plans to close the  
315 local bus service are ill-considered, and will have a  
disproportionate impact on Alsager as a whole; further  
that the 315 service should be retained; and further that a  
local petition has received 201 signatures.*

*The petitioners therefore request that the House of  
Commons urges the Government to support the retaining  
of the 315 bus service.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

[P002050]

Future of the NHS

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

5.4 pm

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): Before I start  
my speech, may I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the  
Speaker and all the office staff, the police and everyone  
else who takes care of us here? I wish them all a very  
happy summer recess, when they all go off on their  
holidays. We are extremely grateful for all that is done.

First, I thank and praise all those who work in the  
NHS, especially those on the frontline. Secondly, it  
would be inappropriate of me not to pay tribute to our  
able and competent Front-Bench team, who face some  
extremely difficult challenges within the NHS. My speech  
today is in no way at all a criticism of the Government;  
it is purely based on my own observation and the  
observations of others, in part in Dorset but also from  
around the country. I hope Ministers will forgive and  
indulge me as I honour one of my election pledges and  
bring this matter to the Government's attention.

As I said, in essence I am responding to my own  
observations and to those of the many people I have  
spoken to, who work either in or around the NHS. I, we  
and they are proud of our NHS, and rightly so. As  
Nigel Lawson, the former Chancellor, so memorably  
said, “It's the nearest thing we have to a national  
religion”.

The NHS will be 70 years old next year; it is the  
world's fifth largest employer, with 1.5 million employees;  
and it serves a population of the United Kingdom of  
more than 54 million people. The total budget for NHS  
England is a staggering £117 billion. The three founding  
principles of the NHS—that it is available to all, free at  
the point of delivery and based upon clinical need  
rather than the ability to pay—still stand. Last week,  
the US-based Commonwealth Fund health think-tank  
found the NHS to be the best, safest and most affordable  
healthcare system of the 11 countries it analysed, for  
the second time in a row. That is a record to be proud of.

However, the NHS is, to some degree, a victim of its  
own success. That same study placed the UK second  
from bottom for clinical outcomes. So what to do?  
Politicians take a scalpel to the NHS at their peril. The  
consequence is that only sticking plaster is used to meet  
changing circumstances. Medical advances, longer life-spans  
and soaring healthcare costs have outpaced resources,  
and the situation can only get worse.

A recent Public Accounts Committee report found  
that the financial performance of NHS bodies had  
deteriorated, with NHS trusts seeing their deficits almost  
treble to £2.6 billion in a single year, 2015-16. Plugging  
those deficits will not be easy. Addressing the shortage  
of nurses and GPs, coping with a strained adult social  
care system, responding to an overstretched A&E service  
and countering ambulance waiting times all require  
careful thought and perhaps further review.

I am a former soldier and we used to say in the Army  
that time on reconnaissance is never wasted, so a visit to  
the frontline—in my speech—is instructive. A senior  
doctor on my Dorset patch despairs at the “army of  
office staff ” who leave every evening on the dot of 5 pm,  
while work in the hospital, which he emphasises has

1099

Future of the NHS

20 JULY 2017

Future of the NHS

1100

always been a seven-day service, rolls on. He believes  
that administrative staff could be cut by about 25%  
without affecting patient care.

That senior doctor says the so-called “bed bureaus”  
in most hospitals are a case in point. When a patient is  
admitted, doctors must book a bed through bed  
managers—there is one per shift, so three per day—who,  
in turn, inform the ward sisters, who were themselves  
once responsible for the beds on their wards. In fact, the  
bed managers are often very senior nurses who have  
been promoted out of their clinical roles into well-paid  
managerial jobs. Formerly, such senior nurses were an  
invaluable source of knowledge and training for junior  
nurses, but it now seems there is a risk that their  
hard-earned skills will be wasted in administrative roles.

To be fair, the NHS says that managers have been cut  
by 18% since 2010. However, in the view of the senior  
doctor I am referring to, there is still ample opportunity  
better to share back-office functions across regions,  
especially in commissioning services, purchasing and  
postgraduate medical education for doctors. For those  
who are unaware, newly qualified doctors apply to a  
regional deanery for further training in foundation years 1,  
2 and 3. That deanery remains responsible for their  
rotations until they choose their clinical specialty, three  
years after qualifying. Therefore, my doctor source  
asks, why are there education managers, deputy education  
managers and deputy assistant education managers in  
most hospitals he has worked in? In addition, he points  
out that nurses are efficiently certified and accredited by  
their own system, so they do not need in-house education  
managers, either.

The pressure on social care has also had a significant  
impact on acute hospitals, says this doctor. Like hospital  
administrative staff, care home staff are available to  
assess prospective new residents only during office hours,  
leaving A&E departments—often with elderly patients  
who are not strictly emergencies—to languish until  
Monday morning. Occupational therapists are also  
unavailable until Monday morning, meaning patients  
cannot be sent home because their homes cannot be  
certified as safe. In addition, A&E departments are  
frequently overwhelmed by patients suffering from mental  
health issues.

The under-16s pose a particular problem, certainly in  
Dorset, because the office hours of the children's mental  
health assessment service are from 9 to 5, Monday to  
Friday. Most young patients present at night, when  
stress, depression or suicidal thoughts tend to rear their  
ugly heads. An A&E doctor is unable even to prescribe  
a sedative. Instead, dedicated nurses must be found to  
watch the young patient constantly until Monday morning,  
when a child psychiatrist can see them.

In addition, the NHS internal market, which has  
been with us since John Major's Government, has also  
had unintended consequences. Procuring goods and  
services across a region, rather than restricting individual  
commissions to each small trust, would save millions,  
says this doctor. So what can be done? Clearly, the  
current situation is unsustainable in the longer term.  
The right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field), if  
I may paraphrase him, has said that the NHS is so  
rapacious that it could probably never be satisfied.  
However, there must be another solution.

Healthcare spending is protected relative to other  
public services, but increasing demand and costs surely  
demand we think a little more out of the box. As I have

mentioned, hospital deficits reached £2.6 billion in 2015-16,  
negating the benefits of any funding increases. Projections  
from the Office for Budget Responsibility suggest that  
spending on healthcare could rise from 7.4% of GDP in  
2015 to 8.8% in 2030-31, which is the equivalent of a  
real increase in spending of £100 billion.

The Office for National Statistics predicts that the  
proportion of people aged 65 and over will increase  
from the current level of 18% to 26.1% in 2066, with  
over-85s tripling to 7.1% over the same period. A study  
by the King's Fund found that financial pressures have  
affected access to services and quality of patient care,  
while the Care Quality Commission's latest report concluded  
that the quality of care provided across England varies  
considerably.

When compared with member countries of the  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and  
Development, the UK spends less per capita than France,  
Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. We also perform  
poorly on many acute care indicators, with worse outcomes  
for stroke victims, heart attacks, and cancer survival  
over five and 10 years. With more people, better and  
more expensive technology and greater expectations,  
the pressures will continue to grow.

A significant new House of Lords report, “The Long-  
term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care”,  
describes a “culture of short-termism”across successive  
Governments. Interestingly, the report calls for a new  
political consensus on the future of the health and care  
system via

“cross-party talks and a robust national conversation.”

I do not entirely agree, but I will come on to that later.

The report concludes:

“Short-term funding fixes will not suffice. Neither will tinkering  
around the edges of service delivery.”

It made three recommendations: that there should be  
radical service transformation, with more integrated  
health and care services in primary and community  
settings; that there should be long-term, stable, predictable  
and adequate funding for the NHS and adult social  
care; and that there should be immediate and sustained  
action on adult social care, with urgent funding to  
alleviate the crisis in NHS hospitals. It is not just the  
Lords who have an opinion; these are coming in thick  
and fast from across the political spectrum, including  
from the King's Fund, the Barker commission, the  
Nuffield Trust, the Health Foundation, the Public Accounts  
Committee, the Care Quality Commission and a number  
of parliamentary Select Committees.

To be fair, a good start has been made. The Health  
and Social Care Act 2012 abolished primary care trusts,  
to be replaced by 44 clinical commissioning groups,  
responsible for commissioning the majority of NHS  
services. Since 2015, those in turn have developed local  
sustainability and transformation plans, as part of the  
NHS five year forward view. The STPs are blueprints  
for better integration of GP, community health, mental  
health, cancer care and hospital services, focusing on  
more joined-up working with home care and care homes.  
The Government are to be congratulated on all of that.  
I am delighted and touched that this week Dorset's STP  
has been awarded more than £100 million by the  
Government. Dorset is also one of eight areas nationally  
to announce an accountable care system, which will  
fast-track these improvements, especially taking the

1101

Future of the NHS

20 JULY 2017

Future of the NHS

1102

*[Richard Drax]*

strain off A&E departments and making GP appointments  
easier to get. It will share in a £450 million pot. The  
STPs are, say NHS England,

“a starting point for local conversations”.

We all hope so. Dorset's CCG is currently poring over  
responses to its public consultation which closed in  
February. Some of its proposals, including moving A&E  
services from Poole to Bournemouth, and losing community  
hospital beds on Portland and at Wareham, I find  
difficult to accept.

Inevitably, some of the CCG's remit must be to find  
savings. Various suggestions have been made in the  
past: the Carter review in 2016 found that £5 billion  
could be saved through shared procurement and back  
office support; the Naylor review in 2017 concluded  
that better management of the NHS estate could generate  
£5 billion and provide land for 26,000 new homes; and  
the Wachter review suggested that better IT systems  
would help. Whatever savings are made can then be  
reinvested in the NHS's most precious asset of all, those  
on the frontline, where there are genuine concerns.

A House of Lords report described the lack of an  
appropriately skilled, well trained and committed workforce  
as the

“biggest internal threat to the sustainability of the NHS”.

A shortfall of some 10,000 GPs across the UK is  
predicted by 2020. At the same time, hundreds of GP  
practices are in danger of closing because 75% of their  
doctors are aged over 55. Nurses are wooed now with  
flexible hours and school-friendly schedules, but the  
abolition of the nursing bursary earlier this year has  
seen the number of applicants applying to start nursing  
degrees this October fall by 23%. I know from my own  
research into ambulance waiting times that the ambulance  
trust covering my constituency is having trouble both  
recruiting and retaining staff.

We all agree, in all parts of this House, that the NHS  
is a unique national treasure, to be protected, sustained  
and nurtured, but it cannot remain a sacred cow,  
untouchable at any cost. So why do we not hand this  
problem to an independent panel, totally divorced from  
politicians, and ask it to see how we can make better use  
of the £117 billion that we spend? From what I have  
heard and seen, I simply cannot believe there is not a  
better way of running our beloved NHS. The will from  
those in all parts of the House is there, so let's be bold,  
take politics out of it, simplify the way the NHS is run  
and channel more resources to the frontline.

5.19 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip  
Dunne):** It is a great pleasure to join you in the House  
for the last debate before the summer break, Mr Deputy  
Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South  
Dorset (Richard Drax) on securing this debate and  
commend his timing, as it is two days after we laid the  
Department of Health and NHS entities' 2017 accounts  
before Parliament. He will note from what I am sure  
will be his diligent scrutiny of those accounts that  
provider deficits have been much reduced in the year  
that has just ended compared with the figure he cited  
for the previous year. That is a tribute to the focus of

managers and trust leaders on securing the financial  
balance that the NHS as a whole has delivered over the  
past year.

To put all that in context, this is a time when more  
people than ever are using the health service. In 2016-17,  
some 23.4 million people attended A&E departments in  
England—2.9 million more than in 2010. The overwhelming  
majority of patients continue to be seen within four  
hours, and the NHS overall sees more than 1,800 more  
patients within the four-hour standard every day compared  
with 2010. In the previous year, the NHS carried out  
11.6 million operations—some 1.9 million more than in  
2010. That provides the context of the achievement and  
the treatments that have been given to patients throughout  
the land.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend recognised the  
excellent care that the NHS provides, which has been  
demonstrated for the second year running by the  
Commonwealth Fund report: in its international study  
published last week, the UK was ranked as the No. 1  
health system in a comparison of 11 countries. That is a  
testament to NHS staff. The patients who benefit from  
those treatments rate their experience of care highly.  
The adult in-patient survey, which was released in May,  
shows that the majority of patients report that their  
overall experience was good, with 85% rating it as at  
least seven out of 10—a slight improvement on the  
previous year.

Looking to the future, which is the subject of the  
debate, the Government are committed to increasing  
the NHS budget to ensure that patients get the high-quality  
care they need. By 2020-21, NHS spending will increase  
by £8 billion in real terms from the 2015-16 baseline.  
That will deliver an increase in real funding per head of  
the population for every year of this Parliament.  
Nevertheless, my hon. Friend is right to point out that  
whatever funding we provide, it is important that we  
spend it to achieve the best possible outcomes for  
patients.

It is essential that we ensure that the NHS continues  
to make the most effective use of its resources to deliver  
high-quality patient care, so I recognise what I think  
was my hon. Friend's motivation in securing this debate  
and raising this subject before the House rises for the  
summer recess. We all agree that it is important to target  
NHS funding to frontline services, which is why we are  
investing in the workforce and there are already more  
than 33,800 extra clinical staff, including almost 11,700  
more doctors and almost 13,000 more nurses on our  
wards since May 2010.

NHS management is an important element of ensuring  
an efficient NHS, but of course we are keen to ensure  
that an increasing proportion of NHS funding goes to  
patient-facing services. Between 2010-11 and 2016-17,  
the proportion of the NHS pay bill spent on managers  
declined from 6.5% to 5.8%, which I am sure my hon.  
Friend will welcome. We are also reducing the number  
of people involved in management, which he called for.  
Between May 2010 and March 2017, the number of  
managers and senior managers in NHS providers and  
support organisations reduced from some 37,000 to  
around 31,000—I think that is similar to the effective  
percentage to which my hon. Friend referred. We are  
also looking to manage the rate of pay of senior managers,  
again to ensure that as much as possible is focused on  
the frontline.

1103

Future of the NHS

20 JULY 2017

Future of the NHS

1104

It is important that we recognise that leadership is as  
important in the NHS as it is in any organisation—we  
must ensure that we have high-quality leadership across  
organisations. I for one am keen not to bash the managers  
in a somewhat traditional manner, but to recognise that  
high-quality leadership in our NHS organisations is  
important in driving high-quality performance for patients.  
That is why I have been working with the leadership  
academy in Health Education England to ensure that  
we have two things: a pipeline of talent so that we can  
identify quality individuals at the beginning of their  
careers in the NHS and track them as they pursue their  
careers, identifying the leaders of tomorrow, in a similar  
system to that with which my hon. Friend will be  
familiar from his service in the military; and some  
consideration of how we can get more clinicians involved  
in leadership roles in their organisations. Clearly, we  
have directors of nursing and medical directors in all  
provider trusts, but too few go on to take up the most  
senior leadership positions as chief executives.

**Richard Drax:** I am listening carefully to the Minister.  
Would it be naive to say that what we want to see is  
matron, in the form of Hattie Jacques, back on the  
wards and to hand far more administrative work, if that  
is the right phrase, back to clinicians, with whom it  
originally lay?

**Mr Dunne:** I am not keen to hand administrative  
work to clinicians, but I recognise that there is a role for  
ensuring that senior clinicians are present and in charge  
of activity in wards. That is the experience I am seeing  
as I visit acute hospitals around the country: senior  
members of staff, normally coming out of nursing staff  
—so they are a matron or other senior nursing officer—are  
responsible for what happens on their ward.

My hon. Friend says that an independent review  
might be appropriate, and I say gently to him that we  
think that the right way to drive improvement across the  
NHS and help position it for the challenges of the  
future is to back the plans prepared by the leadership of  
NHS England with colleagues from across the system  
through the five year forward view. This is the NHS's  
own plan for change and it lays out how the NHS can  
transform services and improve standards of care while  
building a more responsive modern health service. We  
are backing this plan, enabling the NHS to deliver  
Government objectives including seven-day services and  
improved access to cancer treatments and mental health  
services. We agree that the answer to the challenges  
faced by the NHS lies in modernising services and  
keeping people well and independent for longer.

The NHS is using the sustainability and transformation  
partnerships mentioned by my hon. Friend to deliver  
that vision through transformation across local areas.

These are clinically led, locally driven and can deliver  
real improvements for patients. The five year forward  
view also announced the development of new care  
models and we are already seeing the results.

My hon. Friend referred to the announcement yesterday  
about the first allocation of capital funding for the most  
advanced STP areas, including Dorset, which covers his  
constituency. It is fortuitous that the largest single beneficiary  
of capital through the STP allocation was Dorset, and  
what a great day for him to secure this debate and give  
an albeit somewhat guarded welcome to that significant  
capital injection. I am aware that he has a number of  
issues with how that money will be spent.

**Richard Drax:** It was totally unguarded. I am extremely  
grateful, as I am sure all clinicians and all those who  
work in the NHS in Dorset will be.

**Mr Dunne:** That applause is on the record, and I am  
delighted that my hon. Friend takes that view.

We see this investment as backing the exemplar STP  
plans that have been published thus far, and we hope  
that other areas, whose plans are in less good shape, will  
be encouraged to look at those that have succeeded to  
see what they can do to follow their example for the next  
phase of the roll out in the coming years.

I will conclude with a couple of comments about how  
we drive efficiency through the NHS and make best use  
of resources. My hon. Friend referred to the Carter and  
the Naylor reviews. Carter is driving heavily towards  
using best practice and removing variability across the  
NHS, whether in clinical practice or in financial  
performance, in areas such as procurement. Alongside  
that, Naylor is looking at how we drive out inefficiency  
from back-office functions, from estates and from the  
facilities management element of running such a substantial  
network of hospitals and facilities across the country.  
There is scope to do more. That will appeal to my hon.  
Friend's desire to put more resources on the frontline.  
We are looking at encouraging organisations to share  
back-office facilities—as he called for—to bring down  
cost and drive up efficiency and operational productivity,  
which is the right way to go.

I conclude by confirming that we are making good  
progress in small steps. We need to continue to make  
progress to try to raise the depth of the tread of the  
steps that we are taking to ensure that the NHS is fit to  
serve the health needs of this population for the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.31 pm

*House adjourned.*

1WH

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

2WH

Westminster Hall

*Tuesday 11 July 2017*

[JOAN RYAN *in the Chair*]

Balancing the Public Finances

9.30 am

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** If Members wish to remove  
their jackets, they should feel free to do so, and of  
course their ties—I have removed mine, as you can see.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): I beg to  
move,

That this House has considered the matter of balancing the  
public finances.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship  
in this new Parliament, Ms Ryan. This is the first time I  
have secured a Westminster Hall debate since the general  
election. If you will forgive the indulgence, it is also a  
great pleasure to see the Financial Secretary to the  
Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Central  
Devon (Mel Stride), in his place. He served with tremendous  
distinction in the Whips Office, which I had the pleasure  
of leading after the 2015 general election, and I am  
pleased to see him in his current role. I look forward to  
him responding to the debate.

I am conscious that a large number of Members wish  
to speak, so I will speak for a little less time than I had  
originally intended. The first thing worth drawing to  
the attention of the Chamber, however, is how few  
Opposition Members are present, which I find astounding.  
To draw some conclusions from the attendance, we can  
see that the Conservative party and our allies in the  
Democratic Unionist party believe in balancing the  
public finances and making the difficult decisions necessary  
to ensure that we can grow the economy and create jobs.  
Judging by the turnout on the Opposition Benches, or  
rather the lack of turnout, the Labour party is clearly  
not interested in balancing the public finances or making  
sensible decisions; all that it is interested in is spending  
other people's money until it runs out. Whereas, so  
many Conservatives are here that they are having to  
move right around the Chamber and take over the other  
side.

I will probably have to draw my remarks to a close  
sooner than I had expected, in order to allow other  
Members to speak, so let me do a quick precis of my  
argument. We have come a long way since 2010: we have  
cut the deficit by three quarters; we have had faster  
economic growth than almost any country in the G7  
largest countries; and we have cut unemployment to  
levels not seen since I was at primary school in 1975.  
That is incredibly important, because those are not just  
statistics; they represent real people getting the opportunities  
to succeed and thrive.

There are things that we should be proud of, and we  
could and should have talked about them more during  
the election campaign. I was very pleased to hear the  
Chancellor's outstanding speech in the debate on the  
Queen's Speech, in which he set out our economic  
record and our plans for the future. My central message

at the conclusion of my speech today will be that  
although we face difficult decisions and many pressing  
needs for spending public money, we need to raise that  
money while keeping taxes low and economic growth  
moving along. Those are difficult decisions. The Chancellor  
is the man who must make those decisions, and he must  
make them in a balanced way, taking into account all  
the factors, including economic growth. He needs to  
make those decisions at the Budget in the autumn, and  
Conservative colleagues should give him our support in  
doing so.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I congratulate  
my right hon. Friend on his excellent speech. Is it not  
the case that Britain has become addicted to public  
sector debt? The truth is that since 2002 Governments  
of both colours have been spending more each year  
than we have been collecting in taxes. If are to stop  
doing that in future, it will be a bit like a drug addict  
coming off drugs.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend sets out clearly what has  
happened in the past, and I want to spend a little time  
on the challenges facing us in the future, but it is worth  
looking at the economic record. We did not make the  
decisions and get the success we have had easily; they  
were contested, and our political opponents challenged  
us every step of the way. But we have been successful,  
which gives us the credibility to talk about facing the  
challenges of the future.

When we came to power in 2010, the budget deficit  
was the equivalent of just under 10% of the size of the  
economy, at £150 billion a year. According to the most  
recent set of actual figures, we have reduced the cash  
deficit to £46 billion—down by 70%—and the deficit as  
aproportionofthesizeoftheeconomyisdownby75%  
to 2.5%. That is a significant achievement, and it means  
that in this Parliament the size of our stock of national  
debt as a proportion of the size of the economy will  
start to fall. That is incredibly important for the future.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): I congratulate my  
right hon. Friend on securing this incredibly important  
debate. The impact is not simply one of taxes and of  
borrowing and spending, but of Government spending  
onpersonalfinances,whichhasamassiveimpactbecause  
of interest rates and personal interest rates. If we let  
borrowing get out of control, interest rates in the real  
economy would rise. That is when we have repossessions,  
and that then is when we have a depression.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If we  
let the public finances get out of control, interest rates  
would rise and hard-pressed families who are having to  
make difficult decisions would see the cost of their  
mortgages and other debts go up, which would not  
make their lives any easier at all.

Let us consider the impact of controlling the public  
finances on the real economy. If we look at growth, at  
how fast the economy has grown over the past seven  
years, we see that our economic performance among the  
G7 largest countries in the world has been second only  
to that of the United States. Interestingly, we have  
grown our economy at almost double the rate of our  
nearest neighbour, France. In 2014 and 2016 we were  
the fastest growing G7 country, and the joint fastest in

3WH

Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

4WH

*[Mr Harper]*

2015. That is an impressive record. I mention that  
because our political opponents often pretend that balancing  
the public finances has not worked, but in generating  
economic growth it absolutely has worked.

**Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): I, too,  
congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing this  
debate. Will he join me in welcoming the fact that the  
reduction in corporation tax to 19% has brought in the  
highest yields ever, bringing another £11 billion into the  
economy? Does he have any thoughts on what increasing  
the rate to, say, 26% would have on jobs and, importantly,  
our ability to reduce the deficit?

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend, who makes a good  
point, tempts me to leap forward to the end of my  
remarks, but I will say only this about taxes: there is a  
big difference between rates of tax and how much  
money is raised. As Conservatives, we believe that the  
purpose of taxes is to raise money to pay for our public  
services. The Chancellor made it clear in the debate on  
the Queen's Speech that by reducing the tax rate, thereby  
encouraging businesses to locate here and be more  
successful, we raised more money to pay for those  
public finances—I think the Chancellor said £18 billion  
more.

Looking at that performance, it seems to me likely  
that if we were to raise corporation tax two things  
would happen: first, we probably would not raise the  
money, so although we might pat ourselves on the back  
and pretend that we were raising taxes, we would not  
raise the money to pay for public services; and secondly,  
it is fairly obvious to everyone, or to everyone on the  
Government side of the House, that those taxes do not  
fall on businesses at all. When we raise taxes on business,  
there is no mystical “business” to pay them; those taxes  
fall either on workers, who will receive smaller pay rises,  
or on customers, who will see higher prices. Taxes all  
feed through, so everyone in the economy would pay  
the price of any corporation tax rises, which probably  
would not raise any more money to pay for our public  
services, so we would be shooting ourselves in the foot.  
My hon. Friend the Member for North Warwickshire  
(Craig Tracey) makes exactly the right point.

I also want to mention our record on jobs, which is  
what I am proudest of: 3 million more people are now in  
work than were when we first came into office. Let me  
give the specific example—I think this will be heartening—of  
the impact on young people. In 2010 the unemployment  
rate among young people in this country was about  
20%, which is comparable with that of our neighbours  
in the European Union and in the eurozone. Since we  
came into office, to this point, in those countries the  
unemployment rate among young people has been broadly  
flat, up a little but still around 20%. In our country it is  
down six percentage points, to 13%. That is not just a  
statistic; it means that hundreds of thousands of young  
people have had the opportunity to get a job when they  
leave school, college or university.

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I thank  
my right hon. Friend for securing the debate. We reduced  
corporation tax from 28% to 20% but actually increased  
the tax take. As we exit the European Union, we will

need to encourage more businesses to come to this  
country and create more employment, so it is essential  
that we reduce taxes further, rather than putting them  
up. That is the difference between the Government and  
the Opposition.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. As  
we are going to leave the European Union, we want to  
be more global and outward-looking and we want more  
companies to locate in Britain, so it seems to me that  
this is exactly the wrong time—if there ever is a good  
time—to increase corporate tax rates.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): The right hon.  
Gentleman talks about the importance of what this  
Government have done for young people, but can he tell  
us how many people in the figure he mentioned are on  
exploitative zero-hours contracts? If the Government  
are so passionate about young people, why will they not  
pay them a real living wage? Why are they discriminating  
against the under-25s?

**Mr Harper:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raises  
zero-hours contracts. It simply is not true that everyone  
on a zero-hours contract is being exploited. There is  
some good evidence from the Chartered Institute of  
Personnel and Development. I am not sure whether  
these data have been updated, but it did a survey in 2014  
that showed that around 63% of people on a zero-hours  
contract—higher than the proportion of people on a  
permanent full-time contract—were satisfied with their  
terms and conditions. Most people on zero-hours contracts  
actually find that they fit their requirements, because  
they are either students or people with caring responsibilities.

There are of course people who would prefer not to  
be on a zero-hours contract. That is why I welcome  
Matthew Taylor's review, which was published today.  
He thinks that employees should have the right to ask  
their company to put them on a permanent contract.  
Indeed, McDonalds recently offered that to its employees.  
It is true that some of its staff on flexible contracts said  
that they would prefer to move to a fixed-term contract,  
but about 80% preferred to stay on a flexible contract  
because it suited them. I just do not agree with the  
contention that a zero-hours contract is by definition  
exploitative. In many cases, it suits the worker and it  
suits the business—it is a win-win. But it is completely  
true that if such contracts do not suit people, it is better  
that they should have the opportunity to move to a  
full-time or permanent contract to guarantee them hours.  
I am pleased with Matthew Taylor's report.

My final point about youth unemployment concerns  
what happens to young people's opportunities in countries  
that do not deal with their public finances. The most  
obvious example is Greece, which clearly has not dealt  
with its public finances, where 47%—nearly half—of  
young people are without work. Countries that do not  
deal with their public finances damage young people's  
opportunities, probably for their lifetime. I do not want  
us to go down that road and be that sort of country; I  
want us to keep focused on balancing the public finances.

There is an interesting factor relevant to my constituency.  
I looked at a debate in the House in 1983, in which my  
predecessor but two, Paul Marland, spoke. He pointed  
out that at that time unemployment in his constituency  
was 15.3%, which was 2% above the national average. I

5WH

Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

6WH

am pleased that, seven years into a Conservative  
Government, unemployment in my constituency is 1.6%,  
which is below the average for the south-west—1.7%—and  
below the United Kingdom average. Our economic  
record has not just delivered for the United Kingdom  
and for the south-west; it has absolutely delivered for  
my constituents, who now have the opportunity to be in  
work, which is important for their families.

**Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): My right  
hon. Friend is giving a characteristically powerful speech,  
which is why this debate is so well attended. In my  
constituency, youth unemployment has fallen by a  
staggering 61%, making a real difference to people's  
lives. That is partly due to the expansion of apprenticeships,  
which more than 10,000 students have started. Last  
week I was proud to attend once again the graduation  
ceremony at Swindon College, where we are equipping  
young people with the real skills they need.

**Mr Harper:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
raising that point. He knows—not everyone in the  
Chamber will—that Swindon is my home town. I actually  
did my A-levels at Swindon College, so I am particularly  
pleased to hear that that institution is still delivering  
opportunities. The opportunities that I got at a  
comprehensive school in Swindon and at Swindon College  
meant that I was the first person in my family to go to  
university, and definitely the first person in my family to  
make it to the House of Commons. I am pleased to have  
had those opportunities, and I want every young person  
in our country to have them too. That is why this  
matters.

All that I will say about the Opposition—[HON.MEMBERS:  
“Where are they?”] My hon. Friends make the point  
that there are hardly any of them here. *[Interruption.]*An hon. Friend says that they are out spending. They  
opposed all the reductions in public expenditure over  
the past seven years. It seems to me, having done a  
back-of-the-envelope calculation, that the debt would  
already have been more than £300 billion higher based  
on the Opposition's public spending plans, and that if  
they had carried on spending at the rate they were when  
they left office, an extra £1 trillion would have been  
added to the public debt by the end of this Parliament.  
At the last general election, the Labour party manifesto  
was just, “Spend, spend, spend other people's money,”  
with no credible plan to pay for it. That is not the route  
that our country should follow. The fact that so few  
Opposition Members are here to defend their plans tells  
us everything we need to know.

Having gone through our record and why I think we  
have been successful, let me say a few words about the  
challenges we face. Public sector pay is an important  
topic—in fact, it is what prompted me to call this  
debate. We all know hard-working public sector workers  
in our constituencies. It is good to pay them fairly for  
the jobs they do, but it is also fair that we look at all our  
constituents—those who work in the public sector and  
those who work in the private sector. It is worth reminding  
ourselves that after the financial crash a lot of people in  
the private sector experienced reductions in their pay,  
which did not happen in the public sector. According to  
the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which is a respected  
organisation, public sector workers are still paid slightly  
better than private sector workers, even after adjusting

for qualification levels. Even after some public sector  
pay restraint, the levels of pay in the private and public  
sectors are about the same, and people in the public  
sector obviously have the benefit of a more generous  
final salary pension scheme.

We have not talked much about the fact that the  
1% pay cap is of course a cap not on individuals' pay  
but on the pay scales. Most people will not be aware  
that, even with that pay cap, many public sector workers  
have actually seen significant rises in their pay because  
they have moved up pay bands. I think that half of  
national health service staff have had a pay rise of more  
than 3%. Teachers have had an average pay rise of  
3%, because many, unless they have a performance  
issue, move up the pay bands during their career. That is  
on top of the 1% pay rise. We need to look at all those  
facts and conduct the debate in the proper spirit.

There are many pressures on public spending. There  
is public sector pay and funding for our national health  
service and for social care, and colleagues want more  
money put into schools. Part of the challenge of being  
in government is that we cannot say yes to everyone; we  
have to make choices and set priorities. The right way to  
do that is to look at the economic growth forecast, at  
how much tax revenue we think we will have, and  
at recruitment needs in public services. We have to look  
at all those things together.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): I  
congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing the  
debate. On the overall issue of rebalancing the public  
finances, does he agree that there is an example of  
effective and pragmatic expenditure in the recent  
announcement by the Prime Minister and the leader of  
my party? Is not it a good idea to have investment in an  
area of the United Kingdom such as Northern Ireland,  
where there has been high dependency on the public  
sector, in an effort to reduce the debt that is due to  
Northern Ireland, by the creation of private sector  
finance and private investment and thus better investment  
opportunities and more jobs? Is that a good project for  
the rest of the United Kingdom to follow?

**Mr Harper:** I welcome that intervention, because one  
of the things that we set out in our manifesto, and that  
the Chancellor set out in the House of Commons, is our  
plan to invest across the United Kingdom in infrastructure  
such as broadband, to help the economy and businesses  
to be more productive. That is how to raise tax revenue,  
grow the economy and create the jobs that enable us to  
spend money on our public services.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)  
(Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing  
the debate. He is right to highlight the importance of  
jobs, growth and apprenticeships, which should be at  
the forefront of any general election debate in a normal  
time. Does he agree that the public services are under  
pressure at the moment? We must recognise that. I work  
in those public services and I see it in my working life.  
According to the latest forecast, the target—a structural  
deficit of less than 2% of national income in 2020-21—will  
be comfortably met by sticking to the current tax and  
spending plans, so there is about £25 billion of leeway  
to invest a little more in those important public services,  
while paying down the deficit in a responsible manner.

7WH

Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

8WH

**Mr Harper:** I do not disagree with my hon. Friend  
about investing in public services. He will know that  
part of the reason why the Chancellor loosened the  
target a little in his first Budget last year was to build in  
some flexibility to deal with the headwinds that we may  
face in leaving the European Union, and some of the  
challenges, and I think that was right.

I was going to say—my hon. Friend the Member for  
Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) has  
given me an excellent lead-in—that we can pay for our  
public services only by raising the money through economic  
growth, as he suggests, or by borrowing more, which I  
do not think would be sensible. It would damage the  
public finances, raise interest rates, as my hon. Friend  
the Member for Solihull (Julian Knight) said, and put  
pressure on our hard-pressed constituents. Alternatively,  
we would have to raise taxes, which I do not think  
would be the right thing to do either.

When the Chancellor looks at the public finance  
position in his Budget, he needs to consider the growth  
forecast from the independent Office for Budget  
Responsibility—what tax revenues he is likely to have.  
He then needs to consider the pressures on public  
servants and public services. He needs to look at all the  
pressures across the piece and come to a balanced  
Budget judgment, weighing up all those things. Then we  
need to back him in those decisions. What we cannot do  
is have a particular story that goes around each week, or  
decide that something happens to be the flavour of the  
month, and discover at the time of the Budget that we  
have run out of money. That is not the way to run a  
sensible Government, and that is the message for the  
Chancellor.

I want finally to consider how we pay for things. I  
remind my right hon. and hon. Friends that in our  
manifesto we said that we wanted to keep taxes as low  
as possible, because taxes are levied on businesses that  
employ people and on individuals who work hard and  
face decisions about how to spend their money. We will  
always be the party that keeps taxes as low as possible,  
and we want to reduce taxes on businesses and on  
Britain's working families. We made it clear that we  
would deliver an increase in the personal allowance,  
that we would not increase value added tax, and that we  
would stick to our plan of reducing corporation tax,  
because that will bring investment and jobs to Britain.  
As I have already said in response to an intervention,  
that approach will raise more money for the public  
finances, not less. We need to stick with that plan and  
give the Chancellor the opportunity to act in that way.

Any Government worth their salt need to stick with  
sound public finances. That is how to get the growth,  
jobs and investment in the public services that we depend  
on. There are always more pressures on public spending  
than can be paid for. It is a difficult job for the Chancellor  
to balance those things. What we need to do, as his  
Conservative colleagues, is give him space to listen to  
the input—we can make our bids to him privately. He  
then needs to balance those things, taking everything  
into account, and come up with a balanced Budget  
judgment in the autumn. We need to back the Chancellor,  
which will mean we are backing our country and its  
growth prospects, and backing the prospects for jobs,  
growth and prosperity for all our constituents.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I intend to call the  
Front-Bench speakers at about 10.30. Given the number  
of hon. Members who want to speak, I suggest that  
they limit themselves to a maximum of four minutes, if  
not a little less. I will not apply a time limit at the  
moment. We shall see how we go.

9.55 am

**Chris Evans** (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): I pay tribute to  
the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper),  
who made an interesting and succinct speech, as he  
always does. He has come to be known in this place as a  
deep thinker about all matters economic, and I hope  
that one day he will return to the Front Bench, from  
which he is sorely missed.

I feel somewhat like Custer at the battle of the Little  
Bighorn, as the Comanches come running towards me.  
I apologise to those Tories present, because I will pour  
cold water on some of the more political points raised  
by the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean. Over the  
past seven years the Government have been good at one  
thing—patting themselves on the back and congratulating  
themselves on what a great job they are doing with the  
economy. Even though so many families are more  
pessimistic than ever about the future, the Government  
still trade on the myth that they are overseeing a strong  
and robust economy. When they were elected in 2010,  
they were given a mandate alongside the Liberal Democrats  
to bring about change. They allowed people—intentionally,  
I believe—to believe that the deficit and the national  
debt were one and the same thing, and told the British  
people in 2010 that they would pay off the debt and  
bring the budget into surplus by 2015. It is now 2017,  
and they have failed.

Despite its being enshrined in legislation in October  
2015, the Government have now abandoned their plan  
to achieve a budget surplus by 2019-20. The Chancellor  
of the Exchequer has said that the previous commitment  
will be replaced by a vague pledge to deliver a budget  
surplus as early as possible in the next Parliament. Since  
we have had a general election since that statement was  
made in November 2016, I imagine that that could  
happen in the next five years. According to the Institute  
for Fiscal Studies, even reaching that is likely to be  
difficult. The deficit this year is forecast by the Office  
for Budget Responsibility to be £68.2 billion, or 3.5% of  
national income. That is high by historical standards.  
Over 60 years, from 1948 until the eve of the financial  
crash and associated recession, average UK Government  
borrowing was 1.9% of national income.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): If the hon. Gentleman  
is so concerned about closing the deficit, why has the  
Labour party, at every opportunity, thwarted every  
attempt to keep it under control?

**Chris Evans:** I admire the hon. Gentleman, as he  
knows; I know his constituency well. I believe that we  
said there was a rush to pay off the deficit; the former  
Prime Minister and the previous Chancellor started an  
unnecessary rush to pay off the debt. We said it needed  
to be slower. We were concerned about high unemployment  
and a double-dip recession. But for monetary policy,  
that might have happened.

After six years of austerity, the deficit this year will  
be higher than it was for 80% of the time in the 60 years  
before the financial crash, while debt is now at its

9WH

Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

10WH

highest level as a proportion of national income since  
1965-66. Is it any wonder that when the Tories tell the  
electorate “Trust us to pay off the deficit”, voters respond  
by taking their majority away? The Conservative party  
just do not get it. The electorate told them time and  
again that they wanted change, but they were given  
business as usual. Nearly 10 years after the financial  
crash of 2008, its legacy still weighs heavy on confidence  
and growth. By its very nature, it rocked financial  
institutions in this country. Suddenly, phrases such as  
“safe as houses” or “money in the bank” became laughable  
cliches. As the Labour Government rushed to bail out  
the banks and bring about a stimulus that was one of  
the largest in peace time, the Tories nodded their approval.  
It was not until much later that, for political purposes,  
they brought words such as “deficit denial” or “the age  
of austerity” into the political lexicon.

Sustained austerity has in the main been bad for the  
British economy. As the deficit fell from 10% to  
3.5%, around a percentage point has been reduced from  
demand each year. The labour market has been unable  
to return productivity growth to anything resembling  
pre-crash levels. In June, the British Chambers of Commerce  
released its second quarterly economic forecast for this  
year, and the predictions do not make good reading. It  
forecast that, for the next few years, economic growth  
would underperform its historical average, falling to  
1.3% next year and rising to only 1.5% in 2019. It also  
predicted that inflation would rise to a five-year high of  
3.4% towards the end of the year. Interest rates are also  
expected to rise by 0.5% in the first quartile of 2018—much  
earlier than initially predicted. At the same time, there  
is a tax gap of £36 billion between expected and actual  
receipts in 2016. We can talk about tinkering with tax  
levels, but it means very little if we do not collect taxes  
effectively in the first place.

The Government have still not given any clarity on  
their plans for the post-Brexit world. The Government's  
main tool to address inherent weakness in our economy  
has been monetary policy. Constraints on how low  
interest rates could go meant that the Bank of England  
had to buy gilts—so-called quantitative easing. That  
move, together with the cut in interest rates to their  
lowest possible level, has probably kept the lid on high  
unemployment, but it is only papering over the cracks.  
Listening to some of the speeches about how sunny the  
economic outlook is over the years during my time in  
the House, it has to be asked why people are not  
cracking open the champagne and singing, “Happy  
days are here again”? The reason is simple; people feel  
more anxious than ever, they view innovative technology  
with suspicion and they fear that jobs will be automated  
or lost. GDP can be a measure of the health of the  
Government's spending, but it can never be a measure  
of people's happiness, concerns, or worries.

Productivity has not recovered, and as a consequence,  
real wages are below what they were a decade ago—  
something no one alive has ever experienced before. The  
facts are stark. There is a 16% shortfall in the UK's  
productive capacity. Monetary policy can only stabilise  
demand around the economy's potential, it cannot increase  
it. Boosting long-term prosperity is firmly the job of the  
Government'sstructuralorsupply-sidepolicies—something  
that has been sorely lacking from the Tories over the  
past seven years.

Government policies influence investment in education  
and skills, capacity for research and development, the  
regulatory environment in which business operates, the  
flexibility of the labour market and—above all, in  
the light of Brexit—its openness to trade and investment.  
In the Queen's Speech, the Prime Minister said that her  
Government would work to attract investment in  
infrastructure, so as to support economic growth. She  
also spoke of plans to spread prosperity and opportunity  
across the country.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): Will  
the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to welcome  
record employment in our country?

**Chris Evans:** I admire the hon. Gentleman for the  
mischief he is trying to cause me. Of course, I will  
always welcome people being in jobs, but I am concerned  
about the inherent weakness in the economy, which is  
the lack of investment and the lack of an industrial  
strategy over the past seven years.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): I hear the hon.  
Gentleman saying that the economy is not growing, but  
my memory of the statistics is that we are the second-  
fastest-growing economy in the developed world, after  
Germany. On what metric does the hon. Gentleman say  
that we are not a fast-growing or strong economy?

**Chris Evans:** The hon. Lady should have listened to  
my speech earlier— I do not know if she was on her  
iPhone or something—because I never said anything  
about growth. I spoke about productivity, which is  
16% down. It has not returned to pre-crash levels, and  
the facts from the IFS bear that out. If the hon. Lady  
wants to challenge me on that, I am willing to take  
another intervention.

**Vicky Ford:** I understand that the hon. Gentleman  
was discussing productivity, but he also challenged the  
strength of the economy. The economic strength of this  
country is such that we are the second fastest-growing  
economy anywhere in the developed world, after Germany.

**Chris Evans:** I accept that we are not growing at the  
same rate as we have historically. That is the point I was  
making. I believe there is an inherent weakness in the  
economy; it has been over-reliant on monetary policy—  
quantitative easing, low interest rates. But I do not  
believe that there has been investment in the real economy.  
That is the point I am making and that is why productivity  
is down.

The Prime Minister has mentioned the industrial  
strategy, but it is still empty words. There is no insight  
or strategy for how the Government will attract investment.

**Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): The hon. Gentleman  
says that the industrial strategy is empty words. However,  
the industrial strategy has involved, for example, the  
biggest increase in research and development and science  
spending since 1979. How can he possibly say that those  
are just empty words? Those are real actions that will  
increase the trend rate of the growth of the economy.

**Chris Evans:** When productivity is down, those things  
are too little, too late. They should have been thought of  
after the financial crash, when the Government told us

11WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

12WH

*[Chris Evans]*

from the very beginning that they were going to rebalance  
the economy and invest in manufacturing. I remember  
the former Prime Minister even saying at one point that  
we were going to invest to become an economy that  
makes things rather than sells them. That has not  
happened, so it is a bit late in the day to be talking  
about this.

In the light of the report by the British Chambers of  
Commerce, it is so important, now more than ever, that  
the Government implement a strategy to attract investment  
and generate the economic growth that we all want to  
see. That is easier said than done in a globalised world.  
Too many people have been left behind by globalisation.  
However, globalisation is here, and that will not change.  
The financial crash was probably the first crisis of  
globalisation. The only way to address growth, higher  
inequality and rising insecurity is to build a globalisation  
that works for all.

Society has to redistribute some of the gains from  
new technology. Technology constantly evolves and can  
lead to rapid changes in production, and therefore  
reskilling must be a constant. In a job market subject to  
frequent radical changes, people's prospects rely solely  
on lifelong learning, which should be factored in by  
each and every employer. In the age in which we live,  
anyone can produce anything, anywhere. Someone sitting  
in their bedroom right now can broadcast across the  
world in minutes. They can sell to anyone at any time.  
We need to harness that entrepreneurial spirit. It should  
be the Government's intention to bring that about in a  
way that equips people with skills for the future.

We live in exciting and changing times. With the right  
level of investment in our people, the age of austerity  
can come to an end.

**Leo Docherty** (Aldershot) (Con): The Labour party  
manifesto had some rather alarming plans for  
renationalisation, which would have cost more than  
£100 billion. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how that  
would be paid for?

**Chris Evans:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for interrupting  
me just as I entered my finishing flourish; I was trying  
to come to my rhetorical peak. There are inherent  
weaknesses in the former nationalised industries. As I  
was talking about before, people feel that they are being  
ripped off and have no control. They see energy companies  
squeezing them all the time, and something has to be  
done about that. Most people, and basic economics, ask  
why we would privatise an industry that has no competition.  
That has been the problem, but that is a debate for  
another day.

I will finish, because I have spoken for far too long. I  
have no doubt that, with the right level of investment,  
the UK economy can seize the opportunities ahead  
of it.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I remind hon. Members  
that we are very short on time and that there are a lot of  
Members who want to speak. I suggest that hon. Members  
keep their remarks to no more than three minutes,  
otherwise I will have to introduce a time limit after the  
next speaker.

10.7 am

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan—it is the first  
time I have had the opportunity to do so. I will keep my  
remarks very brief because I know a lot of hon. Members  
want to speak, and I will try not to repeat things that  
others have said already. I congratulate my right hon.  
Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) on  
securing the debate, which is of enormous significance  
as we consider the Government's progress since 2010  
and where we go as we look forward to a strong  
economy for the future.

When the Government came to power in 2010, they  
immediately set about putting right and reducing the  
massive deficit they inherited from the Labour Government.  
The deficit has been brought down by three quarters  
after starting as the highest since records began. At that  
stage, one pound in every four spent by the Government  
was borrowed. That deficit has been brought down  
from 10% of GDP to 3%.

That matters a great deal, for two reasons, the first of  
which is that anything borrowed has to be paid back. It  
is a fallacy simply to think that there is a pot of money  
that can be borrowed and spent, but that there is never a  
day of reckoning. If the deficit is not dealt with by this  
Government or this generation, it will have to be dealt  
with by the generations that follow. It is not responsible—it  
is not something I wish to be a part of—to hand down  
to my children and to the children who follow us a debt  
that we were unwilling to consider repaying.

Secondly, there comes a point when the borrowing  
rate increases and becomes unsustainable. Owing to the  
cuts to the deficit that the Government have made, they  
now pay 1% on their 10-year gilts. That compares  
favourably with Italy, which pays 2%, or Portugal,  
which pays 2.9%. That has avoided tens of billions of  
pounds of extra debt payment.

Borrowing is not free. In the year 2014-15, about  
£34 billion was spent on servicing debt interest, which is  
about 4.6% of all Government spending. Depending on  
how it is managed, that is bigger than the transport  
budget and approximately equivalent to the defence  
budget. No one should be under any illusion that, in  
borrowing such amounts, our spending on debt interest  
is equivalent to that of a major Government Department  
of State.

**Neil O'Brien:** You are absolutely right—my hon.  
Friend is right—to point out that we are paying that  
much in debt interest payments. You will know that  
more than a quarter of our debt is held overseas, so by  
my calculations we are spending something like £10 billion  
a year to other countries for them to spend on their  
schools and hospitals. My constituents in Harborough  
will be shocked that we are spending that much to  
support public services overseas.

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I remind the hon.  
Member for Harborough (Neil O'Brien) that he is supposed  
to address the Chair.

**Robert Courts:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
making that powerful point. He is right that when we  
are paying debt interest overseas, we are paying money  
elsewhere when it could be spent in this country building  
up the economy and spent on our priorities.

13WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

14WH

The central point is that a strong economy is needed  
to fund strong services. It is all very well to have a long  
list of priorities on which we would like to spend. Let us  
be under no doubt that everybody Government Member  
wants strong public services. We want to increase spending,  
but that must be done in a responsible way. That money,  
in order to be spent, has to be raised. If public spending  
is not balanced, it leads to a weaker economy. That  
means less money to be spent on our public services,  
and it means that we are in a weaker positon to withstand  
the next economic shock when it comes. In due course,  
there always will be a downturn in the economy and we  
need to be in a strong position to meet it when it comes.  
That is the overriding mistake made by the Labour  
Government.

Living within our means is not an ideological fixation.  
It is not simply a desire. It is a necessity to ensure that  
we can protect our public services and spend sensibly  
for this generation and for generations to come.

10.12 am

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate  
the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper)  
on securing this debate. It was somewhat mischievous  
of him to comment on one side of the Chamber being  
empty—interestingly, the Government side was empty  
last week when we were debating WASPI women.

For far too long, balancing the public finances has  
generally been done on the backs of the poorest and  
most vulnerable in our society.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Will the hon.  
Gentleman give way?

**David Linden:** I will not, because Members have  
taken quite a long time. Despite several years of austerity,  
Her Majesty's Government continue to miss their targets  
on debt, deficit and borrowing. Quite simply, austerity  
has failed to rebalance our public finances, and we need  
to reassess and re-evaluate our approach.

The biggest contributor to a sluggish UK economy  
and the biggest threat to our public finances is the  
reckless hard Brexit currently being pursued by Her  
Majesty's Government. That has not been helped by  
Labour Members voting to give the Prime Minister a  
blank cheque by voting against single market membership  
only two weeks ago.

Scottish National party Members will continue to  
stand up not only for access to but membership of the  
single market and customs union. When we look at our  
public finances, we see a major trade deficit, which in  
the three months to April was £8.6 billion, up from  
£6.9 billion in the previous quarter. By turning our back  
on the single market and pursuing a hard Brexit, we risk  
delivering further shocks to our already precarious  
economy.

The UK economy grew by just 0.2% in quarter 1 of  
this year. In comparison, in the same quarter Scotland's  
economy grew four times faster. That was somewhat of  
a surprise, not least because colleagues in the Scottish  
Conservative party were briefing last week that Scotland  
was about to move into recession, which certainly did  
not happen.

We face difficult financial decisions in Scotland, not  
least because Scotland's budget faces a real-terms cut of  
£2.9 billion due to UK austerity. That figure of £2.9 billion  
is significant, because had Barnett consequentials been  
followed during the Government's grubby deal with the  
Democratic Unionist party, Scotland would have stood  
to receive £2.9 billion.

I want to move on and to some of my concerns about  
the deeply worrying consequences posed for Scotland  
by a hard Brexit. The stark reality is that Brexit threatens  
to cost the economy around £11 billion by 2030 and  
result in 80,000 fewer jobs compared with remaining  
within the EU. We understand and accept that, despite  
62% of Scots voting to remain in the EU, we are leaving.  
However, the Scottish Government have sought to be  
reasonable and amicable, and have come forward with a  
compromise that would allow Scotland to remain within  
the single market. Unfortunately, those pleas have fallen  
on deaf ears.

We know that Her Majesty's Government are pursuing  
a reckless approach to the economy, with a hard Brexit  
coupled to an ideologically driven obsession with austerity.  
SNP Members believe it does not have to be like that.  
Cuts are a choice, not a necessity. During the recent  
general election campaign, we put forward a responsible  
and credible fiscal plan that would return a balanced  
budget by the end of the Parliament. However, in doing  
so, we would generate an additional £118 billion  
cumulatively over the next Parliament, with around  
£10 billion flowing to Scotland. Our fiscal plan would  
stabilise net borrowing at the level it was before the  
financial crash and see debt begin to fall as a share of  
GDP from 2019-20.

Ministers and Conservative Members regularly tell  
us how employment is high under this Conservative  
Government. What they do not say is that much of that  
is due to part-time work or, worse still, exploitative  
zero-hours contracts. Unstable and low pay is a worry  
for my constituents in the east end of Glasgow, with the  
Resolution Foundation estimating that the period 2011-2020  
will be the worst decade for wage growth in 210 years.  
That is before we take into account the Government's  
con trick of the living wage, which will actively discriminate  
against under-25s.

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con):  
Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**David Linden:** I will not, because of time pressures.

Austerity strangles the lifeblood out of an economy  
by exacerbating inequality. The Government's tax and  
welfare reforms disproportionately affect the least well-off.  
Charities have warned that current planned welfare cuts  
are set to drive a potential fall in incomes of 10% for the  
poorest third of working-age households and a rise in  
inequality not seen since the 1980s.

**Mr Harper:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**David Linden:** In conclusion, let us have a debate  
about balancing public finances but let us be serious  
and not balance the public finances on the backs of the  
poorest and most vulnerable.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

15WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

16WH

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I am going to apply a  
three-minute limit. That still might mean that not everybody  
gets in. It is for Members to police it and to go below  
three minutes—you will not be able to go above the  
three minutes.

10.17 am

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I commend  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean  
(Mr Harper) for securing this much-needed debate and  
for his excellent points.

I want to focus my comments on one issue only:  
income inequality, which the hon. Member for Glasgow  
East (David Linden) referred to. Almost a year ago  
today, the Prime Minister gave a statement on the steps  
of Downing Street in which she focused on her aim to  
make Britain a country that works for everyone by  
tackling deep-rooted injustices such as income inequality.  
That is one of the most pernicious issues facing our  
country, and it lies at the heart of our Prime Minister's  
vision for our country. In this Parliament, we are setting  
out the meaningful ways in which we will effect change.

One thing that came up time and again in my election  
hustings, and I am sure those of other hon. Members,  
was the idea of taxing the rich more to pay for all the  
things on which Opposition Members propose to spend  
money. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has proposed  
that as a highly desirable option, which he thinks would  
lead to lower inequality in our country. However, far  
from having the desired effect, would that not have  
precisely the opposite effect?

Is it not a fact that, under the Conservative Government,  
the people who pay the highest taxes in actual and  
relative terms are the rich? In 2016-17, the richest 1% in  
our country are set to pay 27% of all income tax  
revenue, a higher proportion than under the Labour  
Government. The richest 5% will pay 38% of total tax. I  
welcome that. Never let it be said that the Conservatives  
shy away from taxing the rich. We do tax them, but we  
do it in a way that delivers real income to the Exchequer.  
Labour Members—if they were here—would do it in a  
way that damages the economy, hurts businesses and  
jobs, and results in tax hikes for ordinary hard-working  
people, including my constituents in Redditch. Is it not  
a fact that, under the Conservatives, people on lower  
incomes are paying less tax than they did in all the years  
of the Labour Government?

**Mr Harper:** I will be very brief, but I cannot let what  
the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) said  
go unchallenged, which is why he did not give way to  
me. Over the years that the Conservatives have been in  
power, income inequality has reduced. The country has  
become more equal, not less. That does not support  
Opposition Members' arguments, which is why they do  
not want to hear it, but it is a fact of which Government  
Members should be very proud.

**Rachel Maclean:** I thank my right hon. Friend—he  
has managed to make my speech a bit shorter.

I will focus on the lower paid, hard-working earners.  
For 2017 to 2018, the personal allowance is being raised  
to £11,500, which means that the amount of tax-free  
income someone can earn will be more than 75% higher

than in 2010. That means more money in people's  
pockets to cope with the cost of living, because taking  
people out of tax has the same effect as giving them a  
pay rise. We have discussed the importance of giving  
pay rises to everybody, which I welcome. People are  
keeping more of what they earn.

I reiterate my right hon. Friend's comment that income  
inequality is in fact at a 30-year low. It continues to fall,  
and we want to see it go further. It is the Conservatives  
who are on the side of the lowest paid—we have taken  
them out of tax. We are on the side of those earning the  
minimum wage, and we are boosting their incomes with  
the national living wage. We are on the side of hard-working  
people, and we are stabilising the economy so that it  
creates jobs for people, and they can go to work and  
earn a decent living. It is the Conservatives who believe  
in fairness, because we have delivered the lowest levels  
of income inequality for 30 years, giving people a sense  
that our country works for everyone.

10.21 am

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): I congratulate my  
right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean  
(Mr Harper) on securing this debate. I just wish it was  
much longer, as do we all.

As my right hon. Friend knows, every morning we  
are admonished about having a desire to please, but it is  
a salutary warning. It is too easy to spend other people's  
money, particularly when it is future generations' money  
we are getting through. I have to take issue with the  
hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans). He referred to  
the financial crisis and the stewardship of the economy  
under Lord Darling. It was a privilege to serve in the  
Treasury in that period. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman  
that no one was under any illusions that, no matter how  
tough the decisions to be made in 2008 and 2009, the  
real tough decisions and the real grinding work would  
happen in the 10 years that followed as we sorted out  
the fundamental problems left to us by the Labour  
Government.

A lot of good things have been said today, and I  
intend to speak briefly so that other good things can be  
said. My hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert  
Courts) referred to the level of debt interest payments  
and the cost of servicing that debt. We have done an  
extraordinary job as a Government of reducing the  
share of our deficit from 10% to 3% of GDP. That has  
still left us with a monumental debt pile, which we all  
recognise. My hon. Friend the Member for Witney  
referred to the cost of servicing that debt pile in terms  
of transport, but I think of it in terms of policing and  
schools—just to service that debt is equivalent to the  
amount of money we are spending on both.

We have to consider what would happen if in some  
ghastly, dreadful other world this country chose to elect  
a Government that had less of a reputation for fiscal  
competence and in international markets. Where would  
our blended interest rate go from then? If it was to the  
rates currently endured by Spain, Italy or Australia, we  
would be looking at an increase in our debt service level  
of 40%, 80% or 120%.

It does not end there. It does not end on the immediate  
fiscal impact, with the money having to be raised in  
tax or added to our debt pile. It would also come in the  
dynamic effects that would flow—it would come in

17WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

18WH

lower levels of confidence and investment and fewer  
jobs, meaning lower tax receipts, more borrowing, higher  
inflation and lower confidence. The cycle goes on.

The Labour manifesto was stuffed full of examples of  
desiring to please, and the impact on our economy  
would have been disastrous. Every pound that we borrow  
now and every pound added to the debt pile is a pound  
for future generations to pay off with interest. Every  
pound added to our already high levels of national debt  
reduces our ability to take sensible measures and make  
sensible fiscal interventions when the next cyclical downturn  
happens, as assuredly one day it will. Were we to fail in  
our generation to rebalance our books, it is the next  
generation that we would be failing.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. The time limit will  
now reduce to two minutes.

10.24 am

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I had  
90 seconds at the end of the Queen's Speech debate, as  
the last Government Member to speak, and I will  
continue that speech for these two minutes.

The point I made then was that austerity is not a  
choice; that is a facile argument. It is a mathematical  
reality determined by the size of the national debt, and  
most importantly, the future liabilities we are starting to  
accrue. The Office for Budget Responsibility says that  
in 50 years' time, public spending is expected at current  
prices to be £156 billion larger than it is today, which is  
the cost of the NHS plus £10 billion. We have to find  
that money somewhere or consign our children and  
grandchildren to terrible austerity.

There are two suggestions for where we find that  
money. The most important relates to productivity in  
the public sector. According to the Institute for Fiscal  
Studies, if the last Labour Government

“had managed to maintain the ‘bang for each buck' at the level it  
inherited in 1997, it would have been able to deliver the quantity  
and quality of public services it delivered in 2007 for £42.5 billion  
less”—

that is equivalent to the defence budget. The enormous  
savings that come from better productivity cannot be  
underestimated.

The other part of this, which I feel most passionately  
about, comes from the debate that came up in the  
general election about care and the intergenerational  
covenant. It is a staggering fact that the value of equity  
in the homes of those over 65, according to Savills, is  
now £1.5 trillion and earnt £26,000 last year for each  
pensioner household, compared with average national  
earnings of £27,000, or a graduate entering the workplace  
on £19,000, with no prospect immediately of getting on  
the housing ladder and no occupational pension, probably  
retiring at 75.

If people think we can put off that issue through  
parliamentary arithmetic, they are deluded. Economic  
arithmetic means that at some point in the future, as a  
mathematical certainty, whether we like it or not, the  
issue of equity for those who benefited from the housing

boom will come up. We have to decide whether we deal  
with it voluntarily or put it off until we are bankrupt  
and in desperation.

10.26 am

**Gillian Keegan** (Chichester) (Con): We can change  
many things in this House. We can pass and change  
many laws, but the laws we cannot change are those of  
arithmetic. No matter how big the abacus, no responsible  
person can ignore the size of our country's debt and the  
deficit we inherited. Our debt as a percentage of GDP  
was roughly 30% to 40% for decades, yet now, courtesy  
of the last Labour Government, compounded by a  
global recession, that debt is above 80% of GDP. Those  
figures alone should make it clear that borrowing more  
at this stage would be completely irresponsible.

How much does that debt cost us in interest payments?  
Currently we spend £48 billion servicing our debt. That  
is dead money. What else could we spend it on? There  
are many areas where we could use that extra cash. It is  
nearly half the NHS budget; that is a lot of doctors and  
nurses. It is more than our whole education budget; that  
is a hefty pay rise for teachers and more school facilities,  
with plenty of spare change.

I understand that many years of trying to live within  
our means is hard. However, the short-term happiness  
of spending will have dreadful consequences for our  
country's finances and make things even harder. It  
would be the height of irresponsibility to mortgage our  
future, and there is no moral case for bingeing on the  
nation's credit card, least of all when we are forcing  
others to pay the bill—namely, our children and  
grandchildren. As anybody who has ever got themselves  
into credit card debt will understand, it is impossible to  
pay back the original debt when all your cash is taken  
paying off the interest payments alone.

That would set us back just at the point when all our  
leading indicators are heading in the right direction: we  
have seen a significant reduction in the deficit, which is  
down by two thirds; unemployment is the lowest it has  
been for 40 years; the minimum wage is up by 26%;  
pensions are protected; 1 million new businesses have  
been created since 2010; and we continue to invest more  
in our NHS and schools. Those are signs not of a  
country living under austerity but a nation starting to  
prosper, despite the dreadful debt burden handed to us  
by the last Government.

10.28 am

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean  
(Mr Harper) on securing this really important debate.

Everyone who argues for a splurge on public spending  
needs to explain where that money will come from. It  
comes either from increasing taxes or from more borrowing.  
If we increase taxes, that dampens the economy and  
takes away people's hard-won earnings. If we borrow, it  
drives up interest rates. At the moment, we are very  
fortunate, in that we have hard-won respectability in the  
financial markets, which has kept interest rates incredibly  
low. At a time when the Bank of England is warning  
banks to increase their capital and about the level of  
household debt, the risks of increased interest rates to

19WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

20WH

*[Charlie Elphicke]*

households and mortgage holders are great indeed. We  
must be mindful of any idea of increasing public spending,  
given the constraints.

When it comes to tax, we need to look at reforming  
the system and particularly at how taxation of  
multinationals works. Amazon pays very little tax in  
this country and hardly any business rates, yet it is  
killing our high streets. That is not fair. We need to  
rebalance the tax system to make a level competitive  
playing field, not just on our high streets but across the  
piece in business, so that we have more fairness and all  
businesses can succeed and compete equally.

Finally, we have a productivity challenge. We must  
get more investment into the real economy, which is  
why there should be a much greater focus on both sides  
of the House. We owe it to all our citizens to do all we  
can to get the nation a pay rise.

10.30 am

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con):  
Economies that lose control of their finances lose control  
of their destiny and that is why it is absolutely right to  
focus on living within our means. Conservative Members  
believe that the best way to do that is to power up an  
enterprise economy. We all hate austerity; we believe in  
prosperity. We believe in creating businesses and helping  
them to grow and expand to create the wealth to fund  
public services so that we can see them grow and  
develop.

We must be conscious that as a country we need not  
only to live within our means but to help our lower paid  
workers to have the means to live. I am proud of what  
the Government have done with the national living  
wage because we want well-paid jobs and decent public  
services. Productivity is the absolute key to higher wages,  
often for lower paid workers—a good movement, “Be  
the Business”, has been launched by Charlie Mayfield  
today. Technical education is at the heart of that, so the  
Government are putting it to the front. Dealing with  
extortionate housing costs in London and the wider  
south-east is also key to the productivity issue, because  
high housing costs are a drag on the economy. Our  
national productivity infrastructure fund, focusing on  
transport, digital, research, investment and housing, is  
absolutely the right way forward. We should have common  
purpose across the House; we must all focus on driving  
up the country's productivity.

I am proud that, as a result of the hard things that the  
Government have had to do, the richest 1% are paying  
more in tax than happened under Labour and that  
income inequality is at its lowest since 1986—according  
to the Office for National Statistics, not the Conservative  
research department. Finally, the Government have taken  
75 measures to raise an extra £140 billion in tax.

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** I will now call the Front-Bench  
spokesmen. If they take eight or nine minutes each,  
Mr Harper will have one minute at the end.

10.32 am

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): It is a  
pleasure to be in Westminster Hall with you in the  
Chair, Ms Ryan. I thank the right hon. Member for

Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) for bringing this debate to  
the House. It is an important debate to have. It highlights  
the fact that a huge number of Conservative Members  
live on a different planet from the rest of us. In particular,  
the speech of the hon. Member for Redditch (Rachel  
Maclean) did not seem to have any link with reality as I  
and my constituents know it.

Conservative Members are putting out economic  
soundbites that could easily have been lifted from the  
Conservative party's manifesto, but that is not the lived  
experience of real people. That is not what is happening  
or what the just-about-managings are facing. They do  
not feel like their wages have gone up; they do not feel  
like the reduction in tax credits is at all helpful. I get  
that the personal allowance has been raised; that is  
brilliant and I am pleased that it has happened. I also  
get that the minimum wage has been raised, but it is not  
to a level that people can live on. That is the problem. It  
is still a minimum wage and it is not applicable to  
younger people in the job market. They may have  
families and housing costs—the same costs that those  
of us who are over 25 have—yet they are not worth the  
same wage as others. I am frustrated by the debate  
because I cannot believe that Members can spill this  
nonsense.

When the Chancellor gave the spring Budget statement,  
he reckoned that inflation would be 2.4% in 2017.  
Actually, in the 12 months to May, it was sitting at  
2.9%. The forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility  
for earnings growth in 2017 was 2.6%. If inflation  
continues to grow at 2.9% and wages continue to grow  
at 2.6%, there will soon be a serious problem, particularly  
for households that are struggling with increasing levels  
of household debt. The Bank of England is concerned  
about the increase in household debt, which is at its  
highest since 2008. This is a real problem for families,  
especially when they will see their real wages eroded.

**Jeremy Quin:** Is the hon. Lady proposing higher  
Government spending, higher inflation and higher interest  
rates?

**Kirsty Blackman:** I was literally about to come to  
that. There are three ways for the Government to increase  
spending on public services: higher taxes, higher borrowing  
or higher growth. Those are not my words but those of  
the Chancellor, yet whenever an Opposition hon. Member  
suggests increasing public spending or simply not reducing  
it, Conservative Members say, “Oh, you will have to put  
up taxes.” As the Chancellor said, there are three ways  
to increase public spending.

Some of the things that Conservative Members said  
are a concern. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow  
East (David Linden) said that, according to the Resolution  
Foundation, 2011-21 will be the worst decade for pay  
growth for 210 years. That is quite some statistic.

It is interesting that the Government talk about how  
wonderfully they are doing for young people. The Institute  
for Fiscal Studies said that those born in the 1980s have  
by their early 30s accumulated half as much wealth as  
those who were born in the 1970s. The right hon.  
Member for Forest of Dean mentioned the IFS as a  
respected think-tank, and it won an award last night. If  
we are talking about mortgaging our future and concerns  
for the future, the lack of wealth accumulation compared

21WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

22WH

with previous generations is a real problem, including  
for millennials. The way the Government are dealing  
with it is not working.

**Royston Smith** (Southampton, Itchen) (Con): Will  
the hon. Lady give way?

**Kirsty Blackman:** Not just now; I am conscious of  
time.

The Government are increasing spending on  
infrastructure. A recent report from the Institute for  
Government said that

“weak processes are leading to the wrong projects and contested  
decisions, wasting both government time and taxpayer money.”  
We agree that infrastructure spending is a good thing,  
but we believe that the processes in place and the  
Government's choices are poor and could be much  
better directed to infrastructure projects that will increase  
economic growth and create, as the Chancellor said,  
better spending on public services by growing the economy  
rather than simply cutting things or increasing taxes.

10.38 am

**Peter Dowd** (Bootle) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve  
under your stewardship today, Ms Ryan. I welcome the  
Financial Secretary to the Treasury to his position. I  
have no doubt we will have many of these debates in  
future. I thank the right hon. Member for Forest of  
Dean (Mr Harper) for tabling this debate on this important  
issue and on the need for Governments to balance the  
books. I also thank hon. Members for inviting me to the  
1922 Committee. It is a pleasure. That was a joke—give  
it a bit of thought and try to keep up.

It is worth looking at the Conservative Government,  
in which the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean was  
a Minister for six years when all those decisions were  
made. Since coming to office, the Conservative Government  
have consistently failed to balance the books and to  
abolish the deficit, despite continually pledging to do  
so.

**Andrew Selous:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Dowd:** May I get further into my speech? I will  
then be happy to give way.

First, it was promised that the deficit would be abolished  
by 2015. Then it was pushed back to 2020. We have now  
been told by the Chancellor that it is likely that it will  
not be abolished until 2025. The phrase used in the  
Conservative manifesto—hon. Members will appreciate  
that I read it avidly—was

“by the middle of the next decade”.

A full 10 years after the former Chancellor originally  
pledged to do it, and a full 15 years since the Conservatives  
started making the promise, the books still will not be  
balanced.

**Andrew Selous:** Does the hon. Gentleman think that  
our task of reducing the deficit would have been easier  
or more difficult if we had acceded to the Labour  
party's continual requests for more spending and its  
opposition to every single reduction in spending that we  
put through?

**Peter Dowd:** The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that  
I am not going to get into hypotheticals or “what ifs” in  
this debate. We are looking to the future. That was  
promised. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry; I did not hear  
what was said. That was promised, but the Conservatives  
failed to deliver. I do not think that there is a case in  
modern political history of a British Government so  
regularly failing to meet their own economic targets.

**Royston Smith:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Dowd:** In a moment, if I may.

A Government can balance the books in many ways,  
and very many difficult decisions have had to be taken  
during the past seven years. No one doubts that. However,  
this Government chose the path of austerity over the  
long-term prosperity of everyone in the country. Some  
hon. Members have said that that was not a choice, but  
it was. The Government chose to cap public sector  
wages and to cut local council budgets by 40% and in  
certain cases by as much as 60%, with more on the way.

**James Cartlidge:** Does the hon. Gentleman remember  
that the 2010 Labour manifesto promised a 1% cap on  
public sector pay? Does he think that that was because  
the Labour party does not support public sector workers,  
or because it was the right thing to do given the  
circumstances of the economy?

**Peter Dowd:** The reality is that that pay cap has now  
been institutionalised. It has been there for virtually a  
decade and it will continue. The Government have also  
chosen to underfund the NHS and cut £4.6 billion from  
social care, and they now threaten huge cuts for schools.  
However, despite those huge and deeply unfair budget  
cuts to public services, the Government have been able  
to find £70 billion of tax cuts for those who need them  
least of all.

Throughout the election campaign, which I might  
add is a happy memory, we were told that there was no  
magic money tree that could be used to solve the  
nation's financial problems. If anything was magic about  
it, it was that it turned into a cherry tree, and the Prime  
Minister proceeded to pick the cherries and hand at  
least £1 billion-worth to the Democratic Unionist party  
to keep her in No. 10.

**Alex Chalk:** Under the previous Labour Government,  
low-paid workers were required to pay tax on earnings  
above about £6,500. The position now is that they do  
not pay it on earnings up to about £11,500. Is it not a  
positive thing to take low-paid people out of tax? Does  
the hon. Gentleman not welcome that?

**Peter Dowd:** Yes, I welcome anything that helps the  
low-paid, but that is not the only element in someone's  
life chances or in people's prosperity. The reality is that  
there was a mendacity in the deal with the DUP that  
will take a long time to be wiped clean.

Similarly, the Chancellor, in the spring Budget, was  
able to find a temporary £2 billion to backfill the cuts to  
social care and then further money to do a U-turn on  
raising national insurance contributions for the self-  
employed. There was a bit of cherry-picking there as  
well. It is clear that the Tories can find money when it is  
needed to oil the palms of certain people in order to

23WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

24WH

*[Peter Dowd]*

assist the Prime Minister in retaining the tenancy of  
No. 10, and it is all dressed up as being in the national  
interest. That is not real and it is not acceptable.

When it comes to the long-term health of our economy  
and a wage rise for dedicated nurses and teachers, there  
is no money. They will have to continue with the pay  
they have, year in, year out. The truth is that austerity is  
not a necessity, but has been used by the Government to  
fulfil the ideological aim of shrinking the state beyond  
comprehension and privatising public services. That is a  
choice that the Government made. They should simply  
acknowledge that.

There are countless examples of countries taking a  
different approach. One hon. Member referred to Greece,  
and another referred to Portugal. The Government of  
Portugal, our oldest ally, have reduced the country's  
deficit faster than us, but simultaneously they have  
restored state pensions, wages and working hours to  
pre-bail-out levels, and they managed that without crippling  
austerity. When we use examples, let us have a spread of  
international examples.

The well-off have done much better in austerity Britain.  
Meanwhile, those in the public sector have not seen  
their wages increase. The richest 100 families in the UK  
have seen their wealth increase by £55.5 billion. The  
Public Accounts Committee has reported that, while  
income tax for all taxpayers has risen by 9% under this  
Government, income tax receipts from high-net-worth  
individuals have fallen by 20% since 2009-10. That is  
typical of this Government's approach: those who had  
nothing to do with the global financial crisis—the bulk  
of low and middle-income households—are made to  
pay the price of austerity through slashed services,  
increased taxes and falling wages, while the richest in  
society and big corporations get greater tax benefits.  
The old chestnut that we are all in this together is still  
trotted out.

**Rachel Maclean:** I made this point in my speech, to  
which I refer the hon. Gentleman. Does he not agree  
that the richest 1% in our country are set to provide  
27% of all income tax revenue in 2016-17, and that that  
is a higher proportion than it was under the Labour  
Government?

**Peter Dowd:** The hon. Lady made that point before,  
and I will repeat the point that I have just made. The  
claim is that we are all in this together, but Newcastle  
University has showed that, while my constituents saw a  
£195 per head reduction in spending by my local authority  
between 2010 and 2015, the constituency of the right  
hon. Member for Forest of Dean had cuts of only half  
that amount. If we are all in it together, is that fair or  
reasonable? It is not reasonable. Of course we need to  
balance the books, but doing it fairly rather than by  
cherry-picking is crucial. The Institute for Fiscal Studies  
has reported that for the Government to reach their  
target, they will have to find an additional £15 billion-worth  
of spending cuts or tax rises.

There is another question that we must ask ourselves.  
If this issue is so important, why are we waiting for the  
Finance Bill? We have waited and waited for the Finance  
Bill. I hope we get it this side of Christmas—we might  
get it next Pancake Thursday. I hope we get it on the  
Floor of the House so that we can debate it.

We can either carry on with the redundant approach  
of industrial-size spending cuts for most people and tax  
cuts for the rich and corporations, leading to an economy  
in the doldrums and falling household incomes, or we  
can start investing in our country, ensure that everyone  
pays their fair share, and use a growing economy to help  
to balance the public finances. We need a real long-term  
economic plan, without magic cherry trees, without  
bungs and smoke and mirrors, and without a Prime  
Minister who barely has the support of her Cabinet, let  
alone her party, and certainly not the country. We need  
a long-term economic plan for the many, not the few,  
and given the state of the Tory party under the Prime  
Minister, I do not think that that is far away.

10.48 am

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship,  
Ms Ryan. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) for securing this extremely  
important debate and for the impassioned and meticulous  
way—we have grown used to that in his case—in which  
he dealt with some of the most important issues that  
our nation faces.

Many hon. Members have this morning gone back to  
2010, as is right and proper, and set the debate in that  
context. Let us remind ourselves that in 2010 the deficit  
was 9.9% of GDP. To put that in context, the last time  
the Labour party put us into very deep and troublesome  
economic waters was in 1976, when the figure was  
somewhat lower but still led to the then Chancellor,  
Denis Healey, having to go cap in hand to the International  
Monetary Fund because this country was bust. That is  
the perilous background.

Over the past seven years we have made extremely  
good progress. We have reduced the deficit by three  
quarters and, according to OBR forecasts, are probably  
about two years ahead in terms of the interim targets  
that we have set and that have been discussed in this  
debate. One of the most spiriting aspects of the debate  
on the Government side of the Chamber has been the  
focus that was rightly placed on our huge economic  
achievements. Let us not forget that employment is at a  
record high, there are more women in employment now  
than at any other time in our history, unemployment is  
at its lowest level since the mid-1970s and, as many  
Members have rightly pointed out, we have sustained  
levels of economic growth that other members of the  
G7 would be proud of and wish to achieve.

However, as many Members have said, we cannot  
duck the fact that our level of indebtedness, which will  
peak at the end of this financial year at 89% of GDP, is  
too high. It is unsustainable. It is not just a burden on  
future generations, as has been pointed out, but means  
that we are vulnerable to external economic shocks. We  
need to get that level down.

**Alex Chalk:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is  
a sobering fact that in 2007 Greece had a debt to GDP  
ratio of 100%? The fact that ours is close to 90% means  
that we have to take this matter very seriously for our  
national security and that of future generations.

**Mel Stride:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If we  
do not start to see the figure coming down, it can only  
bode ill for the future. That is why we are so determined  
to get it down.

25WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

Balancing the Public Finances

26WH

Turning to the contributions that have been made,  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean  
made important points about our record on growth and  
jobs, about the threat of interest rate hikes if we fail to  
get on top of our debt and about keeping taxes low,  
particularly for our businesses. Many Members have  
made the point that as we have reduced corporation  
taxes the actual tax yield has increased, which rather  
suggests that the Opposition's policy of raising them  
would be counterproductive in every sense. He made  
very important points about public sector pay. Let us  
not forget that this is not just about controlling public  
sector pay and spending, but about preserving jobs. The  
OBR reckons that by sticking to our plans we are  
protecting about 200,000 jobs in the public sector. When  
we talk about the 10,000-plus more nurses and 10,000-plus  
more doctors in the NHS, one of the reasons we have  
them is that we have given ourselves the room to afford  
them.

If I may, I will turn now to the hon. Member for  
Islwyn (Chris Evans), who made an impassioned attempt  
to take on the powerful arguments from the Government  
side. He is somewhat outnumbered. He suggested that  
he was like Lieutenant Custer. Of course, at Custer's  
last stand, which was in 1876 at the battle of the Little  
Bighorn, unfortunately Custer was annihilated: he lost  
five companies, two of his brothers, a nephew and a  
brother-in-law to boot. It is remarkable that the hon.  
Gentleman is still standing after the onslaught from the  
hordes on our side of the Chamber today.

The hon. Gentleman made one point about the tax  
gap. He bemoaned the fact that, at £36 billion, it is  
higher than we would like it to be. That is absolutely  
true, but what he did not mention is that it represents  
6.5% of the tax that we raise and is at the lowest level for  
very many years. As another hon. Member pointed out,  
since 2010 we have had about 55 new tax avoidance  
measures that in total have raised no less than £140 billion,  
which is three times the size of the deficit we face.

My hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert  
Courts) delivered the essential truth that borrowing  
must be repaid and the intergenerational unfairness of  
failing to do so. He made important points about the  
cost of servicing our debt and that if we lose the  
confidence of financial markets, those costs will rocket,  
to our detriment. The hon. Member for Glasgow East  
(David Linden) referred to Brexit as an ideological  
obsession, but I say no, actually: it is respecting the  
democratic will of the people. Although I, probably like  
him, was on the other side of that argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel  
Maclean) made some very important points. The  
Opposition always say that we are looking after the  
wealthiest in society, but the truth is a long way from  
that. Some 27% of tax is paid by the wealthiest 1% in  
this country. A statistic that could also have been used is  
that the wealthiest 3,000 people in our country pay as  
much tax as the poorest 9 million. We are doing a huge  
amount on the issue of income equality.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Jeremy  
Quin) made an impassioned speech in which he referred  
to the importance of keeping interest rates low by  
keeping on top of the debt. My hon. Friend the Member  
for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) finished his contribution  
on the Queen's Speech debate today, and I am glad that

he did because he made some important points, particularly  
on productivity, and quite rightly referred to our £23 billion  
productivity investment fund.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian  
Keegan) gave a powerful speech and referred, I think, to  
the shadow Secretary of State for Education's performance  
on “The Andrew Marr Show” on Sunday, when the  
hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner)  
referred to Labour having a large abacus. I have to say  
that my jaw hit the Stride sofa when I heard her say that  
it would cost about £100 billion to wipe out student  
debt and that this was something they were looking at.

**Mr Harper:** The other point that the shadow Education  
Secretary made was putting her leader straight when  
she admitted that more working-class children were  
able to go to university with tuition fees and that it is  
simply not correct to keep asserting what he says, which  
is that fewer had done so. The fact that she put her  
leader right was spot on.

**Mel Stride:** As ever, my right hon. Friend is entirely  
correct.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie  
Elphicke) made important points about retaining the  
confidence of financial markets, and my hon. Friend  
the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew  
Selous) talked about the importance of productivity,  
technical education, infrastructure, housing and all those  
elements, which matter.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty  
Blackman) did at least welcome the personal allowance  
increases that we have implemented. They are now at  
£11,500 compared with about £6,500 in 2010, and will  
increase to £12,500 over the coming period. She made  
various comments about pressures on pay and wage  
growth, but one fact that I will share with her is that  
those in full-time work on the minimum wage have  
actually seen pay boosted by £1,400 a year going back  
to 2010. That is an achievement that this Government  
should be rightly proud of.

I very much welcome the hon. Member for Bootle  
(Peter Dowd) to his place and look forward to a constructive  
engagement over the weeks, months and years of this  
Government. He said that he has read the Conservative  
party manifesto. I urge him to read it again and again  
and to learn from it. I am afraid that even though he has  
read it, he has failed to explain how to square more  
spending and spending, taxing and taxing and borrowing  
and borrowing with future sustainable economic success.

May I finish with one overall observation? The  
Opposition are very keen at every turn to say that our  
commitment to what they call “austerity” and what I  
call “living within our means” is some form of harsh,  
uncaring cruelty. Surely the cruellest cut of all is when a  
politician struts the stage telling the audience that which  
they most dearly wish to hear, but knowing in his heart  
that he has no way of delivering it—knowing in his  
heart that what he suggests will lead to financial and  
economic ruin. When we look at that situation, what  
question do we have to ask? We have to ask: who will be  
most hurt if we go back to the days of 1976? The  
answer is the most vulnerable—the poorest—because  
they are the least nimble and the least well-resourced to  
get out of the way of the damage. They are the people  
who lose their jobs and cannot cope. They are the

27WH Balancing the Public Finances

11 JULY 2017

28WH

*[Mel Stride]*

people who see interest rates on their mortgages go  
through the roof, and struggle to pay as a consequence.  
As many Members have also said, the others who suffer  
are the young and the as yet not born—those who end  
up being saddled with the debt of the profligacy of our  
generation and have to pay it down themselves.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest  
of Dean for securing this debate. We must stay the  
course. We must make the hard choices. We must make  
it the first priority of this Government to have a responsible  
stewardship of our public finances.

10.59 am

**Mr Harper:** I am particularly grateful to the Financial  
Secretary to the Treasury for closing his speech so  
excellently, because it leaves us with this one thought:  
balancing the public finances and having sound public  
finances is not an academic exercise; it is about enabling  
growth and jobs and allowing us to protect the most  
vulnerable in society, allowing the investment in public  
services, as my hon. Friend the Member for Central  
Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) set out, and  
making sure that we can deliver on those important  
promises. Those who do not want to live within their  
means—the hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd)  
spent a lot of money in his speech but did not set out  
how he could save it—would disappoint people, let  
them down and fail them. That is not a mistake that we  
are going to make.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

Social Inequality (Children's Centres)

11 am

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I  
beg to move,

That this House has considered the role of children's centres in  
tackling social inequality.

It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship,  
Ms Ryan. This issue is close to my heart. I am a  
secondary school teacher—at least, I used to be—and a  
primary school governor, and I have a burning desire to  
ensure that every child, no matter what their background,  
gets the best possible start in life. I keep reading that the  
Government agree, but where is the consultation on  
children's centres that we were promised in late 2015? A  
recent ministerial written answer said that the details  
will be published in due course. I start with a simple  
plea: please do not wait. We are days away from the  
summer holiday. In new, young lives, one year without  
intervention squanders many years of potential rewards.

I will make the case for why children's centres are  
worth investing in. The accelerating demise of access to  
children's centres across the country over the last seven  
years is one of the saddest outcomes of austerity. The  
evidence showed that they worked. If we are serious  
about creating a society where every child fulfils their  
potential, we need to get serious about breaking cycles  
of deprivation. We must not just listen to the evidence  
but act on it.

It is a sad fact that a child's parents' circumstances  
remain the best predictor of how that child will do as an  
adult. Well-respected organisations such as the Joseph  
Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children have presented  
evidence over many years showing that, if we want to  
break that cycle and create a fairer society, we must not  
only focus on the bottom 5% but cast a much wider net  
to avoid stigmatisation and build community resilience.

Every single one of the children's centres in my  
constituency closed last year. In fact, Oxfordshire County  
Council set out in 2013 to close all 44 children's centres  
in Oxfordshire, explicitly to save £8 million from the  
early intervention budget as part of a £22.5 million  
saving across the department as a whole. Following a  
big grassroots campaign, the Liberal Democrats proposed  
a £l million transition fund, which was added to a  
cross-party budget in 2014. It has led to support for  
29 community-led schemes, including in Kidlington,  
Cutteslowe, Botley and soon South Abingdon. However,  
they will provide only some of the services previously  
provided by the children's centres, and one is run entirely  
by volunteers—I thank those volunteers especially for  
their hard work and service. There is no clear plan for  
what will happen after three years, and no long-term,  
sustainable solution.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The  
hon. Lady will know that I have some involvement as  
Chair of the Select Committee on Education at the time  
that children's centres were established. She is right: all  
the research shows that early interventions such as Sure  
Start and children's centres are the answer, but up and  
down the country, children's centres have closed, and  
thereisnopolicyandnomoneyforearlyyearsintervention.  
I am glad that she is taking up the cudgels.

29WH Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 11 JULY 2017 Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 30WH

**Layla Moran:** These stories demonstrate why it was a  
big mistake to remove the ring fence from the Sure Start  
budget. What we have seen across the country is that the  
seemingly more urgent issues of older children, such as  
behaviour management and preventing teenage pregnancy  
and drug use, win out. The older a child gets, the harder  
it is to intervene, and the more expensive the interventions  
become. Given the difficult choices and the reality of  
cuts, it is no wonder that measures provided by children's  
centres have not been given the prominence that they  
deserve. After all, those children have yet to impact  
others.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)  
(Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this  
important debate. Clearly, there is a lot of evidence that  
investment in the early years is good for children's  
future life chances, but does she also agree that the  
issues are not entirely mutually exclusive? Unwanted  
pregnancies and the issues facing single-parent families  
can be dealt with through effective interventions linked  
to children's centres. They work well. That is an important  
point for investment.

**Layla Moran:** I agree entirely. Joined-up thinking in  
early intervention is important.

Parents tell me that children's centres are a lifeline.  
The services that they provide, such as parenting support  
and breastfeeding and baby health advice, are valued by  
many, but almost as important is the sense of community  
that they create. Families who would never normally  
interact bond over the common challenge of making it  
through the day with a delightful but occasionally  
demanding toddler. How many parents have met friends  
for life at Stay and Play? It takes a whole community to  
achieve such aims, and there should be no stigma in  
asking for help.

In the past, the Government have accused those who  
raise the issue of being obsessed with the number of  
buildings. I am not, but I am obsessed with outcomes  
and access, and I can tell the Minister that we have a  
problem, especially with access. The impact on access  
comes from a double whammy: the remaining centres  
are far apart, and local transport links have been reduced.  
The convenience of getting to a site is a key factor for  
the families who need the services the most. I believe  
that we are at risk of leaving behind the same families  
that the Government purport to want to target.

I met a lovely woman a few weeks ago in Kidlington  
who explained that the new centre there has reopened  
but on a different site, and that it offers fewer services  
than the original centre. She had recently given birth to  
her seventh child, in a family that already included two  
sets of twins—I told her I thought she was a saint. Both  
she and her partner work full-time to support them all,  
but they are just getting by. Because the centre has  
moved out of walking distance and there is no direct  
bus link, she feels she can no longer get there. She said,  
“I can't face the journey, and also when I get there, they  
can't cater for everyone. I used to be able to go and there  
was something for all of us as a family to do. I really  
love to go, but it's just too much hassle.”

**Mr Sheerman:** The hon. Lady is being generous. Did  
she see the Children's Commissioner's report, launched  
yesterday, on how many children in this country are

vulnerable on all the criteria? Will she please talk to the  
Children's Commissioner about her campaign? At the  
moment, there are so many vulnerable children out  
there, and given the cuts in local government finance,  
local governments are unable to run proper children's  
services?

**Layla Moran:** I imagine she was quite busy with her  
seven children, but I will encourage her to do so.

One anecdote should not policy make. As motherhood  
and apple pie as this all sounds, I believe that education  
policy should be firmly evidence-based, so let us consider  
that. More needs to be done to ensure that all services  
provided by children's centres are evidenced and effective.  
I applaud the work of the Early Intervention Foundation  
as one of many organisations adding to that body of  
evidence. We need much more of it. I also believe that  
all staff should be well-trained and properly qualified,  
and that allowances need to be made for differences in  
population. What works in one setting does not always  
work in another. We need to give credit to the professionals  
who can make an in-depth judgment, in the moment, of  
what works for the families in front of them.

The Government's own evidence shows that interventions  
for one to three-year-olds play a vital role in life chances,  
especially for the poorest children. The Oxford University  
children's centres study that was instigated by the  
Department for Education reported last year. It backed  
up what countless studies before it had showed: the  
benefit of interventions such as baby health and parenting  
support. Not only do they give value for money by  
improving outcomes for families as a whole; down the  
line, they help to reduce the chances of bad behaviour  
or smoking and raise educational attainment. The study  
further extrapolated that interventions will reduce  
joblessness and raise incomes for children in the future.  
What is there not to love?

As we have seen in Oxfordshire, the problem is that  
there is no budget. We need real long-term thinking at  
central Government level. The results of these interventions  
will not be seen again by the Exchequer until the  
children themselves start to pay it back in decades to  
come, but in my view it is worth the wait. Part of the  
answer is money. Hon. Members ask where it will come  
from. Frankly, it will come from the future. We borrow  
to invest in our own finances at home to reap rewards  
later, and the same principle applies. There is no single  
magic wand, but several magic wands waved early enough  
can make a big difference.

I look forward to the Minister's reply and to contributions  
from colleagues. In my view, nothing is more important  
than the wellbeing of the next generation. Children's  
centres are a proven and cost-effective way of promoting  
just that. Let us give our children everything we can and  
invest in them now, as a down payment on a more equal  
and fairer society in future.

11.11 am

**The Minister of State, Department for Education  
(Mr Robert Goodwill):** I am very pleased to serve under  
your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran)  
on securing this incredibly important debate.

Tackling inequality is an absolute priority for the  
Government. I am pleased to have the opportunity to  
set out our position on the valuable contribution that

31WH Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 11 JULY 2017 Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 32WH

*[Mr Robert Goodwill]*

children's centres can make to the lives of disadvantaged  
children. I reassure the hon. Lady that I, too, have a  
burning desire to help these children. The Government  
are committed to improving social mobility and extending  
opportunity to all.

Children's centres can play a very important role in  
offering families access to a wide range of flexible local  
services. I was fortunate enough to visit a fantastic  
children's centre in my Scarborough constituency not so  
long ago, where I saw for myself how important children's  
centre services can be to families with young children.  
Indeed, all three children's centres in my constituency  
are still open. I was interested to hear from families and  
staff there that the people they really want to help are  
not in the children's centres—they are the people who  
do not engage and do not see the advantage of coming.  
One of my tasks in my new role is to ensure that we can  
get to those families who are not in the children's  
centres and in some cases are not even taking up the free  
childcare that is available. They are probably at home  
watching daytime television and do not see the importance  
of the home learning environment, or indeed the importance  
of taking up the offer that is there from this Government.

Children's centre services can include early years  
provision, child and family health services, information,  
advice, training and employment services for parents,  
and social services for those parents who need extra  
support.

**Dr Poulter:** On improving the offer for people who  
are among the most disadvantaged and most in need of  
support and help, does the Minister agree that there is a  
certain fragmentation when it comes to joining up the  
work of health visitors and family nurses, who support  
some very disadvantaged families, with the opportunities  
available in children's centres, which support some equally  
disadvantaged families?

**Mr Goodwill:** My hon. Friend makes a very reasonable  
point that relates not just to children, but to the elderly:  
health and social services do not necessarily speak to  
each other or work together as much as they might want  
to. However, I pay tribute to the tremendous work of  
health visitors, particularly when new babies are born  
and families need assistance.

**Mr Sheerman:** I welcome the Minister to his role. I do  
not want to be nasty to him on his first outing, but he  
mentioned people watching daytime television. I have  
to say that many of the people we are talking about are  
trying to keep their lives together by doing three jobs on  
zero-hours contracts rather than watching daytime  
television. How many children's centres are still there?  
How many were there in 2010, how many were there in  
2015, and how many are there now? That is the crucial  
point: they are closing all over the country, especially in  
the areas of greatest deprivation. What is the Minister  
going to do about it?

**Mr Goodwill:** I should make a particular point about  
the offer that is available from this Government. We are  
improving the amount of childcare available. The point  
I made about daytime television was a point made by  
the staff at the children's centre I visited. The issue that

the hon. Gentleman should look at, particularly in  
respect of those working, is the offer coming forward in  
September for 30 hours of childcare for those in work.  
It will be a great opportunity for those who have been  
juggling work and childcare responsibilities. Indeed,  
many people will now be able to work during office  
hours, so to speak. Many families have had the problem  
of the husband and wife passing in the doorway at 6 in  
the evening when the husband returns from work and  
the wife has to go out to do additional—

**Mr Sheerman:** Will the Minister give me the numbers  
at some stage?

**Mr Goodwill:** Yes, I will. The position is not as bad as  
the hon. Gentleman points out. Let me give him some  
figures on childcare centres. Oxfordshire County Council  
had to close 41 of its children's centres in the first  
quarter, including several in the constituency of the  
hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon. However,  
according to information supplied by local authorities,  
there were 2,447 children's centres and an additional  
735 linked sites—a total of 3,182 children's centre sites—at  
the end of May 2017. Some 457 children's centres had  
closed since 2010, and 14 new centres had opened.

I hope those figures clarify the matter. There had  
been some confusion in cases where a number of sites  
had been operated by one provider. Those should not  
be counted as closures, because those sites are still open.

**Victoria Prentis** (Banbury) (Con): On a positive note  
for the provision of children's services in Oxfordshire,  
does the Minister join me in welcoming the council's  
development of a new service for children that will  
combine children's social care and early intervention, so  
that there is one seamless service?

**Mr Goodwill:** Yes, absolutely. It is about providing a  
joined-up service, and enlightened local authorities  
understand that. They also need to ensure that the  
additional offer and the additional money going into  
childcare—more than £6 billion by 2020—dovetail with  
their own provision.

My next point follows on from that. Children's services  
do not have to deliver all their services themselves.  
Indeed, they deliver many of them through local statutory,  
voluntary, community and private sector partners. The  
context in which children's centres operate has changed  
since they were established. Funding for children's services,  
including children's centres, gives local authorities the  
freedom to decide how best to target resources and  
respond flexibly to local need.

We believe that it is up to local authorities to decide  
how to organise and commission services from children's  
centres in their areas. Local authorities are best placed  
to understand local needs and how best to meet them,  
which does not always have to be through a children's  
centre building. For example, the Government have  
established the troubled families programme to support  
those with multiple problems. Responsibilities around  
public health for under-fives now sit with local authorities.

**Dr Poulter:** The Minister is being generous in giving  
way. I congratulate him, as I should have done earlier,  
on his new position. The point about troubled families  
is concerning for all hon. Members present, given the

33WH Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 11 JULY 2017 Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 34WH

difficult financial position that local authorities find  
themselves in. The level of provision is left to local  
decision making, but local authorities in difficult times  
often provide only the statutory minimum. There is a  
real challenge here, so what will the Minister do about  
it? How will he link up the good work done in early  
years by health visitors with what happens afterwards?  
Many disadvantaged families are losing out, which is  
affecting the children as well as the families themselves.

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. Interventions need  
to be pithy.

**Mr Goodwill:** My hon. Friend makes another very  
reasonable point. Indeed, one of the challenges in our  
opportunity areas, where we are particularly focusing  
on disadvantage and how we can close the attainment  
gap, is considering how we can make early interventions  
with those hard-to-reach families, many of whom do  
not take up the childcare offer that is available—  
15 hours of childcare are available for disadvantaged  
two-year-olds. Indeed, for those in work—many of these  
families are in work despite having difficulty in making  
ends meet—the 30 hours available from September will  
be a great fillip.

**Mr Sheerman:** Before the Minister moves on from  
that point, will he allow me to make one more intervention?

**Mr Goodwill:** Yes, by all means.

**Mr Sheerman:** The Minister is a good, honest  
Yorkshireman—I know him to be one—so will he give  
me a straight answer to a question? He knows that the  
Children's Commissioner made that announcement to  
which I referred. There was no Government Minister at  
the launch of the commissioner's report on Monday,  
and I cannot understand why. Regarding all these vulnerable  
children, we know that the troubled families programme  
has been a disaster. What have the Government learned  
from that and what are they going to do to react to the  
commissioner's report, which, as I say, was launched  
only this Monday?

**Mr Goodwill:** I met the commissioner the week before  
and we discussed some of the points that she has made.  
Indeed, her work is very valuable in feeding into what  
this Government are doing and will continue to do in  
future to address the problem. As I have already said,  
we have introduced 15 hours a week of free childcare  
for disadvantaged two-year-olds and the diversity of  
childcare provision means that children's centres play  
less of a role in delivering childcare themselves.

I am sure hon. Members agree that it is vital that  
every child, regardless of their background, is given the  
opportunity to reach their full potential. We know that  
the first few years of a child's life are critical to shaping  
their future development. We also know that high-quality  
pre-school education reduces the effects of multiple  
disadvantage on later attainment, and on progress in  
both primary and secondary school. We recognise the  
crucial importance of early years education. With two  
fifths of the attainment gap embedded by the age of  
five, improving outcomes for our most disadvantaged  
children remains a top priority for this Government.

The evidence shows that all children benefit from a  
high-quality pre-school experience, but disadvantaged  
children see additional benefits that continue beyond  
school. Children from less advantaged backgrounds  
can be up to 19 months behind in their learning by the  
time they start school. That is simply unacceptable. We  
want to close this gap. High-quality learning from the  
age of two can help us to do so.

This Government have invested heavily in childcare  
and early years education. By 2020, we will spend a  
record £6 billion per year on childcare. We will also  
invest an additional £1 billion per year by 2020 in the  
provision of free childcare entitlements. In response to  
concerns from providers, we have increased the average  
funding rate for disadvantaged two-year-olds from £5.09 per  
hour to £5.39 per hour. The early years pupil premium  
continues to provide over £300 per eligible child, and we  
have also committed to provide supplementary funding  
of around £55 million per year for maintained nursery  
schools until 2020.

It is fantastic that more and more children are benefiting  
from that support. Currently, 97% of four-year-olds  
and 93% of three-year-olds are accessing funded early  
education. In addition, I welcome the figures that were  
published just last week showing a further increase in  
the proportion of the most disadvantaged two-year-olds  
accessing funded early education, which now stands at  
71%. Nevertheless, I am happy to work with the hon.  
Member for Oxford West and Abingdon to increase  
that figure, including in her constituency.

**Mr Sheerman:** That is a deluge of statistics and  
information, which I very much appreciate—all Members  
who are here today will be grateful for them and we will  
all want to trawl through them. However, has the Minister  
discussed the present situation with the National Day  
Nurseries Association, which is a very lively organisation  
that is based in my constituency of Huddersfield? Its  
staff are very wise, so will he please meet them very  
soon to discuss early years provision?

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
right—we have a deluge of delivery for our young  
children. I am very proud that we are stepping up to the  
mark in that regard. I would be more than happy to  
meet his constituents in Huddersfield to discuss that.  
My wife used to run a pre-school playgroup and then  
went on to work as a classroom assistant, so I know  
from experience within the family how important this  
type of provision is—if it helps at all, my mother was a  
primary headteacher.

What is more, the 30 hours programme, which will  
roll out nationally in September, will support around  
390,000 working parents with the cost of childcare. I  
am pleased that 100,000 working parents have already  
registered for this additional childcare. I encourage  
working parents who have not already registered to do  
so before the deadline at the end of August.

Although children's centres themselves provide just  
1% of funded early education places for three and  
four-year-olds, they can help to identify and support  
families who otherwise would be unlikely to take advantage  
of early childhood services. In particular, children's  
centres often encourage eligible families to take up our  
offer of 15 hours a week of free early education for  
disadvantaged two-year-olds. Children's centres also work

35WH Social Inequality (Children's Centres) 11 JULY 2017

36WH

*[Mr Goodwill]*

closely with local providers, offering funded places for  
two-year-olds to four-year-olds to ensure that families  
who need that crucial extra support receive it.

I am pleased that outcomes for children are improving.  
Early years foundation stage profile results show that,  
in 2016, 81.6% of children achieved at least the expected  
level in communication and language, compared with  
72.2% in 2013. More children are achieving a good level  
of development by the age of five, and the gap between  
disadvantaged children and others continues to narrow,  
from 19 percentage points in 2013 to 17.3 percentage  
points in 2015-16. That is encouraging news and I am  
determined to make further progress.

The quality of early education is hugely important.  
In December 2016, 93% of providers on the early years  
register were judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.  
As of January 2016, most two-year-olds benefiting from  
free early education were doing so in a high-quality  
setting. We also know that we need to invest in the  
dedicated people who are responsible for delivering  
early years education and care including, I suspect,  
those represented by the organisation that the hon.  
Member for Huddersfield referred to, which is in his  
constituency. Earlier this year, we published our early  
years workforce strategy to help employers to support,  
attract, retain and develop staff to deliver-high quality  
provision.

I have a few moments to comment on some of the  
points made in the debate. The hon. Member for Oxford  
West and Abingdon referred to the previous commitment  
to consult on the future of children's centre services, of  
which I am aware. The Government are committed to  
ensuring that all children, regardless of background,  
get the best possible start in life. I will consider carefully  
whether we can take additional steps. Indeed, the debate  
has fed into my thoughts.

The hon. Lady mentioned the closure of Sure Start  
children's centres. Children's centres have an important  
role to play in tackling disadvantage, but it is for councils  
to decide the best solutions for their area. Some councils  
are merging centres to deliver services more efficiently.  
Where councils decide to close a children's centre, they  
must demonstrate first that children and families, and  
particularly the most disadvantaged children and families,  
will not be adversely affected. Secondly, they must  
demonstrate that they still meet the duty to have sufficient  
children's centres to meet local need.

I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Oxford  
West and Abingdon for raising the incredibly important  
issue of tackling inequality. This Government have  
made a substantial financial investment in the early  
years and we want to ensure that it works for everyone,  
including the most disadvantaged.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.28 am

*Sitting suspended.*

Social Mobility

[MARK PRITCHARD *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): I  
beg to move,

That this House has considered Government policies on social  
mobility.

It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship,  
Mr Pritchard. This debate builds on debates that were  
called in the previous Parliament. I believe that social  
mobility—or the lack thereof for the many—is the big  
issue of our time. It is creating a divided Britain, which  
not only is bad for our economy and our future, but is  
the defining issue of our time, as we have seen in recent  
elections and referendums.

**Thelma Walker** (Colne Valley) (Lab): The recent report  
on social mobility confirmed the points that have been  
raised about our divided nation. Over the past 20 years  
we have come to have a new geographical divide, an  
income divide and a generational divide. The geographical  
divide is between successful city regions and places such  
as my constituency of Colne Valley and Kirklees, which  
have seen a lack of regional investment, leading to cuts  
that are affecting the most vulnerable. This Government  
have failed to address social inequality in all three areas.

**Lucy Powell:** I thank my new hon. Friend for raising  
those important points, which I will elaborate on further.

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Not that the hon.  
Lady needs any time to prepare her answer to that  
question, but may I just say that I think the gentlemen  
might be suffering a little with the heat? It is very warm,  
so colleagues should please feel free to remove their  
jackets.

**Lucy Powell:** That is why some of us wore dresses.

There is the intergenerational inequality and the lack  
of opportunity for today's young people to progress,  
which I think was brought to the fore in the general  
election, and there is also the huge regional inequality  
that my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley  
(Thelma Walker) mentioned.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend on securing this debate on such an  
important topic. The Government are currently undertaking  
the youth full-time social action review, and last year I  
was lucky enough to visit City Year UK, which is a  
full-time social action programme. Does my hon. Friend  
agree that it is important to support such organisations  
and that the Government should listen to the review's  
recommendations when they are published in December?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes a good point,  
and I sure that the Minister will listen to what he has to  
say.

We have huge regional inequality and many communities  
have been left behind, which I think was expressed in  
the Brexit vote. We have stubborn wealth inequality,  
with a growing divide between rich and poor. Our  
country's failings on social mobility is the national  
challenge. As the Social Mobility Commission's excellent  
report “Time For Change: An Assessment of Government

37WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

38WH

Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017” shows, despite  
some progress and well-intentioned policies, progress  
by successive Governments over the past 20 years has  
been painfully slow. The report by the commission,  
which is chaired by the right hon. Alan Milburn, states  
that

“successive governments have failed to make social mobility the  
cornerstone of domestic policy”.

That is the argument that I am putting forward today.

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): My hon.  
Friend is right to refer to the report, because it is a  
powerful document. Much of it talks about the need for  
investment in early years and schools as the vehicle for  
social mobility. How does she think the Government  
can square that with the cuts to early years and schools?  
For example, Parrs Wood High School in my  
constituency—a school she knows well—faces losing  
the equivalent of 30 teachers between now and 2020.

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point.  
Parrs Wood High School, which I attended and which  
my son now attends, is an outstanding comprehensive  
school, but it will struggle to continue to be so if those  
cuts come forward.

**The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr  
Robert Goodwill)** *rose—*

**Lucy Powell:** Perhaps we will hear more from the  
Minister on that point.

**Mr Goodwill:** I thank the hon. Lady for calling the  
debate, which provides us with a good opportunity. Will  
she welcome the fact that in her constituency 29,686  
more children are in good or outstanding schools than  
were in August 2010? Is not that great progress from  
this Government?

**Lucy Powell:** We have seen some great progress and I  
will come on to that. In my constituency most of that  
progress has come from local leadership as well, and I  
will mention that later.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): What  
the Minister says is belied by the fact that in further  
education in Coventry there have been cuts of roughly  
27% and in the youth service there will be no funding  
for youth leaders, which does not exactly help the  
situation. Does my hon. Friend agree that if we are not  
careful we will create another lost generation?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point.  
Post-16 and youth service funding is critical to the  
debate and I will touch on that later.

I urge all colleagues to read the Social Mobility  
Commission's powerful report. It highlights the fact  
that the challenges we faced in 1997 are very different  
from those we face in 2017. It rightly calls for social  
mobility to be at the heart of all Government policy,  
decisions and actions, because it is only through a  
prolonged, determined and comprehensive Government-  
wide strategy that we may actually start to change the  
entrenched inequalities and the lack of social mobility  
for the many. The social mobility agenda is about the  
many, not the tiny few we often hear about who manage

to get themselves from the council estate to the boardroom  
or around the Cabinet table. The Prime Minister says  
that she is looking for a national purpose that brings all  
parties and the country together, and I say to her that if  
she made tackling social mobility her calling and the  
key test for her Government, against which all her  
actions were tested, she would get wide support from  
across the House.

Before looking at some of the policy areas where  
more needs to be done, let us remind ourselves why  
tackling the divides in Britain is so important. The  
Sutton Trust has found that failing to improve Britain's  
low levels of social mobility will cost the UK economy  
a staggering £140 billion a year by 2050, or the equivalent  
of 4% of GDP. On current trends, by 2022 there will be  
9 million low-skilled people chasing just 4 million low-skilled  
jobs, yet there will be a shortfall of 3 million higher-skilled  
people for the jobs of the future. The economic  
divides are even starker when we look at the regional  
disparities. Output per person in London is more  
than £43,000 a year, yet in the north-east of England  
it is less than £19,000. London and some of our  
renewed cities, such as my own city of Manchester, are  
increasingly the home of graduates and have vibrant  
growing economies.

**Gloria De Piero** (Ashfield) (Lab): Getting kids from  
ordinary backgrounds to university is a key way of  
enabling them to move up and get on. Will my hon.  
Friend join me in congratulating the previous Labour  
Government on increasing student numbers, while  
acknowledging that there is still work to be done,  
particularly in post-industrial towns such as Ashfield,  
where we send only 21% of 18-year-olds to university,  
compared with an English national average of 32%?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend's excellent point fits  
entirely with one of the main thrusts of the Social  
Mobility Commission's report, which is that there are  
huge regional inequalities, particularly between our growing  
and vibrant cities, where many graduates live and work,  
and our heartland towns and former industrial places.

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab):  
My hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way.  
Does she agree that it is not just geography but ethnicity  
that makes a difference? We sing long about the successes  
of London, but if we look at who is doing well in our  
schools, we see that it tends to be young people from  
black and Asian backgrounds, with white working-class  
kids still not making progress.

**Lucy Powell:** That is another excellent point. My hon.  
Friend will know about that issue from her own  
constituency.

**Rishi Sunak** (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con): Will the  
hon. Lady give way?

**Lucy Powell:** Yes, but then I will have to make some  
progress.

**Rishi Sunak:** I thank the hon. Lady for giving way,  
and I commend her for securing this debate on a topic I  
know she is passionate about, and about which she has  
spoken passionately in the past. She was just talking  
about access to higher education. Will she welcome the

39WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

40WH

*[Rishi Sunak]*

fact that access for working-class families is at an all-time  
high, with students from working-class backgrounds  
now 70% more likely to apply to university than 10 years  
ago? Indeed, that was one of the areas on which the  
Milburn report gave a green light when evaluating the  
Government's progress.

**Lucy Powell:** I am happy to accept that point, which  
the report talks about more broadly, but challenges  
remain. There are some warning signs on the horizon  
and we should be careful that we do not end up taking a  
backward step in this important area.

The Social Mobility Commission has found that the  
generational divide is yawning. Over the past 20 years,  
poverty among pensioners has halved and their income  
today, on average, exceeds that of working adults.  
Meanwhile, young people's earnings have fallen. That  
cannot continue. It is no wonder that we saw a huge  
upsurge of anger, activism and engagement from younger  
voters at the general election. The wealth and income  
divide has also become much wider over the past 20 years,  
with top pay increasing much faster than the incomes of  
lower earners. In 1998 the highest earners were paid  
47 times that of the lowest. By 2015 the highest earners  
were paid 128 times more than the lowest. Gaps in  
wealth have also grown exponentially, with home ownership  
and house price inflation benefiting the lucky few who  
already own their home. It is not just about the economic  
price we pay for these failings; as a society, these divisions  
are causing unrest, anger and resentment. That is leading  
to political volatility and, arguably, the rise of populism.

Those are just some of the reasons why the social  
mobility agenda is so important. It needs to be not only  
at the heart of all Government policy, but a national  
mission for our country. Successive Prime Ministers—Tony  
Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and our current  
Prime Minister—have spoken a great deal about social  
mobility. Most recently, the current Prime Minister  
spoke about the “burning injustices” of our society.  
However, the Government's approach, while making  
progress in some areas, has not matched the rhetoric  
and has been piecemeal and disconnected.

Let us look at what could be done about social  
mobility. There are many recommendations in the  
Social Mobility Commission report and from the Sutton  
Trust, Teach First and many others. Recommendations  
should not be limited to education policy—far from it.  
Every Budget, every Bill and every policy should be  
judged against whether it tackles inequalities and boosts  
social mobility for everybody, everywhere. There needs  
to be a single cross-departmental plan to deliver social  
mobility.

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North)  
(Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the  
debate and making an excellent opening speech. We  
know that the challenge with social mobility begins in  
childhood. An estimated 3,300 children in my constituency  
are living in households with problem debt. One suggestion  
has been to give a breathing space to families facing  
problem debt by giving them 12 months to try to get  
back on their feet. Does she agree that that is one step  
the Government could take to make a big difference to  
families getting themselves out of problem debt?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent  
point. That is another great idea that I hope the Minister  
will respond to, and it shows the extent to which these  
policy areas need to be looked at across the piece.

Tackling social mobility also means looking at difficult  
issues such as inheritance tax, transport spending and  
social care. All those policies need to be looked at  
through the lens of social mobility. However, today I  
will focus on a few areas for which the Minister has  
responsibility, and for which the evidence and action  
needed are known and relatively straightforward. The  
first is early years, which colleagues and the Minister  
will know is a bug bear of mine, so I hope they will  
allow me to expand on that for a moment. It is well  
documented that by the time children reach the age of  
five there is already a big gap in school readiness or  
development between those from disadvantaged  
backgrounds and their peers. Action for Children found  
that more than half of children from low-income families  
do not reach the expected milestones by the age of five.  
Often that gap is never fully closed during a child's  
schooling.

Given that we know some of what works, why are we  
not doing more? Over the past 20 years we have made  
some progress through family support services, Sure  
Start centres, quality early education and targeted  
approaches, such as the offer for two-year-olds. However,  
in recent times and with what is upcoming, the agenda  
seems to be moving backwards.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):  
My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Does she  
agree that one of the Departments that needs to be  
brought into this conversation is the Home Office? I am  
thinking specifically about incidents of domestic violence,  
which have been increasing in my constituency. Experiencing  
and being a victim of domestic violence impacts on  
children, particularly very young children, and their  
educational attainment.

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent  
point. Being in a domestic violence setting at home  
can have the most profound impact on the outcome of  
any child. We need to link that with children's services  
and other family support services. She is absolutely  
right.

The Government's emphasis is now almost entirely  
on childcare support for working families. That is a  
laudable aim in itself, but it perhaps focuses huge resources  
away from social mobility outcomes. Almost all the  
money for the 30 hours of free childcare for working  
families and tax-free childcare will go towards better-off  
families. Those policies are taking the Government's  
focus away from other issues. By definition, the most  
disadvantaged do not get the extra support, and the  
delivery of the new policies is also having a real impact  
on quality institutions

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Lady must understand that  
people working 16 hours on the minimum wage qualify  
for the additional 15 hours of funded childcare. Indeed,  
many people who cannot get into the workplace because  
of the cost of childcare will take the opportunity of  
30 hours of childcare from September. That policy is a  
great achievement and will improve social mobility  
among people on low wages.

41WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

42WH

**Lucy Powell:** By definition, the most disadvantaged  
will not benefit from the policy. What we are seeing in  
some places, certainly in Manchester and other local  
authority areas, is that free childcare was given to the  
most disadvantaged, but that is now having to be switched  
from them to deliver the 30 hours for working families,  
and that surely is not what the Government intended.  
The Minister needs to have a look at that. Another  
unintended consequence of the new offer is the impact  
on our maintained nursery schools, which are an  
outstanding resource. Every single one—100%—of our  
maintained nursery schools are good or outstanding.  
Nearly all of them are in areas of high deprivation and  
disadvantage, but due to the new funding formula and  
the changes to funding, they are now under threat.  
Ministers need to look at the policies they are delivering  
and ensure that they meet the social mobility test and  
are not simply about getting people back into work.

Action for Children, the Social Mobility Commission  
and many others are calling for a clear plan to boost  
social mobility in the early years. That must include  
quality teaching, family support, children centres getting the  
resources they need and boosting the early years pupil  
premium. What happened to the life chances strategy  
that the Government spent two or three years working  
towards? It seems to have evaporated overnight.

Next, I want to turn my attention to schools. I do not  
want to take up too much time, although I have taken  
lots of interventions. As Teach First has shown, the  
social mobility challenge in our schools remains. While  
much progress has been made at primary, progress  
remains slow at key stage 4. One in three teenagers from  
poor families achieves basic GCSEs, compared with  
two thirds overall. As my hon. Friend the Member for  
Ashfield (Gloria De Piero) highlighted, if bright children  
from poor families had the same support as others, four  
in 10 would go to a top university. Today, only one in  
10 does.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)  
(Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing an  
important debate. She is making some excellent points,  
but in improving the life chances of pupils from  
disadvantaged backgrounds, is there not a case for  
putting money behind university outreach programmes  
to identify young people with ability and talent, as  
happened under the previous Labour Government? That  
would make opportunities for those people so that they  
can be helped into careers that they otherwise might not  
have thought were even possible, such as healthcare,  
where there is a real lack of people from working class  
and disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Lucy Powell:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The  
widening participation agenda has been successful in  
places and is important, but other barriers to getting  
those jobs remain for kids who perhaps do not have the  
same social networks or support at home, even if they  
have the same qualifications as some of their peers.

**Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): The hon. Lady  
is making an excellent speech in this important debate. I  
think we can build a cross-party consensus, based on  
the report, about access to social and emotional learning.  
I might call it character education—I think one of her  
predecessors as shadow Secretary of State for Education  
and I debated that issue. Persistence, resilience and grit

skills, as well as self-confidence and self-belief, are very  
important. They are often not given the same weight  
and therefore those who come from disadvantaged  
backgrounds do not get that access; access to extra-  
curricular activities is picked up in a similar way. Would  
the hon. Lady agree that that is something from the  
debate that could benefit from cross-party working?

**Lucy Powell:** I strongly agree with the right hon.  
Lady. I thank her for the joint working we have done on  
some of the issues in the past, and I hope that that will  
continue. When she was Secretary of State for Education,  
she was a strong champion for character education and  
extra-curricular education. I hope that that is something  
we can all work on going forward.

**Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op):  
All the additions are absolutely right, but the foundation  
has got to be strong as well; the funding for our school  
places is important. If my son Jack decides to go to  
university, he will be the first in our family to do that,  
but the school that he is attending faces losing 19  
teachers. The sixth-form college that he would almost  
certainly go to faces losing 22 teachers. At the same  
time, the Government have wasted more than £10 million  
on a failed university technical college and a failed free  
school. How can that make sense?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend raises a very important  
point. I know that he has been championing the issues  
in Oldham, and I hope to work with him to continue to  
do that. I will say something on school funding in a  
moment, if I could make some progress.

Of all the measures and policies of the last 20 years,  
one that stands out as transformational for our schools  
is the London Challenge. London went from having  
some of the worst schools to now achieving the narrowest  
attainment gap of anywhere in the country. It is a key  
part of the overall London effect; 30 of the top 50  
constituencies for social mobility are in London.

There are two key learnings from the London Challenge,  
which are now seriously at risk. The first is the supply of  
great teachers. The Minister's colleague in the Department  
for Education has finally started to recognise that  
recruitment and retention are major issues. Figures  
obtained by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-  
under-Lyne (Angela Rayner) show that a quarter of  
teachers who have qualified since 2011 have left the  
profession. Statistic after statistic backs that up, and we  
know that it is the poorest children and the struggling  
schools that suffer most when teacher numbers drop.

Teachers deserve a pay rise. Yesterday's pay settlement  
is a huge disappointment. Real wages of teachers are  
down by more than 10%. But it is not just about pay; it  
is about workload and the constant changes to curriculums  
and expectations. Ministers really must get a grip of the  
issue and do it fast.

The second learning from the London Challenge is  
about funding, which my hon. Friend the Member for  
Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) mentioned.  
The increase in school budgets over many years, coupled  
with targeted support such as the pupil premium, has  
had a real impact on the attainment gap, which was  
narrowing until very recently. It has narrowed significantly  
in London, where funding was boosted the most. The  
real terms cuts to schools' budgets that schools are now  
having to make—before we even get to the national

43WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

44WH

*[Lucy Powell]*

funding formula—will, again, hit the poorest hardest.  
Interventions, extra support and supported activities all  
benefit the poorest most. Recent teacher polling has  
shown that a third of school leaders are now using the  
pupil premium to plug the gaps in general funding, that  
almost two thirds of secondary heads had had to cut  
back on teaching staff and that schools with more  
disadvantaged intakes were the most likely to report  
cuts to staffing.

The Government are totally kidding themselves if  
they think that the real terms cuts to school budgets,  
together with the teacher supply crisis, are not going to  
show in a widening of the attainment gap and a major  
step back in social mobility in our schools.

**Gloria De Piero:** I met with the headteacher of Ashfield  
Comprehensive yesterday. The school faces a budget  
cut of almost £1 million from last September to this  
September, and he is facing a choice between bigger  
class sizes and fewer subjects. Does my hon. Friend  
agree that that is the sort of thing that hinders social  
mobility?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
Those are some of the unpalatable decisions that  
headteachers are having to make. There is no question  
but that those decisions will have a real impact on  
outcomes, so I am sure we would all support the Minister  
going back to the Treasury to say that the real-terms  
cuts need addressing, and quickly.

Social mobility should be at the heart of education  
policy; every part of the system should work to unleash  
the talents of all young people. That means that existing  
grammar schools must do more to tackle the issues,  
rather than entrenching advantage and damaging wider  
social mobility. I am very pleased that the Government  
have dropped their plans to open new grammar schools.  
However, they said that they would tackle social mobility  
in existing grammar schools. Figures that I have released  
today show that since 2016, the number of children on  
free school meals in grammar schools has hardly shifted  
at all—it has gone up by just 0.1 percentage point—despite  
calls from Ministers that existing grammar schools should  
increase their intake of low-income children.

In the “Schools that work for Everyone” consultation,  
Ministers said that existing grammar schools needed to  
do more. They are now saying that they feel that they  
have fulfilled that objective and so are dropping plans  
to require existing grammar schools to address the  
issue. If existing grammar schools do not reform their  
admissions and play their part in boosting social  
mobility, they should cease to receive public funding.  
We should be rewarding the schools that do the most  
for pupil progress for the majority of pupils, and that  
narrow the attainment gap, which is why we should  
reform league tables so that they show not just attainment  
but pupil progress, and progress in narrowing the attainment  
gap.

I cannot cover everything in the short time we have.  
Needless to say, huge gaps remain in post-16 education.  
I hope that the new T-levels and quality apprenticeships  
will help to address that, but that will happen only if  
they remain focused entirely on social mobility outcomes  
and people do not get distracted by other agendas. As

others have said, and as the Sixth Form Colleges Association  
and others have shown, post-16 funding in Britain is  
still among the lowest in the OECD. We need to address  
that too.

As we have discussed previously, access to university  
and, crucially, outcomes and access to work beyond  
university remain a huge concern. Too few graduates  
are working in graduate jobs; in fact, we have the third  
lowest level of graduates working in graduate jobs of all  
OECD countries. The only countries behind us in that  
league table are Greece and Estonia. That is a travesty  
and it brings into question whether the debt, and the  
exercise, is worth it. Destinations of graduates and  
others are still most determined not by qualification  
and ability but by networks and social connections.

We could have a whole other debate about regional  
inequalities and how we boost social mobility everywhere.  
The devolution agenda that we all support must also  
have social mobility at its heart.

I know that the Minister will want to tell us why we  
cannot afford any of these plans. I would say that we  
cannot afford not to do them. Our economy and society  
pays a heavy price for people working below their  
ability and for wasted talent and wasted communities.  
The Minister's economics are false economics and will  
end up costing us dear in the long run. Achieving a  
step-change in social mobility for the many, not just the  
lucky few, is the challenge of our time. Opportunity and  
progress for the young, a new deal for left-behind  
communities and a radical rethink on tax and spend  
policies all need reshaping around a new national mission  
to make Britain a world leader in social mobility, not a  
country that sits towards the bottom of the pack, as we  
do today. Although Brexit will dominate and define, I  
am sure that we across the House will all come together  
around that national mission.

2.59 pm

**Paul Masterton** (East Renfrewshire) (Con): I thank  
the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell)  
for securing this important debate. The Government  
have made significant progress on tackling social mobility,  
but we need to do more to remove the barriers that  
stand in people's way. People should not be prevented  
from fulfilling their potential because of their age,  
family circumstance, race, disability, sexuality, postcode  
or simply how much their parents earn. Too often, the  
ladder of opportunity runs out of rungs pretty quickly.  
The Government are already getting on with some of  
that, and we are seeing results. I am sure my hon.  
Friends will want to talk in more detail about that.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware  
that half of 18 to 24-year-olds believe that their destination  
in life is based on their parents' socioeconomic status?  
How depressing is that in the 21st century?

**Paul Masterton:** I am aware of that. The hon. Lady  
may not be aware of this, but in Scotland roughly one in  
five people leaves school and goes straight into the dole  
queue. That is why it is important that we look at both  
Governments' policies on improving social mobility  
and continuing to provide good jobs. The record  
employment under this Conservative Government is so  
important.

45WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

46WH

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I welcome the  
hon. Gentleman to his place as a newly elected Member.  
He is talking about the figures for Scotland, but does he  
recognise that, under the Scottish Government, more  
children are progressing from school to positive destinations  
than ever before? *[Interruption.]*

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Order. A phone just  
went off. Can people keep their phones on mute or  
vibrate?

**Paul Masterton:** I am aware of that, but some of the  
things the Scottish Government consider to be positive  
destinations are things that most people would not  
consider to be so.

The Government are getting on with some of those  
things, but we need to be imaginative in our responses.  
We know that two children with parents on the same  
income and with the same educational qualifications  
will experience different levels of social mobility depending  
on their surroundings. A person is more likely to be  
upwardly mobile if they live in a mixed socioeconomic  
neighbourhood, so how do we create policies that bring  
different parts of the community together and expose  
our children to people with different views, values and  
backgrounds?

More and more people are working atypical hours,  
which often conflict with the opening hours of essential  
public services. If someone does not have a network to  
fall back on or someone to pick their kids up from  
school, they are more likely to drop out of the jobs  
market. If someone struggles to get a doctor's appointment  
around their working hours, they are much less likely to  
get early help for a health problem.

As well as social mobility, we need to talk about  
social exclusion, because the latter is hugely detrimental  
to the former. Of course, a huge driver of social mobility  
is earning power and the confidence and self-reliance  
that comes from being in work. Conservative action to  
supportamodernindustrialstrategy,investininfrastructure,  
provide city deals for places such as the Glasgow city  
region, and cut taxes for small businesses, corporations  
and families alike, is helping to drive employment growth.  
We have more jobs and record employment. More  
low-paid are out of taxation, and the national living  
wage has been introduced. Those things really matter,  
because they broaden opportunity, deliver jobs and  
improve future generations' life chances.

It is true that in-work poverty is too high in Scotland  
and the rest of the UK. There are UK-wide levers, such  
as tax and benefits policy and the national minimum  
wage, but the agenda can be set at a more regional level,  
both by the devolved Administrations—particularly  
Scotland, if there are further transfers of tax and social  
security powers—and by local councils. That should  
not be overlooked. Regional economic development  
can drive up wages and increase the demand for employees  
to work more hours. Skills development can help workers  
move into better-paid jobs, and a focus on economic  
diversification can aid unsatisfied workers change industry.  
For example, the underemployed—people who would  
like more hours but cannot get them—are more likely to  
work in fluid sectors such as hospitality and retail. That  
all helps to motor social mobility, and it must continue  
to form the cornerstone of the policy agenda. The  
Taylor report provides a fantastic opportunity for the

Government to revisit many of the structural issues in  
the modern world of work, and to adapt and create  
policy that takes the new landscape into account.

Although education is devolved, there are things that  
we can learn from each other on both sides of the  
border. I believe that a good education is the single  
biggest social mobility tool we can provide. Much of  
the education debate centres on higher education and  
tuition fees, so I was pleased that the hon. Member for  
Manchester Central focused more on early years, because  
that is key. Many people have been dealt their cards for  
life by the time long before they fill in their UCAS form,  
so if we are serious about social mobility, funding has  
to be ploughed into early years. It is about not just  
increasing hours for three and four-year-olds, which  
most parents cannot access anyway—the Governments  
in Westminster and Edinburgh appear to be in an arms  
race to do that—but investing in high-quality childcare.

The Scottish Conservatives have a distinct voice and  
get it right on that issue. We say, first, that before  
increasing hours for three and four-year-olds, we need  
to extend the current allowance to two-year-olds and  
more disadvantaged one-year-olds; and, secondly, that  
we need to ensure that funding is used to train up a  
morehighlyqualifiedprofessionalworkforce.Earlyyears  
education and childcare need to have a real purpose of  
intent. We must develop literacy and numeracy, which  
are dropping very quickly in Scottish schools, as well as  
social skills, to narrow the divide that is currently so  
wide as to be almost irrecoverable by the time our kids  
walk through the primary school gates. We must bridge  
the gap between the point maternity leave ends and free  
childcare provision begins. We need to understand that  
the driver of social mobility is in those crucial early  
years, when the attainment gap takes root.

Students from the most advantaged areas are four  
times more likely to go to university than those from the  
least advantaged areas in Scotland—it three times more  
likely in Wales and Northern Ireland, which is lower but  
still high, and two and a half times more likely in  
England. That starts right back in nursery. In Scotland,  
the gap in attainment can start as early 18 months.

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend is making a very thoughtful  
contribution to this excellent debate. I completely agree  
with him about the need for investment in early years.  
We need to take a longer-term look at public investment,  
which does not always happen, to ensure the investment  
improves children's life chances from very early on.  
Given that local government budgets in England are  
under a lot of pressure, and that a lot of early years  
funding comes from local authorities, what is his advice  
to the British Government about how to improve things  
in England, drawing on his Scottish learning?

**Paul Masterton:** I have learned that it does not tend  
to go down well when Scottish MPs stick their oar in, so  
English MPs should deal with their own system. There  
have been large local government cuts to the settlements  
in Scotland, which are impacting on services. My hon.  
Friend is absolutely right to talk about the long-term  
view, but unfortunately Governments of all colours in  
all Parliaments around the UK often look for short-term  
quick fixes.

One of the things I am particularly pleased to see  
down here in Westminster is the UK Government's  
focus on technical and vocational education. We have

47WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

48WH

*[Paul Masterton]*

not seen that in Scotland, where there have been huge  
cuts to technical education and more than 150,000  
college places have been cut. The Scottish National  
party and the Scottish Government have decided to  
value academic education over and above technical  
education. That is completely the wrong way to do it. I  
am very excited to see what these changes and reforms  
in the English school system will do. The Scottish  
Government have finally given way a bit on things such  
as Teach First. The hon. Member for Manchester Central  
talked about the London Challenge, which was hugely  
successful, and which we can learn a lot from in Scotland.  
I am very excited to see how some of those reforms play  
out.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)  
*rose—*

**Rishi Sunak** *rose—*

**Paul Masterton:** Ladies first.

**Deidre Brock:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
contribution. He would accept, though, that the Scottish  
Government have very recently announced that they  
will be putting £750 million extra into closing the attainment  
gap.

**Paul Masterton:** I would, but the Scottish Government  
have been in power for 10 years, and they seem only  
now to have decided to make education their priority.  
That has come a bit too late for many families and a lost  
generation of kids who have been in education under  
devolution.

**Rishi Sunak:** My hon. Friend is making an excellent  
speech. I welcome him to his place. I want to touch on  
his comments about technical and further education.  
I have campaigned in this House to ensure parity of  
esteem between those routes and higher education. He  
talked about filling out UCAS forms. I have talked to  
Ministers about the idea of having a UCAS for  
apprenticeships system, which Alan Milburn recommends  
in his report and which was included in the Government's  
industrial strategy. Will my hon. Friend join me in  
welcoming that proposal, which could ensure parity of  
esteem and make it easier for young people to embrace  
a career outside university?

**Paul Masterton:** Absolutely. Just to be controversial,  
I commend the Scottish Government on the work they  
are seeking to do on apprenticeships. They have cottoned  
on to that major issue and are doing some good work  
on that front.

**Catherine McKinnell:** I am pleased that the hon.  
Gentleman raised the issue of apprenticeships. It is  
important that we focus on access to university and  
higher education, but for an awful lot of young people,  
a route into an apprenticeship can unlock their potential.  
I co-chair the all-party group on apprenticeships, and  
we are launching a report today that focuses on what  
the Government can do to increase massively what  
schools and colleges do to promote apprenticeships, to  
ensure that schools are incentivised to send their children  
and young people into apprenticeships rather than just  
the university route. Otherwise, they close up avenues to

young people who would benefit from apprenticeships.  
I encourage the Government to take up some of the  
recommendations in the report.

**Paul Masterton:** The hon. Lady makes me think of  
the number of graduates not going into graduate-entry  
jobs, which the hon. Member for Manchester Central  
mentioned earlier. Partly that is because of the exponential  
rise in the number of graduates, and because the UK  
jobs market has not kept pace with it. That brings us to  
the wider issue of whether there are a lot of people  
going to university whose future potential would be  
best tapped into through another route.

Kids learn differently, so we need to allow them to be  
taught differently. They have different skillsets, so we  
need to have an education system that allows all of  
those skillsets to be nurtured and developed. Ultimately,  
kids have different aspirations and goals and we need to  
ensure that we have guidance and routes in place to help  
every child get to where they want to be, rather than  
being funnelled automatically through to university  
education as a default, which is what happens in a lot of  
schools.

Many have said in the past that poverty is a cost that  
the UK cannot afford. They are right. We need to move  
from treating the symptoms of poverty to treating its  
underlying and fundamental causes. The commission,  
which is a few years old now, found that £4 in every  
£10 was spent on dealing with the causes of poverty  
after they had occurred, not on preventing them. That  
simply wastes bad money.

The Government have a great story to tell, but people  
are ultimately more than numbers on a spreadsheet or  
plots on a graph. Social mobility and the effectiveness  
of the Government's policies are measured just as much  
in how people feel their lives are going on the ground.  
Far too many people feel let down and passed by. It is  
simply not okay for the UK to be a country where it is  
still better to be rich and a bit dim than poor and clever.

What was so important about the Prime Minister's  
first speech outside No. 10 was that, like David Cameron's  
life chances agenda, it understood that, although income  
is crucial, we will not get rid of poverty and improve  
social mobility by lifting income levels alone. We have  
to deal with some of the underlying causes, which  
means that too many people simply do not get a fair  
shot.

It is absolutely vital that, whatever else might be  
going on, the Government go back to the speech and  
put it at the heart of everything they do. If they can do  
that, they can truly tackle the potential sapping prejudices  
people face every day and make a real push on social  
mobility.

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Order. There are five  
speakers. I shall impose a time limit of three minutes  
because of the amount of interest in this debate, and  
because we have to allow time for the Front Benchers to  
wind up.

3.12 pm

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I congratulate my  
hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy  
Powell) on securing this debate. Obviously, party political  
points can be made about funding and the closure of  
Sure Start and children's centres and suchlike but, leaving  
those to one side, I hope the Minister will not be

49WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

50WH

defensive. He was very defensive in responding to one  
or two of the comments made and said, “Oh, this is  
what the Government are doing.” My hon. Friend had  
a powerful message: there is a need for a national  
crusade to tackle inequality and social mobility in our  
country. The various reports that have been mentioned  
have a powerful message. They state that there has been  
progress, but under successive Governments it has been  
slow and the gap between people has increased. It is  
now a national disgrace that, in one of the richest  
countries in the world, life is so unequal and so lacking  
in opportunity for people born into certain situations.  
The Minister needs to respond to that challenge rather  
than say, “This is what we are doing.” There is a time for  
a party political debate, but this is not the right time.

I will explain why I think this issue is so important. I  
started teaching in 1976. After my post-graduate course,  
I was able to choose which school I went to. I had  
studied social background and educational attainment,  
so I chose to go to a school with some of the most  
difficult challenges. The school was in an educational  
priority area. Teachers were paid more money to go  
there and the best people were recruited. If we went  
back to that area now, 40 or so years later, we would  
find that many of the same families are still stuck in a  
state of poverty and low achievement. I am not a  
prophet of doom, but that tells us that that situation  
simply cannot be right. It is simply unacceptable that  
we drive round our cities or our rural areas and can  
almost point to where there is low achievement and low  
aspiration. The challenge to the Government—hopefully  
the next Labour Government—is what are they going  
to do about it? We cannot go back to the policies that  
have not worked or have worked too slowly.

This is difficult for the Minister. We cannot pass a law  
that says there should be good parenting, but some of  
our families and parents need more support. It cannot  
be right that sometimes when a child goes to school or  
nursery, they cannot use a knife and fork. Something is  
wrong and we need to look at how we support families  
to get their children to the point they need to be at to  
enter our schools or our nurseries. We need to get them  
to the point where we can really say social mobility is  
the priority of whatever Government of the day.

3.15 pm

**Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard.  
I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Manchester Central  
(Lucy Powell) for a very thoughtful speech, particularly  
onevaluatingpupilprogressionandoutcomesforgraduates.  
There is much more work we can do in both those areas.  
I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for  
East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) for his excellent  
speech.

Opportunity for all was my calling into politics—we  
all have our own individual callings. I went to a school  
that was at the bottom of the league tables. My father  
died at an early age and I understood the importance of  
opportunity for all, regardless of background. In my  
remaining two and a half minutes, while celebrating the  
fact that record employment has seen youth unemployment  
in my constituency fall by a staggering 61%, which is a  
vitaltoolforhelpingsocialmobility,Ihaveaquickwish  
list of things that I want a proactive and constructive  
Government to deliver.

First, it is welcome that 1.8 million more children are  
in good or outstanding schools, but as a society we need  
to do more to celebrate the very best of teachers: those  
who have made the biggest difference, particularly to  
those from the most challenging backgrounds. We need  
to make more of those really outstanding individuals. I  
amnotbiasedbecausemyfather,grandmaandgrandad  
were all teachers.

We need far more mentors to come into schools,  
engagingthelocalbusinesscommunityandthevoluntary  
sector, because the people who have made a difference  
can inspire young people. I still remember my careers  
teacher telling me I had no chance of getting into  
Parliament, so anything is possible.

I am a big fan of university technical colleges, but  
they have a challenge. The entry level is two years after  
the typical secondary school enrolment, so there is a  
disincentive for secondary schools to suggest their best  
students go there. Perhaps the Government should consider  
lowering the age of entry or share the school league  
table results of the students so that those who are more  
technically minded can embrace their full potential.

I am a huge fan of apprenticeships. I was proud once  
again to attend the graduation ceremony at Swindon  
Collegelastweekwherepeoplefromsomereallychallenging  
backgrounds have started their first step into a successful  
career. I love the idea of the UCAS system, but we need  
to do far more to promote the opportunities of  
apprenticeships to small businesses. The sugar tax is a  
wonderful opportunity to provide constructive sport,  
after-school and holiday activities, which make a difference  
to busy parents as well as providing enjoyment, confidence  
and teamwork skills.

The national citizen service is a brilliant scheme, but  
in recent years I feel the quality of the leadership there  
is not as good as it used to be, so we are missing a trick.  
I am a big fan of the introduction of the named work  
coach in universal credit that will for the first time  
provide support for those in work and not just finding  
work. Finally, on the income divide between the older  
and younger generations, only six Governments since  
the second world war have collected more in taxation  
than they spend. When that does not happen, a further  
burden is put on our children. We must never forget that.

3.18 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Pritchard. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member  
for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing another  
debate on this incredibly important subject. As chair of  
the all-party parliamentary group on social mobility in  
the previous Parliament, I have read with increasing  
alarm the numerous reports produced by the Social  
MobilityCommission.Itsrecentreport,“TimeforChange”,  
wasarealwake-upcall.Asmyhon.Friendsaid,itisthe  
challenge of our time. I was attracted to the idea of  
breaking down recommendations into four life stages,  
but the report shows that unless we get the right measures  
in place at the first stage in the early years, everything  
else becomes much more difficult. Sadly, falling behind  
in those early years is often a portent for one's entire  
life.

Hon. Members have already talked about the  
geographical divide, but there is also a generational one.  
I do not believe that the recent general election was a

51WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

52WH

*[Justin Madders]*

ringing endorsement of the status quo. We saw that the  
more young people engaged with the question of what  
they wanted from the Government, the more they turned  
away from the existing set-up—and who can blame  
them? Do they want to better themselves and study at  
university? There are more opportunities now, but they  
come with an eye-watering debt that might never be  
paid off. Do they want to own a home of their own?  
Unless the bank of mum and dad is there to fall back  
on, it could be a long wait. Do they want to build a  
career in a profession doing something rewarding,  
financially and intellectually? Those opportunities exist,  
but for the few, not the many.

Young people's more likely experience in the job  
market will be casual work, low pay and chronic insecurity.  
As the commission's report highlights, young people's  
wages have fallen by 16%; one in five people in the UK  
are stuck on low pay—a higher proportion than in  
comparable nations—wages have stagnated in real terms,  
leading to falling living standards, particularly for young  
people; and, although youth unemployment has fallen,  
the number of young people who are not in education,  
employment or training has barely changed. The number  
of young people receiving careers advice or work experience  
has fallen, and more new apprenticeships have gone to  
older workers than to younger ones.

As the report suggests, we should adopt what I would  
describe as a “mobility in all” approach, and examine  
every Government policy or proposal for how it would  
improve social mobility. One good example of how we  
are not doing well at that is the Government's decision  
to expand the number of medical school places. The  
all-party parliamentary group's report on access to the  
professions recognised medicine as one of the areas  
in which those from privileged backgrounds are  
disproportionately represented. I recently asked the Minister  
a written question on what steps the Government were  
taking to address that. His response was:

“Funding an additional 1,500 medical school places in England  
will provide more opportunities for people to study”.

Perhaps it will, but without further intervention it is  
more likely just to repeat the pattern of professions  
being dominated by people from fee-paying schools.

However, it is not only on access to professions that  
we need to do more. If the reports that up to a half of  
all jobs will be automated in the next decade are correct,  
we will have to undertake a massive, state-sponsored  
exercise in reskilling the workforce. The world of work  
is changing rapidly. Training and redeployment are  
threads that should run through a person's entire life.  
Three, four or five career changes will be the norm in  
the future, and we are not ready for that.

3.22 pm

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): It  
is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Mr Pritchard.  
The recent work of the Social Mobility Commission,  
which has already been mentioned by a couple of hon.  
Members, was so damning that I rather suspect the  
commission is not long for this world. In two decades  
there has been no real progress: 20 years in which the  
only movement seems to have been backwards. From  
my brief look at the research papers, it appears that  
Scotland is not particularly included in the analysis. I

do not know whether I would have found references to  
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if there had been  
more time, but the report seems mainly to be a body of  
work referring to England. Scotland, of course, has its  
own Government and Parliament, to take forward more  
progressive policies—policies so progressive that Labour  
copied them wholesale in its general election manifesto  
and was then praised for being radical.

Social mobility, however, depends on a lot more than  
the current devolved powers can deliver. It requires easy  
access to social security—a helping hand for people  
who want to make a better life through education and  
perhaps start their own business. It also requires a good  
health service, good housing and a cohesive society. It  
needs opportunities to be available—an economy that  
works in the best interest of us all, rather than just a  
few. It needs the Government to take an attitude that  
encourages new enterprise rather than protecting those  
who already have money. Real social mobility requires  
an expansive, open attitude to the world—the kind of  
attitude that would embrace the EU and immigrants,  
and the opportunities that both bring. Social mobility  
needs parity of esteem between people, which seems to  
me to be in pretty poor supply in this place.

To deal briefly with the commission's research, it said  
that both Tory and Labour Governments have largely  
failed the people they were elected to represent. I was  
particularly taken by what it said about the stalling of  
young people's ambitions or, to put it in brutal capitalist  
terms, the waste of the great resource of youth. Young  
people's wages are lower now than they were in 1997,  
for goodness' sake; they should be building their lives,  
and the economy should benefit from their frittering  
away, if you like, a decent disposable income before they  
get serious financial commitments that eat it all up.  
That is before we consider the damage that carrying a  
huge student loan does to people's prospects.

**Paul Masterton:** First, I am sure that the hon. Lady is  
aware that the rise in low pay is much slower in Scotland  
than in the rest of the UK. Secondly, given than in 2014  
Alan Milburn said that a lack of political debate and  
engagement on social mobility in Scotland meant that it  
was sleepwalking into a social mobility crisis, does she  
accept that perhaps the Scottish Government had other  
things on their mind in about 2014, and that they took  
their eye off the ball in relation to social mobility  
policy?

**Deidre Brock:** I remind the hon. Gentleman that  
youth unemployment is at its lowest rate since records  
began in Scotland—it is the second lowest in the EU—  
that free tuition has been reintroduced and protected,  
so that young people do not start their working lives  
with enormous debts, and that a record number of  
Scots are supported into university. He appears to have  
forgotten those facts.

The proportion of young people not in education,  
employment or training is still at the same level. A  
valuable workforce in England is wasted, sitting on the  
sidelines whiling their lives away. Retention and graduate  
outcomes for disadvantaged students have barely improved.  
Careers advice and work experience opportunities are  
disappearing and apprenticeships go to older rather  
than younger workers. Generation after generation have  
been failed by the paucity of ambition of Governments

53WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

54WH

who thought it more important to curry favour with the  
wealthy and privileged, and left a fabulous resource  
untapped. That is short-sighted at best, and more likely  
cruel and thoughtless. Social progress and social justice  
require social mobility. Governments, Parliaments and  
politicians fail if we do not facilitate that.

3.26 pm

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): I  
think that the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and  
Leith (Deidre Brock) read a different report from the  
one I read, which highlighted both successful and  
unsuccessful policies. We should not finish the debate  
without mentioning one of the most extraordinary  
Ministers I have ever met—Lord Adonis. His work on  
the London challenge is a beacon, showing what can be  
done.

Housing is the largest issue facing my south-west  
London constituency, so I want to mention some housing  
facts. Owning a home is an important part of people's  
feelings of self-worth and success, and social mobility.  
It was the most financially important thing to happen  
to my mum and dad in their lives. That is why it is  
worrying that home ownership among the under-25s  
has dropped by 50%. Even more worryingly for children,  
home ownership rates for 24 to 35-year-olds have reduced  
from 59% to 37%. It strikes me as extraordinary that the  
report suggests that some of the poorest families spend  
31% of their income on housing, because people coming  
to my surgery spend 110% of their income on it. They  
work but are completely dependent on housing benefit  
to pay their rent. As for the people at the top, in 1997  
they spent 13% of their income on their house, whereas  
today they spend 8%.

In 1997 the value of homes in relation to the income  
of their owners was in a ratio of 3.5:1, meaning that  
people could expect to buy a house worth 3.5 times  
their income. Today the ratio is 9.5:1. That is impossible  
to achieve, so we throw families with young children  
into the unregulated and uncontrolled private rented  
sector, where they have not only the monthly fear about  
whether they can clear their rent, but the knowledge  
that they can be evicted simply with a court order. The  
number of families I meet who have children—often  
disabled children—and who move house up to three  
times a year, and the thousands of children currently in  
poor temporary accommodation in the capital, paid for  
out of our taxes, is a ticking time bomb for social  
mobility. I hope that the Minister will discuss housing  
in his response.

3.29 pm

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): It is a pleasure  
to take part in the debate with you in the Chair,  
Mr Pritchard. I congratulate the hon. Member for  
Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing the debate,  
and on her thorough speech. She had ample support  
from this well-populated Chamber.

I want to mention a couple of speeches, including,  
obviously, that of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock), who has  
just taken over as the Scottish National party spokesperson  
on fair work and employment. She made a good speech  
about the situation in Scotland. The hon. Member for  
Gedling (Vernon Coaker) discussed his past as a teacher

and previous initiatives. He is right: social mobility is  
about more than education. In many ways we need to  
address the reasons for children turning up at school in  
an impoverished state. That is something that will be  
important. It is not just a matter of education, although  
that is a driver for improving social mobility. We need  
also to consider why some children arrive at school like  
that. At the end of the day, that comes down to money  
in people's pockets, and we need to address it quickly.

The “State of the Nation 2016” report highlights the  
devastating reality about social mobility in the UK:

“The rungs on the social mobility ladder are growing further  
apart.”

That is having an effect on an entire generation of  
young people. In fact, the Social Mobility Commission  
highlighted the fact that 35% of those aged between  
18 and 24 in the UK believe that social mobility is  
getting worse. We live in a society where those from less  
advantaged backgrounds find it harder and harder to  
advance their social position in the UK. We therefore  
cannot afford to ignore their plight and watch the gap  
widen further.

The Young Women's Trust, already quoted, has shown  
that in the UK more than half of

“young people said they feel worried for the future”.

That includes those who are transitioning from full-time  
education to work, and those who are suffering as a  
result of poor vocational routes. The report from the  
trust continues:

“As a result, young people are struggling to make ends meet,  
unable to move away from home or forced to live in insecure  
accommodation, skipping meals so they can feed their children  
and turning to food banks.”

The UK Government should be absolutely appalled by  
such realities.

The Social Mobility Commission's analysis of the  
lack of mobility in the UK focuses on various life stages  
in which progress has or has not been made: no life  
stage has received a green rating; two are amber, “Early  
Years” and “Schools”; and two are red, “Young People”  
and “Working Lives”. That furthers the emphasis that  
should be placed on progressing the position of young  
people in society, and increasing incomes for all groups  
rather than just some.

The House of Commons Library blog notes that  
young people—those in their 20s in particular—have  
seen their average incomes slump, thereby linking the  
challenges faced by the younger generation to the lack  
of productivity in our economy. Children are told that  
work is the best route to greater success, but how can  
that motivate them when so many see their parents  
struggling day in, day out for low wages, with the worst  
wage growth in 200 years, according to the Resolution  
Foundation, uncertain job security and reductions in  
the tax credits that were designed to help them?

In Scotland, we have seen greater efforts to increase  
social mobility through free tuition fees, increased  
investment in education—in early years in particular,  
and £750 million invested in closing the attainment  
gap—and commitments from the Scottish Government  
to increase early learning and childcare entitlement to  
1,140 hours per year by 2020. Those initiatives all aim  
to give every child the best start in life, regardless of  
their wealth or social background. The importance of  
free tuition fees remains prevalent and a key investment

55WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

56WH

*[Neil Gray]*

in the future of our young people. No child should be  
thwarted of an education through a fear of debt created  
by the harsh tuition fees imposed on students in the rest  
of the UK. We are therefore doing what we can in  
Scotland within the devolved framework.

It is time for the UK Government to step up to the  
mark, using the full suite of their powers. To do so, they  
should examine the UK's position in comparison with  
other countries around the world. A report by the  
Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality highlights  
the fact that social mobility in countries such as Denmark,  
Norway and Finland is far greater than that experienced  
in the UK. Instead, we are likened to and ranked lower  
than the US. *The Economist* has detailed issues with  
social mobility in the US by linking them to education.  
Many elite universities seek to find talent from all  
backgrounds, but the middle class are still left with huge  
debts to repay merely because they want the most  
desirable jobs, most of which require a university degree.  
The ways of US education further the Stanford Centre's  
analysis that

“the American Dream is evidently more likely to be found on the  
other side of the Atlantic, indeed most notably in Denmark”.

Looking to the practices of Scandinavian countries  
and learning from their efforts would ensure that a  
more proactive approach is taken to increase social  
mobility across society, rather than having it focused on  
the privileged few. Denmark in particular invests largely  
in its education, thereby allowing the cognitive skills of  
low-income children to benefit. It is time to invest in  
our services and our people to allow the best outcomes  
for people from all backgrounds to flourish. Right now,  
too many are being stymied by this UK Government's  
policies.

3.33 pm

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): It is  
a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard.  
I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing this  
debate. It follows a debate in the main Chamber that  
she, the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky  
Morgan) and the then Member for Sheffield, Hallam  
secured from the Backbench Business Committee in the  
previous Parliament.

The Government's Social Mobility Commission report,  
“State of the Nation”, told us the scale of the challenge  
we face to improve social mobility in Britain. The  
report told us in no uncertain terms:

“Britain has a deep social mobility problem...We identify four  
fundamental barriers that are holding back a whole tranche of  
low and middle income families and communities in England: an  
unfair education system,a two-tier labour market, an imbalanced  
economy, and an unaffordable housing market.”

That was also referred to by my hon. Friend the Member  
for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh).

The report presented the Government with a number  
of proposals on parenting and early years, schools,  
post-16 education, jobs and housing, yet there is no  
evidence that they have yet listened fully to those proposals,  
let alone made them policy. Will the Minister tell us  
which of the recommendations his Department will  
take forward as policy? For example, on early years, the  
report calls for the Government to:

“Set a clear objective for early years services that by 2025 every  
child is school-ready at five and the child development gap has  
been closed, with a new strategy to increase the availability of  
high-quality childcare to low-income families.”

I welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for  
East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton), who talked in  
particular about early years.

The Minister's Department has made no indication  
that it will adopt such plans. In fact, its policies will do  
quite the opposite. Will the Minister tell us why, instead  
of directing resources towards those who need it most,  
his Department will spend around £1 billion a year on a  
policy of so-called tax-free childcare, which will be of  
greatest benefit to those who have £10,000 to spend on  
childcare? Will the Minister tell us which low-income  
families he knows who have £10,000 to spend, or will  
this be another ditched policy?

Will the Minister tell us why the eligibility criteria for  
the 30 hours of free childcare will actually mean that  
tens of thousands of low-income families are not eligible  
for the extra childcare? I am sure he is growing tired of  
being reminded of promises in the 2015 manifesto that  
are being broken, but the manifesto pledge was clear,  
promising that his party would

“give working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds 30 hours of free  
childcare a week.”

**Mr Goodwill:** On manifesto pledges, will the hon.  
Gentleman clarify the situation on student debt? On  
Sunday, we seemed to get a different message from the  
shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ashton-  
under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), from the one we heard  
during the general election?

**Mike Kane:** First and foremost, that was not in our  
manifesto. In this country, we have about £80 billion of  
student debt stored up, and the Department has already  
estimated that we will not get a third of that back. We  
already have the most indebted students on the planet,  
and at some stage the Government will have to tackle  
that scenario.

The Opposition know the immense importance of  
intervention in the early years to improve the life chances  
of children in Britain. That is why Labour opened more  
than 3,000 Sure Start centres, and increased education  
spending every year that we were in government. In  
this week's spirit of new-found bipartisanship, will the  
Minister follow our example and support the most  
disadvantaged children, as we did in the previous Labour  
Government?

I will briefly address a number of recommendations.  
First and foremost, I remind the Minister that his own  
Social Mobility Commission took a clear view on his  
party's flagship grammar schools policy going into the  
election. The commission said that grammar schools  
would not work. Eventually, however, the electorate  
sunk the policy, and that was sneaked out in a written  
statement while the Secretary of State and the Front-Bench  
team were on the Floor of the House of Commons.

Before the election, we heard a great deal about a  
White Paper. Will the Minister confirm whether we will  
be getting an education White Paper in this Parliament?  
Will he also confirm whether the £500,000 of funding  
pledged for new grammar schools will now start being  
put back into the general schools budget, which is  
under severe pressure, as we all know?

57WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

58WH

We have reached a point at which school budgets  
are facing real-terms cuts for the first time in 20 years.  
The National Audit Office has told us that there will  
be an 8% cut in per pupil education spending over the  
course of this Parliament. That will not help social  
mobility and is flagrantly breaking another clear 2015  
manifesto commitment that the funding following a  
child into schools will be protected. I can see that  
from the Minister's own education authority of North  
Yorkshire, including his fine constituency of Scarborough  
and Whitby. He pointed out to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Manchester Central how many children  
were in better schools, but £28.5 million is being  
taken out of schools in North Yorkshire between now  
and 2021.

Will the Minister therefore do what the Prime Minister  
failed to do when asked about that and explain why  
the Government are breaking another manifesto  
pledge? Cuts to school budgets will make it impossible  
to deliver on many of the Social Mobility Commission's  
recommendations, shift resources towards areas that  
most need them, close the attainment gap and support  
teachers. Teachers continue to leave the profession in  
record numbers. My hon. Friend the Member for  
Manchester Central cited statistics that show that a  
quarter of trained teachers have gone since 2011. I am a  
former teacher myself—brilliant colleagues in Trafford,  
where I worked for many years, are leaving the profession  
because of the real-terms pay cuts over the years, the  
increasing pressures on school budgets, and class sizes,  
which are increasing more and more.

The Government have failed to give even a basic  
response to the recommendations of their own Social  
Mobility Commission. I wish that they would do so. I  
praise my hon. Friends the Members for Ellesmere Port  
and Neston (Justin Madders), for Mitcham and Morden  
and for Gedling (Vernon Coaker), and the hon. Members  
for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) and for  
Airdrie and Shotts (Neil Gray), for their contributions.  
The University of Oxford recently published a report  
about food bank use, in which the Bishop of Durham,  
the Right Rev. Paul Butler, wrote:

“This report highlights the need for all of us to refocus our  
efforts on ensuring that every child is able to reach their full  
potential regardless of their background.”

All Members should make that their motto when talking  
about this issue.

3.41 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Education  
(Mr Robert Goodwill):** I certainly agree with the very  
last thing that the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and  
Sale East (Mike Kane) said; it seems to me that the  
entire House could be united around that comment by  
the Bishop of Durham. I thank the hon. Member for  
Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) for securing the debate;  
I am pleased to have an early opportunity to discuss this  
issue. I will leave a couple of minutes for her to sum up  
at the end, if she would like to.

Education is fundamental to breaking the link between  
a person's background and where they get to in life. It is  
our primary tool for opening up opportunity and giving  
people a chance to go as far as their talents and ambitions  
will take them. The Prime Minister has talked about  
areas in which we can work together, and I hope that  
this is one of those. The hon. Member for Gedling

(Vernon Coaker) was possibly a little churlish; I was  
really only trying to correct one or two facts that might  
have helped the hon. Lady to develop her arguments.

I am grateful to the Social Mobility Commission for  
setting out its views in its recent “Time for change”  
report, and I add my personal thanks to Alan Milburn.  
We welcome the report and recognise its conclusion  
that life chances are too often determined not by someone's  
efforts and talents but by where they come from, who  
their parents are and what school they attend.

At the start of this year, the Secretary of State set out  
three priorities for social mobility. They were tackling  
geographic disadvantage; investing in long-term capacity  
in the education system, and ensuring that that system  
really prepares young people and adults for career  
success. Before I explain how we are delivering against  
those priorities, I should emphasise that we are driving  
opportunity through everything we do. For instance,  
there are now 1.8 million more pupils in good or outstanding  
schools than there were in 2010, including—dare I say  
it—11,043 more in Conservative-controlled North  
Yorkshire, where 73,096 children are in good or outstanding  
schools.

**Mike Kane:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Goodwill:** I will regret it, but I give way.

**Mike Kane:** The Minister mentioned—it was a Minister's  
“microphone moment”—1.8 million pupils. May I point  
out that those exact pupils were identified in 2010 by a  
Labour Government as being in coasting schools? The  
resources were put in, and this Government picked the  
low-hanging fruit. The Government say that more pupils  
are taught in good schools, but if that is so, why are our  
programme for international student assessment scores  
going down in international comparison?

**Mr Goodwill:** I disagree. As some of the primary  
school results that recently came out show, we are  
making real progress, certainly in key subjects such as  
maths and English. I am sure that we all welcome the  
tremendous impact that that will have on young people's  
life chances.

**Rishi Sunak:** I could not resist intervening, as my  
hon. Friend mentioned North Yorkshire schools. As a  
North Yorkshire MP, he will be aware that the current  
funding formula disadvantages pupils in North Yorkshire  
to the tune of hundreds of pounds relative to similar  
pupils in other areas around the country. Will he urge  
the Secretary of State to continue her work to correct  
that unfairness in the funding formula and find a positive  
solution for students in his constituency, in my constituency  
and across the country?

**Mr Goodwill:** My hon. Friend makes a valid point.  
When I was first elected, I visited a school in one of the  
most deprived areas of my constituency. The head, who  
had come from another part of the country, said, “If we  
were in the middle of Rotherham, Bradford or Hull, we  
would be getting about 30% more money because of the  
school funding formula.” People in North Yorkshire  
certainly look forward to that being addressed.

As well as increasing school quality, we are strengthening  
the teaching profession, opening up access to higher  
education, transforming technical education, delivering  
3 million apprenticeship places and investing in careers  
education. Beyond that progress, the Department is

59WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

60WH

*[Mr Goodwill]*

delivering against its social mobility priorities in several  
specific ways. We are tackling geographic disadvantage  
by focusing efforts on supporting specific areas that  
face the greatest challenges and have the fewest  
opportunities. We are investing £72 million in 12 opportunity  
areas—social mobility “cold spots” where the Department  
is working with a range of local partners to break the  
link between a person's background and their destination.  
Those areas face some of the most entrenched challenges,  
as described in the Social Mobility Commission's index  
last year.

Our approach goes beyond what the Department for  
Education and central Government can do alone; it  
extends to local authorities, schools, academy sponsors,  
local and national businesses, local enterprise partnerships,  
further education colleges, universities and the voluntary  
sector. Through that process, we will not just build  
opportunity now but lay the foundations for future  
generations. I was in Oldham on Thursday, and I was  
particularly impressed by the ambition and motivation  
in that opportunity area. Indeed, I am no stranger to  
some of the challenges in such areas—one of them is in  
my constituency. Hon. Members will note that that  
opportunity area had already been designated when I  
took on my current role.

Tackling geographic disadvantage is important, but  
so is investing in the long-term capacity of the education  
system. We are absolutely clear that some of the biggest  
improvements in social mobility can be achieved by  
deploying high-quality teaching. Contrary to what the  
hon. Member for Manchester Central said in her opening  
remarks, we have more teachers in our schools than ever  
before. There are now more than 457,000 teachers in  
state-funded schools throughout England, which is 15,500  
more than in 2010.

**Lucy Powell:** I know that I will have a moment to sum  
up at the end, but just for the record, although we may  
have more teachers than ever before, there are also  
many more pupils than ever before. In relative terms,  
there is a chronic teacher supply issue.

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Order. Just for the  
record, there is no guarantee that the hon. Lady will  
have time at the end. The Minister might wish to give  
her two minutes to wind up, but it is entirely in his gift.

**Mr Goodwill:** I indicated that I was happy to give the  
hon. Lady a couple of minutes to get her own back on  
me if she needs to, Mr Pritchard.

More than 14,000 former teachers came back to the  
classroom in 2016, which is the last year we have data  
for. That is an 8% increase since 2011. Although having  
more teachers is important for everyone, it is also essential  
to focus on how we support the learning of the most  
disadvantaged children if we are to improve social  
mobility. We continue to provide the pupil premium,  
which is worth around £2.5 billion this year, but we  
want to ensure that that funding actually benefits the  
most disadvantaged, so we are also investing £137 million  
through the Education Endowment Foundation to expand  
the evidence base for what works for disadvantaged  
pupils.

**Neil Gray:** I made the point, which was supported by  
the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) from his  
experience of teaching and of previous initiatives, that  
we will see proper social mobility only if we understand  
and tackle the reasons why children arrive at school  
impoverished. Does the Minister agree that that is one  
of the fundamental ways we will change the social  
mobility crisis in this country?

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right.  
That is why the work of the Education Endowment  
Foundation is so important in determining what early  
interventions actually work in improving the home learning  
environment for the many children who, as we have  
heard, arrive at school without knowing how to hold a  
knife and fork and, in some cases, not even potty-trained.

We are focusing on geographic inequality and we are  
building capacity. Our third priority is to ensure that the  
system prepares young people and adults for career  
success and encourages them to aim high. As was  
mentioned, we are taking steps to improve careers education  
and guidance for all ages. We are investing more than  
£70 million this year to support young people and  
adults to access high-quality careers provision. The  
Careers & Enterprise Company will ensure that every  
secondary school in each opportunity area has an enterprise  
adviser and delivers four encounters with the world of  
work for every young person. That will focus the whole  
education community in areas of the country where  
social mobility is lowest. We have also developed and  
expanded traineeships for under-25s, which give young  
people the skills and experience needed to progress to  
apprenticeships or sustainable employment.

We are delivering against our commitment to social  
mobility, but of course more must be done. We know  
that too often a child's life chances are determined by  
where he or she comes from, and we understand that  
not everybody can access the opportunities available to  
them. In the early years, we must continue to work to  
ensure that all children are school-ready by the age of  
five. In schools, we must ensure that all children benefit  
from a rigorous academic curriculum and excellent  
teachers.

Beyond school, we must ensure that young people  
have the opportunity to pursue whatever route they  
choose. We must therefore continue to reform technical  
education to ensure that people have the skills they need  
to succeed in the world of work, and we must continue  
to provide the opportunity for disadvantaged young  
people to go to top-performing universities.

I am well aware of the point raised in the debate  
about UTCs taking children at the age at 14. Some  
children do not want to leave their friends at secondary  
school, and sometimes schools actively discourage children  
from leaving to go a UTC, even if the abilities and  
aspirations of that child would be best served in a UTC.  
We have a successful UTC in my constituency, working  
with local employers who are keen to have people  
leaving the UTC job-ready. Indeed, many see  
apprenticeships as the fast route into employment without  
the debt and problems that a university education can  
bring.

Throughout and after education, we must ensure that  
we equip young people with a high-quality careers  
advice offer so that every person can make an informed  
decision on their future. However, despite its pivotal

61WH

Social Mobility

11 JULY 2017

Social Mobility

62WH

role, education alone cannot transform social mobility.  
Improving social mobility requires support from all  
parts of society, including Government, employers and  
civic society. Success has the potential to benefit society  
hugely, as we heard in the debate. Work by Boston  
Consulting Group and the Sutton Trust suggests that  
greater levels of social mobility could add £14 billion a  
year to GDP by 2030 and £140 billion by 2050. That is  
why we are building much wider collaboration.

On 21 June, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of  
State spoke at the launch of the social mobility employer  
index. Employers naturally want the best talent, and the  
best employers are already taking steps to ensure that  
they draw their new recruits from a wider pool. That  
can include engaging young people in schools, introducing  
recruitment practices that prioritise potential, creating  
new routes to progression and promotion, and opening  
up alternative ways in through apprenticeships. The  
index showcases great work, including from Government  
and other public sector employers, and we hope that  
even more firms will sign up next year.

The Government are making significant progress on  
social mobility. Let me turn briefly to issues raised  
during the debate before I leave time for the hon.  
Member for Manchester Central. I congratulate and  
welcome my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire  
(Paul Masterton). I endorse the comments he made in  
his contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for North  
Swindon (Justin Tomlinson) made some thoughtful  
suggestions from experience, and he raised the point I  
made about UTCs.

The hon. Member for Manchester Central talked  
about maintained nurseries, which have a vital role.  
They are often in some of our most deprived areas—there  
is one in my constituency that does brilliant work—and  
because of the qualifications of the staff, it is more  
expensive to deliver such provision. Only about 1% of  
children attend that type of school, but in many ways  
they are the most needy children. She asked about how  
much extra we provided. Average funding has increased  
from £5.09 an hour to £5.39 an hour, and supplementary  
funding of £55 million a year has been made available  
for those schools until 2019-20. We listened to concerns  
and have responded.

The vexed issue of grammar schools was raised during  
the debate. As the hon. Lady may have noticed, there is  
no education Bill in the Queen's speech, so the ban on  
opening new grammar schools will remain in place. We  
were encouraged by the number of selective schools  
that came forward voluntarily to improve their admissions  
arrangements in response to the “Schools that work for  
everyone” consultation. We will continue to work with

our partners in the sector to ensure that more children  
from low-income backgrounds can go to grammar schools.

Points were raised about the attainment gap between  
disadvantaged pupils and their peers—which, I have to  
say, has been virtually eliminated in grammar schools.  
The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and  
their classmates in selective schools is 1.7 percentage  
points, compared with eight percentage points in all  
schools. However, I reassure the hon. Lady and the hon.  
Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike Kane)  
that I am no grammar school fundamentalist myself.

I am enormously grateful to the hon. Member for  
Manchester Central for the support she has given to  
this agenda today. She raised important concerns, and I  
hope she is happy that those concerns are at the forefront  
of our work. Social mobility is vital. We know that  
education plays a fundamental role in that, and we will  
continue to build on what we are already doing by  
working closely with employers and other partners. The  
benefits to be gained by the agenda are significant, and  
the more society as a whole can support it, the better.

3.55 pm

**Lucy Powell:** I thank the Minister for his wind-up  
speech and for allowing me a short moment to thank  
those who have spoken in the debate. There have been  
some really thoughtful speeches and much agreement  
across the Chamber. I hope that that spirit can continue  
in these debates.

As ever, there were fantastic and important speeches  
from my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Vernon  
Coaker), from my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere  
Port and Neston (Justin Madders) as the chair of the  
all-party parliamentary group on social mobility, and  
from my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and  
Morden (Siobhain McDonagh), who raised some important  
points. I could also agree with almost the entire speeches  
of the hon. Members for East Renfrewshire (Paul  
Masterton) and for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson).  
I thank them for their contributions.

The turnout for the debate shows that there is a huge  
appetite to get cross-party agreement on these issues. I  
hope that that continues over the coming months, and  
that social mobility becomes part of a national mission  
we can all get behind so that we can really create the  
equal and fair society we all aspire to.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Government policies on social  
mobility.

63WH

11 JULY 2017

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS  
Trust

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

3.58 pm

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the future of the Worcester  
Acute NHS Trust.

It is a great pleasure to be here under your chairmanship,  
Mr Hollobone. I am grateful for the opportunity to  
raise this matter, a cause of deep concern and worry for  
the people of Redditch and the surrounding area.

As this is a day on which health is being discussed in  
this place, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the  
hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana  
Johnson) for her tireless work on behalf of the victims  
of the contaminated blood scandal. I have a constituent  
in Redditch who has contacted me, even in my first few  
weeks of serving as a Member of Parliament, and I  
know that they and other victims will welcome the  
inquiry announced today.

The Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust caters  
for a population of between 420,000 and 800,000 people.  
Referrals from GP practices outside of Worcestershire  
currently make up 13% of the trust's market share. That  
clearly shows that the trust is under immense pressure  
to provide care to a huge number of widely dispersed  
people.

I will focus on the Alexandra Hospital in my constituency  
of Redditch. It serves approximately 200,000 people, is  
the county's centre for urology services, and has eight  
operating theatres, MRI and CT scanners and cancer  
unit status. It may appear on paper that the hospital is  
well resourced. However, the Care Quality Commission's  
most recent report, published in June this year, rated the  
Alex and the trust overall as inadequate, which is clearly  
a highly distressing situation. As a result, the trust is in  
special measures until further review, a status it has  
remained in since its initial inspection in November  
2015.

Despite that status, I welcome that the trust is rated  
as good overall for its care. Feedback from patients,  
their families and friends is exceptionally positive in  
terms of their being treated with kindness, dignity and  
respect. My constituents in Redditch have often told me  
of their great personal experiences at the Alex.

**Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): I  
congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. As  
a fellow Worcestershire MP, I agree wholeheartedly  
with her comments. While there are many concerns  
about our local hospitals, not a week goes by in which I  
do not get letters and calls from people saying how  
positive their experiences at them were. While a lot of  
things need to change, we should also recognise the  
hard work and dedication of many of the staff, who  
provide excellent service much of the time.

**Rachel Maclean:** I wholeheartedly agree with my  
hon. Friend's remarks. I am grateful to the Minister for  
his generosity in giving up his time to attend today, but I  
have some key questions for him. While a number of  
factors led to the trust being in this situation—the

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS 64WH

Trust

debate does not have the scope to allow me to describe  
them all—what is important to my constituents is what  
the Department and other responsible bodies are doing  
to plan for the future. We want the trust to come out of  
special measures as quickly as possible.

A related but somewhat separate issue is the consultation  
on the future of acute hospital services in Worcestershire.  
The review of services in the trust began in January  
2012 when clinicians across Worcestershire raised concerns  
about whether they could safely deliver services due  
staff shortages. Those shortages meant that services  
had to be concentrated and centralised, owing to the  
provision being too small at each of the Worcestershire  
hospitals. Initial temporary emergency changes—births,  
complex emergency surgery, in-patient children's services,  
emergency surgery on children and emergency gynaecology  
moved from the Alex to the Worcestershire Royal  
Hospital—have now become permanent. Those changes  
will be the subject of the consultation proposals put to  
the board of the three Worcestershire clinical commissioning  
groups for approval tomorrow.

As hon. Members will understand, those two wide-  
ranging issues when taken together have been highly  
emotive for my constituents, as well as for Members for  
the rest of Worcestershire. The “Save the Alex” campaign  
in my constituency has gained huge community support,  
and I have nothing but respect for the dedication and  
commitment of those campaigners, led by Neal Stote  
and many others, who have campaigned extremely hard  
for more than 11 years. They have kept the Alex at the  
forefront of public debate in our area, and I look  
forward to working closely with them in future in the  
best interests of the people of Redditch and the whole  
community.

In their proposals, the CCGs told us that there are  
not enough staff or local demand to maintain services  
at the Alex. I understand that the Worcestershire Royal  
is a busy, modern hospital with an interesting caseload  
that is attractive to consultants and specialist neonatal  
nurses who want to develop their skills. I have also  
learned that the Meadow Birth Centre at Worcestershire  
Royal is fantastic. Since the transfer of maternity services,  
emergency C-section rates have dropped from 32.6% to  
less than 25%, meaning fewer expectant mums being  
rushed down corridors and more relaxed births. Having  
given birth four times myself, and having been a National  
Childbirth Trust worker, I am somewhat of an expert  
on birth, and I know that local women are fortunate to  
have access to that wonderful care.

I accept that the Worcestershire Royal provides the  
safest and best care for the women of Redditch and  
their babies, but we cannot ignore the fact that  
Worcestershire is a rural county and that Redditch has a  
very low level of car ownership. In fact, it is one of the  
lowest in the country, with one in five Redditch households  
having no access to a vehicle. Not owning a car or  
driving will be a cause of great stress in times of  
emergency, and for those who want to visit loved ones  
who have just given birth in Worcester, it will present  
difficulties if travelling with young children in tow.  
Additionally, I have heard from my constituents that,  
when they arrive at Worcestershire Royal, the facilities  
are sometimes not quite set up for their needs.

During the general election campaign, and now as a  
newly elected MP, I have talked to thousands of local  
people who have brought up the Alex time and again—I

65WH *Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS*

*Trust*

have received numerous messages, emails, phone calls  
and comments on my Facebook and Twitter channels  
on this topic. Hon. Members will be able to imagine  
that, at every door I knocked on, the constituent said,  
“Let me tell you what the number one issue in Redditch  
is.” I already knew the answer: the Alex.

One young mum broke down in tears during my visit.  
She said that she had moved to Redditch specifically for  
the Alex, and had given birth to her first son there—a  
young lad who was now four. She suffers from a condition  
that means she is at high risk when in labour, needing  
almost immediate access to maternity services or her  
life would be at risk. She is therefore unwilling to fall  
pregnant again, even though she would like a second  
child. I find that situation tragic. While I have reassured  
her that our West Midlands Ambulance Service is the  
best in the country and would be able to transport her  
safely if needed, I would be grateful for confirmation  
from my hon. Friend the Minister that conditions such  
as hers have been taken into account in the clinical  
decision-making process.

Another problem that people raise with me is the rate  
of growth of Redditch as a town—it grew by more than  
7% between 2001 and 2011. There must be something in  
the water in Redditch, because in 2012 there were  
18,800 children, which is more than 22% of Redditch's  
total population. It is a young and growing town with a  
lot of young people and children. On top of that, there  
are plans for new houses in areas such as Webheath.  
People are naturally worried that services at both the  
Alex and the Worcestershire Royal will not be able to  
cope in future, so I would be grateful if my hon. Friend  
the Minister confirms that he has considered the projected  
rise in the population when making decisions on  
commissioning services in Redditch, which serve the  
populations of both Redditch and Worcester.

Specifically, will the Minister tell me at what level of  
population, and births-per-head in the population, he  
would review maternity service provision in an area? I  
have also questioned the Secretary of State on that  
point. Will the Minister commit to call for a review  
when the population reaches that level? Can he also give  
examples of comparable areas in the country that have  
successfully transferred maternity services to a neighbouring  
town or area, so that the people of Redditch do not get  
the sense that they are being unfairly singled out? My  
constituents would particularly like to know why services  
were centralised in Worcester instead of Redditch, and  
whether that process was carried out fairly and with all  
due process.

Another extremely worrying fact is the winter pressures  
faced in Worcester. The BBC reported in January 2017  
that three patients died at Worcestershire Royal over the  
winter period after waiting on trollies for lengthy periods,  
which has been quoted back to me many times by  
residents. I heard, and continue to hear, many stories of  
people waiting on trollies in corridors for lengthy periods  
and in dirty conditions. I join my hon. Friend the  
Member for Mid Worcestershire (Nigel Huddleston) in  
recognising the dedication of our NHS staff—the hard-  
working doctors and nurses doing their absolute best in  
such conditions—but the root cause of this problem lies  
not with them, but with a failure of leadership that goes  
back some time. That is not good enough. I call on my  
hon. Friend the Minister to provide much-needed  
assurances that robust and effective plans are in place to  
provide much better care for next winter.

11 JULY 2017

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS 66WH

Trust

As I previously alluded to, transport to Worcester is  
of huge concern to my constituents—my hon. Friend  
the Minister will find it challenging to drive between  
Worcester and Redditch on the M5 if he is unlucky  
enough to be stuck in traffic. What assurances can he  
give me that, if an ambulance providing transport in the  
event of an emergency transfer from Redditch to Worcester  
is unlucky enough to be held up in traffic, it will be able  
to care for a critically ill patient, baby, child or mum in  
labour? That is a priority for me and my constituents.

Although I am delighted that there is a free shuttle  
bus from the Alex to the Worcester Royal, I would like  
the Minister to join me in calling on the responsible  
authorities to ensure the sustainability and extension of  
that service. It could then serve more areas by making  
more stops over the diverse area that our county covers,  
as well as being more flexible and publishing its services  
more effectively. A lot of people in Redditch do not  
know about that valuable service, as I saw for myself  
when I knocked on doors in the election campaign.

The Minister will understand that one of the most  
difficult and emotive subjects is the treatment of critically  
ill children. Given the removal of accident and emergency  
care services for under-16s at Redditch, can he confirm  
that the new urgent care centre proposed for Redditch  
will be staffed 24 hours a day? What type of conditions  
will be treated there, and which cases will need to be  
transferred to Worcester? Can he confirm that, if children  
need to be treated in the urgent care centre, there will be  
enough fully trained staff to treat children, given that  
they are mainly serving an adult A&E population? Can  
he give any idea of the timescale for opening that urgent  
care centre?

One key problem identified by the CQC was leadership.  
I am very pleased that the trust has a new permanent  
leadership team, including a new chairman and a new  
chief executive. My Worcestershire colleagues—my hon.  
Friends the Members for Mid Worcestershire, for West  
Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), for Wyre Forest (Mark  
Garnier) and for Worcester (Mr Walker), and my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid)—and  
I will meet regularly with the trust's new chief executive,  
Michelle McKay, whom I have already met.

I welcome the reaffirmed commitments that the Minister  
of State, Department of Health, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne) and the Secretary of  
State made to me of a £29 million investment in the  
Worcester and Alex Hospital sites, if the business case is  
approved this week by the CCG board. I would be most  
grateful to have more detail on what that will involve,  
when we will see it and what benefits it will deliver to  
Redditch.

What conversations has the Minister had with, and  
what support has he given to, the trust's leadership team  
to ensure that the new chief executive can swiftly transition  
the trust out of special measures? Specifically, can he  
confirm what conversations his Department has had on  
the critical issue of staff morale? Low staff morale has  
in the past led to high staff attrition at the Alex, as I  
heard at first hand during the election campaign from a  
number of former and current staff members at the  
Alex. That has a knock-on effect on service delivery. I  
know from my experience of running a business that if  
staff are not happy and do not feel valued, it is impossible  
to achieve a good outcome in an organisation, no  
matter how much investment and resources are put  
into it.

67WH Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS 11 JULY 2017 Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS 68WH

Trust Trust

**Nigel Huddleston:** I thank my hon. Friend for giving  
way again. Does she agree that low morale and any  
hospital being in special measures has a knock-on effect  
on recruitment, because people are a bit more reluctant  
to start or pursue their careers in those hospitals? The  
challenges that that brings need to be addressed.

**Rachel Maclean:** My hon. Friend touches on the key  
point of recruitment, which my colleagues and I, and  
himself, have raised with the new trust leadership. The  
trust has brought forward some interesting and exciting  
measures to address that, such as a new Facebook  
recruitment video. We look forward to seeing how that  
progresses and delivers more staff into this much-needed  
trust.

I am extremely grateful for the Minister's interest in  
this matter and for being granted the time to discuss it. I  
am especially grateful for the commitment shown during  
the general election campaign by his colleague the Minister  
of State, who visited me in Redditch. I call on him to lay  
to rest the pernicious rumour circulating in Redditch  
that our hospital is at risk of further downgrades or  
even closure. I am aware, as are some of my constituents,  
of the Naylor report, which contains in its numerous  
pages—they are too numerous to mention—proposals  
for selling unused NHS land to build affordable housing  
for NHS workers. That seems to me to be an eminently  
sensible suggestion, given the shortage of affordable  
housing in our country and the need for affordable  
homes for our public sector workers.

Some of my constituents have found suggestions in  
the report's pages—suggestions that I have not personally  
been able to find, despite assiduous reading over a  
number of hours, which I can confirm is a great insomnia  
cure, should the Minister be interested—that the Alex  
Hospital might be sold off for building land. I would be  
grateful for his confirmation that no suggestion is hidden  
in the small print of the report or elsewhere in any  
Government document that the Alex Hospital faces  
that fate.

As the Minister has been so generous in attending  
this debate, I would like him to go further by guaranteeing  
my constituents that Redditch will have a hospital that  
serves its population and is fit for the size of the town  
both now and in the future. Thank you, Mr Hollobone,  
for allowing me time to make my points. I look forward  
to hearing from the Minister.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** It was a pleasure,  
and I congratulate the hon. Lady on her address. I call  
the Minister.

4.15 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health  
(Steve Brine):** Thank you very much, Mr Hollobone.  
First, I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for  
Redditch (Rachel Maclean); the Minister of State, my  
hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), who  
is responsible for hospitals, is on the Front Bench in the  
main Chamber taking part in the important debate on  
contaminated blood, to which she rightly referred. He  
has sent me in his place, so I hope I will do.

I will attempt to answer many, if not all, of the  
questions that my hon. Friend asked in the 15 minutes  
or so that I have. I congratulate her on securing the  
debate and on her recent election. I knew her predecessor  
well, and as she graciously said in her maiden speech,

she is some act to follow. She is a lovely person and I  
hope that she is doing well—I am sure that my hon.  
Friend is in touch with her.

Most of all, I congratulate my hon. Friend on the  
way she has tackled this issue in the short time she has  
been here and brought what she said on the campaign  
trail into the House of Commons and its various  
Committees—hitting the ground running would be an  
understatement. That is exactly why the people of Redditch  
placed their trust in her, and she is already a credit to  
them. I was in the House for her maiden speech, so I  
heard her refer to these issues and to the Alex in great  
detail. It reminded me of someone not so far from  
where I am standing now, who came to this House seven  
years ago and said that the future of Winchester's  
hospital would be his priority. I have tried to stick to  
that, as I am sure she will to hers. I have not seen a  
family quite so proud as hers, sitting up top to watch  
her make her maiden speech. I think her children and  
partner were there, and it was great to see.

I understand that my hon. Friend is deeply concerned  
about the performance of local health services at  
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, which has  
been in special measures since December 2015. On her  
first key question, I can reassure my hon. Friend and  
her constituents that Ministers keep a very—I emphasise  
“very”—close watch on performance at this trust and  
all trusts through the role of the chief inspector of  
hospitals, Sir Mike Richards. The Secretary of State put  
that in place, and it has made an enormous difference.  
My hon. Friend will know that, as she was able to join  
the Minister of State on his recent visit to the Alexandra  
Hospital during the campaign.

The recent CQC inspection report is clearly of great  
concern to my hon. Friend and to us, but I understand  
that the Minister of State was reassured to meet the  
trust's new chief executive twice since her arrival from  
Australia at the end of March. She now has a substantive  
team in place for the first time in many years, and we  
know from experience that strengthening the leadership  
team is a significant step towards taking any trust out of  
special measures.

NHS Improvement has taken active steps to help  
drive improvement at the trust. That includes bringing  
in Birmingham Children's Hospital, South Warwickshire  
NHS Foundation Trust and Coventry and Warwickshire  
Partnership NHS Trust to help address key areas of  
weakness and provide strategic, mentoring and practical  
support. An improvement director is also in place. That  
is the very least we expect, and I am pleased to report  
that it is happening.

Let me turn now to winter pressures. The Department  
has agreed to Worcestershire Acute NHS Trust's bid for  
£920,000 of capital funding for primary care streaming  
in A&E. That funding is intended to ensure that the  
trust has appropriate facilities in place for this winter,  
and I strongly encourage the trust to spend the funding  
as quickly as possible, within the constraints of good  
governance, so that it is ready for when the weather  
turns.

That capital investment is one part of the urgent and  
emergency care plan being implemented across the NHS  
this year to recover A&E performance during 2017-18.  
The intention of the national plan is to redirect patient  
activity to primary and community care through GP  
streaming, GP weekend and evening appointments, and

69WH *Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS*

*Trust*

supported discharge and re-ablement in people's homes.  
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust will benefit  
from these efforts to improve performance on delayed  
transfers of care—DTOC is one of the acronyms I have  
had to get to grips with in the past three years—as will  
other trusts.

Let me set the review of acute services, which my  
hon. Friend rightly mentioned, in the context of the  
Herefordshire and Worcestershire sustainability and  
transformation partnership. This represents a landmark  
attempt to address long-standing challenges to the provision  
of emergency care across the county, and to ensure  
sustainable A&E services and all other health services,  
because—we do not say this often enough—we are one  
NHS for the long-term future. The review of acute  
services has been incorporated within the STP, which is  
right. A draft was published in November 2016 and  
public consultation ran between January and March  
2017. I will briefly outline the proposals.

The revised model would see 95% of patients experiencing  
no change in the way they access services in Worcestershire  
and all three of the county's acute hospitals remaining  
open. Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust would  
also retain its two A&E departments at Worcester and  
Redditch and the minor injuries unit at Kidderminster.  
Worcestershire Royal Hospital would become a specialist  
centre to support emergency and complex care, and the  
Alex in Redditch would provide more planned care.

Under NHS England's proposals, both A&E  
departments, at the Alex and at Worcestershire Royal,  
would remain open 24 hours a day. However, due to the  
transfer of in-patient children's beds, the A&E at the  
Alex would be for adults only. Both the Alexandra and  
Worcestershire Royal Hospitals would have new 24-hour  
co-located urgent care centres, which would treat adults  
and children with minor and moderate illnesses and  
injuries.

I must emphasise that no decision has yet been made  
regarding these proposals. As my hon. Friend said, the  
governing bodies of the three Worcestershire clinical  
commissioning groups will hold a meeting in public  
tomorrow, when they will each consider the decision-making  
business case and then make a decision on the  
recommendations. Depending on the outcome of that  
meeting—I have a funny feeling my hon. Friend will  
attend—the next step would be for the trust to go to  
NHS Improvement for approval of its outline business  
case. If successful, the next stage would be to commence  
procurement for the work and to take forward  
implementation of the clinical model. Suffice it to say, it  
would of course have to have clinical support in line  
with the five tests that we and NHS England have now  
set out for any service change.

I am encouraged to learn that the trust is progressing  
its plans for a £29 million investment in improved  
facilities at Worcester and Redditch Hospitals, in addition  
to the almost £1 million awarded following the Budget  
to improve patient streaming for those attending A&E.  
It is proposed that this money should be used to improve  
the operating theatres at the Alex so that the hospital  
can be developed into a centre of excellence for planned  
surgery, to develop a women's centre at the Alex, to  
increase the number of beds at Worcestershire Royal, to  
provide a new children's outpatient department at the  
Alex, to improve endoscopy facilities at the Alex and to  
improve the ever-thorny problem of car parking at

11 JULY 2017

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS 70WH

Trust

Worcestershire Royal. I believe that the Worcester and  
Redditch are strong contenders for that proposed new  
investment funding, and my hon. Friend has made an  
extremely strong case for her constituency.

Let me touch on the Naylor report, which my hon.  
Friend mentioned—I have quite a lot of reading at the  
moment, but I will take seriously her advice about the  
insomnia cure that it provides. I assure her that I am not  
aware of any plans to dispose of the Alexandra Hospital.  
It does not propose closing any specific hospitals; it  
merely refers to where space and land can be released  
while continuing to deliver services. As my hon. Friend  
knows, the Naylor review was independent. Its report  
was prepared for the Department of Health and published  
in March 2017. As she would expect, my hon. Friend  
the Minister of State is considering its recommendations  
carefully and will respond fully in due course on behalf  
of the Government.

My hon. Friend rightly mentioned staff recruitment  
and retention, so I will touch on the problems that the  
trust has faced in recruiting staff, especially at senior  
levels, and its resulting reliance on interim and agency  
staff. The trust has a new chief executive and leadership  
team in place. We have found from the experience of  
many other hospitals that have been in special measures  
that low morale and high levels of attrition are usually  
never about staff commitment; they are about getting  
the right leadership in place, which is why I place such  
emphasis on the new chief executive and her team. My  
right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saw outstanding  
commitment from the trust's staff when he visited the  
Alex and the Royal last month.

Let me turn to my hon. Friend's concern about  
maternity services, which always touch the heart strings  
more than other hospital services. I of course recognise  
the strength of feeling in Redditch and, in particular,  
the concern about travel times to Worcestershire Royal.  
All hospital births in Worcestershire were moved on a  
temporary emergency basis from the Alex to the  
Worcestershire Royal in 2015 due to staff shortages.  
The safety of patients must rightly be our prime concern  
and I understand that the trust ran extensive recruitment  
campaigns for additional staff before this temporary  
decision was made. Worcestershire's maternity services  
form part of the review of acute services, which must be  
right.

The CCGs' published decision-making business case  
makes it clear that Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS  
Trust must review the scheduling of its outpatient  
appointments and operations to take account of patients'  
travel needs and individual circumstances, and that the  
CCGs and the trust should work together with community  
transport providers in Worcestershire to provide an  
enhanced transport service between the Alex and the  
Worcestershire Royal. Decisions regarding those proposals  
are expected to be made by the governing bodies of the  
three CCGs at tomorrow's meeting. I encourage my  
hon. Friend—I do not think I need to encourage her  
too much—to support the CCGs to agree a plan at that  
meeting.

Engagement with staff and local people must continue  
to influence and refine plans at every stage of the  
process. That is a key principle in the local reconfiguration  
of services, and it is dead right that the process is guided  
by those who best know and understand the local area,  
which of course includes the clinical support I mentioned.

71WH *Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS  
Trust*

*[Steve Brine]*

In conclusion, I totally appreciate the concerns that  
my hon. Friend has set out so eloquently today, and I  
commend her once again for her work in such a short  
time in the House on local healthcare issues affecting  
her constituents and her own family, as she said in her  
maiden speech. I encourage her and her constituents to  
maintain an open dialogue with the local NHS, which  
they are doing, and I assure her that Ministers will  
continue to monitor the trust's performance very closely.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11 JULY 2017

72WH

Leaving the EU: Disabled People's  
Services

4.28 pm

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and  
Lesmahagow) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered consultation with disabled  
people on the effect on their services of the UK leaving the EU.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship,  
Mr Hollobone. I start by thanking Disability Rights  
UK for its support while I was preparing for today's  
debate and for the excellent work that it continues to do  
on the impact of Brexit on disabled groups.

The Brexit debate in Parliament has to date focused  
largely on trade, access to markets and business objectives.  
Little has been said about the type of society we wish to  
be after Brexit, and even less about the impact of Brexit  
on groups in society such as disabled people and on  
their daily services and human rights. Today's debate in  
Parliament is therefore important, because it highlights  
our need to consult widely and to think tangentially  
about Brexit. Fundamentally, Brexit is not just about  
markets and money; it is about people. To work for  
everyone in our society, Brexit must therefore be inclusive.  
For disabled people, Brexit must have equality legislation  
and vision placed at its heart.

Disabled people make up one in five of the UK  
population. That is a significant sector of our population  
that will be affected by the legislative changes flowing  
from the UK's decision to leave the EU. It is therefore  
incumbent on the UK Government to consult disabled  
people and their organisations on post-Brexit Britain.  
How extensive is the consultation likely to be and what  
should be the remit for a consultation with disabled  
people on Brexit? We are concerned about the very real  
potential for Brexit to have a significant impact on the  
ability of disabled people to live and work independently  
and with dignity in our communities.

Many of the rights that are upheld for those living  
with a disability have their foundation in European  
Union law. Examples include the 2000 employment  
equality directive, which requires member states to prohibit  
disability discrimination in employment; the 2006 air  
passenger rights regulation, along with similar regulations  
on rail, ship and coach travel, which require disabled  
people to be given assistance when travelling in the EU  
and European economic area; and the 2004 medicinal  
products for human use directive, which requires the  
packaging of all medicinal products to include Braille  
labelling to make them accessible to disabled people.  
Indeed,thegroundbreakingEuropeanAccessibilityAct  
is currently being negotiated at EU level. The Equality  
and Human Rights Commission has said that it will  
benefit disabled people by providing common rules on  
accessibility in relation to computers, ATMs, ticketing  
machines and banking services. In the last few years,  
there has been a really strong set of initiatives from the  
EU,withaccessibilityverymuchpartof the EU strategy,  
which impacts on the UK in a host of areas.

We ask ourselves what will happen to the financial  
support—the millions of pounds—that the EU provides  
from the European social fund to support a range of  
schemes and support for those living with a disability.  
Will successive United Kingdom Governments continue  
that important support? Will they set out how they will

73WH Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 11 JULY 2017 Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 74WH

Services Services

do so? Will they guarantee continued support for disability  
services post Brexit to disability rights groups and  
organisations, which currently benefit from that funding?

Understandable concerns have been raised about the  
settlement criteria proposed by the UK Government. It  
is alarming that disabled people from other EU countries  
might be disadvantaged when it comes to establishing a  
right to permanent residence in the UK. If the criteria  
are to be employment based, what of disabled people  
with fluctuating conditions, who may require breaks  
from employment? Consultation on settled status must  
be carried out with disability groups to ensure that  
disabled people are not excluded from settled status  
purely by virtue of their condition.

The impact of Brexit on NHS and social care staffing  
levels is a great concern. Adequate access to health and  
social care is vital for many disabled people, but with all  
the new implications that Brexit brings for EU citizens  
in terms of gaining work permits for the UK, and with  
EU workers perhaps deciding to leave the UK because  
of those conditions, there will be inevitable and undue  
strain on services. Recent reports show that, post Brexit,  
the UK may be a much less attractive proposition for  
EU workers, particularly skilled workers, and that healthcare  
could be one of the hardest hit areas, with a staggering  
84% of workers in that sector from EU countries saying  
that they will leave the UK. For Scotland, that is also  
worrying, because according to the most recent figures,  
5.8% of the health and medical workforce are non-UK  
but EU passport holders, and experts tell us that losing  
EU workers will have a significant impact on our NHS  
workforce.

How will disabled people be able to access the care  
packages and support and NHS treatment that they  
need in the light of the potential exodus? Many EU  
nationals are already considering leaving the UK. Will  
the Minister tell us what plans are in place to deal with  
the potential shortfall in staff, and address the extremely  
important concerns about the criteria?

Many disability rights groups across the UK have  
expressed concerns about the level of support and,  
some would say, the lack of understanding and compassion  
shown to those living with a disability, who have suffered  
as a result of UK Government policy, such as the  
cutting of the employment and support allowance work-  
related activity group component by £30 a week and the  
tightening of eligibility for personal independence payments.  
Those measures have pushed more disabled people into  
poverty and potential social isolation. Concerns about  
what life in the UK will look like post Brexit for people  
with a disability must be taken extremely seriously.  
Given those recent events, it is understandable that  
many disabled people are beginning to feel quite alarmed.  
The implications of Brexit and the potential impact on  
disabled people, which we will hear about today from  
many hon. Members, need to be addressed urgently by  
the Minister and the UK Government.

I was today given a briefing from the Guide Dogs  
association on the effect on disabled people of the UK  
leaving the EU. It makes key points to which I would  
like the Minister to respond. It states:

“The UK's withdrawal from the European Union has the  
potential to have a serious impact on the safety, mobility and  
independence of people with sight loss, by placing at risk two key  
areas:

Disability awareness training for bus drivers

The audibility of electric and hybrid vehicles”.

Will the Minister respond to those points? I understand  
that EU regulation 181/2011 is due to come into effect  
in 2018 and requires all bus drivers to undertake disability  
awareness training. That regulation was due to come  
into force in 2013, but the Government used a derogation  
to delay its introduction. Guide Dogs says:

“We are now concerned that the UK's withdrawal from the  
European Union may mean mandatory training will either not be  
brought into effect, or later translated into UK regulations once  
the UK has left the EU.”

Training for bus drivers is badly needed. It ensures that  
drivers are aware of the needs of passengers with sight  
loss and respond appropriately. In a 2014 survey, only  
14% of respondents said that a bus driver always responded  
appropriately to their needs as a disabled passenger. To  
tackle social isolation and people's very important need  
for independence and mobility, those issues must be  
addressed.

The concerns expressed today are very real. We need  
commitments from the Minister and the UK Government  
that the rights of those living with a disability will not  
be diminished or eroded over time. We need to know  
that the financial support for disabled people that is in  
place from our EU membership will continue; that  
those from other EU countries will not face discrimination  
if they choose to seek settled status; and how the  
Minister will address the seemingly inevitable shortfall  
in those who provide support and care for the disabled  
in our communities and NHS. Recruiting and retaining  
workers in the social care sector is already challenging,  
but Brexit could precipitate a shortfall that becomes a  
crisis.

I ask the Minister to ensure that, as the Brexit  
negotiations unfold, the rights and needs of those living  
with a disability are central to discussions and negotiations.  
Post-Brexit considerations may seem of most significance  
to trade, but they are also of fundamental significance  
to people, and ultimately to the inclusiveness and the  
nature of our society for those with a disability.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** I see no Back  
Benchers standing, so we will go straight on to the  
speeches by the Front-Bench Members. I take it that  
you are the Scottish National party Front-Bench  
spokesperson, Mr Linden. Normally there is a limit of  
five minutes for the SNP, five minutes for Her Majesty's  
Opposition and 10 minutes for the Minister, but I think  
we can be far more liberal—with a small “l”—this  
afternoon. You cannot speak for as long as you like, but  
you can speak for longer than five minutes.

4.39 pm

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Thank you very  
much, Mr Hollobone. It is a pleasure to serve under  
your chairmanship and to see the generosity once again  
of Kettering, which I know you are proud to represent  
in this Parliament.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for East  
Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron)  
for bringing this important debate to the Chamber.  
There are a number of issues and policies that have been  
forgotten about in the heat of the Brexit campaign. It is  
only now, as we start to work through what the British  
people have delivered, that we as legislators begin to see  
the job on our hands. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend  
for the work that she has done, particularly with the  
all-party parliamentary group for disability.

75WH Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 11 JULY 2017 Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 76WH

Services Services

*[David Linden]*

I have a number of points that I want to make, but  
my fundamental approach is that Brexit could have a  
hugely detrimental impact on the ability of disabled  
people to live and work independently and with dignity  
in the UK. The UK Government need to reassure us  
that disability rights groups will be consulted on decisions  
every step of the way. The main themes I want to touch  
on from the outset are that EU law has played a vital  
role in upholding the rights of disabled people across  
the EU; that the EU also supports, both financially and  
through co-operation, initiatives across the EU to support  
disabled people in member states; that concerns are now  
starting to be raised about the possible impact of the  
UK Government's proposals for settlement criteria given  
the often fluctuating conditions of disabled people; and  
that disability groups have stressed the impact that a fall  
in the number of NHS staff as a result of Brexit will  
have, particularly on social care. I visited Greenfield  
Park care home in Carntyne in my constituency just  
two weeks ago, and that point came up and was well  
made. The UK Government must ensure that disability  
rights groups are consulted fully on any potential impact  
of Brexit on services that those groups use.

My hon. Friend touched on the European Accessibility  
Act, which is currently being negotiated. The Equality  
and Human Rights Commission has said that it will  
benefit disabled people by providing common rules on  
accessibility in relation to computers and operating  
systems, ATMs, ticketing and check-in machines, as my  
hon. Friend mentioned. The proposed Act would require  
domestic provisions to allow consumers and interest  
groups to take action under national law. It would  
require authorities within member states to have the  
power to restrict, prohibit or recall offending products  
and services. Manufacturers would be required to produce  
information relating to complaints, compliance and  
product recall. When we consider the effort that has  
been put in, it really does ring true, and I hope that the  
Minister understands just how serious this is. In giving  
evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee, Anna  
Lawson, Director of the Centre for Disability Studies at  
the University of Leeds, said:

“In terms of accessibility, in the last few years there has been a  
really strong set of initiatives from the EU. Accessibility is very  
much part of the EU disability strategy. It is embedded in a whole  
raft of legislation and policies, which impact on the UK in areas  
such as transport, procurement, social funds and websites. There  
is a new one coming in on public websites.”

There is real cause to look at the support that the EU  
provides financially and through co-operation initiatives  
to support disabled people in member states. Disability  
organisations such as the Papworth Trust have said that  
the EU provides millions from the European social  
fund to support a range of schemes for disabled people  
such as work experience, wage subsidies and support for  
the self-employed. At this stage, in extending a hand of  
friendship across the House, I pay tribute to the right  
hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who  
held an excellent event recently for Mencap on how we  
get disabled people into work. I know the Minister was  
present at that, and I hope that it will be factored in to  
these strategies as well.

I want to talk briefly about my hon. Friend's concerns  
about settlement, because concerns are now starting to  
be raised about the impact of Brexit. Disability Rights

UK interviews have highlighted that disabled people  
from other EU countries might well experience disability-  
related disadvantages when it comes to establishing a  
right to permanent residence in the UK. The UK  
Government have published a document on the rights  
of EU citizens living in the UK. It suggests that EU  
nationals will apply for a new settled status, but does  
not provide further fulfilment criteria. I hope that the  
Minister will touch on that.

I am mindful of time and do not want to detain  
the House much longer, but there are two other points  
that I want to raise. The UK Government must ensure  
that disability rights groups are consulted fully on any  
potential impact of Brexit on services that they use.  
This Government need to realise that decisions they  
make on Brexit will have a very significant impact on  
disabled people, whether they are about social care,  
establishing the right to residence, or a loss of vital  
funding. We know that the last Parliament demonstrated  
a staggering contempt for disabled people who are on  
low incomes, with legislation cutting the ESA WRAG  
component by £30 a week as well as tightening the  
eligibility for PIP.

As we embark on what will be the most challenging  
time for us as legislators in this country, we need to have  
the rights of disabled people first and foremost and  
front and centre. I hope that the Government will do  
that.

4.45 pm

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):  
It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship once  
again, Mr Hollobone. Can I start by congratulating  
the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and  
Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron)—I hope I have pronounced  
that correctly—on securing this timely debate? I also  
thank the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden)  
for contributing this afternoon.

During the referendum campaign relatively little was  
said about the impact that exiting the EU would have  
on disabled people, their rights and their services. With  
some notable exceptions, not a great deal more has been  
heard since. That is a big mission. It is crucial that this  
issue receives the attention it deserves, not only because  
Brexit is ultimately about people—the outcome of the  
negotiations will impact on every aspect of our national  
life and everyone living in this country—but because  
the outcome of the most difficult and complicated  
negotiations that this country has undertaken since the  
second world war could have serious implications for  
the more than 10 million disabled people in the UK and  
their families. That is why the Opposition have consistently  
called on the Government to ensure that the priorities  
of disabled people are at the heart of their approach to  
the Brexit negotiations.

Indeed, the fact that Brexit will affect disabled people  
in specific ways is precisely why we sought to amend the  
European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill to  
ensure that the Government considered the impact of  
withdrawal on protected characteristics—including  
disability—by means of detailed equality impact  
assessments. Sadly, they used the majority they enjoyed  
at the time to vote down that amendment. Now that the  
article 50 negotiations are formally under way, it is  
more important than ever that the Government make it  
clear, to an extent that they have not done to date, that

77WH Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 11 JULY 2017 Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 78WH

Services Services

the voices of disabled people are being heard and that  
their interests will be championed throughout the Brexit  
debate.

The comprehensive Disability Rights UK consultation  
and manifesto clearly sets out the range of concerns felt  
by disabled people in relation to Brexit. There is far  
more in that report than I can hope to cover in the short  
time available to me, but I want to touch on a couple of  
the main issues that both the hon. Lady and the hon.  
Gentleman have raised, and put a series of questions to  
the Minister that add to theirs. They both spoke passionately  
about their concerns for the future of disability rights  
once the UK has left the EU. I know that the repeal Bill  
will not be published until Thursday, and the Minister  
will be limited in what she can say, but can she give  
some sense of how the Government intend to consult  
with disabled people and disability rights groups when  
it comes to converting EU disability law into UK law,  
particularly in terms of corrections undertaken by means  
of secondary legislation? What means of redress does  
she envisage being available to disabled people to enforce  
their rights once we have left the EU? Can she confirm  
whether the Government's intention is to keep pace  
with any positive developments in EU disability law  
that occur after our exit? The European Accessibility  
Act, which is making its way through the European  
legislature, is a case in point.

Both the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman mentioned  
funding. Brexit clearly jeopardises the funding provided  
by the EU to disabled people's organisations and to  
projects that directly benefit disabled people. Will funding  
be honoured for such projects signed before or after the  
autumn statement of last year, financed either under  
the social fund element of EU structural and investment  
funds or by means of the European regional development  
fund? Will the Minister offer some clarity about the  
funding prospects for these projects after 2020?

Both hon. Members touched on the potential impact  
of Brexit on our health and social care system. There is  
particular concern among disabled people that a sharp  
reduction in the number of EEA/EU personal assistants  
and carers could have a detrimental impact on independent  
living. Where that sort of support is reduced, disabled  
people could for forced to choose between residential  
care and living at home with inadequate support. We do  
not want to see either outcome.

Can the Minister clarify whether her Department,  
the Department of Health or the Department for Exiting  
the European Union have undertaken any assessment  
of the impact of exiting the EU on the health and social  
care workforce on whom disabled people rely? Will that  
impact assessment and that issue be taken fully into  
account during the drafting of the forthcoming Immigration  
Bill?

We have touched on the impact that exiting the EU  
will have on the rights of UK citizens abroad and EU  
nationals living here at home. It has the potential to  
become a serious concern and challenge for the  
Government, because many EEA/EU citizens either act  
as full-time carers for family members who are UK  
nationals or live here of their own accord but are unable  
to attain permanent residence because the Home Office  
does not consider them to be working persons exercising  
their treaty rights. The Government's recent offer to  
UK nationals made no mention of disabled people or  
their carers, so there are understandable concerns that

those individuals will not qualify for settled status.  
What assurances can the Minister give about safeguarding  
the position of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals  
living in the EU, so that disabled people and their carers  
will not face unequal treatment?

To conclude, disabled people are worried about the  
risks that Brexit poses to their hard-won rights and the  
services that they value. I look forward to hearing from  
the Minister about those issues and others of concern  
not only to disabled people but to the disability rights  
groups, such as Disability Rights UK, that advocate on  
their behalf.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** I am sorry, but  
the Minister will have to tear up half her speech,  
because she has only 36 minutes of time available.  
Would she be kind enough to conclude her remarks no  
later than 5.27, to allow Dr Cameron three minutes for  
a winding-up speech?

4.51 pm

**The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work  
(Penny Mordaunt):** I think I can manage that, Mr Hollobone.  
I thank the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven  
and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) for securing this important  
and helpful debate. I put on record my thanks, and those  
of the Secretary of State for Exiting the European  
Union and his Ministers, to Disability Rights UK for  
the welcome and helpful work that it has done on the  
manifesto. I also thank the other Members who have  
contributed to this discussion.

I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady that this is not  
just about markets and money. I say that not just as a  
politician or an avid leave campaigner. I have gone the  
length and breadth of the country, and I know the  
public think that Brexit is more than markets and  
money. They voted to leave or remain for a variety of  
reasons: for this country's potential to have a positive  
effect in developing nations, which could have huge  
benefits for the disabled community overseas; for all  
sorts of societal reasons; for the primacy of international  
humanitarian law; for skills training in the UK; and for  
lots of other reasons, including additional funding for  
our public services.

As we talk about Brexit in this place and consider  
what we need to do as we exit the EU and how to  
maximise and lever all the opportunities that will come  
with it, we must talk about a broad range of issues that  
matter to the public, of whom disabled people form a  
large cohort. In research done by the Papworth Trust  
last year, a randomly sampled survey showed that 54% of  
disabled people voted to leave. Clearly, the community  
has clear ideas about what it wants us to secure and  
protect as we exit the EU.

**Dr Cameron:** I thank the Minister for referring to  
that important piece of research. My understanding of  
the Papworth Trust's research is that many disabled  
people voted to leave based on the consideration that  
additional funding might come to the NHS, and therefore  
to their care. Does she not think that that shows how  
important it is that we recognise the needs and care of  
disabled people in our Brexit negotiations?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I agree completely, and I will address  
the issues that the hon. Lady and other Members have  
raised during this debate.

79WH Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 11 JULY 2017 Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 80WH

Services Services

*[Penny Mordaunt]*

Members have spoken about services and about  
strengthening rights and supporting disabled people to  
reach their full potential, whether through employment  
or by other means, and play their full part in society.  
The decision to leave the EU does not change those  
priorities. Government officials are comprehensively  
considering the impact of the transition on disabled  
people.

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Many disability activists—  
including Muscular Dystrophy UK's Trailblazers, a group  
of young disabled campaigners tackling social equality  
issues affecting young disabled people, such as access to  
transport, higher education, employment and social  
and leisure opportunities—are concerned about the  
potential impact of leaving the EU on their human  
rights and ability to live independently. They want to  
know whether the Minister will guarantee whether all  
rights for disabled people contained in EU directives  
will be incorporated into the repeal Bill.

**Penny Mordaunt:** Yes, certainly. I will come to the  
detail in a moment, but absolutely. The repeal Bill,  
contrary to what its name might suggest, is about  
transferring those rights into UK law.

As we have a little time, let me give an example of the  
direction that we want to take. A muscular dystrophy  
trailblazer—in fact, the muscular dystrophy trailblazer  
of the year, a fantastic young woman called Lauren  
who is a fashion student—inspired some changes that  
we have made recently to the Motability scheme. She  
got a fantastic work opportunity overseas that she felt  
she could not take because of the admin that she would  
have to do on returning to secure her Motability car. We  
have changed the rules for that scheme to enable anyone  
who has an opportunity to live overseas for a long  
period—a sabbatical, a work experience opportunity,  
romance or whatever—to do so without being prevented  
by our admin. We listen to disability organisations  
extremely carefully. As young people like her seize greater  
opportunities through more global trade and business  
relationships, we should ensure that admin in our  
Departments keeps pace with them rather than being  
an obstacle.

My Department, the Office for Disability Issues and  
other Departments are supporting DExEU in its aims.  
As negotiations about our future relationship with the  
EU progress, the Government will ensure that any impact  
on disabled people is taken into account. As part of its  
work to uphold rights and equalities, DExEU's stakeholder  
engagement team is working with civil society groups  
and disability organisations and their members to consider  
the broad range of those issues in detail. DExEU  
officials have already met a number of organisations,  
including Mencap and the Voluntary Organisations  
Disability Group, and some of their membership.

Officials are also developing plans for further engagement  
across the sector, including meetings with the Disability  
Charities Consortium, with which DExEU is currently  
liaising to ensure that officials and Ministers are hearing  
the sector's concerns. There will also be direct engagement  
with other groups run by and representing disabled  
people. DExEU Ministers are keen to hear from any  
disabled people or disability groups who want to draw  
their attention to any aspect of the matter.

**David Linden:** I get the impression from the Minister  
that the Government are in listening mode. May I  
therefore extend an invitation to her, and indeed to  
DExEU Ministers and officials, to come to Glasgow for  
a meeting with the Glasgow Disability Alliance, which  
has done excellent work with its manifesto to get these  
issues on the agenda?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I would certainly be happy to do  
that. I am always happy to visit, although it may have to  
be during the recess. The Under-Secretary of State for  
Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Worcester (Mr Walker), has responsibility in this  
area and responsibility for Scotland. I am sure there will  
be opportunities to talk to him directly.

Throughout the negotiations, Ministers and officials  
are holding meetings with the business community and  
others about a variety of issues. I know from my own  
sense check of DExEU that the materials that may be  
needed to support those meetings, such as documents in  
accessible formats, are in good order.

DExEU's engagement with stakeholders will ensure  
that our commitment to equalities through the transition  
remains steadfast. Indeed, we hope to use the EU exit as  
a potential opportunity to create standards that are  
higher than the EU's in many areas—I know that the  
Disability Charities Consortium is particularly keen on  
looking at such opportunities. To support this work,  
DExEU will share with colleagues in other Departments,  
including me in the Office for Disability Issues, the  
insight gained from its stakeholder engagement on this  
and other matters. Brexit is a cross-cutting issue, and  
the Government are co-ordinating work to ensure continuity  
for everyone in this country in the wake of the legislative  
transfer. In our relationship with the EU, the UK has  
been a leader on many equality issues. I hope we will  
continue to hold that leadership role even outside the EU.

Let me address some concerns mentioned by the hon.  
Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow.  
Our standards on rail vehicle accessibility for disabled  
people were used as the model for EU-wide standards.  
That is just one example. On bus driver training, which  
she mentioned, the EU regulation came into force on 1  
March 2013 and training has to be put in place within  
five years. As she will know, the Department for Transport  
has been doing an awful lot to ensure not just that the  
right legislation is in place, but that bus drivers are  
trained and that the standards of customer service that  
people enjoy on public transport are maintained. My  
Department is supporting that work. One of our disability  
sector champions, Jane Cole, is promoting good practice  
on disability awareness training—I place my thanks to  
her on the record.

I hope we maintain our leadership role. The UK has  
some of the strongest equalities legislation in the world,  
including the Equality Act 2010, which enshrines equality  
in domestic law. A huge focus of my Department is on  
ensuring that that law is enforced, because we cannot  
rely on people having to sue organisations to enforce it.  
We have some new opportunities to achieve that, particularly  
by utilising technology. That is one way in which the  
Office for Disability Issues can support this agenda.

The hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich  
(Matthew Pennycook) raised the ESF. For projects signed  
off after the autumn statement, which will continue  
after we leave the EU, funding will be honoured by the

81WH Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 11 JULY 2017 Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 82WH

Services Services

Treasury. We expect those projects to provide value for  
money and to be in line with our domestic priorities. We  
want leaving the EU to mean that we can take our own  
decisions and set for ourselves the policy objectives that  
were previously targeted to gain EU funding. The  
Government will continue to consult stakeholders to  
review EU funding schemes in the round and ensure  
that any ongoing funding commitments best serve the  
UK's national interests.

**Dr Cameron:** Has there been any discussion of whether  
the funding that was received from the EU will be  
matched in the long term?

**Penny Mordaunt:** For projects that are already ongoing,  
the funding will continue. That will be honoured by the  
Treasury. In a way, the European social fund is the  
easiest issue to grapple with, but a large focus of DExEU's  
work is on other issues. Future projects that meet  
the objectives of the Government of the day and that  
offer good value for money will be funded by the  
Treasury. New as well as continuing projects will be  
dealt with in that way. However, we are well aware that  
the UK's third sector has mapped the fact that it relies  
on funding from all sorts of other sources than the  
European social fund. DExEU and the Equality and  
Diversity Forum have a project that is looking at how to  
ensure that the sector will not suffer, and that leaving  
the EU will not be detrimental to the funding that goes  
into those projects.

My office is looking across all areas at how to enable  
the third sector to derive a greater income. Understandably,  
we have cracked down on all sorts of fundraising—chugging  
and so forth—that the sector has done over many years  
and that the public are concerned about. However,  
these organisations provide amazing services to some  
incredibly vulnerable people. We have to enable them to  
continue to provide those services and, ideally, extend  
their reach. In every aspect of our work, we are actively  
doing more work in partnership with the sector and  
more co-funding, enabling those organisations to derive  
a larger income for the services and support that they  
provide. That is a particularly important project that  
does not get a lot of airtime, whereas understandably  
the social fund does.

On freedom of movement, there are opportunities for  
disabled people. It has been too easy to neglect not just  
the vocational and skills training that people need, but  
things like independent living support that we know  
people need in order to thrive and undertake meaningful  
activity and work. The negotiations on freedom of  
movement as we leave the EU will force us, and will  
force business, to look at our labour market strategy.  
There are some opportunities to be seized as we leave  
the EU.

The hon. Members for Greenwich and Woolwich and  
for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow focused  
on healthcare and social care, which are obviously  
incredibly important. I point them to the manifesto,  
which paid particular attention to EU nationals working  
in our NHS and the priority we wish to give them. I also  
underline the work on social care that is going on across  
Government. Understandably, the media have focused  
on social care for older people, but we are also looking  
at social care for those of working age, who do not get a  
lot of press attention. My office is heavily involved—hon.  
Members will see more of that in the near future.

The hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich made  
a point about the Home Office. As in the preceding  
debate, hon. Members will have to make do with the  
Minister in the Chamber, but DExEU is the co-ordinating  
Department. However, I am sure that I can commission  
either DExEU or the Home Office to answer in detail  
on visa applications and support requirements for people  
who wish to come here.

With regard to my own Department, I will point to  
what we have done for other groups. One of the first  
things that I did was to amend the rules on the past  
presence test for refugee children who had a disability. I  
felt that, if we were taking refugees and they had  
particular needs, we should meet them. I point to that  
as evidence that we are very aware of our responsibilities  
and I undertake to ensure that either the Home Office  
or DExEU update the hon. Members for East Kilbride,  
Strathaven and Lesmahagow, and for Greenwich and  
Woolwich, on the specific points about visas.

In the time that I have left, I will just touch on some  
other points. It is important to put on the record as well  
that we are going through a process of examination by  
the United Nations regarding the convention on the  
rights of persons with disabilities. That also affords us  
some opportunities, and I am undertaking a piece of  
work in my Department to consider how we can use the  
principles set out in the convention to enshrine them in  
the heart of the work of every Government Department.  
As I say, that convention affords us some opportunities,  
and that work will be a very encouraging and positive  
exercise.

We have other considerable opportunities as a result  
of leaving the EU. I am hotfooting it from Westminster  
Hall over the road to launch a paper with Localis on a  
sector deal in the industrial strategy on disability. There  
are some tremendous opportunities that join up all the  
agendas that hon. Members have spoken about today  
on employment, our ambitions on international  
development and all sorts of things, and on harnessing  
the tremendous innovation, the science, and the research  
and development that goes on in the UK, whether it be  
in assistive technology, design or all the things that we  
showcase at the global disability innovation hub not far  
from where we are today. We have tremendous opportunities  
that not only play into growth, jobs, markets and money  
butdosomuchmore.

**Dr Cameron:** I thank the Minister for being generous  
in giving way once again. Will she meet the all-party  
group on disability to discuss its recent inquiry report,  
“Ahead of the arc”, which examines some of the important  
issues that she has referred to, including industrial  
strategy and why disability rights and employment for  
people who are disabled should be at its core?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I am always happy to meet that  
group and I await an invitation.

In closing, I thank hon. Members for their contributions  
today. I hope that, as legislation is introduced and as  
negotiations progress, we can continue to keep the  
issues of specific interest to disabled people high on the  
agenda. I am very encouraged by what DExEU has  
done to date and by its plans for the future, and I  
encourage disabled people and their organisations to  
engage with the process. Only then will we get a Brexit  
that we can be proud of. I thank the hon. Lady for  
playing her part in that today.

83WH Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 11 JULY 2017 Leaving the EU: Disabled People's 84WH

Services Services

5.14 pm

**Dr Cameron:** I thank hon. Members for taking part  
in the debate today, and I thank those on the Front  
Benches for their thorough responses. As we have heard,  
research indicates that many disabled people voted for  
Brexit. That shows that we cannot let disabled people  
down—we must honour promises that have been given.  
Many disabled people voted for Brexit believing that it  
would enhance the future provision of their services, so  
we must uphold their rights, their support, their services  
and their opportunities. We must ensure that those

things are maintained, prioritised and continued; that  
we in the UK are always ahead of the curve when it  
comes to disability rights and never fall behind it; and  
that all funding is maintained.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered consultation with disabled  
people on the effect on their services of the UK leaving the EU.

5.16 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

85WH

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

86WH

Westminster Hall

*Wednesday 12 July 2017*

[JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

Euratom Membership

9.30 am

**James Gray (in the Chair):** Members will have noticed  
that there are a large number of people here, and a large  
number of them have put in to speak. I do not feel  
inclined to apply a formal time limit yet, but roughly  
speaking there will be two or three minutes per Back  
Bencher. It would help if Members kept themselves to  
that limit; I reserve the option of bringing in a formal  
time limit later if they do not.

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Mon) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered negotiations on future Euratom  
membership.

I declare an interest as a vice-chair of the all-party  
parliamentary group on nuclear energy. I want to make  
it clear from the outset that this debate is not a rerun of  
the EU referendum debate or of the article 50 debate.  
This debate is about getting it right and ensuring that  
the UK remains a world leader in civil nuclear and in  
research and development.

We achieved world leader status by co-operating with  
others across the world under the umbrella of Euratom—or,  
to give it its full name, the European Atomic Energy  
Community. Euratom was established in the 1950s as  
part of the creation of the European Community. It  
provides the basis for the regulation of civil nuclear  
safeguards and control and supply of fissile material,  
and funds international research. The Culham Centre  
for Fusion Energy is one of the leading research centres  
intheworld.TheGovernmenthaveindicatedthatEuratom  
and the EU are legally joined. Some say that we have to  
give the same notice to exit Euratom as we did to exit  
the EU through article 50. I disagree.

I was a member of the Business, Energy and Industrial  
Strategy Committee, which held a comprehensive inquiry  
into how Brexit will affect energy. We looked at the  
single internal energy market, Euratom and meeting  
our climate change commitments. We heard evidence  
from across the board. Euratom was raised by many  
experts who work in the civil nuclear field and in  
research and development, as well as by academics. We  
received hard evidence that there is contradictory legal  
advice on the matter. In fact, the advice is diametrically  
opposed. Many believe that just because we are a member  
of the same institution, we must have the same jurisdiction.  
That is in dispute, and I put it to the Government that  
there are ways forward that would mean there did not  
have to be a cliff edge when the article 50 negotiations  
are complete. I sought this debate to ensure that we get  
the best deal possible, that we get some transitional  
arrangements, and that the industry is happy.

In the light of the new consensual politics that the  
Prime Minister has announced, will the Minister—I ask  
him to make a note of this—set up a working group  
with industry and academics, and consult Parliament,

to ensure that we have the appropriate arrangements in  
place so that the nuclear industry and those involved in  
research and development can plan for the future?

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I  
understand that this debate will focus largely on the  
nuclear industry, but I am concerned about the impact  
on medicine. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the concern  
of the Royal College of Radiologists that an inability  
easily to bring isotopes into the country could affect  
half a million scans and 10,000 cancer treatments?  
Isotopes cannot be stored, because they have a short  
half-life, so we need Euratom.

**Albert Owen:** I absolutely agree. I have had a lot of  
correspondence from experts across the field, including  
the Royal Marsden Hospital, where cancer research is  
vital. As the hon. Lady says, it is absolutely essential  
that we get that right. This is not about the dogma that  
we must leave an institution; it is about ensuring that  
medicalresearchcontinues,thatwemaintainhighstandards,  
and that we have the framework to move isotopes and  
do the things that she mentions.

**Mr Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con):  
I commend the hon. Gentleman not just on obtaining  
the debate but on his constructive tone, but why should  
the case for staying in Euratom not apply to every other  
agency that we will leave when we leave the European  
Union? As we leave those other agencies and regulatory  
bodies, we will set up our own, under international  
standards. Why can that not also bedone with Euratom?  
Who would want to frustrate that?

**AlbertOwen:**Noonewantstofrustrateanything—quite  
the contrary. I am trying to set the tone by saying that  
we need a long-term plan. I am worried that there will  
be a cliff edge, and that we will have to leave an  
organisation that has served us and the whole global  
community well for many years just because we leave  
the European Union. I repeat that experts have said  
that we can legally decouple Euratom and the EU. I  
think that doing so would improve our chances of  
getting a better agreement. I disagree with the hon.  
Gentleman that we would have to deal with every other  
agency. In a sense, Euratom is pretty unique, and the  
industry and experts—not politicians, but people who  
understand the industry—are worried about it.

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): Since the problem  
is that Euratom is legally joined to the European Union,  
can the hon. Gentleman tell us how many European  
Court of Justice cases Euratom, in its long history, has  
been involved in?

**Albert Owen:** The honest answer is very few. I do not  
know the exact figure—I am sure that the Minister,  
whose civil servants are here, has it at his fingertips—but  
there have been very few. My point, with which I think  
the right hon. Gentleman agrees, is that it is not legally  
essential for us to leave Euratom just because we leave  
the European Union. I am not a lawyer, and others  
argue that it is, but when I was on the Select Committee  
I heard contradictory evidence from the experts. I do  
not want this uncertainty to continue; I want to create  
certainty for future investment in civil nuclear and in  
research and development.

87WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

88WH

*[Albert Owen]*

Let us be frank: as I think the hon. Member for  
Harwich and North Essex (Mr Jenkin) alluded to, our  
reason for leaving Euratom is that No. 10 has red lines,  
one of which is ending the jurisdiction of the ECJ. That  
is one of the reasons—it is a political reason, not a legal  
reason, and it was made almost as an excuse—that was  
given for us leaving the EU and Euratom together. That  
is the argument that the Select Committee heard in  
evidence.

Politically, we need to move forward, and we must  
have frameworks in place for doing so. Three options  
have been put to us: just remaining in Euratom, extending  
our period of membership and getting a transitional  
arrangement; having associate membership; or having  
third-country membership. If people read the detailed  
Library note, they will see that those options are very  
doable. I am trying to base this debate on actual facts  
that the Committee heard in evidence, rather than emotional  
arguments about whether we should leave or remain a  
member of Euratom.

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con): As the hon. Gentleman  
knows, I represent the United Kingdom Atomic Energy  
Authority's Culham establishment. He mentions associate  
membership, which is considered a valid compromise  
by the management of Euratom, but there are two  
models: the Swiss model and the Ukrainian model.  
Does he have a feeling about which way the decision  
will go? Will he join me in encouraging the Minister to  
make a decision pretty quickly?

**Albert Owen:** What is important for future investment  
is not what I think but what the industry thinks and  
what the experts have told me. I am looking forward to  
the Minister's reply, but I will outline in detail those  
three options: remaining in Euratom, associate membership,  
and third-country membership. The hon. Gentleman's  
description of the Swiss and Ukrainian models is a bit  
crude, because different countries are involved. The  
Swiss enjoy associate membership, but other countries,  
such as Japan, the United States and Canada, have a  
different relationship. I want the best relationship for  
the United Kingdom. If it ain't broke, why start fixing  
it? That is where I start from.

Those options do exist. Alternative membership under  
article 206 of the European treaty allows the UK to  
leave but to continue co-operation, as the hon. Member  
for Henley (John Howell) argued, and establish an  
association involving reciprocal rights and obligations,  
common actions and special procedures. However, that  
will take time, and I do not think that the timeframe set  
out by triggering article 50 is helpful; it will hinder  
rather than help, and put at risk many new build projects.

**James Heappey** (Wells) (Con): The hon. Gentleman  
is being generous with his time. Does he agree that  
exactly because of the exposure that the French Government  
have to our new nuclear programme, and indeed to  
EDF's business in the UK generally, we have an excellent  
ally in Paris in trying to ensure that whatever our new  
arrangement with Euratom is, it comes about quickly,  
because that is in the French interest as much as in ours?

**Albert Owen:** It is in everybody's interest because this  
is a global industry, but we must put the UK interest  
first and argue from a UK perspective, because we are

making the decision to leave and we do not expect  
everyone else to do our bargaining for us. We need to  
have a strong position, which is why I am arguing today  
that we need transitional arrangements in place that  
suit us. We cannot rely on French investment going  
forward, but we can create and maintain the high levels  
of skills that we have in this country, and the high level  
of investment.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab) *rose—*

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con) *rose—*

**Albert Owen:** I will give way to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) and then to  
the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert  
Neill). However, I am conscious of time.

**Rachel Reeves:** I thank my hon. Friend for securing  
the debate. I think he is about to touch on the heart of  
the issue. If we leave Euratom—and the uncertainty  
about that in the meantime—that risks high-paid, high-  
skilled jobs going overseas, which we cannot afford  
right now. Our membership of Euratom is key for the  
future of our civil nuclear defence industry.

**Albert Owen:** I totally agree. That argument was  
made to the Select Committee by a representative of  
workers, because they are concerned about training,  
skilling and upskilling.

**Robert Neill:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman about  
the need for us not to have a cliff edge to preserve the  
benefits of membership. The associate membership he  
mentions might be one such way, and France might be a  
supporter of that. Is he aware that Austria has objected  
specifically to the support that the Government have  
given to Hinkley Point on state aid grounds and has  
generally been hostile to powers in the EU with nuclear  
programmes? Would an associate arrangement require  
unanimity among the EU 27, or a qualified majority?

**Albert Owen:** Alternative membership under article 206  
is important. The hon. Gentleman makes an important  
point about Austria, which is hostile to nuclear per se  
and will be taking over the presidency of the European  
Union. That could put other things in jeopardy as well  
as these arrangements. That is all the more reason to  
have a long-term plan, rather than exiting in two years  
and linking ourselves to article 50. I think he strengthened  
my case in many ways.

I am talking about the alternative arrangements for  
membership, enjoyed by Switzerland and others, which  
importantly would allow access to moneys to fund  
nuclear research to be maintained. However, I want the  
whole package: I want research and civil nuclear to have  
certainty going forward. The other option I talked  
about was third-country membership under article 101  
of the Euratom treaty. That is more limiting in scope,  
with regard to power and jurisdiction, than the alternative  
memberships. However, it does allow agreements and  
contracts with international organisations and states.  
Those with third-country membership include, as I  
mentioned, Japan, the United States and Canada—big  
players in the nuclear world. However, we would need  
bilateral agreements with them, which again will take  
time to negotiate. Many people have raised with me

89WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

90WH

concern about the timeframe. Of course, third-country  
membership would not automatically give us the right  
for international contracts for research under the  
international thermonuclear experimental reactor project.  
That is therefore probably more risky than alternative  
membership. It is an option, but it brings risks with it.

Those options are better than the cliff edge. It is not  
politicians who are raising that; it is a broad section of  
the nuclear industry and a broad section of cancer  
research and development as well as various other  
issues, such as those raised by the hon. Member for  
Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) and mentioned by me.  
This is not just about new nuclear, existing nuclear and  
the movement of nuclear materials; it is far more wide-  
ranging than that.

The three options are: remaining in Euratom, associate  
membership, and third-country membership. However,  
whatever the model and the negotiations of the Minister  
and his team, we need proper transitional arrangements  
to be in place. That is the crux of my argument, and I  
feel that the Members who have intervened share my  
anxiety that we must have a proper framework.

The Minister is new to his job, and I welcome him to  
it, but he and his Department have yet to allay the fears  
of industry or of those in research and development.  
He has a job of work to do, and I am trying to help him  
to become firmer in saying that he will work in partnership  
with industry. A working group is the right way forward,  
because that would allow for consultation with the  
experts and for the industry to look seriously at the  
pitfalls and advantages to allow us to have a world-class  
leading industry going forward.

I am sure that the Minister will grasp this new consensual  
politics and listen to me and to hon. Members across  
the House. We want to help him get it right. We are not  
here just to criticise; we are here to assist. The industry  
is waiting to assist as well, so that we get a full and  
comprehensive consultation and timescales that suit the  
industry in the UK and UK plc. In the nuclear industry  
we are about all the research and development that has  
been talked about, but we are also about producing  
low-carbon energy and high-quality jobs.

Very few industries have jobs for life like the nuclear  
industry does. Many people go to the industry and are  
there for life and get that continuity and those high-skilled  
jobs. We need to maintain that if we are to meet the  
criteria that the Department set out in its industrial  
strategy on nuclear and how those link to a broader  
industrial strategy. We need to improve and upscale  
jobs. The nuclear industry is one such area, and if we  
are not careful we could take a step that takes us  
backwards, not forwards.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend—Mr Energy Island—on securing the  
debate. Will he comment on how many jobs in the  
nuclear industry are distributed around the periphery of  
the country and how important those jobs are to areas  
such as the north of Scotland, the north-west, north  
Wales and the south-west? There are concerns from  
across the United Kingdom on this issue.

**Albert Owen:** I agree that many of the existing and  
potential new nuclear sites are on the periphery, but we  
also have in Oxfordshire and many other counties of  
the United Kingdom huge investment that we need to

improve and move forward. I also mentioned the Royal  
Marsden, which has given me a briefing on nuclear's  
importance to the city of London. It is the whole  
United Kingdom. The industrial strategy talks about  
spreading wealth across the whole United Kingdom,  
and here is a good example of where that works, so we  
should continue that and not take risks.

I mentioned nuclear's importance to low-carbon and  
to skills, but we are also at the forefront of research and  
development. We need to maintain that, but I believe  
that we could hinder that if we were to have a cliff edge  
or to exit Euratom just because of a timetable and legal  
reasons.

**James Heappey:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Albert Owen:** Yes, but this will be the last intervention  
I will take.

**James Heappey:** The hon. Gentleman has been generous,  
especially in indulging me twice. He mentions our technical  
edge. Before he sits down, can I encourage him to  
mention our position as a world leader in fusion power  
generation? That is the Elysian fields of future low-carbon  
generation. I know that he will want to remind the  
Minister of just how successful we have been in leading  
that research and how important it is that we remain in  
the vanguard.

**Albert Owen:** I know that other right hon. and hon.  
Members want to make their pitch, so I will not repeat  
my opening remarks, but the hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
right and has made the point for me, and the Minister  
has heard it.

I have based my speech on evidence that I heard as a  
member of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
Committee, and I pay tribute to its previous Chair. I am  
making a bid for that position today, so I may as well  
take advantage of being on my feet for 20 minutes in  
this debate. The Committee did a serious piece of work  
on the pros and cons of exiting the European Union,  
whether for internal markets or supply.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): Will the hon.  
Gentleman give way?

**Albert Owen:** Yes I will, because I am standing for  
election.

**Antoinette Sandbach:** I am grateful. The UK has been  
awarded £500 million of contracts in the nuclear fusion  
supply chain. Is not all of that put at risk if we leave  
Euratom?

**Albert Owen:** Absolutely. The hon. Lady was also a  
member of the Committee, and she knows the written  
and oral evidence we received that highlighted that  
point. It is important for a Select Committee to hold the  
Government to account, but it is also important to  
shape the framework and work with the Government. I  
urge the Minister to work with Parliament, the industry  
and all relevant sectors, so that we can go forwards, not  
backwards, and maintain the status of which we are all  
proud. The UK is a world leader. Let us put politics to

91WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

92WH

*[Albert Owen]*

one side and get the transitional arrangements right.  
Let us work together to ensure that the UK stays at  
the top.

**James Gray (in the Chair):** Order. My suggestion of  
self-restraint to two or three minutes per speech, until  
10.30, when I intend to call the speakers who will wind  
up, starts now.

9.51 pm

**Mr David Jones** (Clwyd West) (Con): I commend the  
hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Albert Owen) on securing  
this important debate.

The nuclear industry is important to the north Wales  
region, as it is to the whole country. However, I take  
issue with the hon. Gentleman because he said that the  
decision to leave the Euratom treaty was taken on  
political rather than legal grounds. He will know from  
the helpful briefing note supplied by the Nuclear Industry  
Association that that is disputed. The view I take is that  
the Government had no option but to leave the treaty.

It is worth analysing the way in which the relevant  
treaties have moved. The Euratom treaty was extensively  
amended by the treaty of Lisbon, although it continues  
to have a separate existence from the EU treaties. Most  
significantly for the purpose of this debate, article 106a  
of the Euratom treaty, as amended, now provides that  
article 50 of the treaty on European Union, which of  
course provides for the departure of a member state  
from the EU,

“shall apply to this Treaty.”

Article 106a also provides:

“Within the framework of this Treaty, the references to the  
Union...or to the ‘Treaties'...shall be taken, respectively, as references  
to the European Atomic Energy Community and to this Treaty”—  
that is the Euratom treaty. Thus the Euratom Community  
and the European Union share a common institutional  
framework, including the jurisdiction of the European  
Court of Justice, a role for the Commission, and decision-  
making in the Council.

That common framework is acknowledged not only  
in the treaties but in domestic British legislation. Section 3(2)  
of the European Union (Amendment) Act 2008 provides  
that any Act that refers to the European Union  
“includes... a reference to the European Atomic Energy Community.”  
The position, therefore, is that article 50 notice of  
withdrawalfromtheEuropeanUnionwouldautomatically  
have operated as a notice of withdrawal from the Euratom  
treaty. That is acknowledged by the British Government,  
and,justasimportantly,itisthepositionoftheEuropean  
Community.

I must therefore take issue with the hon. Member for  
Ynys Mon. I acknowledge the importance of the industry,  
but we need to look at the legalities, which appear, on  
balance, to have been accepted by the British Government  
and the European Union. Although I fully agree about  
the need to avoid the cliff edge, I think that the Government  
are fully aware of the matter and will address it. The  
hon. Gentleman's suggestion, which has been made  
repeatedly recently, that the decision was political, was  
ill founded.

**Mr Edward Vaizey** (Wantage) (Con): When my right  
hon. Friend talks about avoiding the cliff edge, does  
that mean he would support a transition period while  
we remain members of Euratom?

**Mr Jones:** The Government's position has always  
been that there should be an implementation period,  
and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will  
acknowledge that and outline what the Government  
will do. My purpose in speaking in the debate is simply  
to point out that the suggestion that the prime  
considerations are political is essentially unfounded.

9.55 am

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):  
It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Mr Gray. I  
congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys  
Mon (Albert Owen) on securing the debate.

I shall speak briefly, as you stipulated, Mr Gray, and  
will focus specifically on the future of Moorside and  
NuGen. I welcome the Minister to his post. He will no  
doubt have spent a substantial part of his time so far in  
the Department trying to save the NuGen deal and find  
a new investor—almost certainly backed by a foreign  
Government and foreign capital—to save a development  
that will create 21,000 jobs in Cumbria and potentially  
contribute up to 8% of the UK's energy.

I hope for a frank assessment of how the Minister  
feels about the cloud of uncertainty over the industry,  
which has been created by the Government's until now  
steadfast refusal to countenance remaining within a  
treaty that is working well, or to consider something  
sensible such as associate membership, and a seamless  
transition to that. What effect does he feel the situation  
is having on the dash to find a new investor to save the  
deal? We know the difficulty behind the scenes in trying  
to get some countries, which I will not name, to consider  
rescuing the deal. Aside from any damage to UK energy  
security, the collapse in job prospects would be a calamity  
for the region. We need the Government to take an  
approach that gives the best chance of securing the  
investment at a difficult time. We have a new Minister  
and the Government apparently want to consider sensible  
clarifications and improvements to legislation: now is  
the time to change course.

9.58 am

**Trudy Harrison** (Copeland) (Con): I commend the  
hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Albert Owen) on securing  
this incredibly important debate, and the hon. Member  
for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) on his comments  
about Moorside, which is of course in my constituency,  
as is Sellafield, the world's first nuclear reactor. My  
constituency is home to some 67 NIA members and I  
must declare an interest as my husband, father and  
brother work in three of those businesses, along with  
14,000 other people in my constituency. It has been said  
that 76% of the working people in Copeland borough  
work directly or indirectly for Sellafield.

Our nuclear expertise is internationally renowned  
and our safety record is exceptional. Ensuring continued  
membership of Euratom, or swiftly acting to develop  
an alternative, to be in place upon leaving the European  
Union or as part of a planned transition period, is vital.  
Because of the nature of the Sellafield site, Euratom  
safeguards are of key importance to its functioning.  
Every day, Euratom officials monitor activity on site

93WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

94WH

and ensure that fissile nuclear material at Sellafield is in  
the right place and is being used for its intended purpose.  
Euratom owns cameras and other equipment and of  
course has the skills to carry out the work. If we leave,  
the ownership of that material and the skills will need  
to be replaced.

The Nuclear Safeguards Bill should provide clear  
answers, but they would answer only one of many  
problems that withdrawal from Euratom may cause.  
Sellafield's reprocessing facility has reprocessed fuel  
from several countries across the EU and further afield,  
including the United States and Japan. The ownership  
of that material needs to be determined during the  
negotiation, and new nuclear co-operation agreements  
to move materials overseas post-Brexit will need to be  
agreed and ratified.

Whatever the decision taken, and whether we are in  
or out of Euratom in March 2019, safeguarding has to  
continue under international law. What cannot happen  
is a scenario in which new safeguarding measures and  
newco-operationagreementsarenotinplace.Safeguarding  
is critical for the nuclear industry, and particularly for  
Sellafield. Without an approved safeguards regime, as  
well as new bilateral co-operation agreements, nuclear  
trade to and from the UK would stop, or at least slow  
down, which would be economically crushing for my  
constituency—a community that is home to thousands  
of nuclear workers and, indeed, the centre of nuclear  
excellence.

I thank you for allowing me the time to speak in this  
crucial debate, Mr Gray, and I urge the Minister to give  
this consideration. I also welcome the excellent suggestion  
of a working group from the hon. Member for Ynys  
Mon, which I would be very pleased to be a part of.

10 am

**Liz Saville Roberts** (DwyforMeirionnydd)(PC):Diolch  
yn fawr, Mr Gray. I thank the hon. Member for Ynys  
Mon (Albert Owen) for securing this important debate.  
I, too, have to declare an interest: my husband's brother  
works at Trawsfynydd power station in my constituency.  
I add my voice to those warning the Government about  
what a Euratom exit means for safeguarding. Please  
bear in mind that livestock movements in my constituency  
were held back for 26 years following the Chernobyl  
disaster; we have experience of the effect of nuclear  
safeguarding issues, if you like.

Since 1957, Euratom has underpinned our nuclear  
safety and security, and our nuclear industry has benefited  
from well-established regulations that enable us to be a  
trusted partner of our European counterparts. Leaving  
Euratom would mean creating our own safeguarding  
regime—something the UK's Office for Nuclear Regulation  
has already confirmed as impossible by the nominal EU  
withdrawal date in 2019. Furthermore, it would mean  
renegotiating every bilateral agreement Euratom has  
managed on behalf of the UK. Those are incredibly  
complex agreements, called NCAs—nuclear co-operation  
agreements. Each NCA can take three years to agree,  
and without them, the UK will be isolated from the  
legitimate international nuclear community.

That takes me to my second point: the economic  
consequences of withdrawal on the development of  
Trawsfynydd and the nuclear industry, and low-carbon  
energy security as a whole. Euratom ensures the safe

and unimpaired cross-border movement of nuclear  
materials, technology and even expertise. As already  
noted, withdrawing from Euratom would mean lengthy  
renegotiations to allow that trade to continue. Without  
Euratom, ventures such as the development of SMRs—  
small modular reactors—at Trawsfynydd look less attractive,  
meaning a worse deal for local communities, the UK  
and its position in the international nuclear community.

My third point is on the cost of withdrawal on our  
scientific research communities. On Monday, the Prime  
Minister blithely stated that the UK would be able to  
access Euratom research and funding as a third-party  
state. However, she failed to mention that the relationships  
between Euratom and its third-party states vary widely,  
and therefore VIP access is not at all guaranteed and  
would require lengthy negotiations. In the meantime,  
our existing plans for world-leading projects, such as at  
Trawsfynydd, would be disrupted.

I therefore join in the cross-party calls for the Government  
to reconsider withdrawal and the models put forward  
today, and I welcome the suggestion of a working group  
that works closely with the industry.

10.3 am

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con): As I mentioned  
in my intervention, I represent the Culham UKAEA  
establishment. The urgency to resolve this issue is that  
Euratom's work programme runs out in December 2018.  
The European Commission is pushing hard to negotiate  
terms for the 2019-20 programme, but the fly in the  
ointment is Austria's taking over the EU presidency in  
June 2019. Of course, as has already been mentioned,  
Austria is notoriously anti-nuclear, and it is therefore urgent  
that an agreement should be in place by June 2018.

Ministers have apparently written to the Commission  
to continue with the JET—Joint European Torus—project,  
and to commit the UK's share, which has gone down  
very well. Everything has been delayed to accommodate  
Brexit, and willingly so, but there is a need to get a move  
on with this. Staying afull member of Euratom provides  
the best continuity to that programme.

I do not believe that the legal issues are as black and  
white as has been set out. However, associate membership  
with bespoke terms is a perfectly acceptable compromise.  
That would mean that there would be a transition  
period that would leave us as full members of Euratom  
until 2020. There are two principal models of associate  
membership: the Swiss model, which includes freedom  
of movement for nuclear scientists and the use of the  
European Court of Justice, and the Ukrainian model,  
in which there is no free movement of nuclear scientists  
and for which the Ukrainian courts decide disputes.  
The Government need to make their mind up quickly  
on that in order to provide the certainty that the industry  
needs.

There is a lot at stake. UKAEA is targeting £1 billion-  
worth of work on ITER—the JET project's replacement  
in the south of France. That is £1 billion of work  
against the UK's £85 million investment. It is important  
to bear those sort of figures in mind when we come to  
look at the future of Euratom and the sort of relationship  
that we have with it.

10.6 am

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Mon (Albert

95WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

96WH

*[Daniel Zeichner]*

Owen), who I thought spoke with a great depth of  
knowledge about this subject. For those of us who are  
not so close to the industry, I will talk about the  
scientific and some of the legal issues, some of which  
have already been raised, but there is an elephant in the  
room: to many of us, it seems as though the debate is  
being driven by what many of us see as the Prime  
Minister's longstanding antipathy towards the European  
Court of Justice. It seems to me almost like a fetish in  
some ways, because there has to be some way to resolve  
disputes. I often look to football for inspiration; most  
things can be related to football in my view. It needs a  
referee; people may sometimes feel hard done by, but  
when there are disputes, there has to be an arbitrator.  
The Government seem intent on bringing their own  
referee to the table, instead of playing by the rules. We  
have to have some way of resolving these issues.

One issue we have already heard about is the possibility  
of associate membership of Euratom, and we all want  
to hear much more from the Minister about that. However,  
if we are going to talk about associate membership, we  
also need to hear something about whether the Government  
can provide the same assurances for other areas of  
crucial scientific research, such as our relationship with  
the European Research Council, the European Research  
Area and the Horizon 2020 programme.

Just last week, the Government made an extraordinary  
policy announcement in the pages of the *Financial  
Times*, in which two Secretaries of State recognised the  
need for us to stay close to European Union regulatory  
systems in the life sciences sector—an announcement  
that some of us feel might have been more appropriately  
made in Parliament first. It is true to say, however, that  
a direction of travel is emerging on all of these issues,  
even if the proper destination has not yet been arrived  
at.

10.7 am

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): Very simply, I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Albert  
Owen) on introducing the debate, because his attitude  
was extremely constructive. There are a lot of issues  
associated with matters of this kind, and it is important  
for us both to be practical and to stick to the legal  
position. I very much agree with my right hon. Friend  
the Member for Clwyd West (Mr. Jones) about the legal  
position; in fact, it is endorsed exclusively by the European  
Commission. After the BEIS Committee report, which  
was published on 2 May, the Commission published a  
position paper on 22 June stating:

“On the date of withdrawal, the Treaties, including the Treaty  
establishing the European Atomic Energy Community...cease to  
apply to the United Kingdom.”

I think that is definitive; the Commission takes that  
view.

However, the other aspect to this is that we have to  
find an answer to these questions, and we have to be  
constructive about it at the same time. The legal position  
is clear, but the question is where we go from there. We  
are bound by international conventions to our membership  
of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and it is  
my belief that the same applies to the EU. I therefore  
suspect that there is common ground here, in which all  
the rules are effectively already converging. If that is the

case, as I think it probably is, there is a basis on which  
we can move forwards to some form of co-operation. I  
very much take up the view of the hon. Member for  
Ynys Mon regarding a working group. That is an interesting  
idea, and I think it would be consistent with working  
towards something like associate membership.

I would like to say much more, but in a nutshell the  
question of jurisdiction is cropping up the whole time in  
respect of citizens' rights, our trade arrangements and  
so on. There is a consistent pattern in how we resolve  
these questions as we move into negotiations. As I have  
said in the House several times, I believe that there is a  
means whereby, without prejudicing or rejecting our  
judicial sovereignty and Westminster sovereignty, we  
can take a common-sense approach, by adopting a  
tribunal. The tribunal could have on it, for example, a  
retired European Court judge, a retired Supreme Court  
judge and an independent judge. In other words, through  
such a tribunal we could try to find a constructive  
answer through some form of international agreement  
whereby we can all be satisfied, instead of shouting at  
one another. The law is clear, but we need to look for  
constructive solutions.

10.10 am

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray.  
I commend the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Albert  
Owen) for securing this very important debate.

I have an interest in this subject because of my  
constituency. In Abingdon, many of the workers at the  
Joint European Torus facility are very worried about  
what is going on and feel they have been forgotten in the  
last few months. I am delighted that today, they get a  
chance to be heard.

My former profession was physics teaching, so if I  
may be indulged, I would like to explain why nuclear  
fusion is so important. While fission is the splitting up  
of large isotopes to create smaller ones, releasing energy,  
fusion is the joining up of smaller ones to create large  
ones, also creating energy—and what is amazing is that  
the base material is water. When we are done with it, the  
end products have barely any decay half-lives. It is an  
extraordinary technology, and—make no mistake—if  
we get it right, it is as scientifically significant as sending  
a man to the moon. It could solve climate change  
completely, because water is essentially an inexhaustible  
material. I would like to make the case for that, because  
I think it has been forgotten. Humanity needs that  
technology—I do not think I am overstating it—and it  
is vital we get it going.

It is covered under the treaty, not only because of the  
work programme, to which the hon. Member for Henley  
(John Howell) referred, but also because afterwards we  
have ITER. If we are going to access that supply chain  
and not lose the expertise of those scientists, the best  
thing we can do is give them certainty. I have visited the  
site several times and been told that there is already  
movement among the scientists to leave. They need to  
know now what is going on, because it will soon be the  
summer holidays, and they are deciding what to do for  
their families. If their jobs are not secure, they will leave.  
Compounded with the issues around which EU citizens  
get to stay here, that means literally hundreds of jobs  
are on the line.

97WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

98WH

I would like to ask the Minister, on behalf of my  
constituents, what he is doing to ensure we do not have  
any of these cliff edges. Will he assure us that if he  
cannot negotiate the replacement treaties in time, he  
will extend our membership of Euratom until such time  
that we do? Is the plan right now to have associate  
membership? Surely he can tell us what the Government  
are looking at. Will he also confirm that the reason we  
are in this mess is the Prime Minister's obsession with  
the European Court of Justice? I applaud the constructive  
nature of this debate, and the fact is that if we just  
decided to get over that, we would avoid this mess  
entirely.

If I may, I would like to explain why the radioisotopes  
issue is such a big one. The Minister and the Government  
keep saying that it is not covered by the treaty, but I  
refer them to page 66 of the Euratom treaty. Line 2  
clearly states that the very same radioisotopes, technetium-  
99m and molybdenum-99, are covered by the treaty. We  
cannot make those in the UK, so if we are to import  
them—that is the only way we can get them—they are  
covered by the treaty. Will the Minister agree with the  
industry that that is at risk and also reassure cancer  
patients that diagnostics and treatments will not cease?

10.14 am

**Mr Edward Vaizey** (Wantage) (Con): It is a great  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I  
am very pleased indeed that Euratom is now getting the  
attention it deserves, and I congratulate the hon. Member  
for Ynys Mon (Albert Owen) on securing this debate.

It is wonderful to see the support that Euratom is  
getting outside the Chamber—for example, from former  
Conservative party leader William Hague, writing in  
*The Telegraph* yesterday. It has also been on the front  
page of the *Evening Standard*; *The Times* today came  
out in favour of Euratom; and no less a luminary than  
Dominic Cummings, the man who ran the leave campaign  
so effectively, has used quite strong language—he  
nevertheless makes his point effectively—to argue that  
we should not leave Euratom. The reason, of course, he  
shares that view is that Euratom has nothing to do with  
our leaving the European Union.

This is a debate not about stopping Brexit but saving  
our membership of Euratom. Indeed, as my right hon.  
Friend the Member for Clwyd West (Mr Jones), the  
former Brexit Minister, pointed out, we served our  
intention to leave Euratom on a technicality. It was  
quite clear that the Government had received legal  
advice that put it into their mind that it might be an  
ineffective serving of the article 50 notice if we did not  
serve notice that we were also leaving Euratom. The  
trouble that those of us who support our membership  
of Euratom have is that none of us has seen that legal  
advice. It is obviously unprecedented for the Government  
to publish legal advice, but it would be very useful at the  
first meeting of the working group, which no doubt the  
Minister will announce in his remarks, to have some  
distilled version of the legal advice that the Government  
received on the link with Euratom.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Without wishing to  
go over old scores, the right hon. Gentleman will no  
doubt remember that the Government were also given  
legal advice that there was absolutely no need whatsoever  
to have a parliamentary vote on triggering article 50.

Does that make him wonder whether the Government's  
legal advice on this should be subject to some scrutiny  
before it is implemented?

**Mr Vaizey:** That is a very effective point. It is certainly  
the case that those of us who wish to remain in Euratom  
will now seek our own legal advice, but it would be nice  
to know where the Government stand on this. The other  
point that has emerged is that no assessment has been  
made of the impact of leaving Euratom or, rather, of  
the Government's current position, which is to leave  
Euratom and then rejoin it. The Government are being  
offered a time-saving opportunity.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Does my right hon.  
Friend agree that continued membership of Euratom  
would not in any way preclude the striking of free trade  
deals or controlling our borders, which are the stated  
aims of Brexit?

**Mr Vaizey:** My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. One  
Member asked earlier why we are singling out Euratom  
from other European institutions that we will leave as  
part of the process of leaving the European Union. The  
key point is that our membership of Euratom is under a  
treaty separate from our membership of the European  
Union.

**Sir William Cash:** I just want to reaffirm something.  
The Commission's position paper, dated 27 June, is  
quite unequivocal about the fact that when notice is  
given, we cease to be members of Euratom and also the  
EU under article 50. That is quite clearly set out in the  
Commission's position paper.

**Mr Vaizey:** We remain members of Euratom, as we  
remain members of the European Union. We served  
our intention to leave, but there is many a slip between  
cup and lip. I hate to mention this name in august  
company, in case it sets off an argument, but it was  
interesting to see Juncker's chief of staff today pointing  
out that he has never made a comment about our  
membership of Euratom. In terms of his general approach  
to Brexit and our not having our cake and eating it, he  
specifically said on Twitter today that that does not  
include Euratom. There are huge opportunities here,  
and we all stand ready to help the Minister.

10.18 am

**Dr Alan Whitehead** (Southampton, Test) (Lab): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. It  
is quite clear that the legal position is not clear. That  
stems from the fact that the Euratom treaty is not the  
same treaty signed in 1957 as the EU treaty. Leaving  
Euratom would involve separate negotiation of the  
arrangements for co-operative or associated status alongside  
any other negotiations in the EU. That is fairly clear.

In that context, I want to raise a concern that I hope  
the Government have considered, but I suspect they  
have not, about leaving Euratom under those circumstances  
and the status of the Hinkley C nuclear power station  
programme. In autumn 2016, the Secretary of State  
signed an investment agreement—charmingly known as  
a SoSIA— concerning Hinkley C with EDF, the French  
Government and the Chinese Government that contains  
a number of issues relating to what a qualifying shutdown

99WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

100WH

*[Dr Alan Whitehead]*

occurrence would consist of as far as the progress of  
Hinkley C power station is concerned. That investment  
agreement defined that a qualifying shutdown occurrence  
would consist of a Government intervention in the  
working of Hinckley Point C power station, or its  
construction, or if the EU were to do that, or if there  
were a change in treaty arrangements relating to the  
construction or operation of the power station. If we  
left Euratom unilaterally, as is proposed, with no alternative  
position in place, it is likely that that would mean a  
qualifying shutdown. The effect would be a possibility  
of the other contracting parties to the arrangement—EDF  
and others concerned with the power station—walking  
away from the deal and claiming up to £20 billion  
compensation for so doing. That seems to be an important  
consideration that we might think about. I would be  
interested to hear from the Minister whether the  
Government have considered the risk of that occurrence.

That concern is not just mine; it was raised by the  
National Audit Office in its June 2017 report on Hinckley  
C. It indicated that it thought that the Government had  
not undertaken any risk assessment relating to the  
Secretary of State's investment agreement and that perhaps  
they should do so. I would be interested to hear from  
the Minister whether that risk assessment has been  
undertaken and whether the Minister considers that the  
Secretary of State's investment agreement on Hinckley  
C would be at risk as a result of what has been decided  
so far about leaving Euratom.

10.22 am

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Albert  
Owen) on securing this important and valuable debate.  
I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for  
Wantage (Mr Vaizey) and my hon. Friend the Member  
for Henley (John Howell) that Euratom brings great  
benefits to this country.

We should do all that is legally possible to maintain  
those benefits by whatever means it takes. We should  
not allow any thoughts of ideological purity to get in  
the way of achieving that. My judgment is that if we  
can legally remain within Euratom, we should do so. I  
understand the points that were well and eloquently  
made by my right hon. and hon. Friends who have  
suggested that legal advice goes against that, but it  
would not be the first time that Government legal  
advisers have been shown to be wrong and it would not  
be the first time that the Commission's legal advice has  
been proved wrong.

**Alex Chalk:** If there is political will, any legal obstacle  
can be easily overcome.

**Robert Neill:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That  
is my next point.

Unless the Government seek clarity—there is a dispute  
among lawyers about the matter—the likelihood is that  
an interested party may itself seek to litigate and it  
would be much better if the Government seized the  
initiative and said that politically they wanted to stay in  
and would do whatever is necessary legally to achieve  
that objective. That would be altogether better. If they  
cannot achieve that, certainly an association agreement

would be the next best thing and I suggest it should be  
the Swiss model because the small amount of jurisdiction  
of the European Court of Justice is a minor price to pay  
for the benefits. I cannot believe that anyone would  
object to the very modest movement of skilled nuclear  
scientists who only benefit this country. Otherwise, we  
would be cutting off our economic and scientific nose  
to spite our political face and we should not do such a  
thing. That would be a good compromise, but we should  
stay in until such time as that is in place because we  
cannot have any risks in the interim.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): If the Minister  
is unable today to give the legal certainty of being able  
to stay in Euratom, which is what my hon. Friend is  
looking for, does he agree that we need a commitment  
today from the Minister that the Government will pursue  
a solution that replicates the benefits of Euratom  
membership as closely as possible?

**Robert Neill:** We must certainly do that and we must  
be flexible about the means by which we achieve it.  
There may be ways forward and my hon. Friend the  
Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) made a constructive  
point about a tribunal being one way forward. I take  
that in the spirit intended. Equally, the jurisprudence of  
the ECJ on Euratom matters is so discrete and so  
technical that it should give no offence to anyone, unless  
they are a complete purist about maintaining that  
jurisdiction.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):  
The hon. Gentleman is making an important point  
about a discrete and specific area. Does he agree that  
when people voted in the referendum last year, they  
voted on particular issues? I do not know of one  
moment on any doorstep when Euratom came up and  
people said they were voting for Britain to leave. They  
put their trust in the Government and Parliament to  
make sure that as we go through the process we do not  
do anything to jeopardise our interest for the future  
economy.

**Robert Neill:** I am sure that is the case; it did not  
come up on the doorstep for me. I spoke to a biochemist  
in the health service over the weekend who voted to  
leave, but said he certainly did not think we would go  
about leaving in such a rigid fashion that we would run  
into difficulties like this. The Government should change  
our approach to leaving in this and other matters.

I hope the position is clear. We all want the best  
possible outcome on this. The Government should seize  
the political initiative and seek to stay in if possible. If  
not, it is clear that we must go forward, but there must  
be no gap. It is more important that the Government  
deliver on that political objective than worry too much  
about some of the niceties.

10.26 am

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): The sentence that I  
think sums up how we got into this mess came from the  
hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), who said  
that we have to start getting answers to some of these  
questions. How about getting answers to the questions  
before we had the referendum, or how about Members  
asking those questions before they trooped through the

101WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

102WH

Lobby to vote for the shortest and most destructive Act  
that this Parliament will ever pass, and possibly the only  
Act of Parliament for which the explanatory notes were  
half a page longer than the Bill? The fact is that the first  
full day of debate on the triggering of article 50 lasted  
almost 11 hours, and Euratom was mentioned once by  
a Conservative Back Bencher—hats off to the right  
hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey). His mention of  
it came nine hours into the debate.

The Government's entire White Paper on leaving the  
European Union devoted only eight sentences to Euratom.  
It is described as an important priority for the  
Government—so important that it is mentioned on  
page 44, paragraph 831. Even then, there is no recognition  
whatsoever of the need for life-saving medical isotopes,  
which were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member  
for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford), who is no longer in  
her place. She has had an illustrious career saving lives  
in the NHS using radioisotopes. Without the Euratom  
treaty, the United Kingdom will have no—I repeat  
“no”—reliable source of those radioisotopes.

**Kit Malthouse** (North West Hampshire) (Con): Does  
the hon. Gentleman recognise that plenty of countries  
outside Euratom have easy access to medical isotopes  
and that there is no reason why, if we leave, we will  
suddenly become an international pariah and be denied  
those treatments?

**Peter Grant:** I accept that membership is not essential,  
but this is not the only item on which we need negotiations  
finalised and ready to implement within a ridiculously  
short and entirely self-inflicted timetable. If Euratom  
were the only thing the Government had to negotiate  
between now and March 2019, there would be no  
problem. But there are areas that will have an essential  
long-term impact that the Government will not have  
time to negotiate properly in order to get the best  
possible deal. With a bit more candour from the  
Government about how difficult that process will be, we  
might all be better off.

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North)  
(Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government  
need to be candid about all the costs of the various  
options being explored—associate membership, third-  
country membership and remaining in Euratom—and  
about the difference in costs? We know that during the  
referendum campaign a lot of inaccurate information  
was circulated about the cost of remaining and the  
associated benefits of leaving. We need some frank  
information about the costs associated with retaining  
membership of Euratom or leaving.

**James Gray (in the Chair):** Order. Interventions must  
be brief.

**Peter Grant:** I fully agree with the hon. Lady. The  
figure of £357 million comes to mind for some reason  
—it must be because I got the bus to work this morning.  
There has not been the necessary degree of openness  
and detailed debate on any of this. That is why one of  
the biggest mistakes was to call the referendum and  
then have the vote in such short order. We were told  
repeatedly by the Conservatives that we had been talking  
about this for years, but we have not been talking  
about the detail in relation to important agencies  
such as Euratom, the European Medicines Agency and  
many others.

It is good to see, albeit belatedly, so many Government  
Back Benchers now demanding that the Government  
do what some of us were asking them to do beforehand.  
All I can say to them is this: “The next time you want to  
demand that the Government do something different,  
please do so before voting for the Bill that makes it  
impossible for the Government now to listen to what  
you are asking for.” I say that because the Government  
are now claiming that we are in this situation because  
their Back Benchers, some of whom are here today,  
voted obediently for the article 50 Bill, without any  
queries about the implications for Euratom and other  
important institutions. Members here who are bemoaning  
the impact of that Act need to go home, look the mirror  
and ask themselves what responsibility they have.

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): Will the hon.  
Gentleman give way?

**Peter Grant:** I am about to finish and cannot give way  
again.

Those hon. Members need to ask themselves, “What  
responsibility did I have for this mess, and what can I do  
to ensure that I don't allow obedience to the Whips to  
make me vote for such a disaster in future?”

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**James Gray (in the Chair):** Order. I congratulate most  
hon. Members on keeping to time, but I do apologise to  
the four hon. Members whom I cannot call because of  
lack of time. We now move on to the first of the three  
winding-up speeches.

10.31 am

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Albert  
Owen) on securing this important debate. He made a  
clear case for the importance of remaining either a full  
oranassociatememberofEuratom. Manyhon. Members  
spoke about their own constituency interests, and I will  
mention a couple of those. One of the most telling  
comments came from the hon. Member for Feltham  
and Heston (Seema Malhotra), who said, “If you ask  
people on the doorstep why they voted leave, would it  
be because of Euratom?” Of course people are unaware  
of what Euratom does; they are probably unaware even  
of its existence. However, it is fundamental to our  
everyday lives.

**Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): Is the hon. Lady  
really saying that we can develop a list of all the  
organisations that were not mentioned in great detail  
during the referendum campaign, and that we must  
remain part of them just because we have not had that  
full and open debate? Actually, we voted to leave the  
European Union; that is what the British people voted  
for. We have to do that, and if it entails leaving Euratom,  
so be it, but we will do it on the best possible grounds,  
with a transitional period.

**Carol Monaghan:** The hon. Gentleman's first point is  
the correct one: yes, give us a list of everything that we  
have agreed to leave, and let us start working out the  
mess that we have created.

103WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

104WH

**Suella Fernandes:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for  
giving way again; I know that she wants to continue  
with her comments. It is clear that the British people did  
vote last year to take back control over our laws and for  
freedom from the European Court of Justice, the  
Commission and the Council; and of course the EU  
and Euratom share an institutional framework through  
the ECJ, the Commission and the Council. Does she  
not think that by remaining a member of Euratom we  
would be going against what the British people voted  
for?

**Carol Monaghan:** Absolutely not. In the Scottish  
National party we do not share the love of nuclear  
fission that those on the Government Benches seem to  
have, but it is a fact that we have nuclear facilities in  
Scotland. Scotland's future lies in renewables—last year,  
59% of our energy needs were met from that source.  
However, although we are moving towards a target of  
100% renewables, we still have nuclear facilities and  
they still need regulation and materials. Although nuclear  
safety is a reserved matter, regulation of waste and  
emissions from nuclear sites is devolved, but it appears  
that, once again without any consultation with the  
Scottish Government on the implications for future  
regulation, we are being dragged out of Euratom as  
well as the EU.

**Antoinette Sandbach:** Does the hon. Lady agree that  
not a single European Court judgment has compromised  
any British interests relating to Euratom, because they  
have all related to technical aspects and details of the  
treaty?

**Carol Monaghan:** Absolutely. I do not know about all  
the European Court judgments, but that certainly is not  
something that many of us have heard anything about.  
Euratom has operated very successfully for 60 years,  
but now we seem to be taking ourselves out of the  
regulatory framework.

**Kit Malthouse:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Carol Monaghan:** No, I am going to make some  
progress.

Any future negotiations on whatever membership of  
Euratom we might have—I hope that it is full membership,  
but there could be associate membership—must include  
the Scottish Government, as they are dealing with the  
regulation of nuclear facilities in Scotland. Some people  
have talked about putting our own regulatory framework  
in place. Of course, we could get our own regulations in  
place, but the problem is that the clock is ticking, we do  
not have a lot of time and producing these frameworks  
takes many years, not 20 months. That is a real issue.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned medical  
isotopes. The Euratom Supply Agency ensures the security  
of supply of medical isotopes for all members of Euratom.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire  
(Dr Whitford) gave us some statistics. She said that  
500,000 diagnostic scans and 10,000 cancer treatments  
are carried out annually as a result of those isotopes.  
However, we cannot produce our own medical isotopes  
and must therefore import them. Medical isotopes have  
very short half-lives, which means they need to be  
transported quickly, and there are only a few facilities in

the world that produce them. A number of the reactors  
that produce medical isotopes are coming to the end of  
their useful lifespan, which means that in future there  
could be real problems with their supply worldwide  
anyway. This is not the time to take ourselves out of the  
agency that ensures that we have a supply.

**Layla Moran:** Does the hon. Lady agree that the real  
issue with these radioisotopes is that their half-lives are  
so short that any delay in getting them to the UK—even  
hours—means that they will have expired?

**Carol Monaghan:** As a fellow physics teacher, the  
hon. Lady will know that something such as technetium-99,  
which is used in medical diagnostics, has a half-life of  
six hours, which means that after 24 hours it is pretty  
much useless, or its activity has dropped to a level that  
makes it inert. These isotopes must be transported and  
used very quickly after they are produced.

The hon. Lady has already given us a physics lesson  
on fusion, so I will not do that, but fusion is a field in  
which we are world leaders in the UK. The hon. Member  
for Henley (John Howell) talked about JET in his  
constituency. It is one of the world's most important  
facilities and one of Euratom's main facilities, so we  
need to ensure that funding continues. JET currently  
receives about £48 million annually. The contract runs  
to the end of 2018, so we must ensure that pulling out of  
Euratom does not affect future funding.

We must ensure that transitional arrangements for  
nuclear safeguarding, trade and funding are in place  
until the EU-UK negotiations are complete, and that  
should be done with the full consultation of the nuclear  
industry and community. We need to retain our membership  
of the European observatory on the supply of medical  
radioisotopes and continue to work with Euratom and  
global partners to mitigate any shortages of medical  
isotopes. We need to ensure that Euratom funding for  
our nuclear research projects continues. Finally, the UK  
Government must involve the Scottish Government at  
every stage of the negotiation process, to ensure that  
the deal reached works for Scotland's nuclear industry  
as well.

10.39 am

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Thank you,  
Mr Gray, for your rigorous chairing of this debate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys  
Mon (Albert Owen) on securing the debate and on the  
knowledge of and commitment to this vital sector that  
he demonstrated in his opening remarks. Those have  
been reflected by many of the Members who have  
spoken, from both sides of theHouse.Theydemonstrated  
the strength of concern that exists about this issue  
across party lines. The Prime Minister has called for  
some level of cross-party co-operation on Brexit, and in  
many ways today's debate has taken her up on that. Her  
response will show whether she is serious.

Many Members have spoken knowledgably about  
Euratom's importance to the UK, and the worrying  
implications of a cliff-edge departure. Euratom has  
enabled the UK to become a world leader in nuclear  
research and development. The fact that the Secretary  
of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
has decided to continue funding the JET facility in

105WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

106WH

Culham demonstrates that he recognises that too. That  
point was made very forcefully by the hon. Member for  
Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran).

**Annaliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): I was  
not given the chance to speak on this issue, so I want to  
ask my hon. Friend whether he is aware of the need for  
certainty about Culham's status to be provided within  
the year, given the need to avoid the Austrian presidency.  
We need answers very quickly on its continuation. Further,  
is he aware of the enormous expense that will be incurred  
if the Culham centre has to be decommissioned, rather  
than allowed to develop the practical technology of  
which it was, of course, a global pioneer?

**Paul Blomfield:** I thank my hon. Friend for her  
intervention, which demonstrates her commitment to  
the Culham facility not only in her current role but in  
her previous job. She is right on both points. The hon.  
Member for Oxford West and Abingdon made this  
point forcefully: we need certainty now—not at some  
stage in the future, but now—because otherwise the  
facility is at risk.

**Kit Malthouse:** Does the hon. Gentleman recognise  
that actually the biggest threat to fusion research in  
Europe generally is the stance of the European Union  
itself ? Given that Germany has decided to phase out  
nuclear power, the hostility of the Austrians and the  
fact that the anti-science Greens now pepper the European  
Parliament and parliaments across the EU, the likelihood  
of Horizon 2020 funding continuing to go into nuclear  
research at the same level is very low, and likely to  
reduce.

**Paul Blomfield:** Those thoughts are contradicted by  
the enormous investment that the European Union has  
put into the Culham facility and is committing to.

Moving back to the benefits of Euratom, it oversees  
the transport of nuclear fuel across the EU and enables  
vital co-operation on information, infrastructure and  
the funding of nuclear energy. It provides safeguarding  
inspections for all civilian nuclear facilities in the UK—a  
point made well by the hon. Members for Dwyfor  
Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts) and for Copeland  
(Trudy Harrison), who was right to say that if we get  
this wrong, it will have an economically crushing impact  
on the UK. Euratom is the legal owner of all nuclear  
material, and is the legal purchaser, certifier and guarantor  
of nuclear materials and technologies that the UK  
purchases. That includes our nuclear trade with the  
United States.

As has been highlighted this week and by other  
Members, including the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire  
(Dr Whitford), Euratom also plays an important role in  
our NHS. A Conservative Member questioned that  
point, but I take the judgment of the Royal College of  
Radiologists, which has expressed genuine concern that  
cancer patients will face delays in treatments if supply is  
threatened. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton,  
Test (Dr Whitehead) highlighted the National Audit  
Office report on the risks to Hinkley Point. In all areas,  
our membership of Euratom is vital.

Indeed, the Government stated that they want to  
replicate the arrangements we have with Euratom. They  
have talked about probably the exact same benefits, in

the way that they have about the trade deal they want in  
place of single market membership and customs union  
membership. It is an ambition that they have yet to  
demonstrate how they will achieve.

Outside Euratom, the Government would have to  
negotiate individual nuclear co-operation agreements  
with every single country outside the EU with which we  
currently co-operate on these matters. Those would  
be complex, lengthy negotiations within a 20-month  
framework. I am interested to hear from the Minister  
how far they have progressed on those. The Nuclear  
Industry Association has been clear that if we left  
without them in place, it would be a disaster—a point  
made by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and  
Furness (John Woodcock), who is a strong champion of  
these issues.

All this prompts the question: why add this whole  
other burden to run alongside the negotiations for our  
withdrawal from the European Union? The bigger issue  
at play here was summed up very well—I loved the  
football analogy—by my hon. Friend the Member for  
Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner): the Prime Minister's  
obsession with the European Court of Justice. In that  
context, it is deeply unfortunate that Ministers from the  
Department for Exiting the European Union have dodged  
today's debate. It is becoming something of a habit. We  
have had three debates in this and the main Chamber  
on exiting the European Union since the election. DExEU  
Ministers have dodged every one. That is an unfortunate  
habit, because both sides of this House demand a level  
of accountability that they are not demonstrating they  
are up for.

Back in February, I challenged the then Minister of  
State at DExEU, the right hon. Member for Clwyd  
West (Mr Jones), about allegations that it was the  
jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice that had  
led the Government to issue a notice to withdraw from  
Euratom alongside the notice to withdraw from the EU.  
In response he told the House, along much the same  
lines that he has repeated this morning, that this was  
not the case. He said:

“it would not be possible for the UK to leave the EU and continue  
its current membership of Euratom.”—[*Official Report*, 8 February  
2017; Vol. 621, c. 523.]

The right hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey) and the  
hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) have expressed  
the view, which many of us share, that legal opinions  
are never that straightforward. The hon. Member for  
Henley made that very explicit.

**Mr David Jones:** The hon. Gentleman mentioned me.  
He has heard what I have to say. I repeat that the advice  
that DExEU received was as I have outlined this morning.  
Does he accept that?

**Paul Blomfield:** I think that there are probably enough  
lawyers in this place to know that legal advice can go in  
many ways. It may well be that that advice was received  
by the Department, but other Conservative Members  
have made it clear that if the political will exists, a  
solution can be found.

**Mr Vaizey:** I do not mean to doubt the assertion by  
my right hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd West  
(Mr Jones) that that was the advice his Department  
received, but it would of course help the hon. Gentleman

107WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

108WH

*[Mr Vaizey]*

to agree with him if the Department published the  
advice that my right hon. Friend saw when he was a  
Minister.

**Paul Blomfield:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a  
very good point. I hope the Department will respond by  
publishing that advice.

**Sir William Cash:** This is not just a question of legal  
opinion; it is actually stated in the treaty itself. Article 106a  
of the Euratom treaty, as amended by the Lisbon treaty,  
unequivocally says that article 50 of the treaty on  
European Union—the article that sets out the procedure  
for EU withdrawal—

“shall apply to this Treaty.”

It is there in black and white. It is not a matter of legal  
opinion—it is just there.

**Paul Blomfield:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention. On the issue of cross-party consensus, I  
have to say that I was interested in his earlier contribution  
about looking for some sort of associate membership of  
Euratom, which might well involve the jurisdiction of  
the ECJ. We are making some progress, aren't we?

Let me come to those in the Government who have  
contradicted the comments by the right hon. Member  
for Clwyd West in February. Comments by James  
Chapman, the former chief of staff to the Brexit Secretary,  
contradictthatstatement,andhiscommentswereconfirmed  
by the former Chancellor. They suggest that the nuclear  
industry, jobs and cancer treatments are being put at  
risk by the Prime Minister's reckless and irresponsible  
decision to make the future of the ECJ a red line in all  
matters to do with Brexit.

**Mr David Jones:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Paul Blomfield:** No, because I am conscious of time.

All this goes well beyond the issue of Euratom. As  
the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex  
(Mr Jenkin), who is no longer in his place, pointed out,  
it will affect our future in other agencies that we would  
also wish to be members of, such as the European  
Medicines Agency. We should start with the presumption  
that if these agencies are in our interests as a country,  
we would want to continue to maintain that membership.

We have already seen the obsession with the ECJ  
undermining discussions on the rights of EU citizens in  
the UK, and therefore those of UK citizens in the  
EU27. That obsession will also affect our ability to  
secure the objective that the Government have set  
themselves: the “exact same benefits”—I quote the  
Brexit Secretary—that we currently enjoy in the single  
market and the customs union.

I hope the Minister will agree to take back to his  
Secretary of State the clear consensus in this Chamber,  
and I hope the Secretary of State takes it to the Prime  
Minister. As James Chapman said, if the Prime Minister  
does not shift her position on Euratom,

“parliament will shift it for her.”

10.50 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy (Richard Harrington):**My apprehension before this debate was not about the  
content of it,whichhasbeenfirstclassandveryconstructive,  
but about having to pronounce in front of you, Mr Gray,  
the constituency of the hon. Member for Ynys Mon  
(Albert Owen), who introduced it. I thank him and  
other right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of  
the House for their constructive comments.

The hon. Gentleman said that he wants constructive  
comments and debate, he wants certainty and he wants  
world-class arrangements for the future of the nuclear  
industry in the UK and our relationship with other  
countries. I absolutely agree. His suggestion for a working  
group was very interesting. My door is certainly always  
open to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of  
the House, either collectively or individually. I have  
takenthatapproachineveryjobIhavehadandIwillbe  
pleased to continue with it—particularly in this case,  
since you have had to curtail Members' contributions  
today because of time, Mr Gray. You did it very well,  
but I will not have as much time to answer them as I  
would have liked.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** Will the Minister give way?

**Richard Harrington:** I will, but it will cut my comments  
down.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** It is good to hear that the Minister's  
door is always open. I have already contacted him on  
matters relating to Trawsfynydd and have been refused  
a meeting. Would it be possible to arrange a meeting  
now?

**Richard Harrington:** I have never refused a meeting  
with anybody on any subject that I have ever been  
involved in, and I certainly have no intention of doing  
so to the hon. Lady. I really must make progress, but I  
am happy to arrange that meeting as soon as I possibly  
can.

The Government are determined that the nuclear  
industry in this country should continue to flourish in  
trade, regulation and innovative nuclear research. We  
are determined to have a constructive, collaborative  
relationship with Euratom. The UK is a great supporter  
of it and will continue to be so. There have recently been  
some alarmist stories in the press about what leaving  
Euratom might mean for safety and for health, but I  
must make it clear that we remain committed to the  
highest standards of nuclear safety and support for the  
industry. We will continue to apply international standards  
on nuclear safeguards.

We do not believe that leaving Euratom will have any  
adverse effect on the supply of medical radioisotopes.  
Contrary to what has been in the press, they are not  
classed as special fissile material and are not subject to  
nuclear safeguards, so they are not part of the nuclear  
non-proliferation treaty, which is the driver of our  
nuclear safeguards regime. They are covered by the  
Euratom treaty, as the hon. Member for Oxford West  
and Abingdon (Layla Moran) said, but Euratom places  
no restriction on the export of medical isotopes outside  
the EU. After leaving Euratom, our ability to access  
medical isotopes produced in Europe will not be affected.

109WH

Euratom Membership

12 JULY 2017

Euratom Membership

110WH

Since time is pressing, I will say just a little more  
about safeguards, a subject that hon. Members are  
rightly concerned about. It is clear that we need continuity;  
we must avoid any break in our safeguards regime. We  
currently meet our safeguards standards through our  
membership of Euratom. The Government's aim is  
clear: we want to maintain our mutually successful civil  
nuclear co-operation with Euratom. We can do so while  
establishing our own nuclear safeguards regime, using  
the body that already regulates nuclear security and  
safety: the Office for Nuclear Regulation. In order to do  
so, we need legislation, which is why the Queen's Speech  
on 21 June outlined our intention to take powers to set  
up a domestic nuclear safeguards regime in partnership  
with the ONR to enable us to meet international standards  
and nuclear non-proliferation obligations. Regardless  
of where hon. Members stand on the question of  
membership, associate membership, transition or departure  
from Euratom, I hope we can all agree that it is sensible  
and prudent to take such powers. I do not think anyone  
could disagree with that.

**John Woodcock:** Will the Minister give way?

**Richard Harrington:** I really cannot, but only because  
of time; I normally would. Instead, let me say a little  
about what my Department has been doing to advance  
the UK's interests.

We are pleased that engagement with the EU is about  
to begin in earnest. EU directives note that a suitable  
agreement will need to be reached in relation to the  
ownership of special fissile materials and safeguards  
equipment in the UK that are currently Euratom's  
property—I note the contribution from my hon. Friend  
the Member for Copeland (Trudy Harrison) on that  
issue. The outcome of such an agreement, like the rest  
of the UK's future relationship with Euratom, will be  
subject to negotiations with the EU and Euratom,  
throughout which our primary aim will be to maintain  
our mutually successful civil nuclear co-operation with  
Euratom and the rest of the world. I reiterate that we  
are strong supporters of Euratom, and that is not going  
to change. The first phase of negotiations will commence  
next week, on 17 July, following the publication of the  
European Commission's position paper on Euratom.  
Our own position paper will be published imminently.

**Albert Owen:** Will that be before the recess? Will it be  
a written statement, or will it come to the House?

**Richard Harrington:** Imminently means imminently.  
*[Interruption.]*

That was quite a good line, actually.

We are ready and confident that we can find common  
ground as officials enter the first phase of negotiations,  
because there is a clear mutual interest in maintaining  
close and effective co-operation.

We are also keen to ensure minimal disruption to civil  
nuclear trade and co-operation with non-European partners.  
To that end, we are negotiating with the US, Canada,  
Australia and Japan so that we have the appropriate  
co-operation agreements in place. I reinforce that point  
because hon. Members may have read or heard that  
everything has to be done in a painfully long sequence  
that takes years and years. I can tell them not only that  
it is possible to do these things in parallel, but that we  
are doing so.

We will avoid the cliff edge feared by the hon. Member  
for Ynys Mon. We are preparing the domestic Nuclear  
Safeguards Bill, we are opening negotiations with the  
EU, we are talking to third countries about bilateral  
agreements, and we are talking to the International  
Atomic Energy Agency. Nobody doubts the UK's  
credentials as a responsible nuclear state, and everyone  
in the UK and elsewhere is keen to see that continue.  
The UK has been in the forefront of nuclear non-  
proliferation for 60 years. I have no doubt that we can  
bring these discussions to a satisfactory conclusion.

I am sure hon. Members will be quick to remind me  
that I have not yet mentioned nuclear research and  
development. I will have to cover this quickly, but I  
want them to know that it is another strand of work  
that we are taking seriously and acting on swiftly. My  
right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on  
27 June that we would underwrite the UK's share of the  
EU joint European torus fusion project. We are totally  
committed to R and D collaboration, in particular to  
Oxfordshire's world-leading Culham Centre for Fusion  
Energy, which my hon. Friend the Member for Henley  
(John Howell) mentioned. The Secretary of State described  
JET in his announcement as a “prized facility”. I assure  
all hon. Members that this is a top priority for us.

There is no question of lack of support for Euratom.  
There has been discussion today of whether we need to  
leave it at all. There was clear advice at the time about  
the unique nature of the legal relationship between the  
separate treaties and about their inseparability. My  
right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was asked by  
the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee  
whether it would be possible to leave the EU but remain  
in Euratom. He said:

“Essentially, the interleaving of various aspects of the treaties  
in practice could have meant that it was defective. The article 50  
notification would have been defective had we not served it for  
Euratom as well. Therefore, we served it, but at the outset we said  
that we want to have continuity of co-operation and collaboration,  
and that is what we intend to achieve.”

10.58 am

**Albert Owen:** Thank you for chairing the debate in  
such a splendid fashion, Mr Gray. I thank each of the  
15 Members who participated.

I set out in this debate to create consensus so that we  
can get the best deal for Britain. The Minister has been  
slightly helpful, but only slightly. He would have done  
better to have said that before the recess we would have  
a debate on the Floor of the House on how we can  
move this matter forward. We need to hold the Government  
to account—not with a statement just before recess, but  
with a proper and open debate like this one, so that we  
can be constructive and move forward together as one.  
That is what I set out to do today, and that is what we  
have done.

The Government's rhetoric needs to turn into action.  
Demanding that has been the responsibility of Back  
Benchers in this debate, and it will be the responsibility  
of the Opposition and the Government, working together,  
to get the best deal for the United Kingdom.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered negotiations on future Euratom  
membership.

111WH

12 JULY 2017

Schools: Nottingham

112WH

Schools: Nottingham

11 am

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): I beg  
to move,

That this House has considered support for Nottingham schools.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Gray. Today's motion is very deliberate; I want to  
talk about the support that Nottingham schools need,  
not just the funding they receive. Too often Ministers  
have talked our city down. We must be frank about the  
challenges we face in raising educational attainment,  
especially at key stage 4, but we must also recognise  
progress, innovation and success. Failing to do so is  
demoralising and counterproductive.

I hope the Minister will welcome the fact that 83% of  
children in Nottingham are now taught in good and  
outstanding schools, up from 61% just three years ago.  
Some 22% of our schools are now rated outstanding—that  
is the second highest local authority level in the east  
midlands, and above the national average. I hope he will  
also welcome the improvement in key stage 2 results.  
The progress made by children in Nottingham's primary  
schools last year matched the national average in reading  
and outstripped national averages in writing and maths.  
Children come to those primaries with low levels of  
school readiness and low speech and communication  
levels. Many require additional language support and  
pupil mobility is very high.

Nottingham is rightly proud of its “Maths Mastery”  
programme, developed in collaboration with the two  
regional maths hubs. Drawing on learning from Singapore  
and other leading international practice, Nottingham is  
developing a maths teaching culture that is already  
delivering enhanced outcomes, with the approach now  
being rolled out from the early years through to KS4.

The city's five special schools are all rated good or  
outstanding, and Oak Field School is recognised  
internationally as a model of excellence in working with  
children and young people with profound and multiple  
disabilities. We also have an outstanding hospital school  
at the Queen's Medical Centre.

More than 8,000 Nottingham children are learning a  
musical instrument in school, up an incredible 1,652%  
in the past 12 years. In 78% of Nottingham primary  
schools, every child is learning an instrument, compared  
with a figure of 58% nationally. Some 48% of pupils  
continue with instrumental teaching after the first year,  
compared with 27% nationally. There has been a 385%  
increase in the numbers of pupils gaining a nationally  
recognised music qualification in the past three years  
alone.

**Mr Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): I  
am grateful that my hon. Friend has secured this debate.  
She will know my constituent, Sheku Kanneh-Mason,  
who last year won the BBC young musician of the year  
contest, as he went to Trinity School, a secondary  
school in her constituency. He is a great example of the  
sort of specialism and expertise that young people in  
our city can achieve. My concern more broadly is that  
all those specialisms may be sacrificed if the speculated  
cuts to the funding formula and the changes hit Nottingham  
schools particularly hard. Can my hon. Friend say a

word about why some of those specialist skills among  
the teaching staff and beyond are so important in our  
city?

**Lilian Greenwood:** Sheku Kanneh-Mason is indeed  
an acclaimed cellist, and Trinity School and all of us are  
rightly very proud of him. I will say more about the  
importance of music and other enrichment activities  
and why they are under threat.

Students from across the city not only enjoy playing  
or singing in an ensemble, but are equipping themselves  
with perseverance, self-belief and a lifelong love of  
music. It is particularly pleasing to note that Nottingham  
is in the top quintile for those on pupil premium learning  
a musical instrument. However, while the Nottingham  
Music Hub is always exploring new ways to generate  
income, I am concerned that the local authority and  
individual schools may find it more difficult to fund the  
service in the future.

Schools provide other opportunities. The number of  
children able to swim 25 metres at the end of key stage 2  
has more than doubled to 45% in the past four years.  
Some 6,000 primary and 5,300 secondary students are  
involved in competitive school games and sports.

I began the debate by saying that I wanted the Minister  
to recognise that there is much to be proud of in  
Nottingham schools, but I would be failing my constituents  
if I did not also acknowledge that we need to do much  
better in ensuring that every child leaves school with the  
skills and knowledge they need to lead successful adult  
lives. Formal qualifications are an important measure,  
but they are not the only one. I hope the Minister will  
recognise that good schools also ensure that students  
are resilient, kind, reflective, motivated, confident, and  
have respect for themselves and others. Character  
development is vital and should be valued.

Many Nottingham families live in poverty and some  
have low aspirations. Too many live in inadequate or  
overcrowded housing and have very low incomes and  
poor health, both mental and physical. Some children  
face additional challenges because English is not their  
first language, and we know that white working-class  
children, especially boys, are often the hardest to reach.  
Even where children are making good progress at primary  
school and are achieving at the end of year 6, that is too  
often not maintained to GCSE level. We clearly need to  
improve the transition from primary to secondary  
education, but there is concern that the Government's  
emphasis on a limited range of academic subjects up to  
age 16 is off-putting to those pupils, including the  
academically able, who would be enthused by a more  
vocational route. That view is expressed not only by  
teachers and heads, but by the former Conservative  
Education Secretary, Lord Baker, who has championed  
high-quality technical education for more than two  
decades.

Nottingham is working hard to provide sufficient  
primary school places by expanding existing good schools.  
We know that the bulge in pupil numbers will mean a  
shortfall in secondary school places if action is not  
taken now. A reliance on the emergence of new free  
schools is not enough. Nottingham needs extra capital  
resources to expand existing schools or to open new  
ones. The high level of in-year admissions is a further  
challenge, particularly for our maintained schools. The  
current system is not transparent and there is concern

113WH

Schools: Nottingham

12 JULY 2017

Schools: Nottingham

114WH

that some academies are reluctant to admit pupils with  
additional needs, placing some of the most vulnerable  
children at risk of missing time in school. The White  
Paper, “Educational Excellence Everywhere”, called for  
local authorities to have a co-ordinating role in dealing  
with such admissions. Will the Minister say whether he  
will be returning to that proposal?

A further concern is the high level of permanent  
exclusions at key stages 3 and 4. Last year, 108 city  
children were permanently excluded, and this year the  
number is set to be even higher. It is deeply concerning  
that a high proportion of those students have special  
educational needs. The pupil referral unit now has more  
than 300 students on its books, and those young people  
are placed with a number of alternative providers across  
the city, but the cost is very high and outcomes are poor.  
Funding for such provision falls on the local authority  
and diverts resources away from other high-needs children.  
What action will the Government take to incentivise  
schools to tackle poor behaviour, rather than using  
exclusion too widely to shift responsibility?

As the Minister is well aware, school funding—already  
a hot topic—rightly became the focus of debate during  
the general election. I have listened carefully to the  
Minister's responses since then, and I do not believe he  
has adequately addressed my voters' concerns. He says  
that the schools budget has been protected in real terms  
since 2010, but he knows that pupil numbers are rising.  
The cake may be bigger, but it has to be shared between  
more people. Will he come clean and admit that the  
increase in the budget has not been sufficient to protect  
per pupil funding in real terms? He knows that all  
schools face higher national insurance contributions,  
pension contributions, unfunded national pay rises and  
now the apprenticeship levy.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies reported that spending  
per pupil would fall in real terms by 8% and the National  
Audit Office confirmed that,

“funding per pupil will, on average, rise only from £5,447 in  
2015-16 to £5,519 in 2019-20, a real-terms reduction once inflation  
is taken into account.”

The Minister says he will support schools to offset these  
pressures, but I can find little evidence of such support  
in delivering the savings required. One head at a primary  
academy told me:

“We have already renegotiated every single contract both as  
one school and as part of a Multi-Academy Trust. We have lost  
and not replaced three teaching assistants, a sports coach, a music  
teacher and an art teacher. Our pupils walk to their Swimming  
lessons for 12 sessions rather than travelling by bus for 36. If a  
teacher is ill, we don't use qualified teachers to stand in front of  
classes until day four of their absence because insurance for  
teacher absence that starts after the third day is considerably  
cheaper than insurance that starts on the first day.”

It really is that bleak. Schools in Nottingham are making  
cuts that have a direct and damaging impact on the  
quality of education.

The head of an outstanding primary school told me  
that they had cut the number of teaching assistants,  
teachers and learning mentors, increasing pressure on  
remaining staff and providing less support for children  
with additional needs. As he said:

“All of this is also taking place within the context of an  
increase in the numbers of families who need extra support, due  
to benefit changes, higher levels of domestic violence, more  
families being evicted...and the rise of the number of families  
seeking support from food banks.”

Secondary schools paint a similar picture: fewer teachers,  
larger classes, less subject choice, and cuts to after-school  
activities.

I note that the Minister has sometimes resorted to  
blaming his Government's choices on the budget deficit  
in 2010. That is simply not good enough. His party has  
been in power for seven years. They promised that as a  
result of their austerity plans, the deficit would be  
eliminated by 2015. Any shred of economic credibility  
is long gone and their decision to spend £1 billion on  
buying a parliamentary majority underlines that point.

A head told me what inadequate funding means to  
hisschool:“AmIabletoreplacethe18failinginteractive  
whiteboardsinourclassrooms?No.AmIabletopurchase  
library books to inspire a love for reading in the next  
generation? No. Can the disabled child's carer have  
overtime to accompany her for a full day's educational  
visit? Of course, yes. As a result of that carer's overtime,  
can the five-year-olds have another set of glue sticks for  
the summer term? No.” He said:

“As the Headteacher I am not bemoaning the lack of capacity  
for investing in education at a level that will make a significant  
difference to the life chances of my pupils; I am genuinely  
struggling to see how I can squeeze basic school provisions out of  
the funding available.”

On top of the existing level of real terms cuts we also  
face the prospect of a new national funding formula  
that will take money away from every single school in  
my constituency. I welcome the Minister's promise that,  
“there will be no cut in per pupil funding as a consequence of  
moving to the national fair funding formula”,  
but, as he knows, protecting a budget in cash terms is no  
protection at all. With rising inflation and increasing  
demands—for example, the introduction of much needed  
mental health support—school leaders simply feel unable  
to deliver what is asked of them. I could fill hours with  
the testimony of dedicated school staff who feel that the  
Government are not giving them the support they need.  
Adequate funding, especially for schools serving areas  
of high deprivation, is essential. Schools cannot keep  
doing more with less. They are at breaking point.

I hope the Minister will not simply dismiss my concerns  
and those of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend  
the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris), who  
will speak shortly. I want the Minister to commit to, at  
the very least, maintaining school funding in real terms  
for Nottingham schools. If he cannot, I will not stop  
asking. I also want him to come and see why I am  
asking.

Last Friday I visited the city schools exhibition at  
Nottingham Contemporary. The gallery's head of learning  
told me,

“what we are hearing from teachers again and again is that  
coming to a gallery, working with artists, really helps their children  
think differently, think creatively, question, be critical and  
reflective...particularly it builds confidence in those children who  
are told too often they are wrong, to keep quiet and not question.  
The gallery offers those children a place to thrive.”

While I was there, students from Southwold Primary  
enjoyed telling me about their work. Southwold is a  
good school, but it serves one of the most disadvantaged  
parts of my constituency: 46.1% of pupils have English  
as an additional language and 47.6% are eligible for free  
school meals. I have seen for myself the creative ways in  
which the school works to give their children a great  
start in life.

115WH

Schools: Nottingham

12 JULY 2017

Schools: Nottingham

116WH

*[Lilian Greenwood]*

The head said,

“we are giving our city children the experiences that more affluent  
counterparts can afford. Our pupils find it hard to make connections  
due to limited experiences and we need to provide these experiences  
so they can better access the curriculum and understand contexts  
for learning.”

She explained that in last year's SATs reading test, one  
text was about a safari park; some children did not  
know what a safari park was, let alone visited one. As  
she says:

“All this needs funding and at the moment we are trying to do  
it on a shoestring.”

Nottingham's schools need our support. They need  
the resources to do their vital job of investing in the  
next generation. I hope the Minister will come and see  
our schools for himself and commit to supporting  
them, enabling every Nottingham child to thrive.

**James Gray (in the Chair):** Unusually, and for good  
constituency reasons, I call the hon. Member for  
Nottingham North (Alex Norris) for no more than four  
or five minutes.

11.15 am

**Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): I will  
start by declaring an interest as chair of governors at  
Rosslyn Park Primary School. I shall not impose on the  
Minister's time for more than four or five minutes; I am  
enormously grateful to him for giving me the opportunity  
to speak. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) on securing the  
debate. She, like me, made school cuts the focus of her  
terrific re-election campaign, and she and I vowed to  
use all the devices of this place to raise the issue loudly  
and assertively. We have both spent a lot of time meeting  
parents at school gates; it is impossible to overstate the  
strength of feeling on this topic.

Getting a good start in life in order to thrive should  
be something we aspire to for every child. Regrettably,  
in my constituency too often that is not the case. That is  
both the cause of and caused by cyclical poverty in my  
community. That was the theme of my maiden speech,  
and it will be the golden thread running through all my  
work in this place. It is critical that our schools are  
sufficiently supported to make sure we can close the  
gap, or too many of our children will start behind and  
simply never catch up. That is a shame. It is not a fact of  
life and people rightly look to this place and to the  
Government in the expectation that there will be action  
to tackle it. It explains the dismay at the idea that  
schools in Nottingham might receive real terms budget  
cuts. Left wing or right wing, whatever their politics,  
people do not see that as a sensible idea. It is a false  
economy for the state and will lead to greater dependence  
in the future. None of us will win. I can understand that  
there may be historic inequities that need to be ironed  
out, but I urge Ministers to think creatively and to level  
up, or they will take from those with the least in order to  
give it often to those with the least need. I defy anybody  
to join me at the school gates in Bilborough and explain  
that to parents.

School improvement is an imprecise art. As I declared,  
I am the chair of governors at one of Nottingham's  
biggest primary schools. We have been on a journey

with Ofsted and have got to the point where we are very  
excited and cannot wait for Ofsted to come and see how  
well we are doing. Our results last week put us virtually  
at the national average for attainment and above that  
for progress. In future years I have no doubt we will go  
even further. That is all built on current levels of investment  
and on having outstanding leadership that works outside  
the classroom, meaning that each leader can make half  
a dozen or more staff better, leading to better teaching  
on a daily basis in each class. It means never needing  
supply and always delivering quality, but that is at risk  
from real-terms school cuts—nearly £2 million-worth  
across the constituency.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham  
South mentioned, there are only so many physical budgets  
that the cuts can come from. In the end, they will come  
from staff. The public will watch us discuss cuts and  
talk about real terms and cash terms. That is a political  
argument for now, but it will mean naught in future.  
When P45s go out to teachers and teaching assistants,  
that is what parents will understand and they will not  
see that as a good thing. It is not helpful for Nottingham  
and we ask Ministers to revisit those plans and come up  
with something that works.

11.18 am

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham South  
(Lilian Greenwood) on securing this important debate,  
and I congratulate her and the hon. Member for  
Nottingham North (Alex Norris) on their contributions  
to it. I acknowledge the successes in school improvement  
in Nottingham that the hon. Lady highlighted. If we  
look at the data, we see that there have clearly been  
improvements in phonics results, EBacc results and in  
key stage 2 results.

The Government want to ensure that every pupil  
receives a world-class education, regardless of their  
background or where they live. We have made significant  
progress. England outperformed the rest of the United  
Kingdom in the OECD's most recent PISA science  
assessments. The attainment gap between disadvantaged  
pupils and their more affluent peers has shrunk by 7%  
at key stage 4 and by 9.3% at key stage 2 since 2011.  
Therearenow1.8millionmorechildreninschoolsthat  
are rated good or outstanding than there were in 2010.  
In Nottingham, that translates into nearly 8,000 more  
children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

However, the pace of improvement in some parts of  
the country, including Nottingham, is still not good  
enough. Only 80% of schools in Nottingham are rated  
as good or outstanding, compared with the national  
position of 89%. There is still underperformance in  
some schools in Nottingham compared with the rest of  
the country.

For example, in 2016, 75% of Nottingham's pupils  
reached the expected standard in phonics, compared  
with 81% nationally and 87% in Newham—one of the  
most deprived parts of the country—but I am pleased  
that the phonics results in Nottingham have increased  
year on year, with 48% passing that check in 2012. In  
Nottingham, 50% of primary school children in key  
stage 2 achieved the expected level in reading, writing  
and mathematics, compared with 53% nationally and  
62% in Newham. At key stage 4, 16.8% of secondary

117WH

Schools: Nottingham

12 JULY 2017

Schools: Nottingham

118WH

school pupils in Nottingham achieved the EBacc  
combinationofGCSEs,comparedwith24.7%nationally  
and 31% in Newham.

I remain as concerned about school standards in  
Nottingham as I was when I met the directors of  
education for Nottingham City Council and the regional  
schools commissioner in November 2015 to discuss  
how they intended to raise standards. Our ambition is  
for a school system that prevents underperformance,  
helps all schools to improve and extends the reach of  
high-performing schools and headteachers. That is the  
key to delivering more high-quality school places across  
the country and accelerating the pace of improvements  
throughout the country, including in Nottingham.

To succeed in that, we have targeted investment in the  
school system to support those schools most in need,  
and to support the development of teachers and school  
leaders, particularly in the most challenging parts of the  
country. For example, we have established a new fund,  
the strategic school improvement fund, which provides  
£280 million over two years to target resources at those  
schools most in need of support. That will help those  
schools that are struggling to improve to drive up  
standards and improve pupil attainment. Working at a  
locallevel,keypartnerswillbringtogetherlocalintelligence  
to help inform applications and ensure that funds are  
directed at identified improvement priorities that meet  
local needs.

Working with schools at a local level is also an  
important part of our strategy to deliver more good  
and outstanding school places. Our eight regional schools  
commissioners are pivotal to driving up standards locally,  
brokering schools into strong multi-academy trusts,  
and challenging and supporting those trusts to raise  
standards where they are not performing effectively.

Multi-academy trusts play a key role in harnessing  
the support of our system leaders and are helping to  
turn around some of the more challenging schools right  
across the country. Bluecoat Beechdale Academy, which  
serves a deprived community in the Bilborough part of  
Nottingham, was judged good by Ofsted in February  
this year. Ofsted noted that pupil progress is now improving  
rapidly. Djanogly Strelley Academy in Nottingham was  
also judged good by Ofsted in February this year, which  
is a significant turnaround from 2013, when its predecessor  
school was judged inadequate.

When we are not satisfied that the progress an academy  
is making is good enough, we will take decisive action,  
including re-brokering it to a new sponsor.

**Lilian Greenwood:** One of the things that causes me  
great concern is the time that it can take to re-broker a  
school and the difficulties that then creates when a new  
academycomesintoplace.Thatwascertainlytheexperience  
at Victoria Primary School. It has now been re-brokered,  
and I am very supportive of the headteacher and the  
multi-academy trust, but the truth is that for a long  
time—I discussed this with the previous regional schools  
commissioner—that school was left without good  
leadership. That is not good enough. I know that in  
some cases there is a struggle to find academy chains to  
take on schools in order for them to make that sort of  
progress.

**Nick Gibb:** I share the hon. Lady's impatience. We  
need to find more good school sponsors to take on  
underperforming schools. It is an iterative process; we

are seeing more and more academy chains being  
formed and more stand-alone academies taking on  
underperforming schools and helping them to improve.  
For example, Riverside Primary School in Nottingham  
was not performing well. In 2016, it was transferred to  
the NOVA academy trust, which is a strong sponsor  
operating in the city. We need more strong sponsors in  
Nottingham and throughout the country to drive up  
standards. We are seeing that the system of using leaders  
in the education system—a school-led system—is driving  
up standards. It has resulted in 1.8 million more pupils  
in good and outstanding schools than there were seven  
years ago.

The local examples I have cited demonstrate that the  
combined effects of targeted funding to the system to  
drive school improvement and action taken at a local  
level are continuing to deliver more good and outstanding  
places for children. However, underpinning all the support  
we are putting in to the system to help drive school  
improvement is the need to ensure that we have fair  
distribution of funding to schools, which properly reflects  
need.

I listened to the contributions from the hon. Members  
for Nottingham South and for Nottingham North, as  
well as the intervention from the hon. Member for  
Nottingham East (Mr Leslie), on school funding. I have  
spent a lot of time in the past few months, during the  
election and during the extensive consultation, meeting  
schoolteachers, parents and governors from across the  
country. From those conversations, I have never been more  
convinced that our current funding system is broken.

The data that we use to allocate funding to local  
authorities are more than a decade out of date. For  
example, over that period the free school meals rate has  
almost halved in Southwark and more than doubled in  
Dorset, but the funding each local authority receives  
has not responded to that change. It is not right that  
local authorities with similar needs and characteristics  
receive very different levels of funding from central  
Government. That unfairness is exacerbated at individual  
school level, because local authorities make very different  
decisions in designing their local formulae. For example,  
a school in Barnsley would have 50% more funding if  
there were no other change to its circumstances but that  
it was situated in Hackney instead. The system by  
which we distribute money to schools is unfair and  
anachronistic.

That is why the Government have gone further than  
previous Governments in reforming school funding.  
Our manifesto committed to making funding fairer and  
we will do that by introducing a single national funding  
formula, so that all schools in England are funded on a  
consistent and transparent basis that properly reflects  
needs. In March 2016 we launched our first stage of  
consultation on the formula. We asked for views on the  
principles that should underpin it and its overall design.  
The principles included using robust data to ensure that  
funding is matched to pupil characteristics, such as  
deprivation, and the importance of transparency in the  
formula. More than 6,000 people responded and there  
was widespread support for our proposals.

In December last year we launched the second stage  
of our consultation on the detailed design of the formula.  
As part of that consultation, and to ensure maximum  
transparency, we published detailed illustrative impact  
data for all schools and local authorities, which enabled  
us to hold a truly national debate for more than three

119WH

Schools: Nottingham

12 JULY 2017

120WH

*[Nick Gibb]*

months. The Government response will address all the  
issues and concerns raised throughout the consultation  
and by hon. Members in debates such as this—we have  
had several over the past few weeks and months. We will  
respond to the consultation in due course.

Not only do we want the system for distribution to be  
fair; we also want to ensure that every school has the  
resources it needs to deliver a world-class education for  
every child. In order to achieve that, we have protected  
the schools budget in real terms since 2010, and the  
Government have committed to increase the school  
budget further, as well as to continue to protect the  
pupil premium to support those who need it. The  
Queen's Speech was clear that the Government are  
determined to introduce a fairer distribution of funding  
for schools. We will set out our plans shortly and, as  
outlined in our manifesto,

“we will make sure that no school has its budget cut as a result of  
the new formula.”

We know that how schools use their money is also  
important in delivering the best outcomes for pupils, so  
we will continue to provide support to help them use  
their funding cost-effectively. The Government have  
produced tools, information and guidance to support  
improved financial health and efficiency in schools,  
which is available in one collection on the gov.uk website.

**Lilian Greenwood:** Will the Minister confirm whether  
he is saying that no school will lose, in real terms,  
per-pupil funding? That is a really important point.  
Protection of cash is not a protection given the current  
level of inflation and the cost pressures. Will he protect  
per-pupil funding for schools in Nottingham?

**Nick Gibb:** What I have said is that no school will lose  
per-pupil funding under that new national funding formula.  
The issue is that once the money has been allocated to  
the local authority, what the local formula can do—as  
advised by the school forum—is to redistribute that  
money in a different way. What I can say is that the  
commitment in our manifesto was that no school will  
lose money as a consequence of moving to a national  
funding formula.

I conclude by thanking the hon. Member for Nottingham  
South on securing this important debate. Accelerating  
the pace of school improvement across the country is a  
shared priority and we are committed to ensuring that,  
regardless of where they live, all young people have  
equal access to a high-quality education. Targeted support  
at a local level, as I have outlined, will help us to deliver  
that, and a national funding formula also underpins it.  
For the first time we would have a clear, simple and  
transparent system that matches funding to children's  
needs and the schools they attend. It will enable all  
schools to provide a high-quality, knowledge-rich education  
for their pupils.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.29am

*Sitting suspended.*

New Towns

[MR ADRIAN BAILEY *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered challenges facing new towns.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for  
the first time, Mr Bailey, and to see so many colleagues  
from across the House here to discuss this incredibly  
important issue. At a time when the Government are  
embarking on an ambitious house building programme,  
it is particularly important that we consider the experiences  
of new towns—the successes and, in some cases, the  
challenges and the things that have gone less well in  
their history. New towns are an experiment that should  
inform housing policy in this country. There is much  
that we can learn from our different experiences in our  
constituencies. Although there are many issues that we  
share concerns about, we also have common successes  
that we can bring to the House.

This is a wonderful opportunity to get colleagues to  
think about working together collaboratively on this  
issue. We often hear about our coastal town colleagues,  
who band together successfully, our rural colleagues, who  
also band together successfully to lobby for some of the  
things they want, and our urban colleagues, but there is  
something very distinctive about a new town. Very  
often we are by nature isolated within a rural environment.  
New towns were created outside cities as part of a  
vision for fresh, clean air and to tackle overcrowding.  
That isolation means that we are not always welcomed  
by the rural communities that surround us.

Connectivity and transport issues sometimes create  
urban isolation both within the new town and in connection  
with the rest of the country. We certainly have that issue  
in Telford: we are isolated in many ways. People sometimes  
say, “Where is your constituency? Is it somewhere on  
the way to Wales?” No, it is not. It is a vibrant, thriving  
new town set in the heart of rural Shropshire, not too  
far from Birmingham and now easily connectible to  
London. I want people to think about the ways our new  
towns interact with the hubs across the country.

Many new towns are marking their anniversaries.  
Harlow celebrated 70 years this year, and Milton Keynes  
has had its 50th anniversary.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): I congratulate my  
hon. Friend on securing this important debate. This  
year Crawley celebrates the 70th anniversary of its  
designation as a new town, and it has certainly been a  
very successful community. One of its problems, which  
she touched on and no doubt will expound further, is  
that it was designed for about half its current population,  
so we must address issues such as access to health  
services, parking and housing as we go forward for the  
next 70 years.

**Lucy Allan:** I thank my hon. Friend for that very  
helpful intervention. He is absolutely right that our  
respective constituencies share many features.

One of the other reasons for calling this debate is that  
I want new towns to be recognised as distinctive areas  
with specific needs.

121WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

122WH

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I congratulate  
the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. I  
represent about two thirds of Cwmbran new town, in  
the southern part of my constituency. Unfortunately,  
the Government are proposing to relocate jobs away  
from the Cwmbran pension centre and out of the new  
town. Although we can certainly have policies in favour  
of new towns, I suggest that the Government need a  
coherent approach and should not be withdrawing jobs  
from new towns at the same time.

**Lucy Allan:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman's contribution.  
I completely agree that a successful new town must have  
inward investment and jobs. It is about not just housing,  
but the whole community. We must look at new towns  
from that perspective.

SomeyearsagotheCommunitiesandLocalGovernment  
Committee did some excellent work on new towns. It  
first looked at them in 2002, and it revisited them in the  
2007-08 Session, but the Government of the day were  
reluctant to take on board its recommendations. The  
Committee visited Harlow, Corby and Telford, and did  
a significant amount of research. Disappointingly, there  
was the sense that new towns should be normalised and  
treated just like any other town. There was no recognition  
of their distinctive and specific needs, which is partly  
why I wanted to hold this debate.

Fortunately,theTownandCountryPlanningAssociation  
revisited those reports and produced some excellent work  
on how to use the experiences of the past to inform  
what we do for the future. It set up the new towns  
network to work with local authorities in new towns  
across the country and try to bring together some of  
these common themes. I only discovered that wonderful  
organisation while researching for this debate, which  
was fortunate, because had I come to this place without  
that knowledge, I would probably have been reinventing  
the wheel. I am grateful to it for its excellent publications,  
which I will happily send to any hon. Members who  
would like to see them. They contain a thorough analysis  
of the challenges. I am delighted to see that the Minister  
has a copy of one of them with him, and I hope that he  
has read it.

I have the great honour and privilege of representing  
the fastest growing new town in the country. Telford is a  
unique town. It has a specific identity and a proud  
industrial heritage as the birthplace of the industrial  
revolution. It is a collection of former mining villages on  
the east Shropshire coalfield. It has an enviable rural-urban  
mix and a fantastic quality of life, which we should seek  
to emulate in the house building drive that the Government  
are committed to. Despite the many hurdles that Telford  
has experienced along the way, and rural Shropshire's  
considerable resistance to its development—for example,  
there was resistance to the building of the M54, the  
main link road to Birmingham, and it took many years  
of persistence to get that connection—it is now a dynamic,  
thriving centre of gravity for the entire surrounding  
area. Some of that was brought about by welcome  
Government investment in Telford. Weshouldnotignore  
the part that the Government have played in their  
commitment to Telford, for which I am very grateful. I  
very much hope that, as the MP for Telford, I will be  
able to continue to secure such investment.

Telford is now a huge population centre and a huge  
business centre. It has inward investment, commerce  
and advanced manufacturing, and all sorts of high-tech

and new economy businesses are coming to Telford, but  
it has never had it easy. Its success is all about its  
innovation and willingness to embrace change. All new  
towns have had to have exactly that spirit: they have had  
to have determination, optimism and hope to make the  
towns what they are today. The new town movement  
was conceived with the vision of hope, opportunity for  
all, clean air, green spaces and better living conditions,  
but in some cases that vision did not come to full  
fruition.

Telford has overcome those obstacles and is a shining  
example of what a successful new town can be. That is  
why I wanted to share its example today. It is now where  
all the houses are planned and all the jobs are going, so  
it needs to be where the schools and hospitals are built  
and where the infrastructure is located. I say that because  
we still have many battles with the surrounding rural  
Shropshire about what investment should come to Telford.

As I said, all new towns were based on a premise of  
optimism and a vision for a better future. The lessons  
we can learn from the past will play a fundamental part  
in tackling this country's housing shortage.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady,  
who is generous in giving way to me again. I entirely  
agree about the vision for new towns. When they were  
conceived by the post-war Labour Government in the  
late 1940s, it was not only with a vision of hope and  
optimism, but with the idea that things could be planned  
in advance, rather than only as a response to past  
problems. The new towns were settlements where we  
could plan for the future. That could be used again as a  
strategy for future new towns.

**Lucy Allan:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for making  
that important point. The long-term stewardship of the  
assets of new towns is fundamental to their future success.  
It is all too easy to say, “We have a local authority that is  
thinking only about the needs of today and is neglecting  
to look at the long-termvision.”We want the stewardship  
concept.

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her  
generosity and forbearance in giving way to me a second  
time. Yes, it was under a Labour Government that new  
towns were created, but it was also under a Labour  
Government that, sadly, Crawley lost its hospital's maternity  
and accident and emergency services in 2001 and 2005.  
It is therefore pertinent that we concentrate on the  
importance of long-term, sustainable planning.

**Lucy Allan:** I entirely agree.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): I echo the comments  
of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry  
Smith) on the importance of health services in future  
plans for any new town. In Redditch we have seen the  
unfortunate removal of A&E and children's A&E services  
from the Alexandra Hospital—a temporary closure has  
now become permanent—and they have moved to  
Worcester. I will not go into the details, but they highlight  
the need to plan holistically for health services, and that  
is in addition to all the other issues that my hon. Friend  
the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) is discussing.

**Lucy Allan:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
making that point. In Telford we, too, have had some  
debate about the future of our health services. I am

123WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

124WH

*[Lucy Allan]*

delighted to report that we will not lose the A&E or the  
women and children's unit, as was widely touted during  
the election campaign. One reason is that Telford has a  
rapidly growing population, so the need is self-evident.  
However, she makes an important point.

I have talked about some of the positives and good  
lessons that we can learn from new towns, but this  
debate is about the challenges, so I will move on quickly.  
Colleagues will face many of the same challenges in  
their constituencies, such as the new build challenges.  
New build brings its own huge range of different  
complications and problems experienced by residents,  
includingpressureoninfrastructure,schoolplaces,doctors'  
waiting lists and little things such as postcodes or polling  
stations, which we do not have in new build areas, as  
well as street names and bus stops. Those are some of  
the things that are so important to quality of life.

People move to a new town because they are buying  
the dream—they are buying their own home, their  
future and their children's future—but some of them  
will end up living in part-finished estates, paying exorbitant  
fees to management companies that do not discharge  
their obligations—that is probably a matter for another  
day, as we cannot address it in detail in this debate, but I  
wish to revisit it on another occasion.

Another common challenge we face is transport  
connectivity. Infrastructure investment often lags behind  
population growth. In addition, many new towns are  
designed around the car, but in Telford we have low car  
ownership and poor public transport, because of the  
low density of population. Low density is a good thing  
and part of what new towns are all about, but there are  
knock-on consequences for everyday life. As for digital  
connectivity, I will not talk much about it because only  
yesterday in the main Chamber we had a very full  
discussion about digital shortcomings with regard to  
broadband. People spoke at great length about new  
build and deficiencies in broadband.

Low-density population also makes bus routes  
unprofitable, which is a difficult problem to address.  
Road layouts even make walking difficult and—perhaps  
other Members share this view—we have many roundabouts  
bristling with traffic lights, which hold up traffic flow  
completely unnecessarily. That will definitely be the  
subject of another debate, such is the volume of  
constituency letters I receive on the subject, and the  
frustration it causes many people in Telford.

Some hon. Members present will share some of those  
concerns, but all new towns share the major challenge  
of a maturing new town, which is renewal and regeneration.  
As our new towns come of age, whether they are  
50 or 70, we have to look at how we deal with fading  
infrastructure and faded housing estates that are sometimes  
not fit for occupation. As has already been mentioned,  
the failure to plan for the long term has caused some of  
those difficulties.

We all have decaying housing estates in our constituencies,  
built 50 years ago with poor design and poor materials.  
Whole estates are now in need of renewal, because they  
have been left behind. Every time I go to one of those  
estates, I ask where they will be in 10 years' time, never  
mind 50 years' time, and where the plan is to make the  
homes fit for the next generation. Such homes are often  
part of the private rented sector, so I feel that no one is

looking after them—the council will often wash its  
hands of the responsibility. Yes, selective licensing might  
be introduced to try to make the landlords responsible,  
but the issue is much bigger than that, because often  
whole estates are in need of renewal and regeneration.

Infrastructure, too, from local centres to bridges that  
have outlived their intended lifespan, affects the perception  
of what was once an ambitious and modern project, but  
which is now looking faded and tired. That can affect  
the whole ambience of a town. An essential part of the  
success of a new town is not only to keep replacing the  
old, but the need for a vision and that concept of  
long-term stewardship, as we have discussed.

I am delighted that last week the Department for  
Communities and Local Government announced a  
£2.3 billion housing infrastructure fund as part of the  
Government's commitment to their ambitious house  
building programme. It is very welcome. Telford has  
17,000 new homes planned for the next 14 years, and I  
very much hope that it will be able to take advantage of  
the infrastructure fund. When the Minister responds to  
the debate, will he give us some steer as to whether new  
towns will be able to make bids to that fund in order to  
solve some of the problems of renewal and regeneration?

Will the Minister also recognise the fact that new  
towns are special? They have specific qualities and  
challenges. A cross-departmental approach is needed to  
support them. We are talking about housing, transport,  
business and the digital economy, so I would like to see  
Departments across Government focusing on the issue  
as a whole. We want to see the investment that we have  
had in Telford replicated in other new towns, which  
have not always benefited to the extent that we have  
done. Some challenges are specific to new towns, but  
previously Governments have wanted to normalise new  
towns, as if they were just like any other town. That was  
a mistake, so I reiterate how distinctive and special they  
are. Colleagues in all parts of the Chamber will agree  
with that.

In such a short debate we can barely scratch the  
surface of these issues. I would very much like to set up  
an all-party parliamentary group to take forward this  
initiative—I will definitely be knocking on the doors of  
thoseMemberswho are present. Thereare32newtowns  
throughout the UK, and I will talk to the representatives  
of all of them to ask whether they wish to be part of an  
APPG.

We need to challenge the stereotype of new towns.  
Too often they are seen as substandard, but they are  
not; they are fantastically inspiring places to live, work  
and raise families. I could not recommend Telford more  
highly to anyone who wants to live the dream. Yes, there  
are problems and things that need to be ironed out, but  
Telford is definitely the place to do that. In fact, we have  
been very lucky; the Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government has been to Telford on many  
occasions, and I think he fully understands the issues I  
have raised today. I am grateful to him for his support.

Telford is special. In 2018 we will mark our  
50th anniversary. Although there may be lots of events  
and celebrations, we must not lose sight of the need for  
a vision for the next 50 years. The Government may be  
able to help local authorities with that. The nature of  
the election cycle means that local authorities are not  
always preoccupied in the way they ought to be with  
long-term thinking about infrastructure needs. I want

125WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

126WH

to hear from the Minister that there is cross-departmental  
recognition of the specific needs of new towns,that new  
towns can access the housing infrastructure fund, and  
that they will receive help to plan ahead for future  
challenges.

I make a final plea. We have had a housing White  
Paper and there is a New Towns Act, but that was  
passed in 1981, so there may be scope to modernise it  
and make it fit for purpose for the present day. The key  
point that I would like everyone to take away is the need  
for long-term stewardship to secure the future of our  
fantastic towns, which we are all privileged to represent.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** Order. Seven Back  
Benchers have indicated that they wish to speak. I hope  
to get everyone in. As a rough guideline, if BackBenchers  
confine their remarks to about five minutes, that will  
help me achieve that.

2.51 pm

**RosieCooper**(West Lancashire) (Lab):It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey, and I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan)  
on securing the debate. Building new towns was a good  
idea—it was a necessity of the time, in both economic  
and population terms—but they failed to deliver their  
promise, which leaves my constituents in despair even  
today. We need to find a way to deliver that promise in a  
manner that befits the 21st century.

The new town of Skelmersdale was designated in  
1961, with a target population of 80,000. Some 60 years  
on, it has a population of almost half that and little or  
no local facilities, amenities, transport links or adequate  
housing. It is a town built around the car, where people  
are driven underground and forced to use underpasses.  
The roads mostly have no pavements, but cars move  
about freely. It is a town famous for its roundabouts,  
like that mentioned by the hon. Lady.

Skelmersdale residents are proud of their town and  
work hard to put the best of themselves in the shop  
window. Only last year, local football coach Carl Eaton  
was nominated for a BBC sports personality award for  
his work with Skem Men-Aces, a football team that he  
founded for people with learning disabilities. The club  
has won countless trophies, and some of its players  
represent us at international level. There are many such  
impressive stories, and they are all the more impressive  
given that the town is deprived of an adequate town  
centre, a railway station, sports facilities, education  
opportunities and so much more. We have a shopping  
centre that pretends to be the town centre, but it is just a  
building. When the local council attempted to build a  
genuine town centre and a modern high street, the  
ownersof the Concourse took out High Court injunctions  
and made appeals to block it. Skelmersdale is a town  
failed by narrow commercial interests.People are forced  
to spend their money elsewhere.

Although Skelmersdale became a designated new  
town in 1961 and a bright new future was projected, its  
tracks were pulled up and its train line was shut two  
years later. It is a town failed by a lack of foresight and  
that is desperately fighting to get a railway station. It is  
a town that has low car ownership—I concur with the  
hon. Lady on that point—but promises are still being  
broken. The Secretary of State for Transport visited

during the general election campaign and told my  
constituents that bringing back the Burscough curves  
would be a quick win. I am still waiting for that  
announcement. Skelmersdale is so poorly served by bus  
services that, were it not for a planned rescue by the  
county council, an area of Ashurst would be without  
any bus service whatsoever.

All those things absolutely impact on the town's  
economic prospects. It is a town where, rather than  
fixing the roof of a local sports centre, which was well  
used and generated an income, the council shut it down  
and it eventually burned down. It is a town failed by the  
council.The promised local hospital never materialised,  
and even education did not fare well—one high school  
was forced to close and its students had to relocate  
elsewhere in the borough. The recently built college  
withdrew its offer of A-level studies,forcing any student  
with an aspiration to progress at that level or further to  
study outside the town. That is an obvious difficulty  
considering what I said about rail connectivity and the  
lack of buses. It is a town failed by the education  
authorities.WhatcanIsayabouthousing?After60years,  
thousands of people still live in what was referred to as  
“temporary” housing. The planned development of 20,000  
houses still has not happened. It is a town failed by  
planning authorities and developers.

I have fought really hard for Skelmersdale, which I  
have represented for the past 12 years, and I share local  
residents'frustration. We still have not seen improvements  
and investments that were promised more than half a  
century ago. All the infrastructure has decayed at the  
same time and needs massive investment, of which we  
see little or nothing.

Before we move forward and build new towns and  
villages, we must ensure that we leave no one behind  
and we must invest in the towns that we have. We must  
keep our promises—promises that were made a long  
time ago—to people, update these towns and make  
them fit for the 21st century. We must help people like  
my constituents, who moved to our older new towns  
based on promises that they were given that even today  
we have not fulfilled. Yes, we need more new build  
housing, but as we look forward, we must ensure that  
we do not leave people like my constituents behind. If  
there is no future for them,what future can we tell other  
people that they will have in their new towns?

2.57 pm

**Iain Stewart** (Milton Keynes South) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I  
add my thanks and congratulations to my hon. Friend  
the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing this  
important debate. She hit many nails on the head,  
particularly about the need for the Government to work  
on a cross-departmental basis and have a long-term  
strategy for new towns over the next few decades.

I should put the record straight: Milton Keynes is  
actually a new city, not a new town. As my hon. Friend  
correctly said, we celebrated our 50th birthday earlier  
this year. I should also say for the record that Milton  
Keynes has more than 900 roundabouts, which I think  
is more than anywhere else in the country.

**Lucy Allan:** Does my hon. Friend have bristling traffic  
lights all over his roundabouts, or are they left unfettered  
to let the traffic flow?

127WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

128WH

**Iain Stewart:** We have a mixture. Most do not have  
traffic lights, but a few in the centre do.

As it turns 50, Milton Keynes is at a crossroads for  
future development. We have reached the size envisaged  
when Milton Keynes was designated as a new city in the  
1960s in terms of both our physical footprint and our  
planned population of around a quarter of a million.  
The issue is not whether Milton Keynes should grow at  
all—there is consensus that it will continue to grow—but  
in what way, in what direction and over what timescale  
it will do so.

In 2013, the council passed a core strategy that provided  
for more than 20,000 new homes over the following  
decade and a half, and we are currently meeting our  
five-year land and housing supply target. The difficulty  
is that while that core strategy bought us time—it more  
than meets our need for the next period—it did not set a  
long-term vision for the future of Milton Keynes.

After the 2015 election, I successfully argued that  
Milton Keynes should have that long-term future strategy.  
I was delighted when Milton Keynes Council took up  
the idea and set up a futures group, ably chaired by  
Sir Peter Gregson, the vice-chancellor of Cranfield  
University. That painted a positive, dynamic vision for  
the next few decades of what Milton Keynes should be,  
looking at having, for example, not just a standard  
university but one focused on the STEM subjects—science,  
technology, engineering and maths—that our economy  
needs, loosely based on the Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology model in the States. The plan was originally  
called MKIT, but it has morphed into Milton Keynes  
University. That would help not just to generate economic  
needs but to provide the social community buzz that a  
place needs to thrive.

We are looking at growth not just in ourselves but as  
part of the wider Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge  
corridor that the National Infrastructure Commission  
is developing. We had the interim report a few months  
ago and should have the final report by the time of the  
autumn Budget. That is critical in looking at not just  
the area's housing needs but the whole economic construct,  
from hard infrastructure such as the east-west railway  
line and the Oxford to Cambridge expressway to  
5G broadband provision and all the critical infrastructure  
needed to support growth.

My concern is that Milton Keynes Council is now  
pushing ahead with what is called “Plan:MK”, its vision  
for the next stage of Milton Keynes's future development.  
That is not in itself a problem, but my real worry is the  
timing. The consultation document recently put out  
explicitly rejected that the council could have waited  
until the infrastructure commission reported and until  
the futures commission projects were more developed.  
The council thinks that would result in an unacceptable  
delay, but I fundamentally disagree. We have the time  
now to pause—not to pause house building, because  
the core strategy provides for our needs at the immediate  
time—and to look ahead at the smart cities technology  
and all the other developments that could usefully  
shape vibrant new communities that are not just urban  
sprawl.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Telford said,  
neighbouring counties are fearful of ever-expansion.  
However, they have their needs too, and by doing this in  
the right way, planning small villages that are smartly  
connected, we could create new communities that

people want, not the urban sprawl that people fear. My  
plea to central Government is to help give us the space  
to develop that long-term strategy, which will be one of  
the major providers of the housing supply and economic  
growth that the country desperately needs. We have a  
homeless problem in Milton Keynes and we want to  
build new houses, but let us do that in a properly  
planned way. We also need to think about the delivery  
mechanism. A metro-style devolution arrangement will  
not work in the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor,  
but perhaps we should look at reconvening the old  
Milton Keynes Development Corporation, which could  
be jointly owned by the authorities along that route, as  
an effective delivery mechanism.

Our city motto is:

“By knowledge, design and understanding.”

We could get a vibrant, new expansion for Milton  
Keynes and the surrounding areas. That is my plea and  
my hope. I support my hon. Friend's plan to create an  
all-party group to help look at our shared interest and I  
very much look forward to being part of that.

3.4 pm

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve  
under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I, too, am grateful  
to the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) for securing  
the debate, which provides a genuinely interesting  
opportunity to think not only about our own new  
towns, but about the problems faced by new towns  
holistically. Like her, I hope that this is the start of the  
conversation rather than the end.

Aside from the cult film “Gregory's Girl”, the new  
town I represent was probably most famous for a simple  
but effective advertising slogan from the 1980s. If I were  
to ask, “What's it called?”—

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Cumbernauld!

**Stuart C. McDonald:** Exactly—it is Cumbernauld. I  
even had a student activist at one point suggest “Who's he  
called? Stuart McDonald” as a possible campaign slogan,  
but thankfully that was ruled out of hand. That was  
testament at least to the fact that that slogan had  
imprinted itself into public consciousness so much that  
someone born after it was created was still very much  
aware of it.

The new towns were an incredible achievement in  
planning and building, born of an urgent need for  
housing after war and a baby boom, and Cumbernauld  
is no exception to that. Though it was designed as part  
of Robert Matthew's Clyde valley regional plan to move  
population out of Glasgow, it has a slightly different  
history, being the only one of the mark 1 new towns  
designated during the period of the Conservative  
Government of the 1950s. One consequence of that is  
that it has a slightly different design plan. Unlike other  
new towns, it does not share the concept of different  
neighbourhoods but aimed instead for a higher density  
design with a single town centre accessible by foot from  
all other parts of the town.

In many ways, Cumbernauld remains a great place to  
live. It has the same sense of civic pride that other hon.  
Members have described as present in their new towns.  
It is also an extraordinarily green town, with an amazing  
percentage of the town's area comprising woods and

129WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

130WH

parks. It enjoys a wonderful range of local organisations  
and community groups, with many taking a great interest  
in preserving that green space and maintaining it for all  
to enjoy.

However, as others have said, new towns face significant  
challenges as well. I could mention transport and one  
or two others, but in the time left I will focus on two or  
three at most. As has already been said, all new towns  
will face a huge challenge because a massive part of  
their housing stock and infrastructure will be exactly  
the same age, therefore requiring significant sums of  
investment in renewal over a short period of time. Some  
of those problems of regeneration and renewal are  
made even more challenging by the way in which stock  
was transferred first from development corporation to  
council, and then from council to private owners. Therefore,  
in some parts of Cumbernauld, it is almost impossible  
to get agreement between all the different owners of  
flats in order to take action to regenerate, which is  
required by the title deeds.

Another challenge is jobs. I will not go on about that  
for too long, but one of the key challenges we face is the  
possible loss of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs  
office in Cumbernauld—I think my hon. Friend the  
Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow  
(Dr Cameron) will have something to say about that as  
well—which we will return to in the months ahead.

If I were to survey my constituents, I think the No. 1  
new town issue they would highlight would be the town  
centre. It is built over the dual carriageway that goes  
through the town and, because the bus station is also  
located in the structure, for many that will be their one  
and only recollection of Cumbernauld. It was envisaged  
as a solitary megastructure designed to accommodate  
all the retail, municipal and leisure needs of the whole  
population of 50,000. Originally, it also included penthouse  
executive apartments. At first, it was remarkable. On  
completion, I think it was Britain's first indoor shopping  
mall, but I do not think my constituents would disagree  
when I say it has not stood the test of time well; in fact,  
it has dated badly. The building's concrete structure  
makes its exterior appear unattractive, and it has been a  
challenge to attract major retailers, with giant superstores  
locating instead on nearby sites.

There are plenty of ideas on how to improve the situation.  
The local council has a strategy in place after public  
consultation. My MSP colleague Jamie Hepburn and I  
also did a public consultation and arranged a roundtable  
of local organisations and community groups in autumn  
last year. There is enthusiasm for improving the town  
centre and making it a better fit for the town in which it  
is based. One key challenge is the co-ordination and  
co-operation required to make that happen. As well as  
the practical challenge of dealing with a giant monolithic  
structure, there are problems with the fact that bits of  
the town centre are owned by different private companies.  
Even the streets and public spaces are owned by private  
companies.Inthepastyearwehavebeentryingtokick-start  
some action in one part of the town centre that has  
changed ownership, so we almost have to start again.

What should we take from all this? The new towns  
were a bold and necessary experiment. When I was  
preparing for this debate I was interested to read that  
someof themendedupasarevenue-generatingexperiment  
for the Treasury. However, when they were built, there  
was no planning for the challenges that almost certainly

lay ahead. No sinking fund was put aside for a time  
when renewal and regeneration would become urgent.  
Instead, development corporations have handed over  
more liabilities than assets.

Perhaps in the era of city deals we should campaign  
for new town deals in recognition of their unique challenges  
and opportunities. Perhaps we need to look at a role for  
a more modern and accountable version of the old  
development corporations that existed previously. In  
Cumbernauld there is a sort of successor organisation,  
but I am not convinced it is in the right form or has the  
resources and powers that it needs. Perhaps that is one  
thing to look at. I do not know the answer to these  
problems. There might be completely new solutions.

Thehon.MemberforTelfordmentionedanAPPGin  
her opening speech. That has to be the start of the  
conversation. I am absolutely up for joining an APPG  
and I hope we can take forward our discussions and our  
ideas to overcome the challenges.

3.11 pm

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I give my  
huge congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member  
for Telford (Lucy Allan), who initiated this debate. She  
is a real champion for Telford and has done much to  
help to improve her town since she was elected.

As has been said, Harlow is 70 this year. Our town was  
builtasaplaceof aspiration, opportunity and achievement  
for people, mainly from east London, who lived in poor  
accommodation. They moved to Harlow for the chance  
to make their lives better. We are now a sculpture town.  
Harlow is the birthplace of fibre optic communications.  
Hon. Members may be pleased to learn we even invented  
the formula for Bailey's Irish Cream in Harlow.

We have a bright future ahead of us: £400 million is  
being invested by the Government in Public Health  
England. We have an enterprise zone. We have one of  
the best colleges in England, which has led the way in  
apprenticeships and in helping to deal with the problems  
of youth unemployment.

I think this is common among new towns, butcertainly  
in Harlow: although we have lower levels of economic  
capital, we are not as prosperous as we would like to be,  
and there is significant deprivation, we have incredibly  
high levels of social capital and community spirit. We have  
organisations of people looking after one another, including  
faith groups; charities; neighbourhood associations;  
residents' groups; housing groups; and many clubs and  
societies. There is an extraordinary level of social capital  
that brings people together and makes our town more  
prosperous.

However, we face three challenges, andmyhon.Friend  
the Member for Telford touched on one of them. The  
first is reputation. She rightly said that there is a stereotype  
of new towns. Whenever we have a tragedy or something  
terrible happens, stereotypical journalism paints Harlow  
and new towns in a certain way. Journalists go to the  
worst part of the town and say, “This is what it's like: a  
place full of anti-social behaviour.” They do not go to  
see the art, the sculptures, or the beautiful new housing  
estates and the regeneration that is going on. It is  
incredibly frustrating because it is very damaging. Such  
reports are damaging because they stop aspirational  
people coming into new towns. Much of it, of course,  
involves a huge amount of snobbery.

131WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

132WH

*[Robert Halfon]*

The second problem, which has been touched on by  
all hon. Members who have spoken thus far, relates to  
infrastructure. We were built all at once and we are  
breaking all at the same time. A lot of money is being  
invested in our roads, but we do not have enough housing.  
We are lucky to have huge amounts of green space.  
Harlow is a beautiful green town, but we do not have  
enough housing. I am glad new council houses have  
been built, partly thanks to the new homes bonus from  
the Government, but housing remains a significant  
problem. It comes up again and again in my constituency.  
People are not able to get a house or they live in  
overcrowded accommodation.

Although we have a lot of investment in infrastructure  
and roads, there are problems. When the town was built  
it was imagined that everyone would have one small car  
with one small garage, so we do not have enough spaces  
forparking.Peoplenowhavetwocarsandthereissimply  
noroomtoparkthem,sopeopleparkonthegrassverges.  
I hope the Government will use some of the £23 billion  
infrastructure fund to help new towns. The hon. Member for  
Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C.  
McDonald) said there should be a new towns fund, and  
he is right. If we have a northern powerhouse, we  
should have a new towns powerhouse.

Many good things are happening in Harlow. We are  
becoming a scientific, technological and vocational  
education powerhouse of the east of England. We are  
becoming a cultural powerhouse, too, with our sculptures  
and our beautiful Gibberd Gallery, but there has to be a  
focus on the problems that all the new towns have in  
common. The regeneration issue is important. Although  
part of our town centre is beautiful—the water gardens  
particularly—the other part badly needs regeneration  
and new builds. However, the money cannot come unless  
we have more housing. By the time we get more housing,  
it will have been a long time coming. The Government  
must look at where town centres badly need funding  
and support.

Our hospital was built a while ago and we desperately  
need a new one. The Health Secretary has visited Princess  
Alexandra Hospital three times. Its brilliant staff provide  
a wonderful service, even though we have had difficulties.  
The hospital is literally not fit for purpose—sewage gets  
into the operating theatres—so I urge the Minister to  
lobby the Health Secretary for a new hospital. He has  
said that if capital funding is available, Harlow will be  
considered as a top priority for a new hospital.

I will conclude because I know other Members wish  
to speak. As I have said, Harlow is very much an  
apprenticeship and vocational town. The Government's  
investment in skills and apprenticeships is important.  
Anglia Ruskin University is introducing degree  
apprenticeships for our residents. Our schools are greatly  
improving, but we need to do more to make sure our  
children are educated even better and to ensure schools  
improve across the board.

IsaidthatHarlowisaplaceofaspiration,opportunity  
and achievement. If we get continued investment from  
the Government, if there is a focus on new towns, and if  
we can use part of that £23 billion infrastructure fund  
to focus on the desperate needs that new towns have and  
to deal with the deprivation and infrastructure problems  
that we have, not only can we celebrate our 70th birthday,  
but we will easily be fit for another 70 years.

3.19 pm

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and  
Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is an absolute pleasure to serve  
under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I congratulate the  
hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing this  
excellent and timely debate and on speaking so  
comprehensively about the importance of new towns. I  
welcome the debate and our focus on the challenges  
that new towns face. I want first to examine how we got  
here and why wonderful new towns such as East Kilbride  
in my constituency came into existence.

Housing conditions in Scotland were a major concern  
after the second world war. There were overcrowded  
tenement dwellings in Scotland's cities. Between the two  
world wars there had been some tenement clearance  
and new building programmes, but in many cases what  
was built was just as inadequate as the housing it had  
replaced. Decentralisation would be achieved by expanding  
existing towns in the region, encouraging industrial  
growth in other parts of Scotland and building new  
towns. In response to the plan, the new town of East  
Kilbride was designated just one year later, in 1947.

As many hon. Members will be aware, I grew up in  
the Westwood area of East Kilbride. Aztec Camera  
went “from Westwood to Hollywood”; I have managed  
only to go from Westwood to Westminster, but it is  
certainly a first for my family. It is an honour to  
represent my new town—a town that filled my family,  
moving from Glasgow, with hope and provided job  
opportunities, new green living spaces and somewhere  
to bring up a family where there were education, health  
and other resources that we could only have dreamed  
of. It is amazing to think that we are now celebrating  
East Kilbride's 70th anniversary. I pay tribute to all  
those involved in the anniversary celebrations and in  
making sure the new town continues to thrive.

The emphasis on foreign direct investment and trade  
was part of the work associated with East Kilbride  
DevelopmentCorporation decades ago. That, alongside  
housing, was very successful. It was a programme of  
continued development, and one that is now sadly  
missed by most of my constituents. It is important to  
recognise the success that the development corporation  
had. The approach adopted for areas of housing in the  
Stewartfield and Lindsayfield areas embraced urban  
green spaces, at James Hamilton heritage park. As in  
many other new towns, there was a focus on creating a  
pleasant living environment, and Calderglen country  
park and the National Museum of Rural Life are  
perfect examples of our many visitor attractions.

Today's debate is about challenges. Over the decades  
East Kilbride has experienced the loss of key industries.  
Rolls-Royce moved out of our town just the other year,  
as did Motorola before that; we were previously thought  
of as a great semiconductor town in Scottish industry.  
Now, under the UK Government's plans, we face the  
challenge of losing the office of Her Majesty's Revenue  
and Customs. We must invest in our new towns, create  
jobs there and maintain those that keep them thriving. I  
urge the Minister to do all he can to ensure that happens,  
including revisiting the plans for HMRC. An impact  
assessment would show that the plans could decimate  
the new town, and surely he does not want that to  
happen within his remit.

133WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

134WH

The focus of the debate is on challenges, but I believe  
that East Kilbride has a vibrant future, entailing, for  
example, a modern shopping centre complete with a  
new leisure hub. I would like to see a new designer outlet  
mall, although my husband clearly does not want such  
a development. The town centre needs a bit of a facelift;  
we are very proud of our town, so we want to make sure  
that happens. We also need manufacturing, jobs and  
livelihoods to be brought into the 21st century, so during  
the summer recess I shall host my day of international  
trade and development for East Kilbride. I hope that  
the new Chair—elected today—of the International  
Trade Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Na  
h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil), will open  
the event, and that we will have representatives from  
many of the great trading centres of the world, including  
China, Hong Kong and Japan. I hope that they will  
speak about why it is so important to invest in our new  
town, and that we can continue to build such links.

In future it will be important for me to maintain my  
role on the newly developed East Kilbride taskforce.  
My key focus is on jobs, livelihood and trade. We need  
to focus on the town's unique selling point, and give  
that the priority it deserves, across Scotland and the  
United Kingdom: we have excellent low-carbon ideas  
and aspirations, and we want to become the UK's  
low-carbon town. We want new town development plans;  
they should be ongoing and ours should not die with  
the sad demise of the East Kilbride Development  
Corporation. The taskforce and key stakeholders across  
the town, including our MSP, are working hard to make  
sure that we regenerate and continue to build. It is  
important for us to retain the jobs at HMRC. The  
impact assessment indicates that that will be vital.

I call on the UK Government to invest in new towns,  
not just in new city deals. We are connected in our new town,  
with its multitude of roundabouts. Indeed, I will check  
the figures to see whether the hon. Member for Milton  
Keynes South (Iain Stewart) is ahead of us on roundabouts  
—East Kilbride is widely known and loved as Polo mint  
city, so I need to check the veracity of that nickname.

East Kilbride is a shining example of a wonderful  
new town. I want to work with all key stakeholders at  
council, Scottish Government and UK Government  
level, to ensure that it will continue to shine. I will do all  
I can to push for investment and trade. I would like to  
attend the all-party group described by the hon. Member  
for Telford, which is a wonderful idea. There is much to  
be done, but we will make it our priority across the  
House. I could not recommend East Kilbride more  
highly to people throughout the UK and beyond. Come  
to work, live in and visit East Kilbride.

3.26 pm

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I am grateful  
for the opportunity to speak in the debate and congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan)  
on securing it. I am also proud to represent the new  
town of Redditch. Something that we have in common  
with other hon. Members present is the fact that famous  
or notable people came from our town, including a  
gentleman who has just been commemorated by a blue  
plaque—John Bonham, the Led Zeppelin guitarist. Hon.  
Members may know the song “Stairway to Heaven”; I  
sometimes think of its lovely lines when I am climbing  
one of the stairways in this place.

Redditch was built as a new town in the 1960s,  
to accommodate people from a rapidly expanding  
Birmingham. Somewhat similarly to what my hon. Friend  
the Member for Telford described, we are a centre of  
gravity for Birmingham, but in the other direction. To  
this day, Redditch is a desirable commuter town and  
there is significant demand for housing, because of  
natural growth and migration. The concern that Redditch  
residents raise with me is land availability, and the need  
for developers to find a balance that protects and sustains  
the green spaces and environments that are such a  
distinctive feature of the town.

The purpose of creating the local plan is to locate  
growth, limit commuting out of Redditch, make the  
best use of existing highway infrastructure, and promote  
sustainable transport options, while also creating a place  
where businesses can thrive. What conversations has my  
hon. Friend the Minister had with the Department for  
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on ensuring  
that businesses are attracted to new towns as well as to  
urban centres? We in Redditch want that idea to be  
promoted.

There are parts of the town centre in need of  
regeneration, because of neglect over a period of years—  
something my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow  
(Robert Halfon) raised about his constituency as well.  
People in our town also have a perception that there are  
safety issues, because of antisocial behaviour and crime.  
I welcome the fact that all local plans must be accompanied  
by sustainability appraisals. Redditch Borough Council  
has undertaken discussions about that, but residents are  
still understandably concerned about the effect, particularly  
on surrounding services and transport systems, of  
expanding developments in the area. What regular  
discussions has the Department had with the Department  
for Transport and rail operating companies to ensure  
that new towns such as Redditch have transport links to  
connect them to major urban centres such as Birmingham,  
so that residents who work there can get to work easily?

Webheath is a beautiful rural area of Redditch. A  
problem for my constituents is the fact that land there  
has been identified for expanding development. It is on  
the south-west boundary of Redditch's urban centre,  
and between 400 and 600 dwellings are proposed. It is a  
difficult issue for residents. I welcome housing and  
accept the need to provide it, but residents feel that  
developing the land in that way will be intrusive. The  
development is likely to proceed, but there is a risk of  
flooding, and the roads are inadequate—there are lanes,  
not roads, and we do not have pavements. A great  
deal of investment is required to make the development  
safe.

Also, the services of Diamond Buses are inadequate;  
people are being let down on their daily journeys to  
work, and left stranded in outlying areas. Redditch has  
one of the lowest levels of car ownership in the country,  
and one in five households have no access to a vehicle,  
which shows how important the bus services are in  
people's daily lives. I regularly meet councillors in those  
areas to raise constituents' concerns, because many rely  
on public transport to get around.

I therefore ask the Minister to consider the overall  
redesign and expansion of Redditch, and to work with  
borough councils and neighbouring local authorities,  
because development is often driven by neighbouring  
local authorities and impinges on Redditch, which is in

135WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

136WH

*[Rachel Maclean]*

a different council area. We need to make sure that  
councils work together across the piece to mitigate the  
impact of those decisions strategically.

I support providing for the increasing population of  
Redditch, but I feel that further consideration must be  
given to the impact it has on services and infrastructure.  
I have already mentioned our hospital, and I make no  
apologies for mentioning it again—it is the No. 1 issue  
we face in Redditch. People are rightly worried that  
their town will grow, because it is a growing town with a  
young population. Wewantto see long-term, sustainable  
plans for health, not the sudden removal of services  
that then becomes permanent, because that has a negative  
effect on peoples' perception of how they are being  
treated. Redditch residents feel that they deserve services  
in their town just as much as neighbouring Worcester  
does. I share those concerns, and I do not want my  
residents to feel that they are being unfairly overlooked  
in that regard. I welcome the APPG initiative and will  
give it my full support.

3.31 pm

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): It is a great pleasure  
to sum up the debate on behalf of the Scottish National  
party. As I explained in my maiden speech—it seems a  
long time ago now—although my constituency is called  
Glenrothes, slightly more than 50% of my constituents  
do not live in the town of Glenrothes. I think it is  
disrespectful for the name of the constituency to ignore  
that fact. As a lot of hon. Members alluded to, many  
new towns were planted in the middle of established  
communities, which are sometimes very concerned about  
maintaining their own identities. I will continue to  
ensure that officialdom recognises the identities of the  
many disparate communities in the Glenrothes constituency  
that are not in Glenrothes.

As a long-term resident of the town itself, I will make  
some comments on what a wonderful place it is to live.  
However, let me first commend the hon. Member for  
Telford (Lucy Allan) for securing the debate and all  
hon. Members who have spoken for the clear passion  
they have demonstrated for the new towns they represent  
and their pride in the people in those towns. Although  
we have heard a lot about roads and roundabouts, and  
schools and roundabouts, and houses and roundabouts,  
and shopping centres and roundabouts, this is about  
people. All of those things were supposed to have been  
built for people, and with hindsight I sometimes wonder  
what the architects and town planners thought the  
people were supposed to do.

A large part of the problem, certainly in Glenrothes,  
is legacy; the well-intentioned people who planned the  
town all those years ago had no idea what kind of town  
they needed to produce for the 21st century. I think that  
one difficulty is that society was a lot more paternalistic  
then. Glenrothes was built on precincts with a typical  
population of 2,000, although some were quite a bit  
smaller. Those precincts would often have a primary  
school and what was charmingly described as a tenants'  
meeting room that typically held about 50 or 60 people.  
There was nowhere within the precincts where the  
community could meet. A lot of the communities did  
not have a polling station big enough for everybody to  
go and vote at on the same day. The vast majority of

amenities were to be in the town centre, as I think my  
hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) mentioned.

Another big difficulty became relevant shortly after I  
was first elected as a councillor in the town in 1992,  
because the new town development corporation was  
woundupin1995-96.Weexpectedallofitsfunctionsto  
be taken over by the new unitary Fife Council, but the  
Government of the day—as represented by Michael  
Forsyth, the Scotland Office Minister for everything—were  
keen to sell off as much as possible in order to keep it  
out of the hands of the elected council.

Our town centre was sold off, as were a lot of the  
industrial estates, such as the Whitehill industrial estate  
on the western edge of the town, with disastrous results.  
The neighbourhood shopping centres were sold off, and  
the Glenwood centre in Glenrothes has been in the  
ownership of, I think, three different bankrupt or liquidated  
companies. All of those facilities, which should have  
been maintained for the benefit of local people, have  
been allowed to run down because they were sold off  
for short-term gain, often to people with neither the  
capacity nor even the will to make them succeed in the  
longer term. I thought it interesting that the hon. Member  
for Telford referred to that.

Having said that, there have been several successes in  
the town, a lot of which are down to the people—sometimes  
for taking things on board for themselves, sometimes  
for forcing the council, the Scottish Government, the  
UK Government and everybody else to deliver what  
was needed. During my time as a councillor, we saw a  
new dental centre and a new health centre built at  
Glenwood in west Glenrothes, a new secondary school  
built to replace the former Auchmuty High School, the  
new Michael Woods sports and leisure centre built to  
replace the aging and almost literally collapsing 1970s  
sport centre.

We are also in the process of seeing a new residential  
care home at South Parks to replace two older homes—I  
give credit to the former Labour Administration in Fife  
Council for delivering that. We have also seen a lot of  
investment in a sports hub for the community at Gilvenbank  
in the north of the town, and there has been an excellent  
community initiative at Over Stenton playing fields in  
the south of the town to provide a home for the Glenrothes  
Strollers, who have previously been awarded community  
club of the year by the Scottish Football Association.

What is remarkable about all of that to some Members  
here, but is just accepted by those of us on the Scottish  
National party Benches, is that the total private finance  
initiative liability for all of those community facilities is  
nil. If the political will is there, all of that can be done  
without mortgaging future generations to the mercies  
of international financial conglomerates. I hope the  
UK Government listen to this, because there is a better  
way to finance large-scale public investment.

I mentioned the people of the town I am so fortunate  
to represent. Since the start of the general election  
campaign, the people have run very successful large and  
small community events in Macedonia, at St Ninian's  
Church in Tanshall, in Collydean, Gilvanbank, Collydean  
again, at Over Stenton and at Woodside. All of that  
happened in a town that a lot of people said did not  
have any community spirit. It was felt that, being a new  
town, people tended to live their own lives and never  
really interact with one another. I think a lot of the

137WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

138WH

credit for that community spirit belongs particularly to  
our primary schools, because they tend to bring families  
together in a way that few institutions can.

A big fillip to the town over the past 10 or 15 years  
has been the influx of young families from central  
Europe. Because Glenrothes was designated as a new  
town 59 years ago, the population has tended to age  
with the town, and a lot of our communities were in  
danger of growing too old. The influx of younger  
families from other parts of Europe has been of huge  
benefit, and I hope it will be allowed to continue.

If I had one ask, what my town needs, as I suspect do  
a lot of towns represented here, is significant public  
sector investment. The private sector will simply not fix  
this problem on its own. If the political will is there, the  
money can be found, and all of the towns represented  
here can be turned into towns that their residents desire  
and deserve.

3.38pm

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing  
the debate, and I wish her town and the respective  
constituency towns of the right hon. Member for Harlow  
(Robert Halfon) and the hon. Member for East Kilbride,  
Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) a happy  
birthday. I also welcome the Minister to his new post in  
what I believe is his first outing. Is he the Minister for  
pubs? For the northern powerhouse? For devolution?  
Yes? All of the above, but not for parks, apparently,  
which I think his predecessor was. I think he should  
fight for that, given the comments today on green  
spaces in new towns.

Nobody listening to the debate can have failed to  
hear the passion and pride that all hon. Members have  
in their new towns—or cities, as in the case of Milton  
Keynes. The hon. Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean)  
certainly demonstrated a “Whole Lotta Love” for her  
town—as well as for Led Zeppelin—while recognising  
the challenges faced by new towns.

As the anniversaries show, many new towns no longer  
consider themselves new and, as hon. Members have  
outlined, there is now a need to look to renewal and  
investment. I am afraid that some of the issues raised  
today have only been exacerbated since 2010. As the  
hon. Members for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch  
East (Stuart C. McDonald) and for Glenrothes (Peter  
Grant) said, many town centres across the UK have  
been starved of investment and are in desperate need of  
regeneration. The Government will surely have to look  
at the complications mentioned of dealing with multiple  
private companies in town centres when trying to address  
this. I have been looking closely at regeneration with my  
local authority and Departments to try to improve the  
situation in my constituency of Great Grimsby, so I am  
well aware of the difficulties and challenges that people  
face.

The Government, of course, commissioned Mary  
Portas to write a review of the future of high streets in  
2011, but she slammed them just three years later for  
making only “token gestures” in response. Many of the  
things we have heard today reflect a frustration that, on  
the one hand, the Government say they want to support  
towns, new towns and house building, but on the other,  
as two hon. Members mentioned, there is a loss of

Government jobs in these towns. Those jobs are critical  
for not only the local economy but individuals. The loss  
of HMRC jobs—really good, secure jobs—is having an  
impact in my constituency as well.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire  
(RosieCooper)andthehon.MembersforMiltonKeynes  
South (Iain Stewart) and for Redditch mentioned transport  
infrastructure. There was quite a strong emphasis on  
rail, but I was pleased also to hear a reference to buses.  
There is a significant issue around bus transportation,  
particularly for those on lower incomes. Buses are essential,  
but unfortunately since 2010 funding for buses across  
England and Wales has been cut by a third, with thousands  
of routes cut or downgraded as a result. Ensuring that  
there are good bus routes is essential for people's ability  
to move around their local areas.

**Robert Halfon:** I thank the hon. Lady for her kind  
birthday wishes to Harlow on its 70th anniversary. She  
mentioned Government jobs, but would it be fair to say  
that that does not reflect the whole picture? I mentioned  
that the Government invested £400 million to bring  
Public Health England to Harlow, to make us, except  
for Atlanta in the United States, the public health  
science capital of the world. That will bring thousands  
of jobs, including skilled scientific jobs, to our town.

**Melanie Onn:** I am delighted that the right hon.  
Gentleman'sconstituencyisbenefitingfromthatinvestment.  
I am sure that lots of Members around the room will be  
hoping for something similar or the same; I certainly  
would not be disappointed if the Minister came to me  
and offered something similar.

Broadband, which I thought might come up, has not  
been touched on today. In 2015 we were promised  
ultrafast broadband to nearly all homes in the country.  
Maybe someone will leap from their seat and say, “It's all  
absolutely fine; we've got ultrafast broadband,” but I  
know that across the board, only a handful of constituencies  
have more than 1% of connections receiving ultrafast  
broadband speeds. To make all our towns across the  
country successful, the Government must take that  
seriously and press forward on it.

**Iain Stewart:** I should point out that the National  
Infrastructure Commission, which is looking at the  
Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor, is not just  
considering hard infrastructure such as roads, railways  
and the rest; broadband provision is very much part of  
its work.

**Melanie Onn:** Excellent. I could not agree more that  
soft infrastructure is an essential part of connectivity in  
new towns.

**Dr Cameron:** I would also like to comment on  
broadband. It came to my attention at a constituency  
surgery recently that there is real concern about new  
housing estates. If the number of homes being built  
does not reach a certain number, broadband does not  
necessarily have to be provided for residents. Residents  
are buying new houses, expecting broadband to be a  
feature of what they are buying, but there does not seem  
to be any legal requirement for it. Will the hon. Lady  
comment on that?

**Melanie Onn:** I certainly urge the Minister to consider  
that. When people purchase new build properties on  
those estates, modern facilities fit for the 21st century  
must be part and parcel of them.

139WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

140WH

*[Melanie Onn]*

Renewal and expansion of the housing stock are  
clearly issues that face new towns, as the right hon.  
Member for Harlow in particular highlighted. Under  
the Conservatives, we have seen the lowest level of  
house building since the 1920s and the lowest level of  
affordable house building for a quarter of a century. As  
rent and house prices have hugely outstripped rises in  
people's incomes, we now have a generation of young  
people who cannot afford to buy a home—and not  
just in London, but right across the country, with the  
result being 200,000 fewer homeowners today than in  
2010.

The hon. Member for Telford spoke of the specific  
problems for those who buy leasehold properties. Increases  
in ground rent charges are a particular issue that sees  
leaseholdersbeingrippedoffbydevelopersormanagement  
companies and can make it impossible for individuals  
to sell their property. An APPG on the specific issue  
raised that in the previous Parliament, but perhaps her  
new all-party group will consider it as well.

**Peter Grant:** In Scotland, we have dealt with the  
problem of extortionate ground rents by abolishing  
the feudal property system lock, stock and barrel.  
Might that be worth examining for other parts of the  
UK?

**Melanie Onn:** When we are considering these  
issues, nothing should be off the table. It has to be  
something workable and reasonable that protects  
leaseholders. That option will not necessarily be the  
right solution, but it certainly should be available for  
consideration.

Labour has proposed capping some of the charges and,  
in the longer term, ending the routine use of leasehold  
ownership in developments of newhouses entirely. That  
is an alternative, perhaps, to the suggestion from the  
hon. Member for Glenrothes. The 2017 housing White  
Paper pledged 17 new garden towns and villages, but it  
came five years after the former Prime Minister announced  
a consultation on new garden cities in his speech to the  
Institution of Civil Engineers. That delay does not exactly  
instil confidence that the Government recognise the  
scale of the housing crisis facing the country today, or  
the importance of new towns and garden cities to  
tackling the crisis.

Let us compare and contrast with the Labour  
Government of 1945. It took the Attlee Government  
just one year to enact legislation for new towns and to  
designate Stevenage the first. A new planning system  
was introduced the next year. Within five years, 10 new  
towns had been started, with social housing for rent  
making up the overwhelming majority of new homes  
built. That shows what Government can achieve if the  
desire is truly there, which is exactly what the hon.  
Member for Glenrothes was talking about earlier. Will  
the Minister update us on the progress of the new  
garden towns and villages?

The viability of new towns and garden cities relies on  
the agreement of the local population. They have to be  
developed in a way that genuinely improves the local  
area by bringing the jobs and services needed for a real  
community. When the latest tranche of garden towns  
and villages was announced in January, the former

Housing Minister, the right hon. Member for Welwyn  
Hatfield (Grant Shapps), said:

“What worries me about all of these announcements...is perhaps  
it is just a good name to tag on to more housing development  
rather than somewhere. you'd really want to live, bring up children,  
work and play.”

He went on:

“And if it is not all of those things then we will have failed to  
actually create new garden cities; we would have just tried to make  
housing sound more popular.”

Will the Minister reassure us today that these proposals  
are not simply spin on new housing developments but  
will genuinely reflect the ethos of garden cities?

We have heard today about the higher infrastructure  
costs faced by new towns. Labour has suggested that in  
future, new garden cities or towns should retain 100% of  
the business rates locally, to provide an income stream  
for those higher costs. Business rate retention was one  
of a large number of policies dropped in the Queen's  
Speech, but perhaps the Minister will consider reviving  
it for new garden cities.

I also want to ask about the need to provide greater  
protection for those purchasing new build homes, which  
is of course a particular issue in new towns and villages.  
I spoke about the Bovis Homes scandal in my previous  
role as a member of the Communities and Local  
Government Committee. When I challenged the former  
housing Minister, now chief of staff to the Prime Minister,  
on what the Government are doing to safeguard new  
homeowners from this in future, he told me that a  
planned announcement had been put on hold when the  
Prime Minister called the general election. Nothing was  
brought forward to address the issue in the Conservative  
manifesto and there was nothing in the Queen's Speech.  
Perhaps the Minister here today can say what this  
previously imminent announcement was and when we  
can expect it.

3.50 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities  
and Local Government (Jake Berry):** It is a pleasure to  
have my first outing under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey.

I start by saying happy 70th birthday to Harlow and  
happy birthday to Telford, Milton Keynes, Stevenage,  
Crawley and all the other new towns that have an  
approaching big birthday with a zero in it. I have a  
birthday with a zero approaching in a couple of years.

It is because we are at such an important crossroads  
for new towns that I am grateful to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) for this debate today.  
It gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to new towns  
and recognise their continuing role in delivering the  
Government's house building agenda. It is important to  
look at the lessons to be learned from the new towns  
programme so that, as we move forward and build  
garden towns, villages and cities, we do not make the  
same mistakes.

I welcome the way in which new towns can now work  
together, and not just at local authority level. I pay  
tribute to my hon. Friend's idea of an all-party  
parliamentary group, which will start an important  
conversation here in Parliament. The Town and Country  
Planning Association's new town network is doing great  
work and I have a copy of its report here.

141WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

New Towns

142WH

I will focus initially on the new town in my hon.  
Friend's constituency, which in many ways is leading  
the Government's thinking on new towns. Like all new  
towns, Telford is testament to the fact that place making  
never ends. The town has grown to be a success story as  
the commercial gateway to Shropshire over many years,  
but it faces some challenges. Parts of Telford have  
ageing infrastructure. The problem is not restricted to  
Telford and today we have heard many colleagues talking  
about that. The contemporaneous obsolescence test in  
new towns is that if everything is built at the same time,  
everything wears out at the same time, which poses real  
challenges.

In addition, the development style of many new  
towns, which during the '60s and '70s was the height of  
modernity, especially in our town centres, can look  
outdated and often does not provide the modern shopping  
experience that consumers demand today. Telford and  
other new towns have risen to the challenge and in 2016  
the Government signed a unique land deal with Telford  
in which they committed £44.5 million from land sales  
to reinvest in Telford's infrastructure. At the same time,  
we will deliver 2,800 new homes and create 8,500 jobs.  
Telford has been successful in several rounds of growth  
deal funding to improve its infrastructure, to build a  
new bus station—linking to the comments on buses—and  
to invest in skills. The growth deal for Telford is precisely  
the sort of forward-looking approach that we would  
welcome from all new towns up and down the country  
and could be progressed through the housing deal flagged  
in the recent White Paper.

My hon. Friend asked what we will do about the new  
towns legislation, which is hugely important for all our  
new towns. We have legislated through the Neighbourhood  
Planning Act 2017 to enable the creation of locally  
accountable new town development corporations to  
provide powerful and effective delivery options for garden  
towns, so that updating has already taken place.

Telford, like so many of our new towns, is a dynamic  
and excitingplacetolive. Wehaveheard fromrepresentatives  
of all new towns that they all seem to be dynamic and  
exciting. Telford has halved its unemployment since  
2010 and doubled its apprenticeships. Its business start-ups  
are up, its housing starts are up and even my hon.  
Friend's share of the vote at the recent general election  
was up, which I welcome. It shows, as we have heard  
today, what a difference a fantastically hard-working  
MP, on whatever side of House they sit, can make for  
their town. Telford is one of the most economically  
successful towns in the midlands and its gross value  
added and employment are on a par with many areas of  
the south.

We have also heard from colleagues from across the  
Chamber. The hon. Member for West Lancashire (Rosie  
Cooper) talked well about Skem. I am from the area  
and I know that it is not universally known as Skelmersdale;  
we call it Skem. Lancashire County Council and the  
local enterprise partnership are working on a plan for  
Skelmersdale railway station and I hope the hon. Lady  
will come forward with bids to the housing infrastructure  
fund. She spoke very well about some of the challenges  
of the infrastructure in Skelmersdale. I am pleased  
there is good news locally with major employers such as  
Flavourfresh and Huntapac reflecting the growing economy  
around Skelmersdale.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and  
Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) spoke about the challenges,  
but it is clear she has real pride in her town and I know  
that she will be a powerhouse on the APPG. The idea of  
an international trade exhibition promoting a new town  
is excellent.

Myrighthon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert  
Halfon) is supporting local proposals for high-quality  
transformation and growth for Harlow through the  
Harlow and Gilston garden town proposal that he  
supports. New new towns, as I think we will now have to  
call them, must learn lessons from old new towns like  
Harlow. We welcome bids from Harlow and all the new  
towns to the infrastructure fund that he spoke so well  
about.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and  
Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) spoke about  
his town centre, which faces challenges like many other  
new towns.

My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes  
South (Iain Stewart) spoke about smart cities and the  
Opposition spokesman also spoke about the importance  
ofembeddinginfrastructure,includingdigitalinfrastructure,  
in our new towns for their plan for the future.

On a recent visit to the new Metro Mayor of Manchester,  
Andy Burnham, I was particularly interested that he is  
talking about a digital domesday book held locally to  
put on record the infrastructure as it is today. By  
mapping the existing infrastructure it is hoped that we  
can future-proof the expansion of towns to ensure that  
we are not repeatedly digging up our roads. I welcome  
hisenthusiasmfortheNationalInfrastructureCommission  
and agree that this is an exciting opportunity for local  
growth.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel  
Maclean) spoke about her town. I know that she welcomed  
the North Worcester Engineering Centre, which was  
opened by the Under-Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Stourbridge (Margot James), showing that  
Ministers of that Department are constantly in contact  
with her and her town. I note that the local enterprise  
partnership has plans to create 2,300 new jobs in the  
area.

Turning to the Opposition spokesman's comments, I  
will not take lectures from anyone in the Labour party  
about the rate of house building. The lowest house  
building rate anywhere in the country was in John  
Prescott's proposed eco towns. The problem with them,  
unlike our garden city proposals, was that their direction  
was top down, forcing housing, often in the wrong place  
where people did not want it, on communities. What is  
so exciting about our proposals for garden towns and  
cities is that they are locally led. We all know from our  
constituency role that development is often opposed,  
but when there is buy-in from the community from the  
first day, it makes it much easier to deliver.

In Bicester, we have already had 1,000 starts. In  
Ebbsfleet, 350 properties have been completed. In Northants  
garden community, Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough,  
650 homes have been built and in Aylesbury Vale there  
are 2,500 starts, showing that this Government are  
absolutely determined to deliver our promise to build  
more than 23,000 homes in new towns.

143WH

New Towns

12 JULY 2017

144WH

*[Jake Berry]*

There is still a problem with new towns and people's  
perception of them, and the APPG could work on that  
to ensure that towns that may previously have been  
associated with roundabouts, with or without traffic  
lights, and with decay and ageing town centres start to  
be the leading lights of our country. I hope and believe  
that, when the APPG is formed, it will invite me to  
address it and that I can talk about our progress under  
the recent housing White Paper to ensure that we build  
a record number of homes in this Parliament, and  
emphasise that new towns and new new towns continue  
to be a focus for this Government and a fantastic place  
for people to live, work, raise a family, own a car, drive  
round roundabouts and live their lives as happily and  
freely as they can.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered challenges facing new towns.

Ambulance Services (Devon)

[GERAINT DAVIES *in the Chair*]

4pm

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered ambulance services in  
Devon.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Davies. Let me say at the outset that we all pay  
tribute to our blue light services and that this debate is  
not in any way intended to criticise them. The intention  
is to set out the challenges that they confront and to  
celebrate their professionalism and the work that they  
do, but also to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to  
address some key issues that they face in Devon and, in  
particular, in my constituency.

The debate has been triggered by a number of incidents.  
People have contacted me either directly or indirectly to  
raise concerns about long waiting times faced by my  
constituents; an incident that typifies the situation happened  
last month. An elderly lady was left for two hours at the  
roadside, on a baking hot day, waiting for a paramedic  
crew to arrive. She had serious neck injuries and was in  
some distress. Were it not for the kindness of passing  
strangers, things might have been even worse, but a  
consultant anaesthetist happened to be passing and was  
able to provide critical assistance at the scene, and the  
lady also had assistance from the police and from staff  
from South Hams Community Hospital. As a result,  
the outcome has been good, but it could have been very  
different. That has caused a great deal of concern,  
because it is not an isolated incident. Although much of  
the focus of my speech will understandably be on the  
critical, type 1 cases, which require a response within  
eight minutes—everyone understands that—I would like  
the Minister also to think about those other cases that  
we are all coming across in our constituencies which are  
not immediately life threatening but are nevertheless  
very serious and where the outcome can be very different  
unless we see a timely response from our ambulance  
services.

First, I would like to address demand, which is rising  
at an extraordinary rate. During the five years to 2016-17,  
over the area of the South Western Ambulance Service  
NHS Foundation Trust we have seen a considerable rise  
in demand, but there has been a 19.2% increase in the  
Totnes constituency alone, a 29% increase in Plymouth  
and a 23.7% increase in Torbay. The challenge is far  
greater in a rural setting, for obvious reasons. The  
SWASFT area is the most rural area in England; and if  
we look at the activity for Devon, we see that 23.5% of  
SWASFT's activity is in that county, but that is matched  
by only 22.2% of its funding.

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I very  
much appreciate the debate that my hon. Friend has  
introduced in the Chamber today. She is making a very  
good point about the rurality of Devon, which is one of  
the largest counties in the country. Of course, the issue  
is not just its size. If one starts going north-south, there  
are no really fast roads—we need much more done to  
the north Devon link road. Apart from the scale of the  
county, however, the issue is about getting an ambulance  
to an incident in time and our very scattered population.  
Myhon. Friend makes a very good point. Iamsurethat

145WH Ambulance Services (Devon)

12 JULY 2017

Ambulance Services (Devon)

146WH

Ministers are aware of the size of Devon, but there is  
also the question of the time it takes to get from A to B  
if one is not going on major roads.

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention.  
Of course, as we know, demand can escalate considerably  
during the peak summer times, but many of our roads  
are single-track ones with passing spaces, and it can be  
very difficult to get an ambulance resource to the scene  
in a timely manner.

My first point to the Minister is that there are no  
concessions for rurality; there is no funding premium to  
allow SWASFT to meet the extra demands that it faces.  
In fact, overall, its funding has fallen by 2.46% per  
incident in 2017-18, compared with 2014-15. It has to  
meet the huge increase in demand with shrinking resource,  
in what is one of the most challenged areas in England  
because of rurality. I would like the Minister to acknowledge  
that key point and the impact of rurality on response  
times.

My second point to the Minister is that although  
overall SWASFT is doing a good job in meeting the  
performance target of 75% of category 1 calls receiving  
a response within eight minutes, that does rather mask  
the picture in the most rural parts of the area. Let us  
take the South Devon and Torbay clinical commissioning  
group area as a whole, for which we have some data that  
show that it just meets the target, with the figure of  
75.65% of calls. If we look at the breakdown for the  
Totnes constituency, we see that during the past three  
months the figure has been 61%, so my point to my hon.  
Friend is that, when considering a county such as  
Devon, he should look not just at the overall, top-line  
figure, but at the impact in the most rural parts of the  
constituencies. I hope that he will ask for that as an  
ongoing measure, as a response to this debate.

**Peter Heaton-Jones** (North Devon) (Con): There is a  
specific example of exactly what is being described by  
my hon. Friend in my constituency of North Devon—the  
situation in Lynton and Lynmouth, the twin villages  
right on the north coast. At the beginning of last week,  
the South Western ambulance trust withdrew what was  
in effect a rapid-response paramedic vehicle that was  
traditionally stationed in Lynton and Lynmouth, specifically  
because of the rurality and the distance from anywhere  
else of those two villages. There is a lot of concern in  
the community because that service has been withdrawn.  
I pay tribute to the CCG, which is looking for an  
alternative arrangement, but the fear is that there is still  
a gap, and the response time, because of the distance of  
Lynton and Lynmouth from everywhere else, is key.  
May I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, through my  
hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), to  
consider that particular example?

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
intervention. Likewise, very considerable concerns have  
been raised in my constituency about the withdrawal  
this month of rapid-response vehicles from Dartmouth  
and Kingsbridge and in Totnes. I understand the reasoning  
that double-crewed ambulances can provide the conveyance  
that people need to hospital and that utilisation of the  
single vehicles is less—about 24%. I understand the  
rationale behind it, but equally I ask the Minister to  
respond to precisely the concerns that my hon. Friend  
the Member for North Devon (Peter Heaton-Jones) has

raised, because the worry in communities such as mine  
is that once the double-crewed ambulances are conveying  
a casualty to an urban centre, they tend not to come  
back again, whereas the rapid-response vehicles did.  
There is a genuine concern about how we will ensure  
that the double-crewed ambulances come back.

As I have said, I welcome the increase in the double-  
crewed ambulance resource as the rapid-response vehicles  
come away, and I am aware of the data whereby efforts  
are being made to provide a reassuring response that  
actually the number of hours in total will increase.  
However, that change is just coming in this month, and  
I would like the Minister to assure the House today that  
he will look very closely at the data as they emerge over  
the next few months, to ensure that those vehicles are  
returning to the rural areas, because I fear that otherwise  
we will again see that SWASFT is meeting the overall,  
top-line target for the entire patch, but that will be at the  
expense of rural constituencies such as my own, where  
there will simply be a worsening of the response. We  
need to look at that very closely, and I would like the  
Minister to assure me that, following this debate, he will  
specifically ask SWASFT to ensure that there is a response  
available and it does not worsen in the rural parts of  
Devon.

I would also like to address the matter of the workforce,  
which is an issue across the NHS as the Minister knows.  
Within our paramedic resource there is actually an  
11% turnover of paramedic staff, in part because they  
are such a skilled and valued workforce, which means in  
many cases they are being attracted into other parts of  
the NHS, for example to work in casualty departments  
and minor injuries units. Everyone can understand that,  
but we need to make sure that we are recruiting and  
retaining within our blue light response services as well.  
For example, there are currently about 100 vacancies  
over the whole of the SWASFT area, and 16 whole time  
equivalent vacancies in Devon alone. What is the Minister  
doing to work alongside Health Education England to  
address the workforce issues? I will again make the  
point I have done in previous debates about the impact  
of the pay cap on the recruitment, retention and morale  
of the workforce. Again, I call on Ministers to consider  
giving the pay review bodies greater flexibility to be able  
to increase the rates of pay.

We know that there are pressures on our ambulance  
services, but we cannot view them in isolation. I would  
like the Minister to consider the impact that this is  
having on our other blue light services, particularly the  
police. They have raised some worrying concerns with  
me about not only the amount of time that they are  
having to spend on scene—as they did the other day in  
the incident that I described—while they wait for an  
ambulance resource to arrive, but the fact that on  
occasion they themselves have to take people to hospital  
who should really be conveyed by an ambulance resource.  
To clarify, in May this year there were 226 incidents  
where an ambulance was requested but no ambulances  
were available to be assigned in the Devon and Cornwall  
police area, and in June there were 158. These long  
waits are having a knock-on on the police's ability to  
carry out their other duties, and that should concern us  
all.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend  
and neighbour for giving way and congratulate her on  
securing this much needed debate. As she will be aware,

147WH Ambulance Services (Devon)

12 JULY 2017

Ambulance Services (Devon)

148WH

*[Kevin Foster]*

it is not only the police who are experiencing long waits.  
One of my constituents, Susannah Tandy, has got in  
touch about an incident a week ago when her 12-year-old  
son fell 11 foot from a tree. An ambulance was called at  
1 pm but did not arrive until about quarter to 4. These  
sorts of waits not only build up anxiety but could see  
situations get much worse. Thankfully Murphy appears  
to be making a recovery, but it could have been a lot  
worse.

**Dr Wollaston:** I think we are all glad to hear that  
Murphy is making a good recovery. As my hon. Friend  
says, we must focus not just on the immediately life-  
threatening incidents but on the kinds of incidents that  
he described, where an ambulance is very important  
and somebody's condition could deteriorate because of  
a long wait. For SWASFT we must keep an eye on not  
just the category 1 incidents, but the others as well, and  
I hope the Minister will do so.

In this debate we should also celebrate the successes,  
because there are undoubtedly those as well. We have  
seen examples of very good co-working between our  
blue light services. For example, in the “collapsed behind  
closed doors” scheme fire services co-operate with the  
ambulance service where there are concerns that somebody  
might be collapsed in a residence. In the past the police  
may have responded, but now the fire service can also  
provide that assistance, and I pay tribute to those  
co-responders in the fire service. From my time as a  
ruralGPinChagford,Irememberthenumberof occasions  
when people phoned me in surprise because the fire  
service had arrived instead of the ambulance service,  
but it is actually providing a fantastic resource. On  
occasions when it is absolutely critical that somebody  
has a defibrillator on site as soon as possible, the fire  
service can and does perform an amazing job. We have  
got further to go, particularly in remote rural communities  
where a fire resource might be closer to hand. Ihope the  
Minister will look at how we can go further to make  
sure that we develop a multi-skilled workforce who are  
properly rewarded for the expertise and skills that they  
develop across the fire service.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): The ambulance crews across Devon do a fantastic  
job. I represent an urban seat in Plymouth, but the  
demand that is placed on both urban and rural ambulance  
services has a knock-on effect, because there is no wall  
that divides Plymouth from the rest of Devon. Demand  
needs to be understood between both urban and rural  
areas. Will the hon. Lady comment on what happens in  
the summer months when the south-west becomes an  
even more popular tourist destination and additional  
demand is placed on not only the ambulance services  
but our wider emergency services? That moves the  
ambulance resources out of their normal patterns.  
Ambulances are increasingly moved to further away  
places with longer response times than their normal  
patterns might take them.

**Dr Wollaston:** The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely  
important point. He will know that for both our ambulance  
services and our police services those kinds of influxes  
from outside are not adequately reflected in the funding  
formula. That is in addition to the rurality that he  
referred to. In fact, the key point remains that the

greater danger is to people living in rural areas where,  
for example, a resource might take somebody to Derriford  
Hospital but not return, and then when the ambulance  
service dispatches the nearest ambulance it will be in  
Derriford. That is why ambulance services tend to get  
tied up.

I would briefly like to mention the impact of the  
111 service. SWASFT is doing extremely well—it is, in  
fact, the best-performing in the country—at treating  
patients at home rather than conveying them to hospital.  
That is the so-called “see and treat”model, and they are  
also doing well with “hear and treat”. However, there is  
a concern about the increase in calls, because there has  
been an overall increase in calls of 24% for the whole of  
the SWASFT area over five years, with 470 more calls  
per day, although only an additional 81 people per day  
are having to go to hospital. While that may reflect the  
great success of paramedics' expertise in seeing and  
treating at home, will the Minister consider whether it  
also reflects unnecessary calls and the impact of 111,  
which has been raised many times in this House? Are  
too many people still having an ambulance called on  
their behalf when it could have been avoided?

Finally, I would like to end on a positive note in  
thanking all our volunteers who do so much to save  
lives across Devon, working alongside our blue light  
services. I would like to praise all those who support our  
Devon air ambulance service, all the volunteer community  
first responders and those who support, fund and supply  
defibrillators in our communities. On behalf of all in  
this House, we thank them and our wonderful paramedics  
and ambulance service crews.

4.17 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip  
Dunne):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Davies. I wish you every success in your endeavours  
elsewhere today. On that note, I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) on securing  
not only this debate but unopposed re-election to the  
Chair of the Select Committee on Health, which role I  
am delighted to see her continue in.

By happy coincidence, I had the pleasure of visiting  
the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation  
Trust only last week. Having visited the chief executive  
in his office, and seen for myself some of the challenges  
presented by the rurality and the distances—as mentioned  
by hon. Members in this debate—I feel slightly better  
briefed than I would otherwise have been. I drove from  
Exeter to Barnstaple to Plymouth on the same day, in  
the height of summer, on a Friday, when the roads were,  
it is fair to say, not at their least busy. I do absolutely  
appreciate some of the challenges reflected in this debate  
that are imposed on the ambulance service's ability to  
deliver the service to residents in this large, very rural  
and very beautiful county. It is particularly appropriate  
therefore that we have the chance to discuss this briefly  
this afternoon.

I thank my hon. Friend for the characteristically  
considerate and appropriate way she posed challenges  
to me and thanked people employed in the ambulance  
service, and those who support it as volunteers, for the  
magnificent work that they do. She began her speech by  
recognising that the ambulance service in the south-west,  
like all other ambulance services in the country, is  
busier than ever. Demand has been rising significantly.

149WH Ambulance Services (Devon)

12 JULY 2017

Ambulance Services (Devon)

150WH

Across the country, there were some 7 million face-to-face  
responses from the ambulance service in the year ending  
31 March—a 14% increase over the last five years. In  
the south-west of England, demand has increased even  
more sharply, with a 29% increase over five years; I  
think she mentioned a 19% increase in her area of south  
Devon.

The trust is challenged by the geography of the area it  
serves, with its greater distances and slower transport  
routes. Nevertheless, it is doing well, not just in meeting  
national targets but in comparison with other trusts. We  
should congratulate all those involved, but that does  
not mean that there are not a number of challenges. My  
hon. Friend the Member for Totnes mentioned a  
particularly difficult case in which an elderly lady was  
left waiting for some time, and my hon. Friend the  
Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster) raised a case from  
his constituency in which a child had to wait some time  
for an ambulance.

This is clearly an operational issue. I strongly encourage  
hon. Members who are concerned about individual  
cases to bring them to the attention of the chief executive  
of the relevant trust, and to continue to represent to  
their constituents that even if the overall number of  
such incidents is not great, the ambulance service is  
required to provide an appropriate response through  
the disposition of its resources. From experience in my  
own area, I know that MPs are listened to by chief  
executives of ambulance trusts and can make a difference  
in securing deployment of resource to meet the particular  
demands and concerns of their constituents. It is well  
worth pursuing that approach.

Let me touch on some of the initiatives under way to  
meet the challenges that we all recognise and that have  
been referred to in the debate. Sir Bruce Keogh undertook  
a review of the NHS urgent and emergency care system,  
which is trying to cope with the root causes of demand.  
Following the review's recommendations, ambulance  
services will increasingly be transformed into mobile  
treatment centres, with greater use of “hear and treat”,  
in which telephone calls are closed with advice, and “see  
and treat”, in which paramedics are equipped to treat  
patients on the scene without a conveyance. There will  
also be greater integration with the rest of the health  
system. Some 2,600 more paramedics are now operating  
within our ambulance services across the country than  
in 2010, and in the past year 1,400 trainees have started  
on paramedic courses. There has been a big shift towards  
training more ambulance staff to undertake treatment  
on the ground.

The Care Quality Commission has recognised that  
SWASFT is one of the highest-performing trusts in  
England, particularly in its “hear and treat” service,  
which enables clinicians to assess and triage patients  
over the phone and close the call without the need to  
send an ambulance. In April, 49.1% of calls to SWASFT  
were resolved without transportation to A&E—the highest  
percentage of any trust in England. That allows more  
patients to be treated in their own home or in the  
community without needing to be taken to hospital,  
helping not only the patient, but the system.

Another way in which SWASFT is addressing the  
growing demand for services and the need to better  
manage peaks of activity is through reviewing how  
emergency vehicles and staff are rostered. Its review has

moved ambulance resources closer to areas of high  
public demand. Instead of a paramedic crew logging on  
for a shift at a rural station and then getting pulled into  
an urban area—an issue highlighted by my hon. Friend  
the Member for Totnes as a particular challenge in her  
constituency—resources should now be positioned in  
the right places and should stay more local, more of the  
time. She expressed a degree of scepticism about whether  
that is actually happening. I can confirm that in my area  
in the west midlands, we have worked with the ambulance  
service to ensure that ambulance stations are not necessarily  
kept in the same physical location, but are placed in  
parts of the country where demand is highest. This can  
now be well mapped by ambulance systems to ensure  
that service is provided as close to areas of demand as  
possible.

Evidence from the trust's rota review shows that the  
patients with the most serious, time-critical and life-  
threatening injuries have experienced improvements in  
response times, and that ambulance resources stay local  
more of the time. My hon. Friend makes a perfectly  
reasonable challenge for that to be proven—for the facts  
that demonstrate it to be provided to Members of  
Parliament and the public—and I will encourage the  
trust to provide that information.

My hon. Friend and other hon. Members referred to  
the trust's fleet. It is being reviewed to enable the right  
resource to be sent the first time. The trust has invested  
£3.6 million, which has allowed an additional 61 double-  
crewed ambulances—an increase of 20%—across the  
operational area, meaning that in South Devon four  
more double-crewed ambulances will be available this  
year than last year. This approach has allowed a reduction  
in rapid response vehicles, which—as my hon. Friend  
said—are not being utilised as fully as the ambulance  
crews themselves and are therefore not always the best  
resource to send.

There are now some 57 fewer rapid response vehicles.  
My hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Peter  
Heaton-Jones) highlighted some areas in which that has  
caused local concern. I would say to him that the  
ambulance service needs to demonstrate to local people  
that fully crewed paramedic-staffed ambulances are now  
more readily available to serve communities, so that the  
people in most need of conveyance to hospital are more  
likely to get there more quickly. The trust needs to  
demonstrate that as it moves its resources to this new  
pattern.

My hon. Friend the Member for Totnes is aware of  
the ongoing review of the way in which ambulance  
services respond to calls through the ambulance response  
programme. SWASFT has been involved in piloting  
new operating models. The new programme seeks to  
deliver clinically appropriate responses to all patients  
and is part of ensuring that the ambulance service in  
England remains sustainable. The evidence behind the  
ARP is extensive, covering data collected from more  
than 14 million emergency 999 calls. The review has  
looked at a number of key issues for the south-west,  
including the provision of ambulance services in rural  
areas and putting an end to unacceptably long waits by  
removing the long tail of ambulance response times.

A revised operating model is crucial to achieving  
sustainability in the ambulance service, given the growing  
demand that we have all described. Trials have been  
independently evaluated, and the Secretary of State has

151WH Ambulance Services (Devon)

12 JULY 2017

152WH

*[Mr Philip Dunne]*

recently received recommendations from NHS England.  
I hope to report to the House the ARP's findings and  
NHS England's recommendations shortly.

In addition, SWASFT has adopted a number of  
recommendations to improve response times, particularly  
in rural areas. One such initiative, which my hon. Friend  
referred to, is the increasing use of community first  
responder groups across the south-west. Totnes is one  
of the focuses for the next phase of recruitment in  
South Devon, which will start later this month. There  
are some 458 community first responders and a further  
110 fire co-responders across the county, alongside the  
network of public access defibrillators that she mentioned.  
SWASFT is in discussions with three of its local fire  
services about introducing a conveyance and support  
service by fire crews, which would help to supplement  
conveyance when ambulances are not available. These  
initiatives do not change the priority or category of a  
999 call, but they help to ensure that a patient with a  
life-threatening emergency can begin to receive the required  
care as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend rightly raised staffing. I understand  
that the clinical vacancy rate at the trust is currently  
7.7%. The trust has undertaken a very successful graduate  
recruitment campaign, which has resulted in 130 graduates  
accepting offers to join it. They are expected to start in  
September, including 31 who will start in the west  
division, which covers Devon.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation

[DAVID HANSON *in the Chair*]

4.30 pm

**Simon Hart** (Carmarthen West and South  
Pembrokeshire) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered abuse and intimidation of  
candidates and the public in UK elections.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Hanson. I should start by saying that since the  
election the Conservative Whips Office has been dealing  
with at least three credible threats to colleagues every week,  
including death threats, criminal damage, sexism, racism,  
homophobia, anti-Semitism and general thuggishness  
around and after the election. For all I know, other  
parties'Whips Offices may be having similar experiences,  
and I look forward to hearing cross-party contributions  
on that score. It is for that reason, and a few others, that  
I thought it was appropriate to call this debate now.

When I first entered the House seven years ago, it  
never crossed my mind for one minute that I would end  
up making a speech like this. As far as I was concerned,  
elections were four or five weeks of robust banter  
followed by a shake of the hand and a pint in the pub,  
yet now it all seems so different, with swastikas on  
election boards and offensive slogans and language on  
posters.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): I thank the hon.  
Gentleman for securing this important debate. I have  
been an MP for just over two years, and I cannot  
remember a single day that has gone by without me  
receiving some sort of abuse, whether that is death  
threats or a picture of me mocked up as a used sanitary  
towel and various other things. The last election was the  
most brutal I can imagine. Does the hon. Gentleman  
agree that we have to look at this issue with a non-partisan  
view and accept that in all our parties, as much as it  
hurts us, there are people who do not represent our  
values? For some to suggest that it is only one party  
doing it is wrong.

**Simon Hart:** I absolutely recognise that point, and I  
will come to it later in my speech. There will be individual  
contributionsfromMemberswhomighthavehadparticular  
experiences that defy that challenge, but I agree with the  
hon. Lady, and I am grateful to her for making that  
point so early in proceedings.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): I thank my  
hon. Friend for giving way so early in his speech, and I  
congratulate him on securing the debate. While I understand  
why he has brought forward a debate with particular  
regard to general elections, does he not agree with me  
that the recent research done by BBC Radio 5 Live—it  
found that half of BritishfemaleMPshavebeenthreatened  
with physical abuse, nine out of 10 have been abused  
online and 80% have been verbally abused—shows that  
the issue is not restricted to election time?

**Simon Hart:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her  
timely contribution. One thing that has struck me—I  
know it has struck people in our Whips Office, too—is  
that when I started uncovering this topic, I found out

153WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 154WH

about stuff that I simply did not think existed. I have  
been astonished by the quantity of evidence I have  
received from all sides. As she said, I had assumed that  
the issue might just be around election times, when we  
are perhaps a higher profile community, but it is not.  
Actually, it seems to be going on all the time, and a  
number of colleagues are suffering in silence. I hope  
that they do not have to suffer in silence.

I mentioned swastikas on election boards, offensive  
slogans and language on posters, but there have also  
been scratched cars, broken windows and posters of the  
bleeding heads of some of our political leaders on  
stakes at marches and demos. There has even been the  
occasional police officer or teacher joining the overall  
fray. That is not the rule, but it is occasionally the  
exception.

Retailers and hoteliers have felt that they cannot  
support a candidate publicly or make a donation to the  
party or candidate of their choice, because they are  
worried that they might be attacked on online review  
sites or, even worse, in person. There are elderly voters  
who will not put up a sign in their windows. There are  
volunteers who worry about handing out leaflets and  
having abuse hurled at them. There are colleagues whose  
sexuality or religion has resulted in them being spat  
at—not once, but regularly. We will hear more on that  
later in the debate. These people form the core of  
democracy and our election effort, yet they are being  
steadily put off getting involved in politics at a time  
when their contribution has never been more important.

Of course, the abuse is online, too, and we will  
probably spend quite a bit of the debate talking about  
that. For Government Members—I am sure it is similar  
for colleagues in other parties— #toryscum is a regular  
feature of our lives, and that is just the bit I can repeat  
in the Chamber. I chose my words carefully. I do not  
know how many colleagues have read the report from  
BCS—the Chartered Institute for IT—and Demos. It  
contained a survey showing that over a three-month  
period MPs received 188,000 abusive tweets. Thatisone  
in 20 tweets received by MPs.

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): The  
hon. Gentleman will be aware that legislation already  
exists to protect those who are abused online, but that  
legislation is often ignored or not enforced. Will he join  
me in putting pressure on the Government to launch a  
review to see why that is the case?

**Simon Hart:** The hon. Lady is psychic, among many  
other things. What she said was going to be my next  
comment. I absolutely agree with her. There is another  
element with the existing laws, which is how few people  
know that they exist. Indeed, some law enforcement  
agencies do not know that they exist. The questions I  
will be putting to the Minister in a few minutes are  
partly intended to get a greater understanding of what  
legislation is there, where the gaps are and what we can  
do to fill them.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): My hon. Friend  
might be aware of the Home Affairs Committee's report  
from last year that looked at the online abuse MPs have  
to suffer. There was an issue about the threshold we  
have to endure as Members of Parliament, which is  
different from that of members of the public. If abuse is

persistent and falls over into real-life activities, surely  
social media companies have to be held accountable,  
too.

**Simon Hart:** I am sure that a number of colleagues  
would agree with that contribution; I certainly do. I will  
be coming to some proposals and thoughts on social  
media in just a moment.

I want to take a moment to describe the example of  
our former colleague Byron Davies, who until recently  
was the MP for Gower. During the election campaign  
he was subjected to a sustained attack on Twitter that  
contained absolutely unfounded allegations about a  
criminal investigation for electoral fraud. That was not  
an embellishment or exaggeration of a story; it was  
simply made up. Whether Members supported him or  
not, he was a colleague defending a majority of 27, and  
he had to do that against a constant drip-feed on social  
media of people simply making things up as they went  
along. Could it have contributed to the loss of his seat?  
I do not know. It was certainly blatant defamation—that  
much we do know. The Electoral Commission could  
not help, social media platforms would not help, and  
the police investigation, like all police investigations,  
will take time. It is grinding slowly on, but our former  
colleague Mr Davies is having to do all that himself, and  
he is bearing the cost. When that inquiry eventually  
reaches its conclusion, what remedy will he really have?

I could mention my hon. Friends the Members for  
South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray), for Ribble Valley  
(Mr Evans), for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer),  
for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach), and for Brigg  
and Goole (Andrew Percy), the hon. Member for Liverpool,  
Wavertree (Luciana Berger) and the many others who  
have suffered similar or vaguely intimidatory experiences  
during the election campaign. Almost more worrying  
than that is the number of colleagues I have spoken to  
in the past few days who do not even want to come to  
this Chamber to make a contribution, lest it compound  
the intimidation and abuse they have been receiving in  
recent weeks. I hope that we are all in a sense making  
our contributions not to ease our bruised egos, but on  
behalf of colleagues who have put up with a lot of this  
nonsense over quite a long time, and are looking, as the  
hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq)  
said, for a lead from the Government.

Having said all that, I want to make the point that  
this debate is not about thin-skinned politicians having  
had a bit of a bruising time and feeling rather sorry for  
ourselves. Nor is it, as the hon. Member for Dewsbury  
(Paula Sherriff) mentioned, about left versus right or  
right versus left, or whatever it might be—the right hon.  
Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford  
(Yvette Cooper) made an interesting contribution on  
that particular score in her speech to the Fabian Society  
at the weekend. It is actually about families, staff,  
helpers and volunteers. For those of us who have teenage  
children who might follow us on Twitter and Facebook,  
it is about being able to say to them, “Don't worry  
about the death threat; don't worry about the abuse and  
thefalseaccusations.”Itisalsoforthemthatwespeak.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I have had  
death threats for a number of years—I now have panic  
buttons and a restraining order against somebody. What  
is different about what happened at this election—in

155WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 156WH

*[Andrew Percy]*which I was subjected to anti-Semitic abuse, my staff  
were spat at and my boards and property were attacked—is  
that the abuse has been politically motivated. The elephant  
in the room is that it has been motivated by the language  
of some of our political leaders, when they accuse  
people of one political side of murder, and when they  
dehumanise them in the way that is happening at the  
moment. There is something more sinister to this. Yes, it  
affects left and right, but we have to deal with the issue  
of what is happening on our side of politics.

**Simon Hart:** One of my most important  
recommendations is about the role of political leadership  
and what political leaders need to do, rather than what  
they need to say.

I wanted to mention the example of our former  
colleague Charlotte Leslie in Bristol, whose parents  
became victims of abuse. Their entire oil heating supply  
was drained into their garden by somebody who had an  
objection to Charlotte's position on fracking—a slightly  
ironic way of dealing with an environmental consideration,  
but none the less one that caused enormous distress, as  
did the scratching of “Tory scum” into her elderly  
parents' car. That is not something that anybody in this  
House should condone. As my hon. Friend the Member  
for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) has just pointed  
out, when it comes to leadership, it is exactly such  
an example that should trigger a robust response from  
everybody who has the benefit of a high profile in politics.

It is about religion, sexuality, social background—it  
is about people who might have been to public school  
and sound a bit posh. It is about anybody who might  
have a political leaning one way or the other, and who  
might be thinking of becoming a local councillor, or of  
a career at some future stage in some branch of politics,  
not even necessarily as an MP, an Assembly Member or  
a Member of the Scottish Parliament—whatever it might  
be. We have to ask ourselves: why would they want to  
take that step when they see what Members of this  
House have to put up with and, worse still, what Members'  
families, friends, relations, campaigners and donors also  
have to subject themselves to?

To the social media platforms, to the left, to the right,  
and to groups such as Momentum, which has been  
mentioned, rather than taking the lazy way out and  
saying that they are responsible for this, I say, “Help us.  
If you are on the left, help us. If you are on the right,  
help us. If you are a social media platform, help us.  
Help us identify what has triggered the increase in  
abuse, the smear campaigns, the intimidation, the  
harassment, the thuggish behaviour on and offline, and  
the general criticism of people simply because of an  
inability to match or contest their arguments.”

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): The hon.  
Gentleman is quite right: this behaviour is reprehensible.  
He is right to identify social media. Does he also think  
that the traditional print media, particularly newspapers  
such as *The Sun,* has had a role in creating a climate in  
which it is okay to abuse politicians? Perhaps we need to  
look at the traditional print media as well.

**Simon Hart:** The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting  
point. Of course, print media is governed by a rather  
different and more visible level of regulation. There is a

line between robust challenge, the cut and thrust of  
politics and the sort of stuff that we know we are letting  
ourselves in for when we take on this job—some papers  
would argue that they are on the right side of that  
line—which is a mile away from the stuff we are talking  
about. People being made to feel a little shamefaced or  
guilty because they have cocked up—if I can use that  
expression—their particular contribution to politics is  
one thing. If there is an example of a newspaper inciting  
racial hatred, anti-Semitism and that sort of thing, the  
regulators ought to be looking at that, without impinging  
on the free press.

**Ms Ghani:** My hon. Friend is making a strong case. I  
am a little concerned that this debate might blur the  
lines between criticism of the performance of a Member  
of Parliament or a stance they take and actual abuse.  
My concern is that the abuse particularly stops women  
entering politics. I will give the example of a candidate  
who stood in Ealing and was unfortunately not elected.  
Candidates have to declare their addresses when they  
stand for Parliament. She said that she started becoming  
nervous during the election campaign when opponents  
started standing outside her door, spitting in her face  
and following her. That is the threatening behaviour  
that she wants to highlight. This is not about criticism  
in the press.

**Simon Hart:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that  
contribution. Legislation of course already exists to  
deal with such incidents but, as we touched on before, it  
is not always easily accessible. It is not always entirely  
advantageous to be distracted by that during an election  
campaign.

**Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab):  
The hon. Gentleman and I have been sparring partners  
on many occasions, but on this one I congratulate him  
on raising this issue. I agree that all it takes for evil to  
prosper is for good people to do nothing. On the other  
hand, it is very easy for us in this place to make the case  
and put the arguments down—we are protected by  
privilege and have the means of putting our views on  
the record—but there are councillors and ordinary people  
out there volunteering for political parties and charities  
up and down the country who are not protected in  
anything like the same way as we are in Parliament.

**Simon Hart:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that  
contribution, which touches on the reason we are here:  
the degree of collateral impact from which we may  
fairly visibly suffer, and the knock-on effect on people  
who want to do good things for their community,  
charity or cause, but who are beginning to ask themselves  
whether it is worth the effort. What plans do the  
Government have to assess the extent of the issue,  
because I do not think that any of us here know what  
it is?

It almost seems that the age of reasoned argument in  
elections is under threat. All of us, in our own particular  
way, have experienced situations in which we mention  
immigration and are instantly labelled a racist, or we  
mention welfare and are instantly labelled as having  
some extraordinary dislike of the disabled, or we want  
to talk about complicated and sensitive issues around  
the economy, which is interpreted as simply wanting to  
starve the poor. Absurd, extreme, ridiculous, lazy and

157WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 158WH

trite comments are assigned to Members who simply  
want to tackle a complicated social problem in the way  
we were sent here to do. The fact that there is no room  
for reasoned argument any more is a cause of this  
debate. It seems that it is not really about winning votes  
or arguments anymore.

The manner in which some of those campaigns are  
conducted—I am obviously trying to steer a careful,  
non-partisan line here—is about driving people out of  
politics altogether. It is not about votes and arguments;  
it is about the single-minded determination to do away  
with anybody who happens to hold a contrary view.  
That is a big difference between 2015 and 2017, and it is  
an unattractive development that will simply reduce the  
gene pool from which we recruit our politicians and  
volunteers. I cannot believe that any member of the  
public, however vociferous they might be online, actually  
thinks that reducing the number of people from which  
we choose our representatives is a good thing.

What is all this doing to society? How is it impacting  
on candidate recruitment? What is it doing to the retention  
of good people in the House? Have we reviewed the  
recommendations that the Law Commission made 18  
months ago? I am hopeful that the Minister has views  
on that. Are we doing enough to bring the existing  
provisions to the knowledge of the enforcement agencies  
and, indeed, to candidates? I hope that when the Minister  
gets to his feet in a few minutes he will be able to give us  
some indication of the Government's view on an  
independent assessment of the extent of the problem—what  
is going on out there, what is the cause and what is the  
remedy.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): Four years ago the  
all-party parliamentary group against anti-Semitism  
produced a detailed set of recommendations on an  
all-party basis about conduct in elections and asked  
every political leader to endorse it. To date, none has.  
Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if the political  
leaders themselves drew up a code of conduct and a  
wayofaddressingbehaviourduringelections,thatwould  
go a considerable way towards dealing with the most  
difficult period? If there is a transgression by a candidate  
or their supporters, they face the issue of votes at that  
time, and therefore there is a tendency to try to dampen  
it down or ignore it during elections. That is precisely  
why we produced that report.

**Simon Hart:** I could not have put it better myself. In  
fact, I would expand it to outside election times, too. As  
we have heard today, this problem is not limited to that  
four or five-week period every three or four years.

My second question to the Minister is about reviewing  
existing laws and seeing which work and which should  
work but are not being enforced. Where there are gaps,  
we should recommend how to fill them. Then, as the  
hon. Member for Bassetlaw(John Mann) said, we should  
ensure that there is cross-party support for legislation to  
achieve that aim.

We need to look at the responsibilities of the social  
media platforms, which, as my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) and I discovered  
not long ago, all too often wring their hands and say,  
“It's all too difficult.”Actually, it is not all too difficult.  
It is all too important that they now adopt the same  
responsible attitude to what they publish in their name—

although they deny they are publishers—which is, on  
occasion, the sort of material that is completely  
unacceptable. Earlier I raised the example of Byron  
Davies and the Gower, who asked a social media  
platform—I think it was Twitter—to remove an outright  
lie that was possibly going to affect the outcome of the  
election. It refused and said that what was going on was  
within the guidelines. It cannot be with the guidelines  
simply to sit back and allow people to publish utter  
nonsense with the aim of artificially disrupting the  
outcome of an election. I suspect that everybody in this  
Chamber is of that view.

When the then Minister responded to a debate on  
online bullying last year, he said:

“There needs to be partnership, and I do not rule out  
regulation...We need to work with the companies, and we need  
clear guidelines on, and definitions of, online abuse. Even more  
importantly, we need very quick reactions, so that all of us as  
constituency MPs do not have to sit in surgeries with people who  
are clearly utterly distressed because of online material”.—[*Official  
Report*, 7 July 2016; Vol. 612, c. 1107.]

That applies just as much to electoral behaviour as to  
behaviour outside that time.

Finally—thank you for your patience, Mr Hanson—we  
need a political lead, as other colleagues have said. That  
means that the leaders of all parties and groups need to  
stand up and not just send out warmly worded tweets  
about bad behaviour or transmit mealy-mouthed messages  
of condemnation, but take a “not in my name” approach.  
All of the groups we have talked about overtly and by  
insinuation need to say, “Not in my name. Nobody who  
is a member of this party or this group should engage in  
online or offline abuse, either during an election or at  
any other time.” The leadership of those organisations  
have the opportunity today to stand up and say that  
they will deal with this robustly. If they do not, they are  
complicit in the problem. That is why there have been  
rumours and this whole thing has gathered momentum—  
with a small “m”—over the past few months and years.

Thirteen months ago our colleague Jo Cox paid the  
ultimate price for this kind of stuff. It shook the nation  
and sent a message that I hoped people would listen to,  
whether they are in a position of political leadership or  
just able to vote at elections. One year on, the problem  
seems every bit as bad as it was back then. Unless we  
have joined-up, co-operative leadership from the  
Government—I hope we will hear about that now—and  
from all the Opposition parties and the groups that  
support them, all of the extraordinary work that has  
been done in Jo Cox's memory will have been wasted.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**David Hanson (in the Chair):** Order. I intend to call  
the Front-Bench spokesperson for the Scottish National  
party at 5.10 pm, so there is very limited time for right  
hon. and hon. Members' contributions. I hope that  
Members bear in mind that I will not be able to get  
everybody in.

4.55 pm

**MsDianeAbbott**(HackneyNorthandStokeNewington)  
(Lab): This is a very important debate, and I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South  
Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) on securing it. We have to  
be clear that we are talking not about robust debate,

159WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 160WH

*[Ms Diane Abbott]*

however robust it is, but about mindless abuse. In my  
case, the mindless abuse has been characteristically  
racist and sexist. I have had death threats, and people  
tweeting that I should be hanged

“if they could find a tree big enough to take the fat bitch's  
weight”.

There was an English Defence League-affiliated Twitter  
account—#burnDianeAbbot. I have had rape threats,  
and been described as a

“Pathetic useless fat black piece of shit”,

an “ugly, fat black bitch”, and a “nigger”—over and  
over again. One of my members of staff said that the  
most surprising thing about coming to work for me is  
how often she has to read the word “nigger”. It comes  
in through emails, Twitter and Facebook.

Where I disagree with the hon. Gentleman is that he  
seems to suggest that this is all a relatively recent  
occurrence in this election. That is not my experience. It  
is certainly true that the online abuse that I and others  
experience has got worse in recent years, and that it gets  
worse at election time, but I do not put it down to a  
particular election. I think the rise in the use of online  
media has turbocharged abuse. Thirty years ago, when I  
first became an MP, if someone wanted to attack an  
MP, they had to write a letter—usually in green ink—put  
it in an envelope, put a stamp on it and walk to the post  
box. Now, they press a button and we read vile abuse  
that, 30 years ago, people would have been frightened  
even to write down.

I accept that male politicians get abuse, too, but I  
hope the one thing we can agree on in this Chamber is  
that it is much worse for women. As well as the rise of  
online media, it is helped by anonymity. People would  
not come up to me and attack me for being a nigger in  
public, but they do it online. It is not once a week or  
during an election; it is every day. My staff switch on  
the computer and go on to Facebook and Twitter, and  
they see this stuff.

**Andrew Percy:** I agree with everything the right hon.  
Lady is saying, but I do not think my hon. Friend the  
Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire  
(Simon Hart) was saying that this is a new thing. We  
have all had it for years on social media, and the right  
hon. Lady has had it in a particularly terrible way. What  
is different now is that some of this is being driven by  
political leaders' language. When someone addresses a  
rally where there are posters of the severed head of the  
Prime Minister and they do not do anything about it,  
and when leaders say “ditch the bitch” in relation to the  
Prime Minister, that is the problem we have at the  
moment: it is the dehumanisation of each other in  
politics.

**Ms Abbott:** We will have to agree to disagree.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): Will  
the right hon. Lady give way?

**Ms Abbott:** I am afraid I cannot give way, because I  
am mindful of the time.

The type of racist and sexist abuse I get is not tied to  
any events in this particular election campaign. This is  
not about just politicians or even women politicians.  
Any woman who goes into the public space can expect

that type of abuse. People will remember how Mary  
Beard, the historian, received horrible abuse online  
because she was on “Question Time”.

**David Hanson (in the Chair):** Order. The right hon.  
Lady is making a powerful speech, but I am conscious  
that we have only 11 minutes to get other Members in,  
so I hope she will draw her remarks to a conclusion.

**Ms Abbott:** In closing, I want to make a couple of  
points, the first of which is that there is a relationship  
between online abuse and mainstream media commentary;  
in my office, we always see, at the very least, a spike in  
abuse after there has been a lot of negative stuff in the  
media. Online abuse and abuse generally are not the  
preserve of any one party or any one party faction, and  
to pretend that is to devalue a very important argument.  
I am glad we have had the debate—it gives me no  
pleasure to talk about my experience not only in the  
last election, but for years—but let us get this debate  
straight: it is not about a particular party or a particular  
faction, but about the degradation of public discourse  
online.

5pm

**Mr David Jones** (Clwyd West) (Con): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and  
South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) on securing this  
debate.

I have stood in six general elections and I can say  
that, frankly, this was by a long chalk the most unpleasant  
one in which I have ever participated. I have no doubt at  
all that much of the behaviour that my hon. Friend  
outlined was co-ordinated, because the patterns of  
behaviour that I witnessed in my constituency have  
been repeated across the country and have been reported  
to me by a number of colleagues.

One issue that I want to raise, to echo what the right  
hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington  
(Ms Abbott) said, is that of social media. Frankly, if  
ever there were a misnomer, “social media” is it; it is  
deeply antisocial media. Twitter, in particular, has a lot  
to answer for. The anonymity in which a lot of participants  
on Twitter clothe themselves encourages the sort of  
behaviour that we have heard about today. Logging on  
to Twitter nowadays is much like wading through sewage;  
it is a deeply unpleasant experience. The sort of  
commentary, abuse and language that one sees on it,  
which is regularly used against everyone but in particular  
candidates for election, is the sort of thing that no one  
would dream of saying to another person face to face.

That is the nub of the issue. We now have this new  
phenomenon of social media and it has not been adequately  
addressed. It is certainly not being addressed by the  
social media companies. My hon. Friend is right: someone  
who makes a complaint to Twitter gets completely  
ignored. Twitter, in fact, has a huge amount to answer  
for, so in the brief time available to me I ask the  
Minister whether he will please give consideration to  
the impact that social media have had on the behaviour  
of many people during the election campaign. What  
proposals do the Government have to address that,  
because at the moment anarchic media are causing  
misery to untold numbers of people, not least colleagues  
here in this House?

161WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 162WH

5.2 pm

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and  
Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under  
yourchairmanship,MrHanson.Ithankthehon.Member  
for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon  
Hart) for securing this extremely important debate.

I am very sorry that we are having to have the debate,  
but it is necessary, and I have been appalled at the  
severity and scale of the abuse experienced by hon.  
Members and that has been described today. In our  
democracy, to be able to stand for Parliament free from  
abuse, threats, degradation and defamatory remarks is  
essential. I have always thought that we should encourage  
non-career politicians into politics—career politicians  
are also good, but we need the diversity—but it is  
difficult to encourage them into a world of negativity,  
put-downs, vilification and abuse, so Parliament will  
lose good people. All parties have such issues, and I  
reiterate that it is incumbent on party leaders to act  
where abuse occurs. We cannot ignore it, because ignoring  
abuse ultimately condones it.

In my own experience, I have had very personal  
attacks, including anti-Semitic comments because I have  
friends and family who are Jewish. I have also met  
constituents who have been told that I was not a real  
doctor,butmasqueradingasadoctor;thatIdidnotlive  
with my husband; and all sorts of false allegations, such  
as ones about business contracts that I was supposed to  
have with the NHS, but which I have never had. That  
was all aimed at undermining my personal and professional  
credibility.

I will end now to give others the opportunity to  
contribute. Where abuse occurs, it is incumbent on  
candidates, parties and party leaders to act; such abuse  
does not benefit politics, society or diversity. I look  
forward to the Minister's response, and I hope that we  
have cross-party consensus on the issue.

5.4 pm

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I will try to  
be brief, and I have already made a couple of interventions.

I am a Tory in Humberside, which is not an easy place  
tobeaTory.Iwasacouncillorfor10years—oneoftwo  
Tories on Hull City Council—and have been through  
four council elections and four general elections. I am  
not afraid of abuse and insults, something I am pretty  
used to, but what is happening now is on a different scale.

I have been called “Tory scum” for years and had  
insults in the streets, and I am pretty used to that. It is  
part of the process, and although we might say that it  
should not happen, it does. What happened at this  
election, however, was different. I never thought that in  
my own constituency someone would come up to me  
and shout the name of the Leader of the Opposition,  
then describe me as, “Israeli and Zionist scum.”I never  
thought that my posters would be ripped down and  
posted on social media under the phrase, “Fuck the  
Tories #CorbynIn”. I never thought that my staff would  
be spat at in the street by activists, by people naming the  
Leader of the Opposition as their motivation for calling  
my staff “Tory fucking scum.”That is what is happening  
in our democracy.

It is true that there is abuse on all sides, on the left  
and on the right. I condemn it absolutely. What is  
different about what is happening now is that there is an

assault on our democracy and on one particular political  
party. This dehumanisation of my side of politics is  
being motivated and encouraged by the language of  
some of the leaders of the Labour party. There are very  
decent Labour members—the vast mass of them—and  
Members of Parliament, but the abuse has been happening  
to some of them as well.

To have leaders addressing rallies where there were  
images of the severed head of the Prime Minister, but  
that not being called out, and to have leaders accusing  
people of murder or saying, “Ditch the bitch!”, but that  
not being called out, is an assault on our democratic  
values and our processes. It has to stop. It is the worst I  
have encountered in any election and it is not acceptable.  
In this particular regard, it is coming from one particular  
faction. We should be honest about that.

**DavidHanson(intheChair):**LukePollardandRehman  
Chishti have literally three minutes between them. Luke  
Pollard, you have a minute and a half, maximum.

1. pm

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): Abuse aimed at candidates and volunteers is  
not endured by only one party; it is endured by all  
parties. There are people right across our political spectrum,  
from left to right and in the middle, who suffer needless  
abuse for trying to make the world a better place.  
Politics is our way of doing that. It is a difficult and  
contested environment, and at elections we want our  
debatestoberobustbut,speakingasagaymanandasa  
proud Janner from Plymouth, I want to speak up not  
only for Members of Parliament, but for the volunteers  
and for those cautious about getting involved in politics  
for the first time.

During the election, I spoke to a young LGBT person  
who said, “I get abuse online; I am scared to go online.  
If Members of Parliament aren't getting justice for the  
abuse they get, what chance do I have?” The message  
that this House and the Government must send to  
young people from the LGBT community and every  
community who want to make the world a better place  
is that abuse will be taken seriously, wherever it comes  
from, whoever says it and whatever form it is done in,  
whether that is in the mainstream print media, slipped  
into broadcast, on social media or as abuse on posters,  
or—this happened to Jemima, one of the people I  
represent in Plymouth—in an anonymous note put  
through her door simply because she had put up a  
Labour poster. We have to send the message that abuse,  
wherever it comes from, is not acceptable.

1. pm

**Rehman Chishti** (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hanson.  
I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen  
West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) on securing  
the debate.

I have colleagues in all parts of the House. In my  
seven years here, I have built some wonderful friendships  
with them and gone on some wonderful trips abroad on  
delegations and on work we have carried out together.  
However, I will never accept something that is unacceptable  
to happen to any Member of Parliament from any  
political party. Let me give two examples.

163WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 164WH

*[Rehman Chishti]*

When I stood up to make my acceptance speech and  
tothankalltheelectorateafteraverydifficultelection—the  
culture in the election campaign was one of the most  
difficult that I have experienced—I had an activist say  
in public, “Fuck off back to country X”. The matter  
has been referred to the Kent police. They are investigating  
it under public order and racism, so let them do their  
job. But a Labour party activist, who happens to be a  
former assistant to the Medway Labour group, said that  
in public as I made my acceptance speech. I ask each  
and every Member here: if you experienced that, how  
would you feel?

Two days before the election, a video went online of a  
conversation between a third party and a Labour councillor,  
who happens to be the former chairman of the Gillingham  
and Rainham association. Malicious, grossly offensive  
remarks and a threat to me were made—

**David Hanson (in the Chair):** Order. I apologise to the  
hon. Gentleman, but I have to call the Front Benchers,  
so will he resume his seat? I call Tommy Sheppard.

5.10 pm

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): I appreciate  
thatwe are shortof time andIknowthatwewilldiscuss  
this issue again in the main Chamber next week, so I  
will try to keep my remarks brief. I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire  
(Simon Hart) on securing this important debate, and I  
associate my party with the sentiments that he expressed.

I and many of my colleagues have been subjected to  
exactly the type of activity that the hon. Gentleman  
described. Indeed, someone was recently convicted for  
making a threat against me. Like others, I am extremely  
concernedthatitseemsthatthemajorityoftheperpetrators  
of such abuse are male and the majority of the targets  
are female Members—or at least the greatest intensity  
of threats is directed towards them. That should be a  
cause for extreme concern for everyone.

We should be absolutely clear that we are not talking  
about a bit of political banter. We are not talking about  
the rough and tumble of political debate, or even about  
satirising or caricaturing another person's point of view;  
we are talking about vile abuse—dehumanising people  
and sometimes inciting violence against them. That sort  
of activity should not be deemed acceptable in any  
democratic society.

We are also, I hope, not suggesting that there is  
anything special that needs to be protected about Members  
of Parliament; we are arguing about abuse that should  
be tackled no matter who in society suffers from it. In  
that sense, I agree with the right hon. Member for  
Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott).  
This issue cannot be taken in isolation from general  
debates in society, or from the general portrayals in the  
media of certain people in society. I will not say exactly  
what the link is, but to say that there is not an association  
or a link would be extremely problematic.

**Martin Whitfield** (East Lothian) (Lab): Will the hon.  
Gentleman give way?

**Tommy Sheppard:** We are very short of time, but I  
will if the hon. Gentleman is quick.

**Martin Whitfield:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree  
with a senior Scottish National party politician that  
now is the time for people to sign up to a code of  
conduct, and now is the time to ban anonymous social  
media accounts?

**Tommy Sheppard:** Yes. I think the hon. Gentleman is  
talking about my colleague Alyn Smith MEP—a member  
of the SNP national executive—who called for that. I  
was going to deal with that point at the end of my  
remarks.

We need to consider the wider political factors at play  
and whether there is anything we can do to try to  
change the political discourse in our country through  
the way we operate politics. As elected Members of  
Parliament, we have a special responsibility to take a  
lead on that. There are undoubtedly a lot of people with  
a legitimate sense of grievance about the lot that they  
have received in society, for one reason or another. They  
feel alienated from the political process and unable to  
express their point of view.

Of course, that has always been the case; the difference  
is that, whereas those people had to go to extreme  
lengths to vent their anger before, it is now remarkably  
easy. All they need to do is switch on their phone and  
they can instantly and anonymously direct the most vile  
abuse to whomever they want. But that does not mean  
that we should not look at the underlying reasons for  
that alienation and disaffection and see whether there is  
stuff that we can do, through our education system or  
by improving political discourse generally, to try to  
minimise that. I do not say that to excuse people's  
behaviour in any way; I am simply trying to find some  
explanation for it, so that we might begin the long-term  
process of trying to prevent it.

I caution colleagues very much against trying to  
make this a party political matter. Every Member of  
this House—albeit some much more than others—has  
been subjected to some sort of abuse. It crosses all  
political parties, and it is not a matter that one political  
party experiences more than any other. I understand  
that sometimes, people who offer such abuse identify  
themselves as a political opponent, or a supporter of a  
political opponent, of the person to whom the abuse is  
directed, but that does not mean that the abuse is  
sanctioned by a political party or that such people  
speak for a political party. Therefore, if we are to tackle  
this issue properly, we must do so on a cross-party basis,  
and we certainly could agree a voluntary code of conduct  
among the political parties that states what is acceptable  
and what is not.

5.15 pm

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hanson.  
I thank the hon. Member for Carmarthen West and  
South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) for bringing this  
important debate to the House. It is clearly one in which  
every Member has some interest, because I doubt that  
any Member or anyone who stood for election to the  
House has not faced some level of abuse. I also thank  
the other Members who took part in the debate. I am  
keen to hear more detail about the examples they raised  
of abuse that was done in the name of my party, and I  
am happy to take up those cases.

165WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 166WH

I am aware that many Members did not take part in  
the debate because they do not want to give oxygen or  
attention to the people who abuse them. For the same  
reason, I do not want to go into the details of the abuse  
that I have received while I have been in the public eye  
over the past couple of years, but I stress that such  
abuse has no place in our democracy. If we are truly to  
be a country with free and fair elections, everyone must  
feel able to stand as a candidate, or to support a  
candidate or a political party, without fear.

Alothasbeensaidaboutusaspoliticians,butIstress  
that this issue is also about people who purport to  
support a political party. My hon. Friend the Member  
for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) told me that  
supporters of his who put “Vote Labour” posters in  
their windows were subjected to hate mail, which, owing  
to its content, is currently being investigated seriously  
by the police. That is alarming.

This is of course not just an issue for one political  
party; it happens across the political spectrum. I think  
that this issue was first brought before the House at the  
first Prime Minister's Question Time of this Session,  
when the hon. Member for South East Cornwall  
(Mrs Murray) spoke about the abuse that she had  
received during the election. That, too, is abhorrent.  
This is an issue for all political parties.

Abuse is also an issue both during and outside election  
campaigns. While we serve as Members in this House,  
we are afforded some level of security. Since the murder  
of Jo Cox, the importance of that security has been  
brought very much to our attention. That incident  
reminds us how serious this issue can be. Online abuse  
does not happen in a vacuum; when someone can go  
online and tweet abuse or put up a Facebook message  
saying that they want to “put a bullet between his  
ears”—that is a comment that I reported to Facebook,  
which said itdid notbreachitstermsandconditions—and  
get away with it, it gives them the confidence to do so  
offline, on the streets.

I am obviously very hurt when I am the victim of  
abuse, but I am hurt far more when members of my  
staff are abused in the street. Occasionally, they are  
even mistaken for me, which makes me feel terribly  
guilty. This issue is about the protection not just of  
politicians but of their families and colleagues.

**Mrs Miller:** I am sorry for interrupting the hon.  
Lady, but does she not think that the leadership of our  
parties must set the right tone? If they do not, people  
will follow that example. Surely she agrees.

**Cat Smith:** The right hon. Lady pre-empts the movement  
of my speech towards exactly that point. It is important  
that political parties and political leaders have a way in  
which they can address this issue. The Labour party has  
a social media policy and a code of conduct, which we  
expect our members to abide by. Where we find examples  
of members not doing so, we do not hesitate to remove  
them as members. When they join the party, our members  
pledge that they will not use any form of abuse; if they  
do, they risk losing their membership. In fact, in 2016,  
the Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), tweeted  
to say that such abuse was not acceptable, and he  
reiterated that in the “Question Time” debates during  
the general election campaign.

**Simon Hart:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Cat Smith:** I cannot—I am really short of time.

I want to stress the responsibility for social media as  
well. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead  
and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) said on “Daily Politics”  
yesterday, it is not right that Facebook can remove a  
picture of a woman breastfeeding within minutes, but it  
takes it two weeks to remove a fake social media profile.

I see you urging me to draw my remarks to a close,  
Mr Hanson.

**Simon Hart** *rose—*

**Cat Smith:** I therefore urge the Minister to work on a  
cross-party basis. We would like to see a code of conduct  
by way of which we can work together to ensure that  
this abuse is not accepted.

**David Hanson (in the Chair):** The hon. Member for  
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon  
Hart) will get a chance to wind up at the end for one  
minute.

**Simon Hart:** I'm already wound up! *[Laughter.]*

**David Hanson (in the Chair):** I call Chris Skidmore.

5.20 pm

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris  
Skidmore):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member  
for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon  
Hart) on securing this important debate. I welcome the  
opportunity to address some of the issues that he and  
other hon. Members from both sides of the House have  
raised. My hon. Friend put his points across in powerful  
terms, as have others today, and this is clearly an  
extremely serious matter that Members feel strongly  
about. As he said in his opening remarks, this is not just  
about ourselves as Members as Parliament; it is about  
all those close to us—our family, our friends and our  
supporters.

The Prime Minister has been very clear that there is  
no place in our democracy for the harassment of  
parliamentary candidates and that abuse will not be  
tolerated. That is why today she has asked the non-partisan  
Committee on Standards in Public Life to carry out a  
review of the intimidation experienced by parliamentary  
candidates, including those who stood to become Members  
of Parliament at the 2017 general election. The review  
will gather evidence of harassment and consider what  
action needs to be taken to ensure the integrity of the  
future of our democratic process.

This is clearly an issue that has the potential to  
impact on people's wish to stand for office and therefore  
has a negative impact on standards in public life more  
broadly. It is also about protecting the integrity of  
public service itself and that of the offices that we hold.  
The independent, non-partisan Committee on Standards  
in Public Life is well respected and, I believe, well placed  
to lead that work. It has conducted many detailed  
reviews on conduct and ethics and operates independently  
from Government, regulators and politicians.

**Rehman Chishti:** The Minister refers to responsibility  
in relation to conduct. Does he therefore agree with my  
earlier point that if a third party makes to someone in  
office a threat of violence directed towards another

167WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 168WH

*[Rehman Chishti]*

person running for office—myself in this case—and  
makes points that are grossly offensive, anti-Semitic  
and homophobic, the individual to whom that is  
reported has a responsibility to notify the authorities?  
To do nothing, as the hon. Member for Penistone  
and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) said, is completely  
unacceptable.

**Chris Skidmore:** I entirely agree that we, like all  
legislators, cannot be silent on this issue. I hope that, as  
the committee begins to set up its review, all Members will  
wish to partake some of the evidence they have given  
today and do so confidentially, without risk of somehow  
glorifying the perpetrators. It will be for the committee  
to determine the exact parameters of the review, but we  
anticipate that it will want to examine the nature of the  
problem and the protections and measures currently in  
place, and whether those need to change.

The committee may also consider the broader implication  
of other office holders—the role of councillors was  
mentioned. Foremost, the review will look at intimidation  
experienced by anyone who has stood as a parliamentary  
candidate. I am sure the committee will want to progress  
that work as quickly as possible. It will produce a report  
for the Prime Minister with specific recommendations  
for actions, and we look forward to its findings.

On the issue of abuse and the current parameters of  
legislation, as was pointed out legislation is in place to  
deal with internet trolls, cyber-stalking and harassment  
and with perpetrators of grossly offensive, obscene or  
menacing behaviour. As a Government, we are making  
changes where necessary to ensure that the legislation  
we have is as effective as possible. For example, in the  
Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 we made changes  
to relevant offences to help ensure that people who  
commit them are prosecuted and properly punished.

The 2015 Act amended section 1 of the Malicious  
Communications Act 1988, which makes it an offence  
to send certain articles with intent to cause distress or  
anxiety. The amendment allows prosecutions to be dealt  
with in either the magistrates court or the Crown court,  
with the maximum penalty in the magistrates court for  
the offence being 12 months' imprisonment and two  
years in the Crown court. The amendment also removed  
the previous requirement that prosecution be brought  
within six months, extending the time within which  
prosecutions for offences under section 127 of the  
Communications Act 2003 can be made to up to three  
years after the offence. As has been said, the key point is  
that legislation is in place; it is a question of communicating  
the fact that our legislation now needs to be used by the  
police when offences are committed and claims and  
accusations about those offences are brought to them.

The law is clear that what is illegal offline is also  
illegal online. Robust legislation is in place to deal with  
internet trolls, cyber-stalking and harassment and the  
perpetrators of grossly offensive, obscene or menacing  
behaviour. Section 127 of the 2003 Act created an  
offence of sending or causing to be sent by means of a  
public electronic communications network

“a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an  
indecent, obscene or menacing character”.

The Crown Prosecution Service also recently revised its  
guidelines on social media to incorporate new and

emerging crimes being committed online and to provide  
clear advice, to help the prosecution of cyber-enabled  
crime.

The recently enacted Digital Economy Act 2017 will  
also help to ensure that online abuse is more effectively  
tackled by requiring a code of practice to be established.  
The code will set out guidance about what social media  
providers should do in relation to conduct on their  
platforms that involves bullying or insulting an individual  
or other behaviour likely to intimidate or humiliate  
them. The Government are considering how to take  
forward the social media code of practice as part of the  
newly established digital charter, and we will provide  
more details shortly about when the consultation with  
social media will take place.

Hate crime of any kind, directed against any community  
or any person, has absolutely no place in our society; I  
am sure we all agree on that. As a Government, we are  
utterly committed to tackling hate crime. The Prime  
Minister has made it very clear that hate crime of any  
kind is completely unacceptable. It divides communities,  
destroys lives and makes us weaker. Britain is thriving  
precisely because we welcome people from all backgrounds,  
faiths and ethnicities, and that is something we must  
strive to protect.

The fact that one of the first actions the Home  
Secretary took in her new role last summer was to  
launch the hate crime action plan shows how important  
tackling hate crime is for the Government. The Home  
Secretary has also asked Her Majesty's inspectorate of  
constabulary to carry out an inspection of all five  
monitored strands of hate crime, to build up a national  
picture of how effectively and efficiently police forces  
are dealing with it. The inspection will take place during  
2017-18, and the Government will be keen to see the  
findings and then consider how they should be taken  
forward.

The Government are determined that no candidate—  
regardless of their party, background, race, ethnicity or  
sexuality—should be forced to tolerate abuse, online or  
offline, whether it is physical abuse or the threat of  
violence or intimidation. It is utterly unacceptable in  
our modern democracy, which we believe is an inclusive  
and tolerant one, for the incidents of abuse discussed  
today to be allowed to go on unchallenged. I met the  
Law Commission this week and the Electoral Commission  
last week to raise the issue of candidate abuse. I look  
forward to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's  
review of intimidation experienced by parliamentary  
candidates and the eventual conclusions of its report.

We,asMembersof Parliament and as a Government,  
cannot be silent on this matter. The law exists to protect  
candidates, and I urge anyone who has evidence of  
abuse to present it to the committee as part of its review,  
to the Electoral Commission as part of its review of the  
general election and, above all, to their local police  
force, which must take this issue very seriously.

I thank Members on both sides for contributing to  
this important debate, which I hope will mark a turning  
point, not only assisting increased detection of intolerance  
and abuse in all forms, but marking a cultural shift,  
whereby we, across all parties, work together to stamp  
out these vile forms of abuse and tackle the fundamental  
point that this is not acceptable or permissible. We owe  
it to our democracy to make clear that intimidation and  
abuse have no part in our society, not only for candidates

169WH UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 12 JULY 2017 UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation 170WH

who stood at the recent general election but for future  
generations of men and women who are considering  
entering public life and standing for election. No one  
must be deterred from playing their part in our democracy,  
which is why we must seek to end the corrosive  
effect that abuse and intimidation has of actively  
discouraging future generations from standing as our  
representatives.

1. pm

**Simon Hart:** Thank you very much, Mr Hanson, for  
your role this afternoon. I also thank colleagues from  
both sides of the House for such useful contributions  
and the Government for taking such immediate action  
on this. We even got a letter from the Prime Minister  
before the Minister had got to his feet, so things are  
working well.

I apologise for going on too long at the beginning,  
particularly to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham  
and Rainham (Rehman Chishti), who was making a  
really moving speech. I hope he will have an opportunity  
to complete those comments, perhaps in the other Chamber.  
If I had had a chance to intervene on the shadow  
Minister, the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood  
(Cat Smith), I would have asked how many people the  
Labour party has already sanctioned for offences in this  
area. Perhaps she could write to me with that information.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered abuse and intimidation of  
candidates and the public in UK elections.

1. pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

171WH

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

172WH

Westminster Hall

*Thursday 13 July 2017*

[MR PETER BONE *in the Chair*]

Housing Supply

1. pm

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the supply of homes and  
affordable homes to buy.

Home ownership has been people's preferred way of  
living and enjoying their home comforts for many years.  
All the surveys tell us that an overwhelming majority of  
UK people are either pleased to own their own home or  
would like to own their own home, and the reasons for  
that are obvious. Owning a home makes people free of  
landlords' special rules and regulations. They are free to  
do in their own home anything that they wish, subject  
only to the rules of decency and their conduct towards  
other people in their home and towards their neighbours.  
They are also free to amend, decorate and improve the  
inside of their home in more or less any way they see fit,  
subject to safety standards, while suitable improvements  
can be made to the outside, subject to planning consent.

For most people, home ownership has also turned  
out to be an extremely good investment. Not only does  
a home represent security for themselves and their  
family, and a place where they can create and enjoy  
their own environment; it is a store of growing value.  
Since 1980, house prices have risen by 7% a year on a  
fairly steady basis. There have been a few setbacks, most  
notably during periods of recession. The last severe  
setback was a 7.6% fall in 2009, on the back of the  
banking crash. However, that tells us something very  
interesting: even when shares and the values of banks  
were crashing dramatically, the average home did not  
fall in value much against the background of the average  
steady 7% growth. It is therefore not surprising that  
86% of our fellow citizens want to own their own home;  
it is perhaps more surprising that fewer and fewer  
currently achieve that goal.

Home ownership reached its peak as people's preferred  
form of tenure at 71% in 2003. Since then, there has  
been a sharp decline. Now, only 64% of our fellow  
citizens own their own home, according to the official  
figures. I submit that those figures overstate the reality.  
Because of the way the figures are calculated, if an  
adult with a job still lives at home with their parents,  
they do not count as a separate household. They are not  
in a rented household, so they are invisible in the totals,  
even though they are, to all intents and purposes, in a  
rented household under somebody else's rules, although  
they may not pay any rent to their generous parents.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): The  
right hon. Gentleman is making an interesting point. To  
illustrate it, I asked the Library for the home ownership  
figure for Ealing Central and Acton. Apparently it is  
46%, not 64%. Does he accept that there is a bigger  
imbalance in London, and that things are worse than  
the global figures he is quoting? Apparently, the average  
price a first-time buyer pays in the London Borough of

Ealing is £490,421, on an average salary of £27,000.  
Does he accept that the inflated house prices in London  
are part of the problem?

**John Redwood:** I very much agree, and I will go on to  
look at how we deal with that, at the Government's  
answer and at what more can be done. The hon. Lady is  
absolutely right that the figures exaggerate the homeowner  
percentage. Given the way the figures are calculated, if  
a group of young adults co-rent and share a property,  
for example, that does not appear as a series of independent  
rented households, but as one rented property. The  
figures therefore understate the number of people living  
in the rented model compared with those living in the  
owner-occupiedmodel,becauseitismeasuredbyhousing  
units rather than individual households. The Government  
should bear it in mind that we are probably dealing with  
more people whose aspirations are not being fulfilled,  
rather than fewer, because the overall 64% figure  
undoubtedly overstates the reality.

We all know from our own experiences that many  
under-35s not only cannot afford to own a home, but  
find it extremely difficult to afford a rented home in  
Londonandthesouth-eastbecauserentsareextraordinarily  
high. They may still live with their parents, but it would  
not be their preferred way of proceeding; it may not be  
their parents'preferred answer either, but family loyalty  
and love come before individual preferences, given the  
financial positions people find themselves in.

That decline in official home ownership—from 71%  
to 64%—is more pronounced when looking at the age-  
related figures. According to the official figures, 54% of  
under-34s owned their own house or flat in 1996, but  
that fell to just 34% by 2016. We have gone from a  
majority of the under-34s being able to afford their own  
home—so we know it can be done—to a minority of  
around a third in the more recent figures.

For most people, the financial case for owning is  
extremely strong. By definition, at the moment it may  
be cheaper to buy a house and pay a mortgage at very  
low interest rates than to pay rent, because rents are so  
high. Looking at it over a lifetime, it is obviously much  
cheaper and better to make the effort and buy a house,  
if people can, because they may have only 25 years of  
paying the mortgage, whereas they may have 50 or 60  
years of paying rent, which will cost an awful lot more.  
Rent is a good way to keep people poor.

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab):  
To give the right hon. Gentleman a picture, in my office  
in Portcullis House, I have Ross, who bought his own  
home and pays a mortgage of £600 a month, and Dan,  
who pays £650 a month to rent a room in a flat. For the  
first it is an investment; for the second it is an impediment  
to ever owning his own home.

**John Redwood:** That is a very powerful individual  
illustration that bears out my general point that maybe  
half of people today would be no worse off month by  
month if they were able to get a deposit and buy a  
property, compared with renting. If we look forward  
30, 40 or 50 years, they should be massively better off, if  
for no other reason than that the mortgage stops once it  
has been repaid, whereas rent carries on.

Worse still is the cruelty of renting for those in old  
age, when the rent will be at its maximum, because rents  
are likely to carry on inflating as they have done in

173WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

174WH

*[John Redwood]*

recent years. Not only is rent paid for many more years,  
but people are charged the maximum rent when they  
are deep into retirement and least able to pay it, and  
when they will worry about how far their pension will  
stretch to meet their daily bills. That leaves out of  
account the possibility that, if someone buysa property,  
its value will go up, which is an added bonus. As I  
pointed out, that has been true since 1980. It might not  
always be true, but if it were true again over 25 years,  
the owner would be the double winner: they pay less by  
purchasing rather than renting, and their asset rises in  
value.

That rise in value gives homeowners more freedoms.  
If they buy early enough in life, that asset is there,  
normally rising in value, as possible collateral if they  
want to raise a loan for some other purpose—to help  
their family set up a business or whatever it may be—but  
it is not there for the person in rented accommodation.  
It is undoubtedly true that a person who manages to  
buya property is, rightly or wrongly, usually treated as a  
better proposition for loans and business activities,  
which is another injustice for the person continuously  
paying rent.

I detect some cross-party agreement, which is excellent,  
that home ownership is the preferred form of tenure for  
many people—for very good reason—and that we need  
to make more efforts to get people into it, to deal with  
their high rental costs.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** Does the right hon. Gentleman  
agree that the other advantage of owner-occupation is  
security? In the private rented sector, where an increasing  
number of families with children are living, a landlord  
simply needs to secure a possession order for eviction.  
That has become the main route for the eviction of  
families, leading to children being insecure and living in  
temporary accommodation, far away from their homes  
and schools, with all the consequences that holds for  
public services.

**John Redwood:** I entirely agree, and I mentioned  
security for families at the beginning. That is a point  
well made.

We need to ask what we can do. House prices in many  
parts of the country, most especially in London and the  
south-east, are extremely high, and it is very difficult  
even for someone on average earnings, let alone below-  
average earnings, to raise a sufficiently large deposit,  
meet the requirements to raise the loan and meet the  
interest payments on it. One driver of these very high  
house prices is undoubtedly the big imbalance between  
demand and supplyin housing. Iknowthe Government  
accept that and are trying to work on the supply side. If  
more houses can be produced, all other things beings  
equal, that should help ease the house price pressures.

There is also the question of demand. I think all of us  
wish to be generous to refugees and to invite in people  
of talent who can make a good contribution to our  
community. There is everything to be said for allowing  
companies investing here to bring in their executives  
and so forth, but Government Members feel there has  
to be some control on overall numbers. When we are  
being generous, as we should be, we have to take into  
account the strains being put on the housing market,  
which may mean that the people coming here cannot

get the quality and price of housing that we would  
regard as important for the lifestyles we wish for all the  
people in our country.

We need to look at the number of people who need  
housing vis-a-vis migration, as well as supply. I know  
the Government are considering that and will be freer  
on it in due course, once we come to debate in the  
House of Commons a UK migration policy that meets  
demands for decency and labour mobility for business,  
but that also understands the stresses placed on housing  
and other services if we have very large numbers. Those  
stresses run the risk of us not being able to offer people  
the standards we think are appropriate for anyone  
settled here in our country.

The Government have attempted to tackle the housing  
problem by driving the construction of more homes  
and to tackle the issue of affordability by working  
particularly with first-time buyers on how to get the  
first deposit and raise sufficient money to buy what are  
expensive properties. I welcome the Government's initiatives.  
They are all well-intended, and some have been doing  
good things. My main purpose today is to raise two  
questions. Can the initiatives that already exist be beefed  
up and better advertised, so that we get more people to  
use them? It is still slower than we would like. Secondly,  
are there new initiatives we should add to them, given  
the general imperative to get on with solving the housing  
scarcity problem in general and the shortage of affordable  
housing to buy in particular?

Through the help to buy ISA, the Government are  
offering a £3,000 top-up to someone who can save  
£12,000 for a deposit on a house. Although £15,000 is a  
lot of money for someone on a low income who is  
trying to save, it is not a lot of money for a house  
deposit. I wonder whether, through the Minister, the  
Chancellor might think a little more about those figures.  
The more help that can be offered, the faster someone  
can get a deposit and the better that is for their ability to  
access the housing market.

The Help to Buy equity loan scheme is admirable, but  
it is limited to new homes only, and I wonder why. Most  
people buy a second-hand home. By definition, the  
stock of those homes is massively bigger than the new  
supply in any given year. I know it would be a lot more  
expensive if we opened up the scheme to a wider range  
of houses, but it would also be a lot more useful,  
because many people buy a second-hand home as their  
first home. Indeed, for some, the pleasure of buying a  
first home is in buying a second-hand home that is not  
in great shape, so that they can put their stamp on it. It  
may be a way to have a more affordable home, because  
they may wish to spend their own time and effort on  
improving the house, rather than spending money to get  
others in to improve it for them. It might be worth  
looking at whether we can provide more of a bridge for  
people who want to buy second-hand homes.

The affordable housing fund was set up to generate  
more construction of affordable housing. Again, that is  
a great initiative. I would like the Minister to give us  
more up-to-date information on how many homes that  
scheme might achieve and what the approved build rate  
under it is. One issue with the affordable housing fund is  
the cost of building the properties and the quality of  
their construction. I am all in favour of really good-quality  
construction, and modern homes are built to a much  
higher standard in many ways than older homes. However,

175WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

176WH

one way to match the need for higher quality and  
affordable cost may well be to build on the initiatives of  
the house building industry, by having more construction  
in the factory before things are brought to site. None of  
us wish to recreate the old prefabs. They were a necessary  
and welcome development in the immediate post-war  
crisis, when so much of our cities had been devastated  
by bombing, but they are not the kind of thing we want  
to build today. People want elegant, well-insulated homes  
that meet all modern standards.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): The right hon. Gentleman talks about prefabs  
and the old style. In my constituency the Peabody  
housing trust developed as a millennium product pre-built  
buildings on Murray Grove. People are still living there  
now, and very happily so. There is a modern way of  
developing that could be cheaper. Does he think the  
Government should consider that?

**John Redwood:** I agree. There is not a public-private  
sector divide, in my view; it is something the private  
sector is beginning to adopt and needs to look at just as  
much as the public sector. If done well, it can improve  
the quality. Indeed, some of the most expensive properties  
that individuals can buy are modular German or Swedish  
houses, which are imported in kit form and put up in a  
week or two on a suitable piece of concrete, on a nice  
plot of land, at quite a high price, with extremely  
elegant finishes.

The reason we can both drive quality up and drive  
cost down is that in the factory environment we can  
engineer and produce the larger parts of the house to  
high specifications and low tolerances, so that they are  
very accurate. When the houses are then on site, they  
are in good order and we do not need all the site labour.  
We do not have problems when it rains, because it is all  
being done in a controlled environment, where dust and  
dirt can be controlled and there are not the wrong wet  
or dry conditions. We can have perfect conditions for  
manufacturing to a high quality. The more we can  
achieve in the factory, and the less we have to do on site,  
the more we speed up the build time. Months can be  
taken out of the build time, and if we take out time, we  
take out cost.

Ihopethatmorecanbedone. Persimmon, for example,  
is producing very high-quality homes for private sector  
buyers. Its Space4 factory does quite a lot of prefabrication  
work for a number of homes in its range. I hope there  
will be more initiatives. I mention that to the Government  
because, through their affordable housing fund, they  
have the money and they are the customer, as well as the  
final customer for the property. They can therefore use  
that intelligently, as a buyer, to drive the process in the  
way I have suggested, so that we get quality up and cost  
down—a double benefit.

The Government have a rent to buy scheme. I would  
like to hear more about that and whether it can be made  
more generous. The idea is lower rent when someone  
takes on the tenancy, to give them more scope to save  
for a deposit. They then have the right to move in and  
switch from renting to buying. That is an excellent idea.

I think that the Government could do more on their  
own estate and on brownfields in general. That is partly  
a planning issue and partly an investment or encouragement

issue. By Government, I mean local as well as national,  
because the two need to work in partnership, which  
often requires national Government to lead the way. A  
large number of properties, particularly in our towns  
and cities, are in use but are in decline, or the buildings  
may be empty because their use has terminated. Given  
the pace of change in retail, there will be redundant  
retail space, and given the pace of change in office  
employment and some industrial employment, there  
will be redundant older buildings. Older warehouses  
and industrial plants have been elegantly converted into  
homes, for example in docklands. When those buildings  
are down on their luck or become free, we must ensure  
that the public sector does all it can to make permits  
and proposals available so that people can transform  
them.

Perhaps the Government could look at a scheme to  
back individuals who want to transform a property of  
their own—a sort of modern homesteading scheme for  
which they can be given support if they want to take on  
a poor property—or if a group of people want to take  
on a larger property and convert it. We could have more  
action to deal with dereliction, which is often close to  
valuable real estate in some of our leading cities, but we  
need to back that with an initiative. It should not always  
be large companies that eventually get around to doing  
that and taking all the property; there may be an  
opportunity for individuals, smaller businesses, co-operative  
arrangements or whatever to take on property problems  
and turn them into opportunities.

On brownfield sites and in urban redevelopment there  
is generally scope for central and local government to  
have a bigger vision—some are good at that, but some  
are rather slow—and to use it to identify suitable sites  
for more affordable housing for sale.

**Dr Huq:** There is another level in London—the Mayor  
of London. The right hon. Gentleman was asking for  
more up-to-date statistics. A press release today from  
the Mayor announced 50,000 new affordable homes,  
1,823 of them in Ealing, with two thirds for first-time  
buyers and one third at social rent levels. I am curious  
to hear from the Minister whether the Government will  
also commit to social rents. On the whole, does the right  
hon. Gentleman welcome that breakdown, which might  
go towards counteracting the feeling of many young  
people that the housing ladder is being kicked away  
from them?

**John Redwood:** As I have said, I am pleased with any  
initiative that provides more affordable housing for sale.  
London is the centre of the crisis, because it has the  
most unaffordable housing for most people, but it has  
considerable scope for the sort of developments that I  
have been talking about, where there are brownfield  
areas or property that needs change of use or that can  
be extended or improved where suitable schemes could  
work.

Icannotsitdownwithoutmentioningmyconstituency,  
which has its own housing issues. I live in part of the  
country where quite a lot of people would like to buy a  
home. My council, Wokingham Borough Council—my  
constituency also includes parts of West Berkshire  
Council—feels that it has done more than its fair share  
by identifying large sites for new house building and our  
building rate in the constituency is almost 1,000 homes  
a year, which is a very fast pace of change to accept.

177WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

178WH

*[John Redwood]*

The council wants two things to make that a bit more  
tolerable. First, it wants reassurance from planning  
Ministers that the housing will be in places only where  
the council is making provision. It is making plenty of  
provision, but there is a temptation for inspectors to  
grant permission for houses not where the council is  
planning, so not with the road, school and health  
facilities that we would like.

Secondly, as the Minister will recognise, given the  
phenomenal pace of change, the council needs financial  
help to put in the infrastructure. It is no good getting  
the private sector to finance a lot of new homes if there  
is no extra primary school, doctors' surgery or, above  
all, more road space, because our roads are now totally  
congested. The local council had to put in three new  
primary schools in a hurry a couple of years ago when  
the numbers had built up and changed rather rapidly  
because the new people coming in to buy the new  
homes had rather more family members than had been  
anticipated when the first forecast was run. There is a  
real issue with maintaining a decent quality of service  
and finding the money for it.

When a council or area is co-operating, the Government,  
in turn, should co-operate with it and local people and  
provide infrastructure and some sort of order and pace  
to the development, because otherwise the pace of  
change becomes disruptive and difficult and turns people  
against the idea of more housing, which nationally we  
clearly need. There need to be fair shares.

I obviously welcome the Government's initiatives to  
promote more prosperity and development in the north,  
because that suits us as well. We have been carrying a lot  
of the brunt of development and growth. Growth and  
jobs are welcome in many ways, but they must be at a  
sensible pace. We on our side of the argument would  
like to see fairer shares across the country, just as much  
as many Members representing seats further away from  
London would like a bigger share of the growth that the  
country is capable of.

Perhaps a more contentious note is the right to buy. I  
am an enthusiast for the right to buy because it is a good  
way for people to acquire their own home, but I wonder  
whether the access arrangements are sufficient. Why do  
we limit access under the right to buy to post-1997 houses  
in some cases? Are the discounts large enough? I do not  
buy the argument that selling a socially provided house  
reduces the supply. The number of houses remains exactly  
the same after the transaction with the same people  
living in them as before it took place; it is just that the  
form of tenure of the one that is sold changes and there  
are all sorts of restrictions on resale to ensure that they  
are still properly used and the system is not exploited.

Under the system we are now developing, which I  
welcome, if a publicly owned house is sold and someone  
takes out a private sector mortgage, the state gets a  
receipt. I want that money spent on producing another  
house, so that right to buy can become an ally of more  
housing provision because the money can be recycled.  
That is what developers do: they undertake a development  
with their capital and then sell it on because they need  
the capital to do the same again and to build more  
houses. The state should be more agile at doing that. It  
should be recycling the capital, thereby fulfilling more  
people's wish to be homeowners by allowing them to  
transfer from renting to purchasing.

My final comment about the state sector—it is not  
specifically within the Minister's remit, but is part of  
the general housing problem—is on the provision of  
service housing. I have always favoured the idea that we  
should try to replicate the opportunity to buy within the  
confines of service life. I think that the way to do that is  
by having a home base concept in all the services, so  
that a soldier, sailor or airman knows what his or her  
home base is and has quarters or property there.

There should be an option: either they buy private  
sector property nearby, perhaps with help from the  
Government and their services employer, or, if they are  
in the military estate, there should be a proxy arrangement  
whereby they could take a mortgage on their quarters,  
flat or house. They would have the financial interest in  
it, but they would have to sell back to the state when  
they ceased to be in the military and would do so with  
the benefit of any rise in house prices by some suitable  
index or local arbitration. While they were in the services  
they would be collecting the money for a deposit and  
participating in the housing market, which they otherwise  
would be debarred from by virtue of their service tenure  
and need to rent service property. That could help. I do  
not like to see people coming out of the services after  
20 years with no deposit and having rented service  
property all their life, and then local authorities say,  
“Well, you're not our responsibility because you haven't  
lived in our area long enough or at all,” so they find it  
difficult to find housing. We need to do better by our  
service personnel.

Those are some thoughts for the Minister on how to  
improve and beef up the initiatives to get more people  
enjoying the benefits of home ownership. We seem to  
agree that the benefits are generally there. If we in  
politics can bring a bit more joy into people's lives and  
give more of them the things they would most like, it  
would be a worthwhile day's work. I offer those thoughts  
to the Minister in that spirit.

1.59 pm

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone, in  
a debate that is important for my constituency. I welcome  
the Minister to his place and trust that we can have a  
constructive relationship in working around the housing  
crisis in the city of York.

After 60 years without a local plan, the Tory and Lib  
Dem parties in coalition on City of York Council have  
proved that political expediency is far more important  
to them than addressing the needs of my community.  
That has an impact not only on the housing crisis and  
people desperately needing a home they can afford to  
live in, but on our public services and the local economy,  
because local businesses are also feeling the heat.

On Monday, the council's local plan working group  
approved a plan, after a further two years of delay, to  
focus on high-density, luxury developments in Labour  
areas of the city and to minimise development in the  
Tory and Lib Dem areas. That strategy will fail to  
deliver the minimum number of affordable units needed  
in York, as the coalition has taken the absolute minimalist  
approach to development and will not even meet its  
quota for affordable homes. The local plan does not  
build on the evidence presented by independent experts  
to build the right number of homes and the mix of

179WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

180WH

housing desperately needed in York, and it will not meet  
York's requirements for social housing, which is now at  
such a premium.

Owing to issues in the local economy, the city is not  
working; the local economy is struggling. Public services—I  
can name the healthcare sector and the NHS—are  
struggling to recruit the staff needed to support the city,  
because people simply cannot afford to live in York.  
York has many brownfield sites to develop. They are  
not ready for immediate development, because they  
need to go through a decontamination process, which  
we all understand takes time. However, housing on  
those sites and, in particular, the York Central site, with  
which I am sure the Minister is familiar, will be completely  
unaffordable for local people, because the City of York  
councillors have determined that the homes will be  
luxury apartments, which our city does not need. People  
who are already struggling to find and afford a home  
they can call their own will be unable to access that housing.

In fact, people on low incomes in York now have to  
find 8.9 times their salary for the cheapest properties in  
the city. That is out of their reach, so they are either  
leaving the city altogether, creating the crisis that we are  
seeing in many sectors, or having to rent privately. In  
York, 26% of housing is now in the private rented  
sector. The cost of renting a two-bedroom property is  
£838, and renting a three-bedroom property costs more  
than £1,000. The average cost of a house to buy is more  
than £300,000. The Minister can already see that York  
is becoming inaccessible for local people. The average  
wage in York is just over £22,000—it is a low-wage city  
because of the decline in its industrial base. There is an  
economic challenge as well as a housing challenge,  
which means that our city is altogether challenged. That  
is why I appeal to the Minister to look at how we can  
put solutions in place.

**Dr Huq:** I wonder whether my hon. Friend has had a  
similar experience to me. The cost of private rent is  
punitive, and buying is even worse. I do a lot of school  
assemblies, and every school I go to says that it has  
recruitment problems because people cannot afford to  
stay in west London. The schools can get good trainee  
teachers in their 20s, but the minute those people want  
to put down roots, they are off to Milton Keynes,  
Slough or wherever the nearest affordable place is,  
which creates an uneven age structure in the teaching  
staff and messes everything up.

**Rachael Maskell:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.  
In teaching and right across our public services, it is a  
real challenge for public servants to be able to live in  
these premium spots to provide the vital services for the  
next generation. That is the position particularly in our  
schools, but also across our health and care services and  
other vital services.

In York, there is a real shortage of the housing  
required. In 2015-16 alone, York suffered a 52% fall in  
affordable units delivered. The need is getting greater  
and access is getting further away. Over the past five  
years, house prices have increased by 27.6%. The right  
hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) is right  
to highlight the real issues with access to housing, but  
for my constituents it is only a dream.

In the council's debate on Monday, the Tory and Lib  
Dem councillors did not mention social housing once,  
yet 1,600 people are on the waiting list. I have met many

of them, and they are living in very cramped conditions.  
Just last week a constituent told me that they were  
sleeping on the settee and their child on the floor in  
their parents' house because they cannot access housing  
of their own. They are being moved from their  
accommodation and have nowhere to go, but the council  
cannot provide any housing for them. There will be a  
challenge in meeting people's needs, particularly the  
educational needs of their children, as a result of the  
housing situation. Whether we are talking about damp  
accommodation, which I come across, overcrowded  
accommodation or the rising number of homeless people  
in York, we must address the need for a supply of social  
housing and not just what is called affordable, because  
for people in York a quarter of a million pounds is  
totally unaffordable.

We will see this problem increase. Universal credit is  
being introduced this week, which will have an impact.  
There is also a real challenge with the amount of  
housing allowance that people get, because for the  
broad rental market area the calculation is based on an  
area broader than just York itself, so the amount of  
financial support that some families can get comes in  
under the rate they should get.

Bizarrely, the site of Imphal barracks was included in  
the local plan. Under this Government, Imphal barracks  
is due to close in 2031. There is a 15-year window for  
the local plan, so the window will close well before 2031  
and that site should not be in the plan, because no  
housing will be put on it before the end of the local plan  
era. But the council saw that as a way of boosting the  
numbers—it is a false way. Those homes cannot be  
counted, so our housing crisis will be even greater.

The so-called local plan will be a total disaster for our  
city, but it is also an absolute scandal. I am talking  
about its focus on all these high-value, luxury apartments,  
which our city does not want or need. Where they have  
been developed in our city, they are used as assets.  
People do not live in those homes but just purchase  
them as an investment, or they are used just for holidays  
and race days or weekends. We hear about the story in  
London, but that practice is becoming more and more  
prevalent in York. That will not address the needs and  
the crisis that people are having to face in their own  
housing situation in York.

I would say that we are seeing an experiment in social  
cleansing—if not social cleansing itself—in what is  
happening in the development of York. This is the  
wrong kind of housing, in the wrong place, and it does  
not address local needs. We need social housing and  
truly affordable housing to meet the needs of our  
community, but it is at a level far lower than that which  
the Government have set. The local plan is the worst  
example of political manipulation at the cost of ordinary  
people I can think of, and the Government should not  
even allow it to hit their desk.

In the light of recent events, which have shown the  
needs of the poorest in our society being totally ignored  
by the elite, it is time for the Housing Minister to decide  
which side he is on. I have raised these issues with his  
predecessors on many occasions, but we have not been  
able to make any advance. That is why I trust that this  
Minister will be able to offer some hope to people in my  
constituency.

The people who live in my community need homes.  
That is basic. They are not looking for more; just homes  
where they can live and raise their families. I trust that

181WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

182WH

*[Rachael Maskell]*

these appalling proposals will be rejected, and that the  
needs of my constituents, our public services and my  
local economy will be met through a proper proposal  
for the housing that York needs.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):** Order. Before we continue,  
it might be helpful to Members to know that I am  
required to start the winding-up speeches at about 2.30,  
and that three Members are seeking to speak.

2.10 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the  
right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) on  
his helpful presentation on affordable homes, which  
included some good ideas about how the Minister can  
address the issue.

As a father with three sons and two granddaughters,  
I well remember having a full house while my son and  
daughter-in-law lived with me. That is the way it was,  
because that is what they needed to ensure they could be  
on the site and then move. I declare an interest as a  
landowner; I have had a couple of sites passed that I  
have then given to my children to help them. Not every  
child has that opportunity. I remember when they lived  
with us, with their baby, while they built their house.  
There was a period when they accumulated money to  
finance themselves, get a deposit and move on. They did  
not fall into a category eligible for social housing, which  
would have enabled them to pay less for rental  
accommodation. Things in Northern Ireland are very  
different; the matter is devolved, as the Minister will  
know. My son Ian and his partner Ashley also lived with  
us before they got their first home so that they could  
accumulate some cash for their deposit.

I understand that time is of the essence, Mr Bone,  
and I will speak about a couple of points. Young people  
need their own space and their own lives. Sadly, social  
housing is so strained that many young people who  
work are unable to get a foot in and are therefore stuck  
either paying someone else's mortgage by renting—as  
the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain  
McDonagh) mentioned—or living with parents for longer  
than they would like.

Couples who both worked while they had young  
children used to be an oddity; now, the family in which  
one parent can stay at home and look after the children  
is fast becoming the oddity. That is due not to extravagant  
lifestyles but to the cost of getting on the housing  
ladder and of running houses that were bought when  
prices were high. In my constituency, and perhaps across  
all our constituencies, there are homeowners who now  
have negative equity, and it will be a long time before  
they get out of it, if ever.

Getting on the property ladder can be difficult for a  
young family. That is where the Government must step  
up and step in to assist first-time buyers. One of my  
staff members here in London is buying a house at  
£575,000. How on earth can they do it? Only with the  
good will of family connections is it possible to get on  
the first level of housing in this city. The sister of a girl  
who used to work for me lives in London. They are both

accountants and probably fairly well paid, but the house  
that they are buying is £700,000. Where do people in  
London start if they want to buy a house?

The total housing stock in England increased by  
around 190,000 dwellings last year, as I am sure the  
Minister will mention. That is 12% higher than the  
previous year's figure, but well below the 250,000 that  
the Government said would be built. I heard someone  
in my constituency ask recently how we planned to fill  
all the homes that we are building in Newtownards—1,000  
new homes on a 100-acre site on the east of the town.  
Lagan Homes will build some 550 houses on two sites in  
Bangor, and another major developer, Turkington, is  
developing a site at the foot of Scrabo in the middle of  
Newtownards.

House prices have increased slightly over the years,  
but there is an undersupply of affordable private rented  
accommodation, as every one of us here can attest. An  
increasing number of applicants on the social housing  
waiting list are in housing stress, all of whom pose  
particular challenges and must be dealt with using the  
framework for councils provided by the community  
planning process.

My council area, Ards and North Down, has a  
population of 158,000 and is still growing. Almost  
19% of the population is aged 15 or younger, 61.6% are  
16to64and19.5%are65andover.Theissueisnotjust  
houses but whether accommodation is suitable to the  
age of the people living there, including pensioners and  
those with disabilities. New build starts in my council  
area increased by 66% between 2012 and 2014, but they  
fell again in 2015. The urgent housing wait list—people  
whoneedhousesrightnow—is1,300peoplelong,which  
indicates the scale of the problem.

No one has yet talked about co-ownership. My son  
andhispartnerhaveahousetodaybecauseofco-ownership.  
That is what got them on the ladder; they had to start  
somewhere. We have not heard either about the option  
of living above shops. There are lots of shops in many  
cities and towns across the United Kingdom of Great  
Britain and Northern Ireland with options for upstairs  
developments of flats, and we should consider that.

I am mindful of the time, Mr Bone. Major investment  
is needed in all constituencies across the United Kingdom.  
It will help local construction industries, and therefore  
the local economy, and allow families an adequate  
standard of living. It must be driven by Government  
initiatives. With great respect to the Minister, who I  
know will have a good response, as will the Opposition  
spokesperson, we should subsidise developers providing  
smaller pensioner homes, and help first-time buyers to  
get on the property ladder without increasing their  
long-term debt to an unmanageable level.

This debate is about not simply allowing houses to  
be built, but Government help, encouragement and  
involvement at every level, from social housing to affordable  
private housing. There must be a team within the  
Department to focus on the end goal of merging the  
two sectors to deliver for all the families in the United  
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They  
are crying out for fit-for-purpose affordable homes, and  
we have a duty to deliver them.

**Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):** I thank the hon. Gentleman  
for his self-restraint.

183WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

184WH

2.16 pm

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab):  
The figures are these: home ownership among under-25s  
has dropped by 50%, and home ownership among 25 to  
34-year-olds has dropped from 58% in 1997 to 37%.  
The multiplier between income and property price was  
3.5in1997;today,itis8.5.Thatisthereality.

In my very brief time, I will share the story of my  
constituent Jonathan, who is doing well in HR. He  
earns £38,000, which is £10,000 more than the London  
average.HethoughtthathecouldbenefitfromaLondon  
and Quadrant Housing Trust shared ownership scheme,  
only to find that a one-bedroom flat in Morris Court in  
my constituency would cost £500,000. That scheme is  
supported by the Government. Affordable by whom?  
Not Jonathan on £38,000 a year.

We need big thoughts, not little thoughts. We do not  
need to tinker; we need to think about the impact of  
buy to let on our economy, and particularly on our  
housing market. London is the only capital city in the  
world that does not restrict international investment in  
its residential property market. How can a young first-time  
buyer ever fight their way through?

We need a crusade in the public sector for councils  
and public sector bodies to make it a priority to use  
their land for low-cost home ownership and social  
rented accommodation. As long as they can sell it to the  
highest bidder, they will do so to subsidise their other  
services. I am not saying that they are wrong; I am  
saying that that is a consequence of what is going on.

The person I would like to pray in aid is not a natural  
ally; it is Paul Smith, CEO of Haart estate agents.  
He said in *City A.M.* yesterday that

“as the average loan size increases whilst the average income  
decreases”,

despite first-time buyers' desire to buy, young people  
are being forced

“beyond their means, and government should intervene with a tax  
break as a quick and straightforward way to help them get onto  
the ladder. Theresa May's legacy on home ownership has so far  
been a disaster. The ‘just about managing' are further away from  
owning their own home than they ever have been, and the  
government's feeble housing white paper did not go anywhere  
near enough to get housebuilders building and the market moving.”  
I could not have put it better myself.

2.19 pm

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/  
Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Bone. I congratulate all Members for their measured  
toneinthisdebate,whichissoimportanttoourconstituents.  
I declare an interest as a London homeowner and as a  
private landlord.

We need to see this debate in the context of the  
overall shortage of homes, particularly in my city and  
my borough, where home ownership is a desire for  
many but a pipe dream for nearly everybody. As my  
hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden  
(SiobhainMcDonagh)andothershighlighted,themultiplier  
effect is now so high that even people on a very good  
income in London cannot afford to buy a property; I  
was interested to hear from my hon. Friend the Member  
for York Central (Rachael Maskell) that the situation is  
the same in York.

The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood)  
made a point about recycling and right-to-buy receipts.  
The situation is very difficult in areas such as Hackney.  
We have a shortage of land to recycle, and land is  
expensive. Since the '80s, we have lost 10,000 homes to  
right to buy, yet the waiting list for social housing now  
stands at 12,100—the highest figure in 12 years. Up to  
500 new people are applying to be added to that waiting  
list every month; if I have time, I will give some of their  
stories.

In my borough, more people rent privately than own  
their own homes—not because they do not want to own  
their own homes, but because they have no option.  
However, given rent levels in the private rented sector, it  
is amazing that they can afford to do so. A typical  
two-bedroom property costs £420 a week, while a four-  
bedroom property costs £683 a week. Those were the  
median values of London rents in January this year,  
according to data from the Valuation Office Agency.  
People are squandering money on private rented  
accommodation, unable even to think about putting aside  
a deposit, even if on their income they could afford to  
get on the housing ladder.

We need to examine the fact that so many people now  
need social housing because they cannot get on the  
ladder. The knock-on effect of this cost shunting is  
immense. Hidden homelessness is growing massively in  
my constituency: in many households, one family live  
in the bedroom while another live in the living room.  
Does the Minister have access to any figures on that?

This is one of the new big scandals. When I started  
out as a young councillor, I used to visit families in bed  
and breakfasts. There was then a cross-party consensus,  
driven by the Labour Government, to get rid of the  
practice of putting people in bed-and-breakfast  
accommodation. We are now seeing a huge cost in  
homelessness.Mylocalnewspaper,the*HackneyGazette*,  
which comes under the umbrella of Archant, has done  
a good investigation on how much is being spent on  
homeless families. Hackney Council alone—just  
one London borough council—spent £35 million last  
calendar year to house homeless families in temporary  
accommodation, where they spend three to four years  
on average.

I used to say to people, “If you qualify as in need of  
housing, you might be in a hostel for six months, but  
hang in there and you'll get something,” but increasingly  
they are now there for not just a year, but 18 months. I  
have known mothers come out of hospital with their  
newborn baby and go into a single room in a hostel with  
their other half and their toddler, alongside many other  
people with different vulnerabilities. That is not acceptable,  
as I am sure the Minister agrees. We want practical  
answers from him about how the Government will tackle  
the problem.

This comes down to the supply of housing. It is  
important that we build that supply to ensure that there  
are homes in the right places, as the right hon. Member  
for Wokingham said. Average prices in Hackney have  
risen by 85% over the last five years. The average price  
for a semi-detached property is now £920,000, while the  
average price for a flat is more than £500,000. Another  
important aspect of the problem is that many people  
are trapped in flats because they cannot afford to borrow  
the additional money they need to move into a house.  
As my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and

185WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

186WH

*[Meg Hillier]*

Acton (Dr Huq) said, that is how we lose key public  
sector workers: they may need an extra bedroom or  
want a different lifestyle, and they do not really have the  
option in Hackney.

Earlier this year, the Public Accounts Committee  
producedareportcalled“Housing:StateoftheNation”,  
which was driven by our concern about the Government's  
programme to release enough public land to build 100,000  
homes over the last Parliament. That programme has  
improved thanks to the Committee's scrutiny, but I  
warn the Minister that our report is part one of a  
series—not too long a series, I hope, if he listens to our  
concerns and takes on board our serious points. The  
report highlights the human costs of the homelessness  
problem: 120,000 children in England are living in  
temporary accommodation today. That is not only a  
cost to the public sector, but a human cost for those  
concerned and their communities. The consequences to  
individuals and to the taxpayer are immense. Having  
families moving around, changing schools and health  
providers, adds cost and stress to the system.

More affordable housing for ownership is vital, but  
so is ensuring that affordable housing for rent really is  
affordable. Even for working people, it can be very  
difficult to afford a council rent in Hackney, particularly  
if they are on minimum wage or are not working full  
time. Housing benefit is taking the strain, along with  
the private sector. Some £21 billion a year is spent on  
housing benefit. As a new Minister in his Department, I  
am sure the Minister is aware of that figure. I hope that  
over the summer recess, when Parliament is not there to  
subject him to detailed scrutiny—don't worry, we'll be  
back—he will take the time to think about how that £21  
billion could be better recycled and spent to serve those  
in need of social rented housing, as well as those who  
want to buy.

Let me touch on some potential solutions for the  
Minister. Community land trusts are a really good  
opportunity to maintain the value of land for the  
benefit of the community in perpetuity. Public land is  
often sold off to the highest bidder, because that is how  
Departments balance their books, but if the Minister  
can get a double dividend, surely that is worth pursuing:  
decent homes for people that are affordable to buy or  
rent and that bring money into the public sector.

Planning clearly needs to be revisited, and so does  
shared ownership, because so many people are trapped  
in it. In fact, there was a shared ownership property for  
sale in my constituency for more than £1 million. When  
I pressed the housing association on it, it said, “It's  
okay: four sharers on incomes of £70,000 each could  
buyit.”Thatisludicrous.Itisnotwhatthewholemodel  
should be about.

We need to look at new models of ownership. Speaking  
as a Labour and Co-operative MP, I think we should be  
looking at co-operative ownership. That would require  
some legal changes, but I do not think that the House  
would resist such changes if they were proposed by the  
Minister. I am aware that the Government are worried  
about losing votes, but I think there would be strong  
cross-party consensus on this issue.

Finally, we need to raise the borrowing cap for councils,  
so that they can be more innovative in how they provide  
housing. My borough is doing a good job. It has

3,000 homes for building in the pipeline, of which  
1,500 are for council housing at affordable rent, but the  
other half are for sale at high prices to subsidise the rest.  
Would it not be better to give the council the capacity to  
put that housing out there at a lower price?

I ask the Minister for answers on some specific points.  
Will he update us on the progress of the voluntary right  
to buy for housing association homes and particularly  
on the impact on councils, such as Hackney, with  
high-value council homes, which, under the original  
proposals, were expected to backfill the discount for  
those housing association sales? We are anxious to  
know what is happening, because we do not want to  
lose more of our affordable homes in an area of such  
high housing need. Will he also update us on the release  
of public land for new homes, which the Public Accounts  
Committee has scrutinised in detail? Will he give us the  
assessment of double households—hidden households—  
that I asked for? Have the Government really got a grip  
on that? I do not blame the Minister if not, because he  
is new to his brief, but it is vital that he gets a grip of it,  
because it gives an idea of the latent demand as well as  
the social cost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden  
highlighted overseas absentee purchasers. Will the Minister  
consider holding serious discussions with the Treasury  
about taxing those overseas purchasers for buying properties  
that sit empty next door to the very hidden households  
that I represent? It is a complete injustice that in a city  
as rich as London, people are living in massively  
overcrowded conditions, unable to get on the housing  
ladder and unable to move from their small flat to a  
bigger home, while just down the road whole blocks are  
sold off overseas over a weekend and are never lived in.

2.28 pm

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship in this  
important debate, Mr Bone. I am grateful to the right  
hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) for  
securing it. A range of interesting and informative  
points have been made. From the contributions we have  
heard, there can be little doubt that housing is important  
for people and communities throughout the nations of  
the UK.

I completely agree with the right hon. Gentleman  
that aspirations are not being fulfilled. Everyone deserves  
a decent and affordable home to live in. Unfortunately,  
many people are being priced out of the communities  
they grew up in, either because of rising house prices  
and rents or, in some areas, simply because of the lack  
of available properties.

My own area is no exception, although the challenges  
we face are very different from those of London and the  
south-east. When we compare average house prices  
with the average salary in my local area, we find that  
house prices in the Falkirk area are around five times  
higher than salaries, and around six times higher in the  
West Lothian area. House prices continue to rise faster  
than local incomes, making a house a good investment  
for someone if they can afford it, but not everyone can.

There is more to housing availability than the supply  
of deliverable housing land. For many local residents  
price is not a factor, as they are simply unable to obtain  
a mortgage to buy a property in any case. We need a full  
mix of housing tenures for our communities to be

187WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

188WH

vibrant, which means market-value properties for purchase,  
affordable homes for purchase, and homes for rent,  
which are also essential to the mix. Affordable homes  
are essential in preventing homelessness, improving family  
wellbeing and tackling inequality. For example, last  
year in West Lothian there were 1,360 homeless  
presentations and there are 9,409 people on the council  
housing waiting list, which is a clear indication that  
local demand exceeds supply.

Undoubtedly, a range of contributory factors have  
led to the shortage of available homes. For example, we  
have an ageing population, and in my constituency it is  
anticipated that we will have a 130% increase in the  
over-75 population within the next 25 years. When that  
is coupled with the growth in single occupancy for  
younger people, it puts massive pressure on the number  
of available homes. However, I am in little doubt that  
the roots of the housing crisis stem from the Housing  
Act 1980, which resulted in sales that wiped out large  
swathes of housing stock across the UK. In this respect,  
I very much differ with the right hon. Member for  
Wokingham. Ensuring that the receipts from the sale of  
housing stock were either used to offset debt or reclaimed  
by the Treasury made it virtually impossible for councils  
to replace their housing stock. If councils had been able  
to do that, we might be in a very different position  
today.

Of course, housing and planning policies affecting  
Scotland are devolved. Under the Scottish National  
party Government, Scotland has scrapped the right to  
buy, and in doing so we have helped to preserve housing  
stock, protecting up to 15,000 social homes from being  
sold over the next decade. Government investment in  
housing,inpartnershipwithcouncils,housingassociations  
and developers, will generate economic activity in the  
region of £1.7 billion per year, on average, supporting  
around 14,000 jobs in construction and related industries  
across Scotland.

Between 2011-12 and 2015-16, the Scottish Government  
exceeded their target of building 30,000 affordable homes  
by more than 10%, with 33,490 affordable homes being  
built, including 22,523 for social rent, 3,473 for other  
affordable rents and 7,494 for affordable home ownership,  
all of which creates an important mix. The Scottish  
Government's affordable housing supply programme  
has a target to deliver 50,000 affordable homes by 2021.  
In addition, the Scottish Government are undertaking a  
wide-ranging review of the planning system in Scotland  
to improve its effectiveness.

I will highlight some of the Scottish Government's  
achievements. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has  
highlightedthattheScottishGovernmentspend85%more  
per head on social housing than England and Wales do.  
Also, the latest figures on housing completion rates  
show that across all sectors in Scotland we are achieving  
73 completions per 100,000 of the population, which  
compares very favourably with 47 in England, 39 in  
Wales and 56 in Northern Ireland.

In conclusion, the provision of affordable housing is  
fundamental to tackling inequality and ensuring sustainable  
communities, and it is important forthe maintenance of  
social mobility. While the situation in Scotland is not  
perfect, the SNP understands that providing more affordable  
housing and more social housing must be a priority. I  
hope that UK Ministers find some examples of good  
practice in the positive work that has taken place in  
Scotland over the past 10 years.

2.33 pm

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve  
under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I am told that I  
ought to declare an interest for the record: as the  
outgoing Mayor of Greater Manchester, I had responsibility  
for strategic planning and strategic housing.

I strongly welcome this debate and the opportunity  
to contribute to it. The right hon. Member for Wokingham  
(John Redwood) might be either glad or dismayed to  
know that I probably have a considerable measure of  
agreement with him in both the way he set out his case  
and the specific points he made. However, there was  
perhaps one sin of omission and one of commission.

I will deal with the omission first. I will quote Pete  
Redfern, the chief executive of Taylor Wimpey, who  
made a strong point in a review that he carried out last  
year, in which he said that  
“it is vital that policy focuses. on all tenures”,  
because the impact of the rented sector on the home  
ownership sector and vice versa is still very powerful,  
and we must not neglect that. We must also recognise—in  
fairness, the Minister's predecessor had begun to take it  
on board—that there are some people for whom it will  
almost certainly never be possible to join the home  
ownership queues, and we must ensure that there is an  
adequate provision of high-quality affordable social housing.

I will pick up at an early stage the point that the right  
hon. Gentleman made about ensuring that our councils  
have adequate control, because one of the realities at  
the moment is that far too often developers win on  
planning appeal; he is right in that regard. However,  
such wins are massively against the interests of the  
rational planning of our communities, particularly in  
areas of dramatic growth of the kindhe described in his  
own constituency. We must ensure that our local authorities  
have the capacity not only to determine where new  
homes are located, but to ensure that with that new  
housing comes the infrastructure to create liveable  
communities rather than just housing units. That is a  
very important point.

We have heard some powerful comments from my  
hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael  
Maskell), the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon),  
myhon. Friends the Members for Mitcham and Morden  
(Siobhain McDonagh) and for Hackney South and  
Shoreditch (Meg Hillier), and the hon. Member for  
Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) about the  
reality of housing on the ground. We have a housing  
crisis in this country. It may not affect everybody—it  
does not affect me as an individual homeowner—but  
for members of my own family and certainly for many  
of my constituents there is obviously a crisis.

There is a homelessness crisis and a crisis for those  
who are inadequately homed—the “disguised”homeless  
—as several hon. Members have recognised. We are not  
seeing a high number of new homes built; we now have  
a crisis of building. One of the most dramatic features  
has been the major decline since 2010 in the number of  
people under 40 who are homeowners, because nearly a  
million people in that age group have disappeared from  
home ownership. I recognise that it is a moving age  
group, but that decline is still significant, showing that  
things are not as they ought to be.

The Government have to take some responsibility for  
this situation, including for a White Paper that, frankly,  
is not fit for purpose. I think that anybody who examines

189WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

190WH

*[Tony Lloyd]*

housing over any period recognises that short-term  
fixes simply cannot and will not work. We really need  
some consensus on both house building and house  
supply over about a 25-year or 30-year period. We  
ought to look with ambition at building 250,000 new  
homes ever year, which is the kind of figure that over  
time can make a material difference to supply. If we do  
notdothat,thecrisisthatexistsinLondon,andincreasingly  
in cities such as York, will become the norm throughout  
our country. We must have an ambitious and radical  
move on house building.

**Jim Shannon:** It is important that we underline the  
type of accommodation that is needed in the future.  
Does the hon. Gentleman recognise—I think the hon.  
Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day)  
referred to this—that those who are getting older need  
specific accommodation? In many places there does not  
seem to be much provision for that specific accommodation.  
Does he feel that it needs to be a central part of the  
Government's strategy as our population grows older?

**Tony Lloyd:** The hon. Gentleman brings me on to an  
important point. One thing that we must begin to  
recognise is that we do not actually have a housing  
market; we have many different segments of housing,  
all of which have different features. Of course we must  
recognise the needs of vulnerable people and older  
people—older people are not necessarily vulnerable,  
but they have different housing needs. Those needs  
must be recognised in a long-term housing strategy, and  
we must ensure that provision is across the piece.

I have the current figures on new starts. In their 2015  
manifesto, the Government committed to building some  
200,000 starter homes over the Parliament, which is  
40,000 a year. Quite frankly, the figures are so dismal  
and so insignificant that we are failing not simply to hit  
the statistical targets, but failing real families and real  
people.

**Meg Hillier:** I hesitate to repeat myself, but, as my  
hon. Friend just said, the Government are building  
40,000 starter homes, and I remind Members that the  
waiting list for housing in Hackney is 12,000. That is  
just one London borough. That demonstrates the stark  
gap between demand and supply.

**Tony Lloyd:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We  
have got to have a radical shift in how we deliver things.

In the few moments I have at my disposal, I want to  
talk about some of the things we have to do. I applaud a  
number of comments made by Members from all parts  
of the Chamber. London is probably a special case, but  
there certainly has to be an examination of the capacity  
for people to move speculatively into the London housing  
market. They might not simply be overseas investors; in  
some areas it might be about recognising that institutional  
investors, or even private investors, have a detrimental  
impact on the capacity to house our population. A real  
issue has been raised about London in particular and  
the position of people on low pay in public services. We  
want them to work in our inner-city schools, but frankly  
they cannot afford to pay the rents or mortgages considered  
to be the norm.

When we still have the concept that a £450,000 property  
is affordable, we are living in the realms of fantasy. The  
traditional lending ratio that building societies offer is  
4.5:1. By definition, that means that someone needs a  
family income of £100,000 for that affordable property.  
Most of us would not regard that as being the income  
of the people we want to target affordable housing  
towards.

**Jim Shannon:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Tony Lloyd:** If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I  
will not; the debate is short and I know that the Minister  
will want some time to respond.

We have to look at the question of land availability in  
a determined way. Some of that is about the cost of  
land. One issue we all face is that if land is valued at the  
post-development price, the landowner is the institution  
or person who creams off all the excess profit, even  
though the work is not put in by the owner, but possibly  
by the developer or the commonweal. We have to find  
some way of transferring the capacity for that value  
added into provision for the commonweal, whether  
through the public sector or more generally. We also  
have to look at the fact that in many of our cities—London,  
Manchester and northern cities generally—a lot of our  
brownfield sites are in need of enormous investment to  
bring them up to a level that is fit for building. Remediation  
is not just a fancy word; it is something that has to be  
invested in to make land usable.

We need to recognise that we have a massive skills  
shortage. There may be an ambition to increase housing  
supply, but we have a crisis looming with the ageing  
workforce in construction. The Minister needs to work  
with other Departments to ensure that there is some  
rational planning for the future. Frankly, it is not obvious  
that there is any sense of rationality or planning. If the  
two could be joined together, we may be in with a  
chance. We urgently need to tackle that skills shortage.  
Ifwedonotandwehaveanykindofhousingboom,we  
will once again see the development of the cowboy  
builder or prices going through the roof.

If we are to provide starter homes, we must ensure  
that they are starter homes in perpetuity. The discount  
needs to stay with the property, because otherwise we  
willneverbeableto guarantee, in our overheated housing  
market, that people will continue to be able to get on the  
housing ladder as first-time buyers. We need to ensure  
that Help to Buy for first-time buyers is realistic. Some  
of the suggestions that the right hon. Member for  
Wokingham put forward are well worth considering.  
We have to have something that allows first-time buyers  
to get into the property market. As Members have said,  
often the problem is not the cost of funding the mortgage—  
the mortgage is sometimes considerably cheaper than  
the rental alternative—but the deposit. The accumulation  
of the deposit is virtually impossible for many people,  
and we need to do something about that.

Where I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman is on  
theconceptofrighttobuy. Wehavetolookatone-to-one  
replacement. We have to ensure a consistent supply of  
housing in the social sector or under council ownership.  
There is nothing immoral about different types of tenure.  
We need to be tenure-blind in how we plan our future,  
but if we are tenure-blind, we have to ensure that the  
resources are there for that tenure.

191WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

192WH

The last point I will make, simply because of time, is  
this: I appeal to the Minister to look carefully at the role  
of social landlords. Social landlords in my city region  
told me that if they are given the opportunity to develop  
tenure-blind, they can increase the supply of new homes  
that they put on the market. The significant increase  
that they could provide would make a material difference.  
The artificial restrictions on social landlords are simply  
not helpful.

I once again congratulate the right hon. Gentleman  
on securing an important debate. We have to continue  
the debate, because we are scratching at the surface. We  
have a long way to go if we are to move to that sense of  
having a long-term vision for housing. Without that  
long-term vision, we will fail this generation and we will  
continue to fail future generations. This is an important  
debate, but it must continue.

2.46 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Communities  
and Local Government (Alok Sharma):** It is an absolute  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first  
time in this Parliament, Mr Bone. May I start by  
declaring an interest, in that my wife is the owner of a  
property that is rented out? I congratulate my right hon.  
Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood)  
on securing this debate. I agree with other Members  
that we are debating an incredibly important subject.  
Asever, he made an incredibly thoughtful and intelligent  
speech, which has been the hallmark of his contributions  
since he entered this House in 1987. I would like to take  
some credit for helping him win that first election,  
because I was his bag carrier at the time.

I think the housing White Paper is a rather good  
piece of work. I was not involved in it, but it makes  
clear that there is no silver bullet, while acknowledging  
that for decades we have not built enough houses in the  
United Kingdom. I agree that every credible analysis  
says that we need to build between 225,000 and 275,000  
homes a year to keep up with demand. There is a  
reason the White Paper is titled, “Fixing our broken  
housing market”. I hope colleagues will acknowledge  
that it is not just a question of individual Governments;  
successive Governments have tried but not succeeded in  
getting the house building market going. We have seen  
some progress: in 2015-16, some 190,000 homes were  
delivered, but I fully acknowledge that there is a lot  
moretodo.

Whether housing is for sale or for rent, it is increasingly  
unaffordable, as we have heard from Members today. To  
give some statistics, to buy an average home in England  
costs almost eight times average earnings. Twenty years  
ago, it was three and a half times average earnings. I  
agree with my right hon. Friend that in this country  
people value owning their own home. A very large  
percentage of people want to do that. I also agree with  
the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk  
(Martyn Day) that there is an element of social mobility  
to home ownership. The Conservative party commitment  
in our manifesto is absolutely clear: we want to deliver a  
million homes by the end of 2020 and half a million  
more by the end of 2022. We need to do better, and that  
means tackling the failures at every point in the system.  
I know that Members have talked about those failures,  
and I will try to address them in my speech.

As one or two colleagues have noted, I am new to this  
brief. I have heard many of the suggestions that have been  
made, and I will take an opportunity over the summer  
to think carefully about much of what has been said,  
but the start has to be building more houses. In October,  
we launched the home building fund, which will provide  
£1 billion of short-term loan funding for small builders,  
custom builders and innovators to help diversify the  
house building market. The fund is versatile. It provides  
£2 billion of long-term loan funding for infrastructure,  
which we all agree is incredibly important. Many  
communities are happy to take more homes, but want  
the infrastructure to go with them. Although it is too  
early to see homes completed through the fund, I am  
confident that, over time, it will unlock up to 200,000 homes,  
with an emphasis on brownfield developments. I would  
encourage Members to spread the word to businesses in  
their areas that may benefit from that fund.

We are supporting communities by ensuring that they  
can get involved in local planning through neighbourhood  
planning. I do not know whether the hon. Member for  
York Central (Rachael Maskell) has had an opportunity  
to talk with her local communities about neighbourhood  
planning in the context of the local plan, which she  
expressed some concerns about.

As we have seen with neighbourhood plans that have  
been adopted and made, local communities are willing  
to take more housing. In fact, in the areas where plans  
have been adopted, an average of 10% more housing  
has been accepted than was the case under the plans of  
the local authority. What people do worry about is  
infrastructure, so we have introduced a £2.3 billion  
housinginfrastructurefundtomakesurethatinfrastructure  
is put in first, which is vital. The prospectus was launched  
on 4 July and I would again encourage hon. Members  
to bring the fund to the attention of their local councils.  
If every local council put forward high-quality proposals,  
I believe we could make a real difference. As my right  
hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham mentioned,  
we are talking about more roads, healthcare facilities  
and schools. Getting local people to accept housing  
means giving them more infrastructure.

On public sector land, we are taking direct action to  
release public sector land for development. Since 2011,  
we have released land or identified land to be released  
with the capacity for almost a quarter of a million  
homes. That is incredibly important and I want to get to  
grips with it in my brief. The accelerated construction  
programme will ensure that those homes are built quickly  
on surplus public sector land. The programme will also  
encourage new entrants to the market to deliver more  
homes overall.

We also need councils to plan for the homes that  
people want to live in, where they actually want to live.  
As we set out in the White Paper, we intend to consult  
on a new standardised approach to provide a transparent  
and consistent basis for the preparation of local plans,  
which is more realistic about the current and future  
housing pressures in each place and is consistent with  
the modern industrial strategy that we have set out.

Many colleagues talked about support for home  
ownership. I want to make it clear that the Government  
are absolutely committed to supporting home ownership  
and we are taking action to help first-time buyers. We  
have helped more than 400,000 households buy property  
through schemes such as Help to Buy and right to buy,

193WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

Housing Supply

194WH

*[Alok Sharma]*

and 80% of those we have helped through Help to Buy  
have been first-time buyers. The number of first-time  
buyers is at a nine-year high. I agree that we need to be  
doing much better, but it is at a high. My right hon.  
Friend asked why the Help to Buy scheme applies only  
to new homes; the reason is that that helps to drive up  
supply.

Our shared ownership offers an important route in to  
full home ownership, by allowing purchasers to buy  
a minimum 25% share in a new-build home. We have  
also raised the income cap on shared ownership in  
England.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** What would the Minister say to  
my constituent, Jonathan, who earns £37,000 a year but  
cannot be part of a shared ownership scheme built by  
London and Quadrant Housing Trust, because the  
cheapest one-bedroom flat is half a million pounds? My  
constituency is one of the cheapest in London!

**Alok Sharma:** As I have acknowledged, we need to be  
building more homes—there is no doubt about that. I  
am happy to discuss with the hon. Lady that particular  
case. I am not here making excuses; I acknowledge the  
tone of this debate, which is that we need to be building  
more houses.

**Tony Lloyd:** Will the Minister reflect on the question  
of incentives to new home ownership? Restricting the  
scheme to new properties does a number of things.  
First, it restricts the supply. Secondly, it breaches the  
point that my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney  
South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier) put forward about  
people wanting to stay in their communities. On top of  
that, older properties are often cheaper. The policy does  
not make a lot of sense.

**Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):** I remind the Minister  
that it is normal for the proposer to have a chance to  
reply.

**Alok Sharma:** I have noted the points that have been  
made and I am sure we will have individual discussions  
with colleagues.

Another issue noted was the rate of build-out and  
developers not building out on the planning permissions  
granted. As colleagues will know, we made proposals in  
the housing White Paper to ensure planning permissions  
are acted on much faster. I want to work with developers  
to help them, but they also need to help us to get homes  
built.

We had a discussion about social housing and affordable  
housing. Housing associations are responsible for about  
a third of all new housing supply every year. We are  
supporting them to build more affordable homes through  
our £7.1 billion affordable homes fund.

In the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, it is more  
important than ever to reflect on our approach to  
existing social housing. That is why we are focusing on  
supporting housing associations and local authorities  
with their plans to regenerate existing housing estates.  
The estate regeneration national strategy and funding  
package was launched in December 2016 and more  
than 100 estates are already receiving funding.

It is clear that there is an enormous amount to do.  
Successive Governments have failed to provide the  
homes that we need. Although there has been some  
progress, it has not been good enough. I am determined  
to work with every organisation, business and colleague  
who has a role to play, to ensure that we build many  
more good-quality homes, which our country needs,  
to help more people achieve their dream of home  
ownership.

2.56 pm

**John Redwood:** I thank the Minister for his reply, as  
well as all colleagues who have contributed to a wide-ranging  
and informative debate. As we have been reminded,  
some prices of flats and houses, particularly in London,  
are now excessively high for anyone on any kind of  
normal income. That is a reminder to those thinking of  
buying their first properties that the best reasons are  
that they like the place, can afford to live in it on the  
financial terms available and like the freedoms that  
home ownership produces, because what we have seen  
in the last 40 years of great price growth, where people  
make a lot of money, might not be repeated given the  
very high levels that some properties have reached. The  
main purpose of a home is somewhere for the family to  
live, not as an increasing store of value, although that  
has been an advantage for those generations who have  
bought in recent decades.

I urge the Minister to get into discussion with the  
Ministry of Defence. I mentioned in my opening remarks  
a particular problem with the provision of accommodation  
for people leaving the services, who are not well served  
by the arrangements for service quarters. There are  
things that could be done—some using public money  
and public assets, and some that could be done by the  
private sector harnessing private money to the housing  
needs—that would provide a much better answer and  
not leave people in danger of being homeless when  
they leave our service. It is quite wrong that some  
people are placed in that position and councils are  
unable to help them.

I also urge the Minister to be in regular contact, as I  
am sure he is, with the Treasury. As previous Housing  
Ministers have discovered, the Treasury is crucial in  
the housing equation. High interest rates, which made  
difficulties with mortgages, used to be the curse of  
Housing Ministers, but that is not his problem. Perhaps  
in a way we have had the reverse; with all the quantitative  
easing, asset prices, including property, have risen rather  
more than they otherwise would have done. But there  
are a lot of tax issues. I was pleased that the last Budget  
did something about stamp duty, but it is still very high  
for people buying their first home in the more extended  
markets. Anything that can be done to cut the costs that  
the Government impose on buying a home and owning  
it will be extremely welcome.

I hope the Minister will look again at how wide-ranging  
some schemes are. I think we can make a good case to  
say that the Help to Buy loan should be extended from  
new homes to second-hand homes. Surely we are interested  
in the prospects of every individual trying to buy a  
home. It is not primarily a scheme to increase the  
number of houses being built—there are many other  
ways of doing that—but is primarily to involve more  
people in the housing market. It seems very odd to

195WH

Housing Supply

13 JULY 2017

196WH

ration that scheme only to people who are near a new  
development that would suit them when that might be  
only 1% of the properties on offer.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

Organ Donation: Opt-out System

[Ms KAREN BUCK *in the Chair*]

3pm

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the matter of the introduction  
of an opt-out system for organ donation in England.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Buck.  
I want to begin by sharing with the House my reasons  
for tabling my debate and by telling the stories of Max  
Johnson and Joe Dale. Yesterday, I had the privilege of  
meeting Emma and Harry Johnson—Max Johnson's  
mother and brother. Max is nine years old and has  
cardiomyopathy—a condition that enlarges the heart  
and can be life-threatening if left untreated. Max is kept  
alive by a tiny metal pump in his chest, and has been  
waiting for a heart transplant for six months. He is one  
of 6,388 people in the UK waiting for an organ donation.  
Last year, 457 people died while still waiting.

Joe Dale was a constituent of mine. He died last  
month after a sudden asthma attack, which caused  
devastating brain damage. He was just 16 years old.  
After his death, his family made the selfless decision to  
donate some of his organs so others might have the  
chance to live. Because of their decision, Joe became  
one of the hundreds of deceased donors who save and  
improve lives every year in the UK. I know that right  
hon. and hon. Members will want to take the opportunity  
to join with me in passing our condolences to Joe's  
family and giving our thanks for their brave determination  
to help others in spite of their personal tragedy.

The stories of Joe and Max, the work of my hon.  
Friend the Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn)  
and the very important *Daily Mirror* campaign have  
re-energised my long-held belief that as a country, as  
politicians and as a legislature we can do more to help  
those in need of organ transplants.

**Mr Geoffrey Robinson** (Coventry North West) (Lab):  
I will be very brief. My hon. Friend mentioned the  
*Daily Mirror* campaign and the private Member's Bill  
introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport  
West (Paul Flynn) and other supporters, which failed  
due to the prorogation of Parliament and the general  
election. Luckily, I have position No. 6 in the ballot,  
and I want to inform my hon. Friend the Member for  
Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis)—I compliment him most  
sincerely on conducting today's debate—that I intend to  
reintroduce the Bill pretty much as it stands. I will be  
presenting it next Wednesday in the House of Commons,  
and I hope I can count on my hon. Friends' support.  
That also applies to the hon. Member for Strangford  
(Jim Shannon).

**Dan Jarvis:** I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to  
the *Daily Mirror*, which ran a very important campaign  
for some time, and thanking it for the work it has done.  
I also thank him for confirming, I think for the first  
time, that he intends to use his private Member's Bill as  
an opportunity to introduce a legislative mechanism for  
the Government to change the law in England, should  
they wish to use it. I hope that will provide a forum  
where this matter can be further debated constructively  
in Parliament. I am very grateful to him for taking that

197WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 198WH

*[Dan Jarvis]*

decision, and I look forward to supporting his Bill and  
working with him and, I hope, the Government to make  
it a great success.

Four hundred and fifty seven unnecessary deaths a  
year is too many, and I believe it is our duty to reduce  
that number and save the lives of people such as Max.  
By changing the law to an opt-out rather than an opt-in  
system we in Parliament can do that.

The truth is that there is a common misconception  
about how organ donation works. Only a very small  
number of people die in a way that allows for organ  
donation. The vast majority of people on the organ donor  
register will never actually donate their organs. The  
figures are startling: about half a million people die  
every year in the UK, yet last year, out of that half a  
million, only 5,681 people died in circumstances that  
made donation possible—about 1%. Although there  
are hundreds of thousands of people across the country  
who are registered as potential donors, only a handful  
will ever be in a situation that allows donation to take  
place. The reality is that there are simply not enough  
registered organ donors. People in the UK—specifically  
in England—are dying as a result.

Accompanying those alarming facts are some more  
positive recent statistics, as reported in this week's “Organ  
Donation and Transplantation Activity Report for  
2016-17”. Last year, there was a 4% increase in the number  
of deceased donors to 1,413—the highest number ever  
in the UK. Coupled with more than 1,000 living donors,  
that has resulted in 4,753 life-transforming transplants  
this year—a 3% rise from last year. The number of  
patients whose lives were saved or improved by an  
organ transplant has increased by 3% to 4,753. All that  
means that more than 50,000 people are alive today  
thanks to a transplant.

The “Organ Donation and Transplantation Activity  
Report” is a good news story, but I believe we can make  
it an even better news story. Behind every statistic there  
are people, and, as Lorna Mason and Gary Masterson  
wrote this week in the annual transplant activity report:

“Every transplant is the result of a complex collaboration  
between donors and their families, a host of clinicians working in  
different parts of the NHS and finally in transplant recipients and  
their family.”

They went on to say that

“opportunities for donation continue to be missed...While we  
cannot quantify every missed opportunity precisely, we need to  
work collaboratively to make sure that these are as few as possible.”  
Despite the excellent campaign run by the NHS to  
encourage organ donation—details of which can be  
found at www.organdonation.nhs.uk—the UK still has  
one of the lowest rates of consent in Europe for organ  
donation.

The “Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020” strategy,  
published in 2013, set the target of increasing the donation  
consent rate from 57% to 80% by 2020, in line with the  
better-performing countries in the world. That is the  
rate at which families who are approached by NHS  
Blood and Transplant actually go on to become donors  
afterwards. Although the consent rate has increased to  
63%, it is still too far below this year's target of 70% and  
the 2020 target of 80%. Now is the time for us to do  
something about that.

I believe that the best way for us to increase the  
number of lives saved through organ donation is to  
adopt the so-called opt-out system—sometimes known  
as a system of deemed consent. Under the current law  
in England there is an opt-in system of organ donation.  
In other words, people must proactively state that on  
their death they would like their organs to be donated to  
someone else. And yet surveys consistently show that  
there are many more people who would like their organs  
to be donated when they die, but they are not registered.  
Polling conducted by the British Medical Association  
supports this and has shown that 66% of people in  
England would donate their organs after death, but  
only 39% have signed the organ donor register. That  
means millions of people here in England are willing to  
donate their organs, but are not registered to do so.

I am sure we all understand that people lead busy  
lives and that organ donation is not something most  
people think about on a day-to-day basis, but the reliance  
of the opt-in system on our not only thinking about it  
but finding the time to sign up is reducing the number  
of organs available and the number of lives saved. That  
is why many other countries use a different system.

Wales has had an opt-out system since December  
2015 and only last month the Scottish Government  
announced plans for a similar system of organ donation  
in Scotland. In a statement, the Scottish Health Minister  
said:

“Moving to an opt-out system of organ and tissue donation  
will be part of the long-term cultural change in attitudes to  
encourage people to support donation.”

That view is increasingly shared by countries around  
the world and by many of our European neighbours  
such as Austria, Belgium and Spain, which all use  
variations of the opt-out model. It is time that we in  
England joined them, modelling our system on that in  
Wales where they offer three clear options: first, to  
register someone's wish to be a donor by opting in to  
the system; secondly, to register their wish not to be a  
donor by opting out; and thirdly, to have their consent  
to donation deemed by taking no action.

It was argued when the law was passed that the  
availability of the three options would increase the  
number of organs available for donation, and that that  
in turn would save lives. I am pleased to say that the  
evidence from Wales suggests that such assertions were  
correct and that the new law is working. Indeed, the  
potential pool of organ donors has almost trebled since  
2014-15, and the opt-out system does not appear to  
have deterred individuals from proactively opting in. It  
is right, of course, that we strike a note of caution with  
that data, but the initial signs are encouraging.

I now want to address some of the concerns that  
people have about an opt-out system of donation. This  
is undoubtedly an emotive issue and there are strong  
feelings on both sides of the debate. I would not want to  
question anybody's motives in deciding whether they  
wish to be a donor. It is, after all, a deeply personal  
matter. Under an opt-out system, people would not  
be required to give a reason for choosing not to be a  
donor, as the system is not about trying to shame  
people into becoming donors. Also, similar to what is  
happening in Wales, any new law would need to be  
accompanied by an active public awareness campaign:  
first, to ensure that people understand the new system;  
secondly, to encourage more people to make the positive

199WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 200WH

decision to become an organ donor; and thirdly, to give  
people who may want to opt out the information they  
need to do so.

1 understand that some people have concerns that an  
opt-out process raises the risk that a person will have  
their organs taken against their will and against their  
families' wishes, which in turn could cause unnecessary  
distress to the families of the deceased. I also understand  
that such concerns may be more prevalent within some  
ethnic and religious groups and that some members of  
our Muslim and Jewish communities have different  
interpretations of the religious legitimacy of deceased  
donation. I completely get that. I understand their  
views and have the utmost respect and sympathy for  
them. However, I firmly and wholeheartedly believe  
that not only do the benefits of an opt-out system far  
outweigh the risks, but that the risks can be mitigated  
through a public awareness campaign tailored to different  
ethnic and religious communities and through the use  
of in-hospital safeguarding measures. Any new system  
would have to ensure there were safeguards in place to  
ensure that no one's organs were donated against their  
wishes; that the opt-out system applied only to those  
over the age of 18; and that for those under 18 it  
continued to be the case, as it was with my constituent  
Joe Dale, that the family have the final decision, because  
it is vital that nobody feels as though they are being  
coerced.

I also accept that changing the law is not the only  
change we need to make. It would need to be part of a  
wider package of measures to increase organ donation.  
We need to redouble our commitment to the “Taking  
Organ Transplantation to 2020” goal of increasing the  
consent rate to 80%, and to consider carefully whether  
the strategy needs strengthening in the light of the  
progress so far.

The evidence from Wales and from countries across  
Europe gives us the confidence to say that an opt-out  
system would be an important step forward. For that  
reason, I very much hope that we can proceed on a  
cross-party basis. I respect anyone who takes a different  
view on an issue of conscience such as this, but it is clear  
that the principle of deemed consent has support from  
Members of all parties across the House.

The Health Secretary recently told the House that an  
opt-out system has “a lot of merit”. Only yesterday at  
Prime Minister's questions, the First Secretary of State  
told me that

“organ donation is clearly a hugely important part of our system,  
and the Department of Health is looking at the impact of those  
changes to see if those can give rise to further improvements in  
the number of available organs.”—[*Official Report*, 12 July 2017;  
Vol. 627, c. 290.]

I welcome such statements because I know that an  
opt-out system has merit. When the Parliamentary Under-  
Secretary of Health, the hon Member for Thurrock  
(Jackie Doyle-Price), winds up the debate, will she tell  
us what work is taking place in her Department and  
when it will report?

Before I conclude, I want to take a moment to say  
how much my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland  
Central (Julie Elliott) wanted to be here today. About a  
year ago, her daughter, Rebecca, a fit young marathon-  
running mother of one, had blood tests that indicated  
kidney failure. Three weeks ago she had surgery at the  
Freeman Hospital in Newcastle to enable her to start  
dialysis. Today, she joins the 6,000 other people on a

waiting list for an organ donation. The average wait for  
a kidney on the transplant list is two years. I know that  
all hon. Members will want to join me in wishing Julie,  
Rebecca and their entire family all the very best. Also, I  
want to take this opportunity to thank charities such as  
Kidney Care UK for their work. Because of these  
stories we should move forward as quickly as possible;  
children such as Max and mothers such as Rebecca do  
not have the luxury of time to wait. Anything that we  
can do to help them get a new organ is a step worth taking  
so that they can join the thousands of people in our  
country who have benefited from organ donation.

We have a duty of care to those in our society who  
need help, and that includes those who need transplants.  
We can and must do more to help them. We cannot save  
the 457 lives lost last year, but who knows how many we  
could save in future? As an old friend once told me,  
“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The  
second best time is now.” I very much hope that the  
Government will act.

3.19 pm

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck. I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) on  
securing the debate and on his sensitive and compassionate  
tone; I hope I can reciprocate. I agree with the hon.  
Gentleman that it is imperative to work to increase the  
number of organs available for donation, because every  
week people in this country die because there is a  
shortage of available organs. The critical question that  
we must ask today is whether presumed consent would  
help with that.

Presumed consent certainly seems an attractive  
proposition, but perhaps I may enter a note of caution,  
to aid our early deliberations on the matter. One of the  
key legal principles I was taught as a student lawyer was  
that silence is no reply, which means that, much as we  
might like to draw conclusions from silence, there are  
good reasons why it may be inappropriate to do so.  
Introducing the principle of presumed or deemed consent  
would involve a major change with respect to organ  
donation. It would effectively mean that even if someone  
did nothing at all—did not sign an organ donor register,  
or opt out or in—a consequence would be triggered.  
The person's silence would trigger a quite major action.  
Their organs could later be taken and transplanted.  
Consent would be deemed, although they would have  
done nothing.

Of course, some people, on seeing the publicity that  
might surround the introduction of presumed consent,  
would deliberately and knowingly decide to do nothing,  
aware of the consequence; they would be comfortable  
with that. Those people would be aware that they had,  
in doing nothing, effectively chosen to donate. However,  
there would inevitably be a significant group of people  
who missed the publicity altogether. We need to be  
sensitive to that.

Informed consent is an important principle, undergirding  
the relationship between the citizen and the state, so it is  
right that the House should explore the issue carefully,  
which is why I welcome the debate. It is critical to  
explore whether, for example, it is right in this instance  
to undermine the principle of informed consent by  
introducing presumed consent. Is it possible that that  
could create a precedent that might be appealed to in  
future for less enlightened purposes?

201WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 202WH

*[Fiona Bruce]*

Some practical concerns were highlighted during the  
debates in Wales that preceded the legislation there,  
some of which I did not feel were satisfactorily resolved  
at the time. When the Welsh Government made the case  
for introducing presumed consent, they based their  
case, at least in part, on a piece of research by two  
academics, Abadie and Gay:

“Evidence...suggests that introducing an opt-out type system  
could result in a 25 to 30 per cent increase in deceased organ  
donation rates which could equate to a further 15 donors each  
year in Wales, each of whom...on average might donate 3 organs.  
This means around 45 more organs could become available to the  
UK pool for transplantation.”

I understand that the research compared practices in  
other jurisdictions, and classified Spain, the country  
with the highest donation rate in the world, as a presumed  
consent country. Spain introduced presumed consent  
legislation in 1979, but the law has never been implemented;  
Spain is still in practice an informed consent jurisdiction  
like England. Indeed, rates of donation there started to  
increase only when, 10 years later, Spain made other  
changes, in particular investment in the organ donation  
infrastructure. It increased the capacity, training and  
availability of medical staff to talk to families about  
donating the organs of a loved one when a life has  
tragically been cut short.

A leading expert in the field, Professor John Fabre,  
unsuccessfully tried to point out to the Welsh Government  
their misconception. In an article entitled “Presumed  
consent for organ donation” in the journal *Clinical  
Medicine,* he referred to their explanatory memorandum,  
published in December 2012, to the Bill that became the  
Human Transplantation (Wales) Act 2013. It stated:

“For example, an opt-out system is operated in Spain and it  
has the highest donation rate in the world.”

As I have said, Spain, even today, does not operate an  
opt-out system, so I believe that that statement was  
incorrect, even though it was cited in official papers in  
Wales, underpinning the presumed consent legislation.  
The recognition that the country with the highest donation  
rate in the world does not in fact operate a presumed  
consent system is important in any assessment of the  
efficacy of presumed consent. It is also striking that  
some of the countries that are least successful with their  
organ donation rates, including Sweden, Greece and  
Bulgaria, operate presumed consent.

A second objection raised during the debate in Wales  
was the fact that in some countries the introduction of  
presumed consent has been associated with significant  
numbers of people withdrawing from donation. Some  
people interpret the introduction of presumed consent,  
despite its noble motivation, as the state seeking to  
claim their organs without proper consent. Rather than  
seeing it as a mechanism for donation, they see it as a  
mechanism for bypassing consent to donation. There  
has been some evidence of that in Wales. Giving oral  
evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee of  
the National Assembly for Wales, organ transplant  
specialist Dr Peter Matthews, who was based in Morriston  
Hospital in Swansea, said:

“My own experience is that the British psyche has a particular  
view that what it should do is donate organs as an altruistic gift,  
and if it is felt that the state is going to take over the organs, then  
there is the potential that people who may have been willing to  
become a donor will not do so. We have seen two cases in

Morriston where patients who were on the organ donation register,  
on hearing about this, said to their families that if the state was  
going to take their organs, they were no longer willing to give  
them. We lost two donations”.

During the debate on the Bill in Wales, three Assembly  
Members relayed similar stories from constituents.

I want to comment on the impact of presumed consent  
in Wales. NHS Blood and Transplant records donations  
on a yearly basis, from April to April, and the first full  
year of results that we have from Wales is for 2016-17.  
The data tell us two important things: first, in 2016-17,  
61 deceased donors facilitated 135 organ donations. Far  
from representing the anticipated increase of 15 donors  
and 45 organs, that apparently constituted a decline by  
three donors and 33 organ donations from the previous  
year's figures. That might come as something of a  
surprise, because some people have suggested that the  
system was a great success. However, under informed  
consent a family can donate the organs of a deceased  
person if the deceased has signed neither the organ  
donation register nor the opt-out register, which means  
that, as we have heard, in Wales prior to December 2015  
the families or living representatives of the deceased  
could—as they can here—decide to donate their loved  
one's organs. But under presumed consent those informed  
consent donations would be reclassified as presumed  
consent donations. Critically, that does not mean that  
those donations would not have happened under the  
old system.

Secondly, and not surprisingly, bearing in mind what  
Dr Matthews told the Assembly, there has been a huge  
increase in the number of people in Wales opting out.  
In 2016-17, 174,886 people in Wales were on the opt-out  
register. That figure far outstrips comparable figures for  
other parts of the UK, where consent is not presumed.  
Only 27,559 individuals in England, 1,834 in Scotland  
and 204 in Northern Ireland have opted out. That  
means that a staggering 85.5% of individuals in the UK  
who have opted out live in Wales, despite the population  
of Wales representing only 4.8% of the UK population.

I have cited a lot of figures, but I do so to get them on  
the record and to aid our debate. To appreciate fully the  
cost of the change in Wales, we must remember that  
prior to the introduction of presumed consent, people  
who had signed neither the opt-out register nor the  
opt-in register were potential donors.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Does the hon.  
Lady agree with the Welsh Government's conclusion  
that 40 lives have been saved under the presumed consent  
scheme that would have been lost under the previous  
arrangement?

**Fiona Bruce:** My concern is to demonstrate that we  
have to look very carefully at some of the evidence that  
the Welsh Government used to come to their conclusions.

Where someone has signed the opt-out register,  
conversations cannot even begin. That means that more  
than 174,000 of the Welsh population have effectively  
been removed as potential donors. Previously, in the  
absence of express direction to do otherwise, those  
people's families, as their living representatives, might  
have been happy to donate their loved ones' organs at  
their death. When Wales embraced presumed consent,  
the other UK jurisdictions said that they would wait to

203WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 204WH

review the results in Wales before deciding whether they  
wanted to go down that path. I ask the Minister to look  
at the evidence.

We have significantly increased donation levels in  
England since implementing the recommendations of  
the organ donation taskforce in 2008, which of course  
came down very much against presumed consent. Rather  
than seeking to emulate Wales, England should perhaps  
seek to emulate Spain and put its emphasis on lowering  
the family refusal rate by increasing the number of  
clinicians who are trained and available to discuss this  
issue with families when the need arises—often at short  
notice.

Professor Fabre concluded his seminal paper in *Clinical  
Medicine* in the following terms:

“Rather than legislating for the consent of donors, we should  
be addressing the misgivings and misunderstandings of families  
so that they decline donation much less frequently, as has been  
done so successfully in Spain. An acceptance rate of 85% is a  
realistic and achievable objective for the UK over a 5-year period.  
As previously, we have the Spanish model to guide us. It will not  
be easy. It will require. a detailed plan at the national level”.

I very much hope that the Minister will consider all  
those points and confirm that the Government will take  
into account every possible consideration and concern  
about this issue before any legislation is introduced.

1. look forward to her response.

3.33 pm

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): I warmly congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley Central (Dan  
Jarvis) on securing this debate and on the clarity and  
comprehensiveness of his speech. He covered the ground  
in commendable fashion and hit the significant factors  
involved.

The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) rehashed  
the debate in Wales. She mainly addressed opinions and  
fears that were expressed before the change was made in  
Wales. I am sure that those fears were sincere, but they  
have not been realised in the way that she suggests. It is  
not important that the Welsh Government might not  
have had entirely accurate evidence; evidence rarely is  
entirelyreliable,andtheremayhavebeenmisunderstandings.  
What is crucial is the outcome, which is impressive. At  
least 40 lives were saved—at least 40 people are alive  
today who would not have been had the presumed  
consent Bill not passed. As my hon. Friend said, the  
figure for lives lost in England is 457. That is an  
extraordinary number of people. If there were an accident  
today in which that number of lives was lost, that would  
be our main concern.

My interest in this issue began in 2012, when my  
22-year-old constituent Matthew Lammas came here to  
lobby me and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport  
East (Jessica Morden). That young man was in need of  
a heart transplant. He had a heartbreaking story of so  
many false alarms. He would get a call at perhaps

1. o'clock in the morning to drive to Middlesbrough or  
   Birmingham, but halfway up he would get another call  
   to say, “Sorry; somebody else got the heart—someone  
   got here before you.” Six months after he visited me  
   here, I attended his funeral. A 22-year-old man's life  
   was lost. I am absolutely convinced that, had we taken  
   the bold decision to introduce presumed consent in  
   Wales six years ago, we would be in a far better position  
   and Matthew Lammas's life would not have been lost in  
   that way. Those are the simple facts.

There have been extraordinary changes in Wales since  
the passage of the presumed consent Bill. No one in  
Wales has died for lack of an organ since that system  
came into effect. In 2015-16, 214 organ transplants were  
carried out and 192 patients were on the organ donation  
waiting list. There was a great deal of concern in Wales,  
and we all understand that; we all know the feeling of  
wanting to treat the bodies of our loved ones with  
reverence and care. There is something that upsets us  
profoundly about the idea of organ transplantation.  
There are also genuine religious objections, which were  
played out again and again in Wales. ButIcomebackto  
my point: look at the outcome.

There has also been a huge change in public opinion  
in Wales. In 2014-15, 48.5% of the people of Wales had  
consented to donating their organs. The figure leapt to  
64% in two years. Public opinion has come around to  
this. We must congratulate the *Daily Mirror*, which  
demonstrated tabloid journalism at its very best. I am  
not sure that this sells many papers, but it has, for all the  
best reasons, boldly sought to ensure that this life-saving  
measure is introduced. We can now have great optimism,  
because my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry  
North West (Mr Robinson), who came sixth in the  
private Member's Bill ballot, announced that he will  
take this issue up, and there is every chance that the spirit  
of this Parliament will take it forward.

We rejoiced this week when a decision was taken  
about the long-standing injustice of contaminated blood.  
We have come to a consensus about that, and the  
Government have shown themselves willing to move  
forward and introduce valuable reform. When I introduced  
my Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill in the last  
Parliament, my contact with the Government was entirely  
friendly. They were reasonable; they were cautious in  
reaching conclusions but made it clear that the door  
was open for reform soon. We can change that figure of  
457 avoidable deaths. We must move rapidly and find  
consensus among all parties to take the clear and  
unambiguous lesson from Wales that presumed organ  
donation consent saves lives.

3.39 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to  
speak in this debate. I congratulate the hon. Member  
for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) on presenting what I  
thought was a passionate, honest and fair contribution.  
This is a matter I am also interested in and seriously  
believe in. I will say early on that I subscribe to the opinion  
put forward by the hon. Gentleman, because I feel that  
is the way things should be. That is a personal opinion.  
All of us here obviously agree that organ donation is  
important, but we might look at it in different ways.

I am not interested in this only because of my role as  
the DUP's health spokesperson; I also have a personal  
interest relating to family members. The hon. Gentleman  
gave the example of one of his constituents. My nephew  
Peter was born with a kidney the size of a peanut, which  
is probably fairly hard for people to comprehend. From  
the day he was born to the day he had the transplant, he  
was on dialysis treatment, which, once someone has  
started, they cannot come off. I am very aware of the  
issue, and I will make an honest, personal contribution  
to the debate.

Someone in this world donated that kidney to Peter,  
who is alive today because of it. The alternatives were  
looked at by the family, and everyone looked at it in the

205WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 206WH

*[Jim Shannon]*

way that they thought best. His mother was going to  
give her kidney, but then she became pregnant, so that  
opportunity fell away. In the meantime, someone else  
came forward with a kidney donation, which Peter had.  
Peter is the same age as my second boy, so I can quite  
honestly relate to the difference between the two boys as  
they grew up. I understand the importance of organ  
donation, and believe that people certainly should be  
on the register.

I was on the Organ Donation Northern Ireland website  
just before we came here, and the first sentence I read  
really impacted upon me:

“Most people would accept an organ if they needed one.”  
That is not really surprising, is it? Yet only 40% of us in  
Northern Ireland have signed the NHS organ donor  
register. We would all want an organ donation if we  
needed it, but we have not all signed up. I have to ask  
the question honestly, sincerely and fairly to those here:  
if that is the issue, would they not donate their organ?  
I know that I would.

I carry a wee organ donation card, although it does  
not make any difference. It is long faded because it has  
been in my wallet—they say that the money in that  
wallet is like a prisoner, but that is by the by. I signed up  
for the card when I was 18, although that is no longer  
necessary, because when people sign up for their driving  
licence and tick that box, they are registered forever.  
That is how we do it in Northern Ireland. The card is  
very faded, but it says:

“I would like to help someone to live after my death”.

That is its purpose.

I was returned for Strangford with 42% of the vote in  
2015, and this year—I thank the people of Strangford  
for this—I was returned with 62%. I have to tell hon.  
Members that it is a much better position to be in this  
time around than in 2015. It is a lot more safe and  
secure, but how much more so for those who need  
donations as a matter of life or death? Last year,  
12 people died in Northern Ireland while waiting for an  
organ transplant. That may not seem a huge number,  
but speak to those 12 families and hear exactly what it  
means to them. Every one of us in the Chamber—  
those in the Gallery and hon. Members who are  
contributing—will know exactly what it means. It is a  
phenomenal loss.

The sad fact is that some people who passed away in  
that same year may well have wanted their lives to make  
a difference by donating their organs, but because their  
families did not know, it did not happen. It is about  
raising awareness, having the debate today and every  
one of us searching our souls and consciences for how  
to respond. It is really important that we do so; it is a  
conscious decision that everyone should consider. I  
completely believe that this is a matter of conscience. In  
fairness, the hon. Member for Barnsley Central said  
that in his contribution. He recognises that it is a matter  
of conscience, and I heard that in what others said as  
well.

I will look down on no one who feels that, due to a  
religious belief or some other belief, they cannot donate  
their organs. That is freedom of belief in action and the  
conscience clause is important, but what I cannot  
understand is someone who simply refuses to consider

or discuss the possibility. I agree with the Welsh example:  
I believe that people should be on the list unless they  
opt out. We have to up the ante and move forward  
constructively.

I mentioned the case of my nephew. There is another  
case that I always remember. There was a gentleman in  
Newtownards whose son was injured in a car accident.  
Unfortunately, he was on life support and was going to  
die. His dad told me that his son, by his death and  
donation, was able to save six lives. In Newtownards we  
also have a very active group of people who are donation  
recipients. The council at that time—it was called Ards  
Council then; it is now Ards and North Down Borough  
Council—had made a remembrance garden, which we  
had an opening ceremony for. Many people in not only  
my constituency but across the whole of the United  
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
understand exactly what this means.

The last time I spoke about organ donation in this  
Chamber, I said that 30% of people in the UK were  
registered to donate. That figure is now 36%. That is  
great, but it is still not enough. That is why we have to  
do something and look seriously and honestly at what is  
being proposed today. Registered donor numbers have  
increased every year since 2012 and are 20% higher than  
five years ago, yet three people a day are still dying  
needing a transplant. Is that right? No, it is not. We  
have to do something about that. The figure could be  
lower if people were prepared to think or talk to loved  
ones about it.

I see so many driving licence forms in my office. It is  
not for me to judge, and I will not—I never judge  
anybody on donation—but on too many of those driving  
licence forms people have not ticked the box to say that  
they want to be a donor. I do not know why they have  
not done it. It is up to them to make their own mind up,  
but when our time comes to pass on from this side of  
the world, we can help someone. If I can help someone  
with this old, fragile, diabetes 2 body standing here, why  
should I not? It is time that people understood the  
importance of this decision.

I am conscious that other Members want to speak, so  
I will not ramble on too much longer, but I want to  
make a wee comment about Wales. We are all aware that  
in Wales, where they have had so-called deemed consent  
since December 2015, only 6% of the population has  
chosen to opt out, which speaks volumes. More importantly,  
in that one year in Wales, as the hon. Member for  
Newport West (Paul Flynn) said, 39 organs were  
transplanted through deemed consent out of a total of  
160 transplants. That 39 out of 160 was a significant  
contribution to saving lives. Why should we not do that?  
I cannot get my head around it at all.

I will finish with this, because you are giving me the  
eye, Ms Buck, so I need to be careful. I urge people to  
be aware of the decision and the impact that it can have  
on families. We must take more positive steps to see a  
better take-up of organ donation, while always ensuring  
that people can make the choice themselves. I am conscious  
of the conscience clause. The simple fact is this: we can  
save lives in our deaths. Let us encourage people to do  
this in a manner that is sensitive and yet makes clear the  
case that we would nearly all take an organ if we needed  
one—would we not?—and should therefore all be willing  
to give one.

207WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 208WH

3.48 pm

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): It is a pleasure  
to see you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I want to start by  
congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley  
Central (Dan Jarvis) on not just securing this debate but  
taking the opportunity to raise this incredibly important  
issue at Prime Minister's questions yesterday.

I am pleased to hear that my hon. Friend the Member  
forCoventryNorthWest(MrRobinson)willbeintroducing  
his presumed consent private Member's Bill when he  
gets his opportunity on a Friday. I hope we will not see  
a repeat of the usual filibustering, which means we  
cannot have aproper debate and do not get the opportunity  
to vote on the Bill. It is really important that the House  
finally gets the chance to express its view on this matter,  
and that will not happen if the Bill is simply talked out.

I want to reiterate the concern that has been expressed  
aboutournotbeingontargetto achieve an80%consent  
rate for donation after death by 2019-20. We have  
missed the strategy's interim targets every single year.  
More needs to be done to make a difference and to save  
lives. We have a moral obligation to do something,  
which in this case means introducing presumed consent.  
It is neither perfect nor a panacea for all the issues  
surrounding organ donation but, as we heard from my  
hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley Central and  
others who spoke in the debate, it would make significant  
difference.

A constituent contacted me today about her severely  
disabled son. She is concerned that he lacks capacity to  
opt out and she is worried that in the medical profession's  
view some lives may be worth less than others. It is  
important to give people such as my constituent the  
reassurance they need, and that is not just about the  
right to opt out. As we have seen in Wales, where there  
is a soft opt-out procedure, families still get consulted.  
It is important to put people's minds at rest.

Across Bristol, there are more than 182,000 people  
on the register, with more than 38,000 in my constituency.  
In March, 27 people in the city were on the active  
transplant list, 13 of whom were in my constituency.  
Last year, there were 10 deceased donors and 22 deceased  
donor transplants. At the moment, we are not quite  
keeping up with demand.

Cystic fibrosis is a subject dear to my heart, not least  
because my 12-year-old niece, Maisie, has it. It is a  
life-limiting illness that affects 10,800 people in the UK  
and most of them will need a lung transplant to extend  
their life and improve their quality of life. I want to take  
the opportunity, slightly gratuitously, to pay tribute to  
Maisie's 14-year-old brother, Isaac, and her 17-year-old  
sister, Lilli, who did a 65 km—40 mile—walk across the  
Peak district the weekend before last to raise a few  
thousand pounds for the Cystic Fibrosis Trust. It was  
quite a trek.

The trust does brilliant work to raise funds and to  
support the families of people with cystic fibrosis, most  
of whom will need a lung transplant at some point.  
About 50 cystic fibrosis patients receive a transplant  
each year. It is the third most common reason for lung  
transplantation. Such patients have the best outcome,  
with 60% of recipients living at least five years after  
donation.

At any time, about 60 people with cystic fibrosis are  
on the transplant waiting list. Patients on the list are  
generally not expected to live more than a couple of

years if they do not receive a transplant. One in three  
will die before they can receive one, so you will understand,  
Ms Buck, why it is important to me that we up the  
donation rate and make sure that lungs are available  
whenever possible.

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust does not see opt out as the  
only answer. I am sure the Minister knows that it has  
been calling for a national allocation system so that  
there is less of a postcode lottery and it is not just  
people who are fortunate enough to be in a place where  
lungs are available for transplant who get them. Last  
month, NHS Blood and Transplant announced that it  
would move from a regional system to a fairer national  
allocation system for urgent cases. The Cystic Fibrosis  
Trust has, of course, welcomed that.

Organ donation is complicated. It is not just a case of  
finding available lungs and a donor who wants them.  
According to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, 75% of clinically  
usable donor lungs are not used. It wants more training  
for doctors because only three doctors in the UK can  
downsize lungs to make them suitable for smaller patients.  
It is often teenagers and people in their early 20s who  
have poor lung capacity and neednew, downsized lungs.  
Will the Minister consider training more people to  
ensure lungs can be used?

Repairing sub-optimal lungs to make them suitable  
for transplant is also an issue. Spain has the highest  
organ donation rate in the world not just because of  
its opt-out system but because it has medically trained  
transplant co-ordinators, uses intensive care beds  
better and more frequently, has different admission criteria  
for its intensive care units and uses more high-risk  
donors.

I appreciate that we are talking specifically about  
presumed consent, but I want to ensure the Minister is  
aware of all the wider issues. I hope she will work on  
those as well as supporting the opt-out Bill.

3.54 pm

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): I am delighted to  
be having this debate, and I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) on securing  
it. He told us the moving stories of Max and Joe,  
bringing a human aspect to the debate. He underlined  
that deaths are preventable, but that although 66% of  
people in England would donate, only 39% are on the  
donor register. Combined with the knowledge that only  
a small number of people on the register of donors will  
be able to donate, that highlights the fact that there is  
clearly a lot of work to be done.

Thehon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) added  
a few notes of caution, with the view of aiding an  
informed debate. There are always at least two sides to a  
debate, and being informed does us no harm. Unfortunately,  
she is no longer in her seat to hear me say so; to me,  
hanging on for an entire debate is important.

The hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn),  
speaking in his own inimitable style and even summing  
up the debate for me at one stage, told the story of  
Matthew, a 22-year-old man who unfortunately lost his  
life, and the feeling that had a system been in place back  
then, an operation could have been available and his life  
might have been saved. The hon. Gentleman also urged  
England to follow Wales's lead by implementing a soft  
opt-out scheme.

209WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 210WH

*[Ronnie Cowan]*

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)  
spoke about his nephew Peter, who required a kidney  
and fortunately got one, and is alive today due to that  
donation. Not everyone in Northern Ireland has been  
as fortunate. He also highlighted that one donor can  
save multiple lives.

The hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy)  
spoke about missed targets, saying that no plan is  
perfect, which reminded me of the Churchill quote:

“Perfection is the enemy of progress.”

She also spoke passionately about the needs of those  
with cystic fibrosis.

There were a few false starts, but now that the Welsh  
Government's soft opt-out is up and running, the Scottish  
Government have announced plans to do the same  
thing. An independent evaluation of the implementation  
of the Welsh opt-out system is due to be published in  
December 2017, and we believe that the numbers will be  
encouraging, but if even one donor has been identified,  
it must be worth it. The British Medical Association has  
stated that it believes that, over time, an opt-out scheme  
promotes more positive social attitudes to donations, so  
it may well be that we will not see the benefits for a few  
years to come.

I believe that the most important people in this  
debate are the many waiting for a donor—those whose  
lives are poorer or even on the line as they wait, and  
wait. This is not solely about saving lives; it is about  
improving them. One donation does not simply save or  
improve one life; it has a knock-on effect. My colleague  
Iain Fraser would not have been born if his father  
Sandy had not received a kidney many years ago. I  
thank Sandy Fraser for his ongoing commitment and  
work in his capacity as the chairman of the Scottish  
Kidney Federation.

I ask Members: if they had a loved one, as many of us  
do, whose life could be transformed by receiving an  
organ donation, would they not turn over every single  
stone and investigate every possibility in order to identify  
a donor? I hope that is what we are about to do. In my  
view, a soft opt-out scheme is the path to go down, but  
whatever comes of this debate, it must stimulate discussion.  
We should all make our wishes known to our friends  
and family. When my time comes, as it will, please take  
whatever you want.

3.58 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland  
West) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your  
chairmanship, Ms Buck. I thank my hon. Friend the  
Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) for securing  
this debate, his excellent contribution and all the work  
that he has done in recent weeks to raise awareness of  
the need for more people to become organ donors. I  
commend other hon. Members for their thoughtful  
contributions to this debate; the *Daily Mirror* for raising  
awareness of organ donation since the case of Max  
Johnson, a nine-year-old boy in need of a new heart;  
and the more than 9,000 people who signed the Change.org  
petition.

I also pay my respects to other hon. Members who  
have brought this issue to our attention over the last  
decade or so. They include my hon. Friend the Member  
for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh), who

introduced a private Member's Bill on this topic back in  
2004, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport  
West (Paul Flynn), who introduced a private Member's  
Bill more recently and who spoke so well today.

I will quickly set the scene on organ donation in the  
wider sense and then move on to the situation in countries  
such as Wales and Spain, in which opt-out systems have  
been introduced. Finally, I will talk about three tests  
that Opposition Members would like the Government  
tolookat, if such a system were implemented in England,  
to ensure that patients, NHS staff and community  
groups could have confidence in such a change in the  
law.

There is no doubt about the need for more organ  
donors in England. We have heard about that so clearly  
today. With so many people on the waiting list for new  
organs, it is important that we get more people signing  
up to donate their organs so that we can ensure that  
more people have the chance to live. That is why it is  
welcome that in a written answer last year, the then  
Public Health Minister, Nicola Blackwood, confirmed  
that since 2008 organ donation across the UK had  
increased by 68% and transplants by 47%, and that  
2015-16 saw the highest ever deceased donor rate in the  
UK, with 1,364 deceased donors resulting in 3,529  
transplants.

However, as we have heard, there is still a lot more to  
do because, tragically, 1,000 people every year die while  
waiting for a transplant. As we heard from my hon.  
Friend the Member for Barnsley Central, 6,388 people  
in Britain need a transplant. That includes 183 children.  
It also includes Rebecca, the adult daughter of my hon.  
Friend and constituency neighbour the Member for  
Sunderland Central (Julie Elliott). I sendmyhon. Friend,  
Rebecca and all her wider family my best wishes, as I  
am sure we all do.

Like the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)  
and, I am sure, others here today, I am a card-carrying  
organ donor. As soon as I became old enough to carry a  
card, I did, and that was also because of a direct family  
experience of someone requiring organ donation. My  
Aunty Ella was one of the pioneers of organ donation  
when she received a kidney transplant at the fantastic  
Freeman Hospital in Newcastle. Thatwasabout50years  
ago. I have just looked this up: the first organ donations  
at the Freeman were in 1967, so my Aunty Ella was  
literally one of the first. She had a very young family at  
the time. I was born in '66, but I can remember being  
told that all she wanted was to live long enough to see  
her children grow up. Well, she saw her children grow  
up, get married and go on to give her grandchildren.  
That is what organ donation is all about: it gives people  
a future.

There are issues, though, when it comes to black  
and minority ethnic communities. NHS Blood and  
Transplant reported that 66% of people from BME  
communities in the UK refuse to donate their organs,  
despite being more likely to need a new organ because  
of a predisposition to certain illnesses, such as diabetes  
and hypertension. I will cover that issue when I come to  
the three tests that we would need to set. It is why it is  
welcome that we have had an opportunity today to  
debate this issue and everything that comes with it and  
to think about how we go about improving organ  
donation, alongside considering what my hon. Friend  
the Member for Barnsley Central set out on the principle  
of an opt-out system.

211WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 212WH

Currently, we know of two countries in which opt-out  
organ donation systems work: Wales, which we heard  
quiteabitabouttoday,andSpain.Asweheard,Scotland  
is also considering how it can introduce an opt-out  
scheme. In Wales, the system was brought in via the  
Human Transplantation (Wales) Act 2013, which came  
into force in 2015. The new law sets out that those who  
live and die in Wales will be deemed to have given  
consent for their organs to be used unless they have  
explicitly said otherwise—that is the opt-out.

According to the Organ Donation Wales website, a  
public awareness campaign before the change in the law  
came into effect resulted in the numbers of organs  
transplanted increasing from 120 to 160. NHS organ  
donation statistics have shown an 11.8% increase between  
2014-15 and 2016-17 in people in Wales opting in to  
donate their organs—the highest increase among England,  
Wales and Scotland. However, a written answer from  
the Minister present today, based on NHS Blood and  
Transplant figures, stated that

“there has been no notable change in Welsh deceased donation  
figures since the change in legislation”.

This is backed up by NHS organ donation statistics,  
which show that despite the opt-out system in Wales,  
there were more deceased organ donors in England and  
Scotland. That could be because the system is still in its  
early days; people who have not opted out are still alive  
and have not yet been able to donate their organs.

Further afield, our friends in Spain have had a soft  
opt-out system since 1979, in which consent is presumed  
in the absence of any known objection by the deceased,  
but family consent is still sought. The implementation  
of that system led to a small increase in organ donation  
and transplant, but there was a dramatic increase after  
1989 when the Spanish Government made a big push to  
reorganise organ donation, as a result of which there  
was a medically trained transplant co-ordinator in every  
hospital by 1999. However, as a 2012 British Medical  
Association report stated, there are likely to be differences  
between the UK and Spain's performance on organ  
donation because of their different approaches to resources  
and clinical practices. For example, Spain has a higher  
number of intensive care beds, different ICU admissions  
criteria and end-of-life practices, and the use of higher-risk  
donors in comparison with those used here.

Nevertheless, those two examples give us food for  
thought on the change in organ donation rules in England.  
They show that if we implement this policy, we need to  
get it right. It is important that we learn from what has  
already happened, adapting and using what we learn  
from other countries to get it right in this country. I  
hope the Minister and her officials will be busy doing  
that after the debate.

Labour will set three tests for the Government if any  
new organ donation system is introduced in England.  
First, they must obviously ensure full public awareness  
of any change in the organ donation rules. Secondly,  
they must ensure that medical and healthcare professionals  
are involved in designing any changes to the system  
and that they have the support to raise awareness among  
the public. Thirdly, they must promise to work closely  
with community groups to ensure that cultural and  
religious views are fully consulted on and taken into  
account before any change is introduced. Those three  
tests are based on work done in other countries, notably  
Spain and Wales, but also on the current situation

across the UK, where there have been documented  
issues with engaging with BME communities on organ  
donation.

Organ donation and transplantation is a sensitive  
issue, as we have heard in this debate. Many people have  
strong and differing opinions on it, and it is crucial that  
the Government ensure that all voices are listened to so  
that we can come up with a solution. These real problems  
must be addressed. We know of many people who are  
on transplant waiting lists for far too long. Sometimes  
people die because they have been on the waiting list for  
years without a match to save their lives. We need  
considered action by the Minister and the Government.  
They must look at the issue carefully, consult with the  
public, ensure that solutions are found and bring about  
the improvements needed. I trust that the Minister will  
endeavour to do just that.

4.8 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health  
(Jackie Doyle-Price):** It is a pleasure to serve under your  
chairmanship, Ms Buck. I thank all Members who have  
participated in this debate. Organ donation has been  
such an established practice in the NHS for quite some  
years that we often forget about it. The way that everyone  
has brought the subject to life today, with references to  
their own stories and experiences, has reminded all of  
us how important it is. Perhaps it is time this subject  
had some renewed focus, if only to raise awareness and  
encourage people to opt in, whether or not we ultimately  
introduce an opt-out system.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central  
(Dan Jarvis). He could not have done a better service to  
his constituents Joe Dale and Max Johnson in the way  
he expressed his argument with considerable persuasion.  
Perhaps through him, I could send my good wishes to  
Joe Dale's family. I hope they get some comfort from  
the fact that Joe lives on by giving life to others. As we  
know, one organ donor can save or transform up to  
nine lives. What better legacy can we have than for other  
people to live on? We, as Members of Parliament, could  
perhaps be more proactive in giving that message, as we  
breathe life into this much neglected subject.

I am told that we last considered organ donation on  
the Floor of the House in 2014. This opportunity to  
discuss it is very welcome, and we will have many more  
opportunities, given the confirmation from the hon.  
Member for Coventry North West (Mr Robinson) that  
he will use his private Member's Bill to push this issue  
forward. I am sure it will get a good airing.

The hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland  
West (Mrs Hodgson) presented tests at the end of her  
speech for what we should bear in mind when deciding  
what to do in this space. I think we should do all those  
things, in any case, as we talk about kidney donation.  
The key has to be public awareness and ensuring that  
medical professionals do their bit to encourage people  
to participate in organ donation. We must also engage  
with community groups where there is a specific problem.  
That is my biggest priority.

I want to say a bit more about the context. Obviously,  
we want to encourage as many people as possible to  
make clear their intention to donate after death and  
to have that conversation with their families. That is  
often where the decision is made. Medical professionals  
need the requisite training to have these sensitive  
conversations.

213WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 214WH

*[Jackie Doyle-Price]*

As the hon. Member for Barnsley Central mentioned,  
not many people understand the system of organ donation.  
We can all sign up to be on the donor register, but not  
all of us will be in a position for our organs to be used.  
Quite often, organs can be used after an unexpected  
and traumatic death, and it is very difficult for any  
medical professional to have a conversation with the  
family about what should happen to the deceased's  
organs. We need to have a lot more understanding and  
be a lot more willing to make it clear to our loved ones  
that we would want our organs to be donated if we were  
ever unfortunately in that position.

I must pay tribute to all those in the national health  
service who work in this area. Their determination and  
commitment makes donation and transplantation possible.  
Although we still need more transplants, we have seen a  
significant increase in donations in the UK. We saw  
1,413 donors giving 3,712 transplants in the last year,  
which illustrates how many lives can be saved by one  
successful approach to donation.

It is incredible that, as NHS Blood and Transplant  
told us only this week, more than 50,000 people are now  
alive thanks to organ donation and transplantation.  
The first transplants took place in my lifetime, and they  
were seen as revolutionary. One reason we have not  
given this subject as much attention is that donations  
now tend to be seen as commonplace.

There is much to celebrate, but there is also much  
more to do, not least because 457 people died last year  
while on the active transplant waiting list. That ignores  
the 875 people who were removed from the list because  
they had become too ill to receive a transplant. Many of  
those will have died shortly afterwards. At any one time  
some 6,500 people are on the waiting list, and again,  
although waiting times are declining, we cannot be  
complacent. We need to make sure that those people  
have hope that, when they are on the list, they have a  
realistic chance of receiving a transplant.

Our biggest challenge is black, Asian and minority  
ethnic donors, for two reasons. First, black and Asian  
people are more at risk of illnesses that may require a  
transplant, such as high blood pressure and diabetes,  
and secondly, the consent rate for those communities is  
half that of the white population. The same is true for  
blood, so we need many more blood donors from the  
black community. There is a constant need for that  
because of the prevalence of sickle cell anaemia, but we  
know that only 1% of the nation's blood donors are  
black. So we need to do much more not only in organ  
donation but in blood donation.

There is some encouraging news. Last year, more  
than 6.4% of all deceased donors were from black and  
Asian communities. That is a significant increase, so the  
direction of travel is positive, but we need to do much  
more. Average waiting times for kidney transplants  
have fallen for everyone, and that rise in donations from  
black and Asian communities has meant that the biggest  
fall in waiting times is for black and Asian patients—down  
from four years to two and a half over the past seven  
years. The direction of travel is good, but we need to do  
more, because people from black and Asian communities  
still wait at least six months longer than white patients.  
That problem needs to be tackled, because recipients  
are matched according to blood and tissue types, which  
differ across ethnic groups.

As we set out in our manifesto, we are determined to  
target that audience, and we welcome the involvement  
of all hon. Members in that. We are looking at other  
partner agencies, and we are working with the National  
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Transplant Alliance.  
However, many other groups need to be engaged, not  
least to tackle misplaced cultural concerns about donation.  
It is not incompatible with Christian beliefs to bequeath  
one's organs, and we need to make sure that that message  
gets out loud and clear by engaging with all community  
leaders in this space.

We have heard some persuasive arguments on opt-outs  
and why we should move towards an opt-out system,  
and I certainly understand the thinking behind that  
proposal. To add my personal experience of this, my  
constituent Patricia Carroll regularly lobbies me on the  
subject. Her daughter Natalie suffered from anorexia  
and diabetes, and died awaiting a kidney and pancreas  
transplant. Patricia tried to donate her own kidney to  
Natalie but was not a match. Following Natalie's death,  
she decided to become a live donor. Last year—I think  
itwasaroundChristmas—shegaveakidneytoa22-year-old  
young man called Joe who had been on dialysis for  
three or four years.

What Patricia has done for that family—it is the  
family, not just the individual—has transformed their  
lives. I again pay tribute to all live donors. That is an  
incredibly altruistic thing to do when recognising the  
impact it can have on the donor's own health. It is  
amazing, particularly when there are donors who have  
absolutely no personal relationship with the beneficiary  
of their organ. Patricia will be watching with interest to  
see what I have to say about this.

There are obvious attractions to opt-outs as a tool;  
anything that will increase the pool of available organs  
will obviously be attractive. However, opt-outs on their  
own are not a panacea, and the references to what we  
can learn from Spain are significant. The issue is about  
what is wrapped around that. Specifically, it is not just  
about public understanding and public awareness of  
why we need donation and what it means, but about  
how the medical profession deals with it.

The crucial point that affects donation is the conversation  
in the room between medical professionals and bereaved  
families. We have seen examples of families refusing  
consent because they are not convinced that their relatives  
wanted to donate and it feels safer to say no. Equally,  
we have seen that being overruled. We find that the  
highest rates of donation are achieved when we have  
specially trained nurses who have that conversation  
with the family in a sensitive way. When such conversations  
take place, rates of donation go up significantly. Those  
conversations are critical. If we look at the experience  
of Spain, we see that that injection of medical advice  
achieved the step change in donation rates, over and  
above having an opt-out system.

None the less, we are interested to see the experience  
in Wales. We are certainly prepared to consider that,  
and obviously we need to consider it sooner than we  
might have intended, given the private Member's Bill,  
but opt-out will never be a silver bullet to achieve more  
donation. We are committed to ensuring that we do  
whatever we can to increase donation. Our strategy,  
“Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020”, contained the  
ambitious targets that the hon. Member for Barnsley  
Central mentioned. Although we have not actually achieved

215WH Organ Donation: Opt-out System

13 JULY 2017

Organ Donation: Opt-out System 216WH

the 70% that we are aiming for, the direction of travel is  
positive. The fact that more than 23.5 million people  
haveoptedintodonatetheirorgansisquiteanachievement,  
although I am not complacent. To give credit where  
credit is due, the NHS and everybody involved have  
achieved a great deal in achieving those figures.

The key thing is the availability of specialist nurses.  
We must ensure that organ donation is embedded as a  
normal consideration of end-of-life care, where that is  
available. We have looked at developing a new organ  
donor register that makes it easier for people to opt in.  
We are trying to make available as many opportunities  
as possible for people to do that, for example when  
people sign up for a new driving licence. In any interaction  
with Government, we need to give people that option,  
because where it is a positive choice, it is more likely to  
be effective.

**Jim Shannon:** We all agree about the need to raise  
awareness on the mainland and across the whole United  
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. When  
it comes to raising awareness—I presume the Minister  
will do so imminently—will she engage with the Northern  
Ireland Assembly, provided that it is still going, and  
with Scotland and Wales to ensure that we have a  
UK-wide programme of awareness to get people on the  
register?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** The hon. Gentleman makes an  
excellent point. He might have seen that I am wearing a  
pin, which is a nice pink heart that says, “Yes”. That  
campaign is being run by NHSBT to highlight the need  
for people to offer to be a donor. If people are prepared  
to do it, they should wear this nice pin. We need to use  
any number of the tools at our disposal, and we need to  
be a lot more imaginative about the ones we use. I look  
forward to seeing him with his nice pink heart.

I should conclude my remarks to allow the hon.  
Member for Barnsley Central an opportunity to respond  
to the debate. I think that we are all united in the  
outcome we are trying to achieve, which is to encourage  
more people to be willing to donate their organs to  
achieve more transplants. With regard to the tools we  
employ to achieve that, we will look at opt-out and  
consider whether that would do anything, but in the  
meantime we are prioritising engagement with black  
and minority ethnic communities. We will continue to  
invest in specialised nursing to have those very sensitive  
conversations, because they need to happen. We will  
look at what more we can do to encourage more families  
to be willing to give consent at the time it needs to be  
given. I thank everyone for contributing to the debate.

4.24 pm

**Dan Jarvis:** This has been a constructive and useful  
debate, and I am grateful that we have had contributions  
from Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England.  
The reality, as the Minister said, is that this is a serious,  
sensitive and complex subject, but ultimately it is about  
saving lives.

It was a great privilege to meet Max Johnson's mother  
yesterday, and I pay tribute to the Johnson family for  
their stoicism and the fact that they are prepared to talk  
about their experiences. Speaking as a parent, I can  
only imagine how difficult it must be for them. Today,  
Max Johnson sits in hospital in Newcastle, waiting and  
urgently hoping that an organ donation will be made  
available to him.

As I said in my opening remarks, we all have a  
responsibility to do everything we can. We have a duty  
of care to people more generally, and that particularly  
includes those who require some form of donation. We  
can learn a lot from what is happening across Europe  
and in Wales. I am delighted that there are moves afoot  
to move to a similar system in Scotland.

I was obviously very pleased to hear that my hon. Friend  
the Member for Coventry North West (Mr Robinson)  
will be introducing a private Member's Bill, which will  
have its First Reading next week and its Second Reading  
at some point in the autumn. That provides a valuable  
opportunity for us in this House to have a further  
discussion.

As the Minister again rightly said, there is no silver  
bullet solution. If the Government were to be persuaded  
that moving to an opt-out system was the right thing to  
do, that would have to be accompanied by a range of  
othermeasures,notleastfurtherpublicitytoraiseawareness  
so that, collectively, we can all encourage people to sign  
up and be organ donors.

I am not prone to making predictions, but I will say,  
in conclusion, that I think that at some point we will  
move to an opt-out system in England. It is my strong  
belief and hope that we do that sooner rather than later,  
because I am confident that to do so would save countless  
lives.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the matter of the introduction  
of an opt-out system for organ donation in England.

4.26 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

217WH

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

218WH

Westminster Hall

*Tuesday 18 July 2017*

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

Anglo-Polish Relations

9.30 am

**Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con):  
I beg to move,

That this House has considered Anglo-Polish relations.

I am grateful to be speaking in this important debate.  
My family and I left Poland and came to the United  
Kingdom in 1978, because of communism. My parents  
were staunchly anti-communist and refused to live under  
the tyranny of communism, but after martial law it was  
impossible to return, and we had to see our family,  
friends and fellow citizens suffering under the oppression  
of the Jaruzelski regime. I returned for the first time  
after the lifting of martial law, in 1983. I spent many  
summers with my beloved Polish grandfather, listening  
to his experiences and hearing of the suffering that he  
and his family and his generation went through during  
the terrible times of the second world war, and the  
horrendous brutality and destruction in Warsaw from  
1939 to 1945. I also listened to his experiences of living  
under a communist system, with the terrible lack of  
freedom that ensued from that.

I am very proud of being the first ever Polish-born  
British Member of Parliament. Although there are  
other Members with relatives from Poland, I am the  
only one to have actually been born there, and I am  
proud of my unpronounceable surname. When I first  
stood to be on the Conservative candidates list someone  
said to me, “You will never be elected with a completely  
unpronounceable surname like that. You've got to change  
it or anglicise it”—as many others have done. I said, “In  
that case, I will never stand for Parliament, because I  
am very proud of my Polish roots.” Once during the  
selection process someone said to me: “Kawasaki—that's  
not a very Shropshire name, is it? How are you going to  
get by with a name like that?” I said, “Well, it didn't  
cause my grandfather's generation any problems when  
they were fighting in the battle of Britain, so I hope it  
won't cause me any problems today.”

I am proud of the fact that this debate is taking place  
at the same time as the royal visit to Warsaw, which  
accentuates the increasing importance of Poland as a  
European economy and a trading partner for the United  
Kingdom—as well as a defence partner for our country.  
Let us not forget that while we grapple with encouraging  
many of our NATO partners to spend the prerequisite  
2% of GDP on defence, Poland is already doing so. In  
fact, it plans to increase defence spending beyond the  
2%margin. However, differences are opening up between  
Poland and Germany—the two countries that the royal  
couple are visiting this week—with respect to their  
vision for the European Union and its component  
parts, and what authority it should have over sovereign  
nation states. I hope to get the Minister's perspective on  
the differences that are starting to materialise between  
Warsaw and Berlin.

This year we celebrate the 77th anniversary of the  
battle of Britain, and I was proud last year to accompany  
Lord Tebbit, a man for whom I have enormous respect,  
to the RAF Club to celebrate the 76th anniversary. He  
and I, along with many senior Polish military officers  
and their British counterparts, had a wonderful dinner.  
In his speech Lord Tebbit—who, we should not forget,  
served in the RAF—said something that resonated  
enormously with me and will stay with me for the rest of  
my life. He said that in the summer of 1940 the balance  
between the Luftwaffe and the RAF was so even, and  
the outcome of that key battle was so uncertain, that it  
was unequivocally the arrival of the Poles, the largest  
foreign contingent in the battle of Britain, that tipped  
the balance in favour of the British side. Although the  
debate is about current Anglo-Polish relations, we must  
never forget the extraordinary contribution that those  
brave men undertook on our behalf to save our country.  
We must always celebrate that and teach our children  
and grandchildren about it. Although their country had  
been taken over by tyranny, they did not give up. They  
did not just lie back and take it. They continued their  
struggle against fascism by coming to the United Kingdom  
and fighting with us.

**Stephen Pound** (Ealing North) (Lab): The hon.  
Gentleman's points are extremely important. The  
contribution and enormous sacrifice made by the Polish  
people means that they have the support of every proud  
member of this nation.

The inquest on the suicide of Dagmara Przybysz  
opened yesterday. That bright, intelligent young woman  
committed suicide because she was bullied for being  
Polish. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the points  
he has made should be disseminated as widely as possible,  
so that no one will ever again be bullied for being  
Polish? They should instead be praised for it.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for raising that point. My right hon. Friend the Minister  
drew to my attention a newspaper article about that  
beautiful young Polish girl, who was found hanged in  
school as a result of being bullied by a racist gang.

**Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): Will my hon.  
Friend give way?

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I am going to make some progress,  
but then I will give way.

The hon. Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound)  
is of course correct, and that is why the Polish war  
memorialisimportant.Suchvisiblesignsofthecontribution  
of Poles to the United Kingdom are important, because  
we must explain to younger generations why so many  
Poles are here. Many are here because they came to  
continue the fight against fascism, and then stayed here  
as part of the community. No one accentuates the  
importance of that better than Senator Anders, whom I  
am sure the hon. Member for Ealing North has met.  
She is the daughter of the esteemed General Wladyslaw  
Anders, who was an important figure for Poland. Not  
only is she the senator for Suwalki area, where British  
troops are deployed at the moment, but she has been  
appointed as a special roving ambassador to engage  
with the Polish diaspora around the world and  
commemorate and recognise their contributions to their  
host nations. I pay tribute to her, because Poland needs  
recognition for its unique contributions.

219WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

220WH

*[Daniel Kawczynski]*

An area of dissent in the European Union is refugees.  
Poland has recently taken more than 1.3 million refugees  
from the terrible fighting in Ukraine. My Polish friends  
tell me that there are now 1.3 million Ukrainians in  
employment in Poland, but some figures put the number  
of Ukrainians in Poland as high as 1.5 million or  
1.7 million. On my summer holidays to the Polish  
seaside resort of Sopot, where I go every year, I see for  
myself the huge number of Ukrainians working in  
restaurants and cafes, and throughout the community.

Poland is not demanding a resettlement of those  
Ukrainians or any special help from the European  
Union in dealing with those huge numbers of refugees  
streaming across her border. In fact, Poland has already  
done a great deal to help and support those refugees in  
escaping the fighting and difficulties they have experienced  
in Ukraine, yet Germany and the European Union are  
now talking about sanctions against Poland for not  
taking the requisite number of Syrian refugees. I find  
that dangerous and frightening, quite frankly. We have  
a history of welcoming refugees to our nation, and we  
are proud of that, but that decision must come from the  
grassroots. It must bubble up from society, as happens  
in our country.

What frightens me is the idea that the European  
Union can somehow unilaterally dictate an allocation  
of certain types of refugee to be distributed to Poland,  
against the express wishes of the democratically elected  
Polish Government. The issue is clearly polarising, but  
we must respect the will of the Polish Government. I  
consider one European country or the European Union  
itselfthreateningsanctionstobeblackmailandintimidation,  
and the United Kingdom must support Poland on the  
issue. The referendum showed that no matter what  
happens with the European Union, we believe in the  
supremacy of individual sovereign nations and their  
ability to be directly accountable to their people for all  
policies that they implement.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Does the hon.  
Gentleman agree that the same defence could be made  
of countries such as Jordan and Turkey, which have  
already accepted far more refugees than they can sustainably  
look after? If the United Kingdom was prepared to  
take a decent number of refugees from Syria and Iraq,  
instead of putting pressure on countries in the middle  
east to take more, would there not be less pressure on  
places such as Poland, which is already catering for  
refugees from other parts of the world?

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I do not really want to get into a  
debate about our domestic immigration policies. I am  
proud that the United Kingdom has provided more  
money than any country apart from America for refugee  
camps in Jordan and Lebanon, but of course we can do  
more.

A key point that I want to raise with the Minister is  
that because we are leaving the European Union, people  
say to me, “What's it got to do with you? Your power  
and influence in the European Union is bound to wane  
over the next two years, and then you will have no  
influence at all.” One Conservative MP said to me  
today, “You're blowing in the wind here; we will not  
have any influence in the European Union.” But the

fact remains that we will of course continue to have  
influence. As a major European power, security, stability,  
peace and confidence on the European continent is vital  
to us, and we must continue to engage and support  
countries such as Poland on this issue and others.

I say to the Minister that when Germany behaves in  
such a way, it needs to be called out for double standards.  
On the one hand Germany talks about the unique  
importance of solidarity within the European Union,  
and says that there has to be redistribution of refugees  
around the whole of the European Union, but on the  
other hand it implements policies that go completely  
against that concept. One example is the Nord Stream 2  
pipeline—a massive project to build an undersea gas  
and oil pipeline from St Petersburg to Germany, completely  
bypassing the whole of central and eastern Europe. We  
all understand and appreciate the importance of energy  
security for all our NATO partners in central and  
eastern Europe. They are building liquefied gas terminals  
on the Baltic sea and starting to buy more gas from  
Qatar and the United States of America, but a common  
energy policy with the Russians is needed. The Russians  
understand only strength, and any differences between  
those countries will give Russia increased leverage to  
turn off the taps or to put pressure on some of those  
countries if things do not go its way.

I am really disappointed by Germany's conduct over  
the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, and I very much hope that  
my right hon. Friend and other Ministers will raise the  
issue with their German counterparts. What discussions  
has my right hon. Friend had with his German counterpart  
to highlight concerns about the lack of support for  
central and eastern Europe on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline?  
As I said, it is vital for our interests that countries in  
central and eastern Europe and the Baltic states continue  
to have energy security.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire  
(Glyn Davies) still wish to intervene? I was rude not to  
give way to my constituency neighbour from just across  
the border in Wales. I give way to him.

**Glyn Davies:** I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me  
to intervene and to express my admiration for the Polish  
people. A huge number of Polish people have moved to  
my constituency and, I am sure, to many others. They  
work incredibly hard and are committed to their families—  
that is their reputation—all on top of the commitment  
that those of us of a certain age know they made to the  
freedom of our country in the last war. We in  
Montgomeryshire have great admiration for the Polish  
people. I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the  
debate and on the speech he is making.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I am grateful to my constituency  
neighbour and hon. Friend for those kind remarks.

Another key issue for our Polish friends is the need  
for a permanent NATO base in eastern Poland. I will be  
the first in the debate to recognise the contribution that  
theUnitedKingdomhasalreadymadeinsendingrotational  
troops to the Suwalki gap. We are all proud that more  
than 150 British soldiers from the Light Dragoons are  
in Poland playing their role in sending a strong message  
to the Russians that the new demarcation line between  
NATO and Russia is there to stay and must not be  
infringed, and that the United Kingdom will never  
tolerate any infringement on the sovereignty of our

221WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

222WH

NATO partners in central and eastern Europe. I am  
sure that is a red line for every hon. Member in this  
Chamber and throughout the entire House of Commons  
and House of Lords.

We are all scarred by the terrible consequences for  
Poland of the Yalta conference—being imprisoned behind  
the iron curtain for 60 years—and of the initial attack  
on 1 September 1939. I am particularly scarred, if I may  
say so, after listening to my beloved grandfather speak  
of those consequences. It will take generations to forget  
and forgive what happened at that time. However, we  
must now show the Poles that we are resolute, and that  
our word is our bond when it comes to upholding the  
article 5 clauses in the NATO treaty that guarantee  
Poland's sovereignty and independence.

I have asked many questions on the Floor of the  
House about the steps the Government will take to be at  
the vanguard of pushing for a permanent NATO base  
in Poland. I have had various oral replies, none of  
which have been satisfactory. The answer from Ministers  
is, “That is a decision for NATO.” Of course it is, but we  
have an opportunity to show our Polish friends and  
allies that we are at the forefront of understanding their  
requests for a permanent NATO base. We ought to use  
our senior position within that organisation to push  
very hard to ensure that there is a permanent NATO  
base in eastern Poland. We need to take the lead on this  
issue.

We also need to take the lead in trying to alleviate  
tensions with Russia and on the Minsk II agreements,  
which have so far been prioritised and led by France  
and Germany. I was recently discussing with a Conservative  
colleague why we did not get involved initially in the  
Minsk I and II agreements. As a major European  
power, we clearly have a duty and responsibility to join  
Germany and France in trying to resolve the tensions  
between Russia and Ukraine, which are a major source  
of instability in central and eastern Europe.

When I was debating with German Members of  
Parliament at the Royal United Services Institute last  
week, I challenged them on the German stance with  
regard to permanent NATO bases in Poland. I have to  
say that I did not get unequivocal support from them;  
they are rather sitting on the fence. The Minister may  
correct me if I am wrong, but I do not believe the  
Germans want a permanent NATO base in eastern  
Poland. They are happy with the main focus of NATO  
being in Germany and protecting Germany. The only  
NATO base in Poland at the moment is right on the  
Polish-German border, in Szczecin, so if there were any  
incursion, only a tiny bit of Poland would potentially  
be protected.

The Germans and Angela Merkel have a long-standing  
relationship with President Putin. Angela Merkel probably  
has the greatest understanding of the Russian President,  
speaking Russian and having known and negotiated  
with him for a long time, but we in the United Kingdom  
need to challenge the Germans on that issue. Yes, we  
must have dialogue with the Russians and co-operate  
with them, but we need to ensure at the same time that  
there is a carrot-and-stick approach to them, and part  
of that must be a permanent NATO base in Poland.

I am conscious that other hon. Members wish to  
speak, so I will shortly wrap up my comments, but the  
other point I want to raise with the Minister is that we  
must fight, along with our Polish friends, not to tolerate

a single European army in the post-Brexit world. We all  
remember the picture of Signor Renzi, Mrs Merkel and  
Monsieur Hollande standing on top of an Italian aircraft  
carrier stating that they wanted a single European army.  
Some people on the continent even say that they can no  
longer depend on the British and Americans for a  
security umbrella for Europe. That is very wrong and  
very dangerous, and nothing must happen to usurp the  
power and responsibility of NATO as a collective defence  
mechanism for the whole continent.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): I  
congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate.  
Does he agree—it appears he is on the same line—that  
the security of Europe in the past, the present and  
hopefully the future, even in the central European belt,  
has been thanks to NATO, and that we should build  
and strengthen our relationship with all the NATO  
nations and not allow the misreading of history that  
says the European Union cemented peace, when it was  
in fact NATO?

**Daniel Kawczynski:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely  
correct. In the referendum campaign in Shrewsbury,  
one couple came up to me and said, “I'm going to vote  
for remain because the European Union has maintained  
peace in Europe over the last 60 years,” and I had to  
spend the next 15 minutes explaining very succinctly  
that it is nothing to do with the European Union. What  
has kept peace in Europe in our time, thank God, has  
been that collective defence mechanism—anchored, I  
have to say, by support from the Americans and the  
Canadians. Undoubtedly many very important countries  
are part of that defence mechanism, such as Norway  
and Turkey, which in my view are unlikely to become  
members of the European Union. It is very important  
that those countries—in addition to America, Canada  
and the United Kingdom, which is pulling out of the  
European Union—are central to the collective defence  
capability that we all require.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman: we must trumpet  
the importance of NATO. We must also work with our  
Polish friends to ensure that they take the lead within  
the European Union in ensuring that, although the  
United Kingdom is pulling out of the EU, NATO  
continues to be supreme as the sole common defence  
umbrella for the whole continent.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the  
900,000 Poles who are living in the United Kingdom.  
Prince William said yesterday in his speech in Warsaw  
that Polish is now the second most spoken language in  
the United Kingdom.

**Glyn Davies:** Not Welsh?

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I hear my hon. Friend from across  
the border mentioning Welsh, but he will have to take  
that dispute up with Prince William directly.

I have a wonderful Polish teacher who is helping  
me with my Polish grammar, Mrs Watrobska, to whom  
I would like to pay tribute. I spend the first 15 minutes  
of every lesson, every week, complaining about how  
difficult and unnecessarily complicated the Polish  
language is. She just listens to me and keeps faith, but I  
am finally getting to grips with the rather complicated  
Polish grammar.

223WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

224WH

*[Daniel Kawczynski]*

One statistic that I want to share with the Minister is  
that 87,000 companies have now been set up in the  
United Kingdom by the Polish diaspora. I would argue  
that these people are, in the main, ideal immigrants. If  
we were to design a newcomer to our country, it would  
be a Pole. They are highly educated and highly skilled  
people. Many of them have finished university education,  
and they have an extraordinary work ethic. It makes me  
so proud when so many people come up to me, knowing  
that I am from Poland—whether it is farmers in Shropshire  
or people in the building trade, construction, architecture,  
design or fashion—to say, “We love these Polish workers.  
They are dependable; we can rely upon them.”

Of course that makes me very proud, and that is the  
sentiment. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the  
Minister will agree that British people appreciate Poles  
and the contribution that these very hard-working people  
make to our country. Many of them have expressed to  
me concerns about their rights in a post-Brexit world  
and in the transition we are going through. This  
Government wanted to settle the issue of the reciprocal  
rights of EU citizens—both theirs and ours—at the  
very forefront, before negotiations started, understanding  
the importance of getting the issue resolved as a priority.  
Unfortunately, Mr Tusk and Angela Merkel prevented  
us from doing that.

The Government now have a very effective and positive  
plan to ensure that these people have guarantees to stay  
in the United Kingdom, and I am sure that the Minister  
will allude to those guarantees when he makes his  
speech. Let us not forget—this is the strongest message  
I want to give to our Polish friends—that just because  
we are pulling out of the European Union, it does not  
mean we will not continue to encourage highly-skilled  
Polish workers to come to our country. We will continue  
to celebrate their contribution to our economy and we  
will continue to issue work permits to highly-skilled  
Polish workers who wish to come here, work and make  
a contribution to our society.

I now turn to the newspaper article that my right hon.  
Friend the Minister highlighted to me, about a young  
Polish girl, Dagmara, of just 16. I am not in the habit of  
showing newspaper articles; I hope I am not infringing  
any official rules, Sir Roger. I shall put it down.

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Order. It is not welcomed  
by the Chair because *Hansard*, of course, cannot see the  
articles to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, but he  
is more than free to quote from them.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I am very sorry, Sir Roger. I  
wanted the camera to pick up the face of this beautiful  
young Polish girl who so sadly died, hanged, following  
a racist incident.

Having come from Poland myself, I have to say that I  
personally have experienced nothing but kindness and  
understanding. I find it amazing and gratifying that,  
even as a foreigner to this country, I have been elected to  
the House of Commons. That obviously says a lot  
about my constituents. However, there have been some  
reported cases of racism against Poles, and it is obviously  
sickening and very worrying. I would like to assure our  
Polish friends that the Government—I am sure the  
Minister will agree with this—are doing everything

possible not only to punish in the severest way those  
who are responsible, but, through our schools programme  
and other measures, to ensure that people are aware of  
the extraordinary contribution that Polish people make  
to our country and why we all welcome them to our  
shores.

I would like to touch on the extraordinary number of  
British investments that are taking place in Poland.  
Tesco, which was initially incepted by a Polish immigrant  
to this country, as I am sure hon. Members know,  
now operates widely across Poland. There is also  
GlaxoSmithKline. In the financial services sector, Aviva  
is making great progress. I pay tribute on the record to  
the Polish Ministries that are working in a very collaborative,  
professional and effective way, not only in supporting  
British companies but by helping them better to understand  
regulations and by listening to feedback from British  
multinational companies about some of the problems  
that they have faced and taking them on board when it  
comes to reforms. My understanding is that the Polish  
Government are very serious about creating a pro-business  
approach. Poland is open for business, and they are very  
keen to attract as much British investment as possible.

I would, however, like to highlight for the Minister  
one case and concern that I have come across. A British  
company called EuroEco Fuels, in the biofuels industry,  
operates in the port of Szczecin. I heard from various  
colleagues that it was having enormous problems with  
the port of Szczecin authorities. I do not have enough  
time to give a significant explanation of some of the red  
tape and, the company argues, infringements against  
them by the port of Szczecin authorities, but so grave  
were my concerns that I took the time to visit the  
company earlier this year to see at first hand what its  
problems were. I know that my right hon. Friend the  
Minister for Trade and Investment has written to his  
counterparts in Warsaw. Unfortunately, the situation is  
not yet resolved. I wanted this Minister to know of that  
particular problem; I wanted to highlight it to him and  
his ministerial colleagues to see whether they can do  
anything to help EuroEco Fuels with its ongoing and  
highly controversial deliberations and concerns with  
the port of Szczecin authorities.

I think that we need a permanent prime ministerial  
trade envoy to Poland. The Minister will need to  
find someone very senior from the House of Lords  
or someone—

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan): Who speaks Polish!

**Daniel Kawczynski:** No, I am not referring to myself;  
the Government need someone with much more gravitas  
and experience than me. But I am serious. Prime ministerial  
trade envoys are doing a great job in countries such as  
Iran and Indonesia—the Minister will know that our  
hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham)  
does a very good job there. We do not have a trade  
envoy for Poland, yet we are Poland's second largest  
trading partner. I urge the Minister to ensure that the  
Government consider appointing a trade envoy to Poland,  
so that all of us who are interested in bilateral trading  
relations with Poland can get behind that man or  
woman and help them to make the United Kingdom  
Poland's No. 1 trading partner. We are currently its second

225WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

226WH

largest trading partner after Germany. I see no reason  
why, over the next 20 years, we cannot become Poland's  
No. 1 trading partner.

As long as I am a Member of this House—I have  
been one for 12 years now—I will always do whatever I  
can to promote relations with Poland. I say this as  
someone who was born in that country and who loves  
that country, its culture and its history very much. I feel  
that our two countries are inextricably linked and that  
we are very important bilateral strategic partners, and I  
for one look forward to our relations with Poland going  
from strength to strength over the coming years.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Order. Four hon.  
Gentlemen wish to speak, and I propose to start calling  
theFrontBenchersat10.30,so do the maths.

10.6 am

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The maths is fairly  
easy to work out, Sir Roger; thank you. I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel  
Kawczynski) on setting the scene so well. His knowledge  
of Poland is second to none in the House, and we  
appreciate his contribution to the debate.

We all know about the very significant Polish community  
in the UK. There are the Polish nationals who have  
come to the UK since Poland joined the EU in 2004,  
but there already existed a very large and significant  
Polish community in the UK—they came around the  
time of the second world war—and that is why I wanted  
to speak on this issue. I am the MP for Strangford, and  
we have a large contingent of Polish people who have  
lived in the constituency for a great many years; they  
came here originally during the second world war. The  
1951 UK census showed that the number of Polish-born  
immigrants had quadrupled since before the war, to  
more than 160,000.

As I said, the history with Northern Ireland dates  
back to world war two. Polish people integrated well  
with the local population. People in my constituency  
have passed down fond memories of the Polish brigade  
stationed in Ballyhalbert at the 315 Squadron base. Just  
last year, we had a commemorative event at the watchtower  
in Ballyhalbert, which was much used in the second  
world war. Today, as the hon. Member for Shrewsbury  
and Atcham said, Prince William and Kate are on their  
visit to Poland. They were very careful not to mention  
Brexit; I think that was a great idea—when in Rome, do  
not annoy the Romans. It is important that we have that  
relationship, which we hope will continue to grow after  
we leave the EU.

The Polish people are remembered for their manners  
and politeness and their sheer determination, even though  
they were based in Northern Ireland, to fight against  
the Nazis who invaded Poland. The 38th Irish Brigade  
also fought alongside the Polish brigades in the assault  
at Monte Cassino. It is good to know that the bonds  
forged in war have remained strong locally. That has  
been enhanced through the reputation of the local Poles  
as hard-working decent people. Some of those Poles  
married local girls back in the second world war, and  
Polish names can be found through the Ards peninsula  
and where I live. About 1.4 million eastern Europeans

live in Britain. That includes 916,000 Polish people, and  
80% of them are in work, so they come with a work  
ethic. Those are the figures according to the most  
complete official picture so far. A Polish shop opened a  
couple of years ago just a couple of doors up from my  
advice centre. Again, that is an indication of the presence  
of the Polish population and those who want to enjoy  
foods from back home.

A study of migration from the eight eastern European  
countries known as the EU8, conducted by the Office  
for National Statistics, shows that Lithuanians are the  
second largest group in the United Kingdom. The ONS  
study confirms that the food product manufacturing  
industry is particularly dependent on migrants, with  
EU8 citizens making up 25% of the total workforce. In  
my area, in the agri-food sectors, the importance of  
Poles and eastern Europeans to the workforce is enormous.  
We need to ensure that that continues.

The latest figures from the ONS are that in 2015 an  
estimated 831,000 residents of the UK were born in  
Poland, and an estimated 916,000 residents have Polish  
nationality. A 2013 analysis by the ONS of the 2011 census  
reported that Polish—here I have to disagree with my  
friend the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn  
Davies)—was the most spoken language in the UK  
after English. If the ONS says that, who am I to  
disagree? It refers to people who describe Polish as their  
main language.

As the briefing paper for the debate set out, in December  
2016 the inaugural UK-Poland intergovernmental  
consultations were held in London; that was the first  
time the two Governments had held a

“structured, comprehensive dialogue at Cabinet level.”

We welcome that. They agreed a series of collaborative  
measures on defence, foreign policy, security, business  
and the economy and science and innovation. The  
bilateral deployment of 150 soldiers within Enhanced  
Forward Presence, which has been mentioned, is good  
news.

The Governments also agreed to sign a defence  
co-operation treaty—let us be clear that it will not be  
like 1939; we will hold to and enhance this one  
—to strengthen UK-Polish industry co-operation, to  
co-ordinate opportunities to support the growth of UK  
and Polish small businesses, to showcase UK-Polish  
research collaboration, to increase academic exchange  
and to continue to co-operate to tackle global challenges  
including energy security, counter-terrorism and cyber-  
crime. They agreed to broaden and deepen our country-  
to-country dialogue by establishing an annual British-  
Polish civil society forum in 2017, bringing together UK  
and Polish academia, businesses and think-tanks to  
enhance the vibrant Polish community in the UK,  
including in my constituency.

I will conclude, because I am conscious that others  
want to speak. There will clearly be an opportunity to  
foster relations after Brexit. It is essential that we do so,  
especially on defence strategies, building on the history  
of our two nations. It can and should be done, inside or  
outside Europe, whatever the case may be. That is the  
feeling coming from Polish Government officials, and it  
is clear that the Brexit Minister is aware of and working  
on it. I encourage him and everyone here, including this  
Minister, to keep the House aware of the relationship  
between the two nations and enable it to grow.

227WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

228WH

10.11 am

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con): I think my hon. Friend  
the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel  
Kawczynski) missed out from his list of trade envoys  
our brilliant trade envoy to Nigeria—I cannot imagine  
who has that job. I just refresh his memory on that.

I, too, will start with a history lesson, although not  
one that goes back as far as the second world war. Let  
me go back to the time of Mrs Thatcher and the setting  
up of what became known as the Know How Fund,  
Britain's technical assistance programme to central and  
eastern Europe. The fund, of which I was a board  
member, started in Poland, because the British Government  
saw the attractions of Poland and the innate spirit of  
entrepreneurial activity there, and decided that they  
would work with individual Polish organisations—not  
governmental organisations—to take reforms forward.  
I spent many years afterwards doing non-exciting things  
such as trying to import British accounting, law and  
stock exchange and banking practices to Poland, with  
some great success. That is why so many British companies  
feel comfortable doing business in Poland now.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** Of course I recognise the role  
that my hon. Friend undertakes as the excellent trade  
envoy for Nigeria. I agree wholeheartedly about the  
initial support that Britain gave to Poland after the  
communist era in the form of technology transfer and  
support in setting up institutions. He will, of course,  
agree that Britain was at the forefront of ensuring that  
the Paris Club nations rescinded many of Poland's  
communist era debts.

**John Howell:** I agree. The point that I would make is  
that it is a fundamentally good way of transferring  
British technical assistance, for the benefit of both  
countries, as it transpires. It makes the other countries  
much more receptive and makes it easier for British  
companies to operate there, and it certainly improves  
the activities in those countries.

The involvement with Poland goes back more years  
than I care to remember, but it has not stopped there. I  
still have a great deal of involvement with Poland and  
Polish MPs. It is worth remembering that Poland supplies  
many Members of Parliament to the European  
Conservatives Group at the Council of Europe. In a  
post-Brexit world, the Council of Europe goes far beyond  
the 27 EU members, with a full membership of 47. That  
says a lot about the Council's interest in human rights,  
democracy and the rule of law. I have heard Polish  
members of the Council of Europe participate in many  
debates on refugees, and I know full well that they  
understand the needs of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees  
in Europe, because they have said so in public debate.  
The point that they make balances good practice across  
Europe and seeing the refugee pattern as a whole with  
keeping an eye on what Poland can take for itself.

My hon. Friend mentioned that Prince William had  
been to Poland recently; Donald Trump was there as  
well, which led to many protests. There have also been  
protests about the court reforms that the current Polish  
Government are undertaking. Will the Minister comment  
onthose?Thedifficultywiththecourtreforms,according  
to the opposition, is that the Government there are  
seeking more power over the courts, trying to end the  
separation of powers within Poland and introducing

more rules to allow members of courts to be chosen by  
parliamentarians. Is that compatible with the country's  
continued membership of the Council of Europe and its  
commitment to democracy?

My experience with Poland goes back many years,  
and I hope that it will continue for many more years to  
come. It is a place full of great entrepreneurs who  
contribute to our lives every day.

10.16 am

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): It is nice to  
have a positive discussion about Poles in this Chamber—  
not polls suggesting that Hillary Clinton could or could  
not have won; not polls suggesting that we will or  
will not stay in the European Union; not, dare I say,  
polls suggesting a landslide majority. Here is a positive  
debate that we parliamentarians can have about Poles in  
this country and the relationship between Poland and  
this United Kingdom of ours.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and  
Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski)—indeed, my hon. Friend—  
who is chairman of the all-party parliamentary group  
on Poland. On being elected to this House, he could  
have set aside any labels that people might attach to  
him, saying that he is just a constituency representative,  
but he stands up passionately and fervently for positive  
relations between this United Kingdom and Poland. I  
am sure that the Minister will give him due credit for the  
work that he undertakes in this House.

I have a number of points to direct to the Minister. I  
recognise that two of them probably do not fall within  
his bailiwick, but I hope that he will at least undertake  
to consider them. First, it is great news that for the first  
time, Belfast will have a permanent Polish consular  
service. A property is under construction at the moment,  
and for the first time, that service will be available to all  
the Polish nationals who have made Belfast their home.

It is appropriate to place on record our appreciation  
for the decades of dedicated service given by Jerome  
Mullen, honorary consul for Poland in Northern Ireland.  
He is a quiet champion who has often been thrust into  
difficult circumstances when there have been inter-  
community tensions. He has stood up passionately for  
Polish people in Northern Ireland and represented them.  
I hope that the Minister will take it upon himself to pay  
tribute to Jerome and the work that he has done in his  
capacity as an honorary consul and representative.

The battle of Britain has been mentioned. I think  
that it is appropriate to highlight that, whenever Polish  
airmen came to this country in exile, they were first  
offered the opportunity to serve under the British flag,  
wear British uniforms and participate as reservists only.  
Equipment was in short supply, but there is a wonderful  
story that the *Belfast Telegraph* set up a public fundraising  
campaign. The idea was to raise £7,500 to buy one  
Spitfire, but the campaign got £88,633 16s 5d and  
bought 17 Spitfires, including for the Polish airmen of  
the 315 Squadron—the Dublinski squadron, which my  
hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)  
referred to. Those airmen served our country, their own  
country and their aspirations for Europe so well and so  
diligently. Their record pertains to this day.

I met a number of people during the election campaign  
who raised concerns about this country's decision to  
leave the European Union. I recognise that dealing with  
those concerns falls naturally to the Home Office, but as

229WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

230WH

part of fostering good relations, I think it is appropriate  
that I raise them today. One Polish national, who has  
been living in Belfast for 15 years, travels home every six  
weeks, flying through Birmingham under a Polish passport.  
Every time he re-enters Belfast, he is stopped to have his  
credentials checked. This is an EU national who has  
freedomofmovement,travellingfromoneUnitedKingdom  
city, Birmingham, to another, Belfast. There is a  
constitutional issue when someone in his position is not  
allowed to go down the EU national route—the route  
we all use when we go on holiday—but is separated off  
and has to prove his credentials. That needs to be raised  
with Border Force and the Home Office.

The second concern is from a gentleman who has  
been a Belfast veterinarian for 10 years. He employs  
13 people and has totally established residency in the  
city of Belfast.

**Sir Alan Duncan:** Just for clarification, could the hon.  
Gentleman explain his constituent's visa entry problem?  
If he is an EU citizen, he can go down the EU route. I  
am puzzled by the problem that the hon. Gentleman is  
explaining to the House.

**Gavin Robinson:** That is the conundrum. He should  
naturally go down the route for EU nationals, as we do  
when we go to Spain, Poland or anywhere else in the  
EU, but he is directed out of it as a Polish national.  
Whatever has happened since the decision to leave the  
European Union, he is being subjected to controls that I  
think are inappropriate—the Minister's response indicates  
that he agrees—and that need to be investigated.

An applicant for British citizenship needs to have  
held a residency card for one year. My office has been  
contacted by two constituents, Polish nationals who  
have been in Belfast for many years and have established  
businesses and families, because their applications for  
British citizenship were turned down even though they  
had held residency cards for a year. An unduly onerous  
constraint is being placed on people who have chosen  
the United Kingdom as their home, such as those two  
Polish nationals. They have chosen Belfast as their  
home, lived there for more than 10 years and attained  
residency cards. At the time when they were turned  
down for British citizenship, they met the criteria to be  
in this country.

As representatives of the people in this country, we  
need to resolve these niggling issues collectively, because  
we do not want leaving the European Union to be a  
bumpy ride. We want to make it as smooth as possible  
and build on the strong relations between the United  
Kingdom and Poland.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman  
for his role in the all-party group on Poland; he is a very  
active member of the group who has many Polish  
citizens living in his constituency. I thank him for his  
support and encourage him to come to the Belvedere  
Forum, which is hosted in Poland and brings together  
people from different walks of life to promote bilateral  
relations. I will talk to him about it another time, but I  
very much hope he gets involved.

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** In the interests of time,  
the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson)  
may wish to treat that as a rhetorical intervention.

**Gavin Robinson** *indicated assent.*

10.24 am

**John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk)  
(Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) on securing  
this important debate. I understand that its focus is on  
the future, but I hope I will be forgiven for using it as an  
opportunity to promote my constituency's shared history  
with Poland. As the Member for a Scottish constituency,  
I would have preferred the debate's title to refer to  
“British-Polish relations”, but I will forgive my hon.  
Friend for that oversight.

There is a strong link between Scotland—particularly  
the area I represent in the Scottish borders—and Poland.  
After the fall of France in May 1940, the 1st Polish  
Armoured Division was established in Duns in my  
constituency. It trained in Berwickshire before taking  
part in the Normandy landings. After the war and the  
Communist takeover in Poland, many Polish soldiers in  
the west were unwilling to return to a country where  
their personal freedom was far from assured, so many  
settled in the UK, including a relatively large number in  
the Scottish borders. That link can still be seen today in  
the “Great Polish Map of Scotland”, which was the  
brainchild of Polish war veteran Jan Tomasik, who  
lived in Galashiels. It stands near Peebles, just outside  
my constituency, and is thought to be the world's largest  
terrain relief model.

Another famous Polish migrant was Wojtek, the beer-  
drinking, cigarette-eating, ammunition-carrying brown  
bear that was officially enlisted in the Polish army and  
fought in the Italian campaign before being stationed  
near Hutton in Berwickshire. In Duns, which is twinned  
with the Polish town of Žagan, a statue of Wojtek was  
unveiled by the mayor of Žagan last year after a blessing  
by a Polish priest. The statue stands as a reminder of  
the important link between our communities.

To this day, there remains a sizeable Polish community  
in the Scottish borders—around 1,300 people, according  
to the most recent census data. Their contribution  
cannot be overstated: they work hard, integrate well  
and add some cultural diversity to the borders. Hawick's  
Saturday Polish school, which offers courses to Polish  
and English-speaking adults, is a great example of how  
the community does well at integrating while maintaining  
and promoting its own culture. I know that there is  
some anxiety among the community about its future as  
the UK leaves the European Union. Ensuring that Poles  
continue to feel welcome here is an absolute necessity. I  
am pleased that securing the rights of EU migrants is  
one of the first priorities of the negotiations; I look  
forward to the situation being resolved as quickly as  
possible.

Looking to the future, there is much we can do to  
improve and build on the special relationship that the  
UK has with Poland. As one of the fastest-growing  
economies in the EU and one of our key allies, Poland  
will have an important role to play in the forthcoming  
negotiations. I am encouraged by the establishment of  
annual bilateral summits between the two countries,  
the first of which took place last year. The focus should  
be on pursuing the measures agreed at those meetings,  
particularly on defence co-operation, and further work  
to strengthen industry co-operation and small business  
growth in our two countries. It is clear that Poland  
recognises that our leaving the EU does not mean  
that our important trade and defence links should  
be compromised.

231WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

232WH

*[John Lamont]*

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Shrewsbury and Atcham again on securing this important  
debate, and I am grateful for having had the opportunity  
to say a few remarks. I am confident that our relationship  
with Poland will continue to strengthen and will continue  
to be as positive as it has been in the past.

10.28 am

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am pleased to  
begin the winding-up speeches in this debate. To pick up  
on an earlier comment from the hon. Member for  
Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont), I  
wondered whether I would be allowed to take part in a  
debate on Angles and Poles. However, tracing the migration  
routes on a map apparently proves that when the Angles  
came over from northern Europe, those who turned  
north were known as the acute ones, while those who  
turned south were known as the obtuse ones. That may  
explain quite a lot.

I want to highlight two aspects of the debate. First, it  
reminds us of the critical and decisive role that Polish  
servicemen and women played in ensuring that the  
United Kingdom did not fall under Nazi rule in the  
1940s. Second, it gives us the opportunity to celebrate  
the contribution of just a small number of Polish nationals  
and people of Polish descent in and around my constituency.  
We have heard a lot of reminders today about the part  
that Poland played during the second world war. I have  
to say that I think there has been a massive failing in  
how we have taught not only our children, but ourselves,  
the history of these islands.

During my relatively short time here in Parliament, I  
have heard MPs in the main Chamber talking about  
how Britain—or, sometimes, England—stood alone against  
the Nazi menace. The simple fact is that if Britain had  
stood alone, Britain would have fallen. The United  
Kingdom would not have stood up permanently against  
the force of the Nazis without the support of service  
people from Poland and many other countries.

**Stephen Pound:** The hon. Gentleman is making an  
extremely important point. It seems that the links between  
Poland and this country, which were forged in blood—those  
links of fraternity and shared struggle—are so powerful  
that they can never be broken. Was he in the House  
when his hon. Friend, the hon. Member for West  
Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes), spoke about  
the Clydebank blitz, when an entire section of a great  
city was flattened and the most potent response to the  
blitzkrieg was from Polish destroyers in the Clyde at the  
time, which were similar to the Blyskawiza, the destroyer  
that sunk the Bismarck? This connection between us  
and the Poles is far too strong ever to be threatened.  
Does he agree that we need to tell more people about  
this glorious, joyful, courageous, magnificent history of  
Poles in the UK?

**Peter Grant:** I am very grateful for that intervention;  
it means I can now take out several parts of my own  
speech.

**Stephen Pound:** Forgive me.

**Peter Grant:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman made  
those comments more eloquently and probably more  
briefly than I would have done, so I am grateful to him.

We have already heard that it was a Polish squadron  
that was the best in the entire RAF at doing what the  
fighter squadrons were there to do, which was to shoot  
down Nazi aircraft. In the early 1940s, one in every six  
bomber crews in Bomber Command was Polish. In  
total, 19,000 Poles served in the RAF. The contribution  
that Poles made in helping to crack the Enigma code  
has already been highlighted. Poles also played a crucial  
role in taking Monte Cassino, it was the Poles who  
eventually sank the Bismarck, and the Poles were the  
only people to shoot down Luftwaffe bombers during  
the worst night of the blitz of Clydebank.

The list goes on and on, and those are only the parts  
of the history that we are allowed to know, because we  
can be certain that there were things done behind enemy  
lines that will never be made public—not even today—and  
there were also things done on the eastern side of  
Poland that the Soviets, who conquered the country  
after 1945, made sure were never, ever going to be told.

Perhaps the darkest of those stories, which has  
not been mentioned yet, is the deliberate massacre of  
22,000 Polish soldiers—prisoners of war—under the  
direct orders of Stalin. It was an attempted genocide.  
The motive was to rid Poland of any potential leader, so  
that even after the war Poland would not be in a  
position to stand up to military conquest from the east.  
One of the great tragic ironies of the second world war  
is that we went into it to defend Poland from a military  
invader, but at the end Britain and the United States  
handed Poland back to an even worse dictator than the  
one who originally invaded on 1 September 1939.

It has not been mentioned today but it must be put  
on the record again that there are more Polish nationals  
recorded in the Righteous Among the Nations than  
those of any other nationality anywhere on Earth.  
More than 6,000 Polish citizens risked arrest, torture  
and death for themselves or their families to save Jews  
from the holocaust. That should also be remembered.

I want to talk about the Silent Unseen, the Polish  
secret resistance, who have very strong connections with  
Fife. Many of them lived just across the constituency  
border at Silverburn House in Leven and in Largo  
House. General Sikorski was headquartered for part of  
the war at Tulliallan, in the far west of Fife. I am  
delighted that thanks to my good friend and constituent  
MaciejDokurno,workingalongsidethePolishconsulate,  
the Polish Embassy and others, the contribution that  
the Silent Unseen made to the war effort is now—only  
now—beginning to be recognised.

One of the great heroes or heroines of the Polish  
resistance was Elzbieta Zawacka—her name is often  
anglicised as Elizabeth Watson—who was the only female  
member of the Silent Unseen. She was arrested and  
imprisoned by the Soviet authorities as a British agent  
and spent a significant part of her life in prison. After  
she was released, she continued to work for the liberation  
of Poland and was an active member of the Solidarity  
movement. Thanks to her, Poland was eventually liberated,  
not in 1945 but almost 50 years later, when the people of  
Poland were finally given the right to choose their own  
Government and their own future.

That act of handing Poland over to the Soviets at the  
end of the war is something that we can never allow  
ourselves to forget. We have heard a lot today about the  
enormous debt of gratitude that we all owe to Poland  
for what Poles did for us for during the war, but we

233WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

234WH

should never forget our debt of remorse for what we did  
to them and their country afterwards. I believe it was  
one of the darkest days in the 20th-century history of  
the United Kingdom.

As I have said, a lot of the history of the Poles during  
the war was never really given its proper place, sometimes  
for genuine reasons of national security, and sometimes  
because the Soviet Union did not want to recognise  
anything that had happened, and certainly not the  
massacre at Katyn, for example. The Soviet Union did  
not want to recognise that those who fought for Poland  
under the command of British forces were not enemy  
agents but troops fighting against the Nazis as well.

A lot of people—some of whom are in the Chamber  
today—are trying to make sure that this story is told  
and continues to be told, as it deserves to be. When I  
learned that I was going to speak in this debate, I put a  
wee post on my Facebook page, saying that if there was  
anything that people wanted me to raise, they should  
please let me know. I have had any number of comments  
on the page and by email giving the names of Polish  
people who my constituents have lived beside, worked  
beside, been treated by in hospitals, been served by in  
shops, and so on. That makes it very clear that the  
Polish nationals in Fife are welcome, and I hope they  
will always be made welcome.

I received a message from someone I did not know  
called Slawek Fejfer. When I saw the Polish spelling, I  
wondered whether it was a pseudonym, because I thought  
it was somebody who lived in Fife. He asked me particularly  
to raise the fact that Polish nationals do not have the  
right to vote in most UK elections. I was pleased to be  
able to remind him that EU nationals can vote in  
elections that are under the control of the Scottish  
Government, and I sincerely hope that all the elections  
in the United Kingdom will soon follow suit, because it  
seems to me that we do not vote for what or where we  
have been, but for where we want to go together. It is  
only right that those who have chosen to make their  
future part of our future should have a full say in that  
future.

I checked up to find out whether Slawek's was a  
genuine name. Not only did I find that it is genuine;  
apparently he lives in a place called Shrewsbury—I have  
never heard of that place before. I hope his constituency  
MP, the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham  
(Daniel Kawczynski), is listening to his concerns and  
will support his demand that he and his family should  
have the right to vote—possibly for the sitting MP—next  
time the opportunity comes along.

To finish, the greatest recognition that we can give to  
our Polish colleagues and friends now is to allow them  
to continue to play a full part in the nations that they  
have chosen to call home. It is almost exactly a year to  
the day since we had a similar debate here in Westminster  
Hall. At that time, the denial or the delaying of the  
granting of the right of Polish nationals to live here  
permanently took up a great part of that debate. Despite  
that being one of the top priorities for the Brexit  
negotiating team, it has still not happened, and I cannot  
understand why. We have had comforting and reassuring  
words; we do not yet have a legally binding guarantee. I  
would like the Minister to tell us today that that legally  
binding guarantee will come and will be unconditional.

I do not understand why the leader of the United  
Kingdom Government cannot say today what the leader  
of the Scottish Government said over a year ago to our

Polish nationals and nationals of other European countries  
who live here among us. What I want the UK Government  
to say to them is what the Scottish Government have  
already said to them: “This is your home. This is where  
you belong. We want you to stay for as long as you and  
your family want to stay here with us.”

10.39 am

**Mr Khalid Mahmood** (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab):  
I thank the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham  
(Daniel Kawczynski) for securing this debate. Before I  
go any further, I pay my condolences to the parents of  
Dagmara Przybysz, who was bullied and suffered a  
racist attack. She is not the only person who has been  
treated in that way. A significant number of cases of  
racist treatment of Poles have led to injuries and deaths.  
I wholly condemn such behaviour and all of us in this  
place should condemn any form of racist attack against  
any individual. As I say, I pay my condolences to  
Dagmara's family and all those who are supporting  
them.

A lot of Members have mentioned the statistics relating  
to the Polish community in the UK; let me see whether I  
can clarify some of the issues. The latest figures from  
the Office for National Statistics show that in 2015 an  
estimated 831,000 residents of the UKhad been born in  
Poland. An estimated 916,000 people resident in the  
UK are of Polish nationality. If we get the figures  
together, it gives us a framework. A 2013 analysis of the  
2011 census conducted by the Office for National Statistics  
reported that Polish was the second most spoken language  
in England, after English. It is not just Harry and  
William. About 546,000 people—1% of thepopulation—  
describe it as their main language.

As well as the Polish nationals who have come to the  
UK since Poland joined the EU in 2004, a significant  
community was already here of Polish people who  
came to the UK during the second world war. The 1951  
UK census showed that the number of Polish-born  
immigrants quadrupled from before the war to more  
than 160,000. A lot of Members have talked about the  
bravery of the Polish pilots who joined the RAF to fight  
in the battle of Britain. In Birmingham, we have Castle  
Bromwich, where the Spitfire was manufactured. Many  
Polish air crew and pilots who were based there worked  
as mechanics to quickly turn around the Spitfires that  
had been in action. A lot of the pilots fought bravely  
and went into action again and again, every time they  
were required or called upon. I pay tribute to all those  
people. They played a huge role, and that example  
reinforces the role of the Polish community in this country.  
It is why I am utterly appalled by the racist attacks on  
the Polish community, which I wholly condemn.

An issue was raised about the NATO base and Poland.  
I have discussed some of those issues with General Ben  
Hodges, the current NATO commander—the hon. Member  
for Shrewsbury and Atcham talked about Germany and  
where the second NATO base should be—and he said  
that in the event of any action, the logistics of getting  
the mass of equipment and troops to the frontline as  
quickly as possible would be critical. Establishing a  
base in Poland would therefore be a positive thing to do  
and would ensure a strong role for NATO. As part of  
that, it is crucial, in light of what has happened in  
Crimea and the need to protect northern Europe, that  
Poland continues to play an integral role in our NATO  
defences, and I support that.

235WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

236WH

*[Mr Khalid Mahmood]*

The hon. Gentleman raised a significant number of  
issues, one of which was a trade envoy for Poland,  
which would be a positive thing. Members have talked  
about how work in their capacity as trade envoys has  
produced significant support for bilateral relationships.  
Trade envoys help ensure we get more trade on both  
sides and create better relationships. Trade is usually  
one of the better ways to improve relationships, so it is  
important we do that.

The hon. Gentleman talked about being a Polish  
Member of Parliament. Probably the first Polish Member  
of Parliament was Mark Lazarowicz, who represented  
Edinburgh North and Leith, although he is no longer in  
the House. I believe he was the first MP of Polish  
heritage, and he worked hard to represent the community.

Anotherissuethathasbeenraisedishowwegetmore  
investments in companies already involved in Poland. It  
is positive for us to have better trade. Depending on  
how the current Brexit negotiations go, we could be put  
in a very different arena. There are significant issues for  
us to deal with in terms of where Poland stands, what  
happens with Brexit, how we move forward and what  
other agreements there may be. Poland's status within  
the EU means that some of those issues will have to be  
worked out separately.

In December 2016, the inaugural UK-Poland  
intergovernmental consultations were held in London.  
It was the first time that the two Governments held a  
“structured, comprehensive dialogue at Cabinet level.”  
They agreed a series of collaborative measures in defence,  
foreign policy, security, the economy and business, and  
science and innovation. Those measures included:  
“the bilateral deployment of around 150 UK armed service  
personnel to Poland within enhanced Forward Presence. agreement  
to sign a defence cooperation treaty. strengthening of UK/Polish  
industry cooperation. coordinating opportunities to support the  
growth of UK and Polish small businesses. a showcase of UK-Polish  
research collaboration and increased academic exchange. ongoing  
cooperation to tackle global challenges including energy security,  
counter terrorism and cyber crime”.

One issue that needs to be added to the list is the  
status of those in the Polish community in the UK who  
are not registered British citizens. What will happen to  
them? The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State  
for Exiting the European Union are putting proposals  
to the EU in relation to that, but I would be interested  
to hear from the Minister what progress has been made  
since the inaugural meeting in December 2016. The  
citizenship and status of those Poles who live here is  
very important.

Time is limited, so I will come to a conclusion. I  
thank all Members who have participated in this debate,  
particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing  
North (Stephen Pound), who has acted as an assistant.  
Some great interventions have been made throughout  
the debate.

10.47 am

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** I thank my hon. Friend the Member for  
Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) for initiating  
this debate. May I say how much we all appreciate his  
hard work as chair of the very active all-party group  
on Poland?

The UK-Poland relationship is at its strongest in  
living memory, and it is a genuinely strategic partnership.  
That is partly a result of sustained commitment by this  
Government. Perhaps I can give a flavour of the investment  
we have made in building the partnership, while addressing  
as many of the points that Members have raised as  
possible.

My hon. Friend is unique in this House for his Polish  
origins, but there are many Polish links across the UK,  
and I am pleased to have such a strong Polish community  
in my constituency. In Melton Mowbray, the strong  
Polish community dates back to the second world war.  
Most were RAF pilots, but looking at my hon. Friend, I  
am not sure he would ever have been able to fit into a  
Spitfire.

As has been mentioned, Their Royal Highnesses the  
Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are in Poland today,  
celebrating our rich shared history. Today they visit  
Gdansk's Shakespeare theatre, which was built on the  
site of a 17th-century theatre that once hosted touring  
English players performing works of the English  
renaissance. The visit also looks ahead to the future.  
Yesterday Their Royal Highnesses visited Warsaw's new  
centre of digital start-ups, which has very strong links  
to London. They oversaw the final stages of a competition  
among Polish start-ups seeking the chance to develop  
their products in the UK. The successful tech entrepreneurs  
will join the 30,000 businesses Poles have set up in the  
UK. I note that my hon. Friend said that there were  
87,000 such businesses. Let us agree to split the difference  
and say that there are lots of Polish businesses in the  
UK, and we are very pleased with all of them.

My hon. Friend mentioned the problem of EuroEco  
Fuels. I can confirm that our ambassador in Poland has  
raised that case with the Polish authorities; the Foreign  
Office and the Department for International Trade are  
monitoring the case very closely. Also, may I invite hon.  
Members to the excellent UK-Poland Belvedere Forum  
that was mentioned? I was delighted to launch the first  
forum in Warsaw in March; the next forum will be held  
in London next spring.

The strong contribution of the Polish community to  
our economy and society is abundantly clear to all of  
us. It is the driving force behind the deepening relationship  
between our two countries in business, science and  
culture, and is behind the growth in trade that reached  
£15 billion last year. Poland is the UK's leading trade  
partner in central Europe, accounting for 40% of our  
exports to the region. We heard mention of a possible  
trade envoy this morning. I am not aware that we have  
any trade envoys to countries inside the EU, but of  
course it is possible that that may change in due course.

Since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took  
office a year ago, we have enhanced the bilateral relationship  
dramatically. We have established new annual dialogues  
between our Governments and our civil societies to  
build broader, more vibrant and more diverse collaboration.  
We already work together on a range of priorities, from  
tackling modern slavery and serious organised crime to  
the fight against financial fraud. Above all, our mutual  
security interests are central to our co-operation.

Within NATO and beyond, we share a steadfast  
commitmenttoEurope'ssecurityanddefence,demonstrated  
by the deployment in April of 150 British troops now  
stationed in Orzysz. We look to agree a bilateral defence  
treaty to build on that partnership further, because it is

237WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

Anglo-Polish Relations

238WH

not just within our respective borders that our interests  
align. We are working hand in hand with Poland on  
defence and security matters across the globe. That was  
clearly demonstrated in March by the joint visit to  
Ukraine of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary  
and the Polish Foreign Minister, Witold Waszczykowski.  
Further afield, our Governments are committed to the  
Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, and to the  
global coalition to counter Daesh. Poland's election to  
the UN Security Council will see our co-operation  
deepen further once it is in place in January.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and  
Atcham raised the question of a permanent NATO  
base in Poland and whether we can guarantee Poland's  
sovereignty and independence. I want to be crystal clear  
that our commitment to NATO's collective defence and  
Poland's sovereignty is unwavering. Our contribution to  
NATO's enhanced forward presence is an historic  
commitment to Poland. I heard the gratitude of the  
Polish Government for the UK's support directly when  
I met the deputy Defence Minister in Warsaw in March.

This debate has celebrated our close co-operation  
and has raised several pertinent questions. Foremost are  
the rights of EU citizens in the UK. The Government  
have always been clear about the valuable contribution  
that they all make to our country. We have always  
sought to provide as much certainty as possible to the  
3 million EU citizens in the UK, and, crucially, the  
1 million UK nationals in the EU. That is why we have  
put EU and UK nationals first in our exit negotiations.  
We want to reach a reciprocal agreement for EU citizens  
in Britain and UK nationals in Europe as quickly as  
possible. Our detailed proposals represent a fair and  
serious offer to EU citizens. I hope that that will be  
recognised in the EU and that we can reach the agreement  
we seek to protect the interests of all.

I want to say very clearly—this is perhaps the most  
important immediate issue facing us—that I, the  
Government and all of us utterly condemn any violence  
against Polish people in the UK. I have addressed  
Polish audiences on this issue and cannot overstate the  
point too much. Poles are valued, and we condemn and  
deplore any violence against them. When it is motivated  
by racial hatred on the back of some kind of EU  
argument, it is absolutely disgusting, reprehensible and  
unacceptable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and  
Atcham mentioned the tragic suicide of a Polish girl,  
whose inquest has just taken place in Truro. One incidence  
of hate crime is one too many. The Prime Minister has  
been absolutely clear that hate crime of any kind has  
absolutely no place in British society. I can reassure  
Members that we have the most robust legal framework  
in the world for tackling the issue. The Government  
published a hate crime action plan last year that includes  
working with schools to equip teachers and parents to  
challenge and report hatred, as well as new funding for  
projects to tackle the problem.

The Nord Stream pipeline was mentioned. The issue  
is that it would go directly from Russia to Germany,  
bypassing Ukraine, where there are existing pipelines. I  
reassurehon. Members that the UK remains committed  
to ensuring a diverse and strong energy market. It is  
clear to all of us that reliance on any single supplier  
represents a risk to Europe's energy supply. That is why  
we are working with our European partners to minimise

that risk, and any new developments must be fully  
compliant with EU legislation. To that end, we are  
watching carefully developments in the Senate, which  
might reinforce sanctions against Russia, which would  
have implications for the pipeline.

Myhon. FriendtheMemberforHenley(JohnHowell)  
mentioned constitutional reform. I can assure the House  
that Her Majesty's Government follow developments in  
Poland closely. The rule of law is a vital part of every  
democracy. In active democracies, rule of law issues  
such as these are best dealt with in the countries concerned.  
As members of the EU they must of course comply  
with the high standards we expect. At the May General  
Affairs Council, Poland and the European Commission  
agreed to resume dialogue on the issue. It is not for me  
to prejudge the outcome of that dialogue, but Members  
can rest assured that there is a clear and important  
focus on the issue that my hon. Friend raised.

The hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson)  
mentioned the consular work in Belfast, which we  
acknowledge. The Poles are doing that very well. As my  
intervention implied, I was puzzled by his point about  
the Border Force entry requirements for a Pole, as an  
EU citizen travelling between cities in the UK. I urge  
him to take that up with the Home Secretary. In order  
to assist that process I will ask my office to forward to  
the Home Secretary an account of this debate so that  
they can be alerted to the issue he has raised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and  
Atcham also raised the prospect of Poland being threatened  
with fines or penalties for not complying with the  
refugee relocation mechanism. The UK continues to  
support refugees and host communities through significant  
development aid and by resettling the most vulnerable  
people from the region. We are also working internationally  
to tackle the drivers that cause people to leave their  
homes in the first place. Unmanaged migration to Europe  
is a shared and complex problem. We are committed to  
working with all our European partners to tackle the  
migration crisis.

The UK and Poland have long been close allies and  
friends. As we prepare to leave the European Union, a  
strongpartnershipbetweenourcountriesismoreimportant  
now than ever. That is why we have established new  
dialogues and re-energised relations. The unparalleled  
contacts between our peoples are at the heart of our  
partnership, and they represent our greatest opportunity.  
The children of Poles who have chosen to make their  
lives in the United Kingdom have made friends in  
neighbourhoods and classrooms across our country. As  
they enter the workforce—in business, academia, the  
sciences, the arts and even politics—they will undoubtedly  
feel a strong affinity to both Poland and the UK. That  
provides a catalyst to drive forward a stronger UK-Poland  
relationship. I am sure I reflect the feelings of hon.  
Members of all parties when I say I am determined to  
make the most of that opportunity

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Mr Kawczynski, you  
have 30 seconds for a final comment.

10.59 am

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I am grateful to all hon. Members  
who have contributed to thisdebate,andIamextremely  
grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for his

239WH

Anglo-Polish Relations

18 JULY 2017

240WH

*[Daniel Kawczynski]*

comprehensive response to the points raised. Iampleased  
thatwenowhaveanannualAnglo-Polish—sorry,British-  
Polish—summit. I look forward to working with the  
Minister in future on British-Polish relations.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Will Members leaving  
the Chamber please do so quickly and quietly?

Drones: Risk to Aviation

11 am

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the risk to UK aviation from  
drones.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Sir Roger. On Sunday 2 July, the runway at Gatwick  
Airport was closed twice—once for nine minutes and  
once for five minutes—as a result of the incursion of a  
drone. Five flights were diverted to other airports and  
several others were put into holding patterns, at great  
cost and inconvenience to airlines, the airport and,  
most importantly, passengers. In 2014, Airprox Board  
investigations into aircraft near misses with drones found  
that there were three, of which one was of the most  
serious category A. In 2015, the figure had risen to 27,  
with 13 category A incidents. In 2016, it had risen to 71,  
with 26 category A incidents—a huge increase in the  
most serious type of incidents. I secured this debate to  
find out from the Government what action they are  
taking and considering to counter that increasing threat  
to the lives of aircraft crew, passengers and those living  
under flight paths.

I am not anti-drone, and nor is the British Airline  
Pilots Association. I thank BALPA, along with the  
Civil Aviation Authority, Heathrow Airport, National  
Air Traffic Services and the House Library, for providing  
information on this subject. When properly and safely  
controlled, drones are of great value in, for example,  
precision agriculture, inspection of power cables, aerial  
photography, mapping and police work. Just this morning,  
I spoke with a constituent who runs Cloudbase Images  
Ltd. He was recently asked to carry out some work in  
the proximity of an airport. He contacted air traffic  
control there and they discussed a safe way of carrying  
out that work, which meant modifying the client's requests.  
That is an example of how drones should and can be  
operated safely and professionally.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon.  
Gentleman for bringing this issue to Westminster Hall  
for consideration. He mentioned the British Airline  
Pilots Association, which has warned that the use of  
drones could cause what it refers to as a catastrophic  
crash. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that now is the  
time to step in and, perhaps, draw up the protocols used  
by the firm that he referred to and make them part of  
aviation law? There is not much sense in closing the  
door after the horse has bolted. Now is the time to get  
the protocols in order.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for raising that point, and I will come on to it. He is  
absolutely right. One of the reasons for having this  
debate is to find out what the Government are doing  
and urge them to take action quickly where it is necessary.

My constituent was concerned because the airport  
said that very few people contacted them, even though  
it is adjacent to a big city where a lot of professional  
drone work is carried out. He was worried that others  
were not taking steps to contact air traffic control or to  
make the appropriate safety arrangements.

There has been enormous growth in the ownership of  
drones. Some 530,000 were bought in 2014 alone. Of  
course, the vast majority are for leisure use. When used  
responsibly, they are a great asset. They encourage

241WH

Drones: Risk to Aviation

18 JULY 2017

Drones: Risk to Aviation

242WH

interest in aviation and aerodynamics and lead to  
innovation. But there is also irresponsible or downright  
dangerous use, which poses a risk to aircraft and passengers.  
The key is regulation and enforcement that protects  
aviation without seriously damaging what is becoming  
an important sector of the economy.

Drones are currently subject to the Civil Aviation  
Act 1982 and the Air Navigation Order 2016, which  
stipulate—for all drones—that they must not “endanger  
persons or property” and that whoever is controlling  
the drone

“must maintain direct, unaided visual contact”  
at all times. Drones weighing more than 7 kg must not  
be flown at a height of more than 400 feet, or 500 metres  
horizontally, nor in

“Class A, C, D or E airspace”

or

“within an aerodrome traffic zone during the notified hours of  
watch of the air traffic control unit”.

To operate a drone outside those limits, or to carry out  
aerial work—even non-commercial work—requires an  
operating permit from the Civil Aviation Authority.  
That permission is given on a case-by-case basis by the  
CAA. By September 2016, 2,500 permits had been  
issued, which strikes me as a small number compared  
with the number of people who I believe are carrying  
out work with drones at the moment, whether commercial  
or non-commercial. There are further requirements for  
someone who wishes to operate regular flights with a  
drone. The CAA will also wish to be assured of the  
competence of the person piloting the drone.

I wonder how many people who purchase drones for  
recreational or commercial use are fully aware of the  
requirements. I spoke with someone recently—someone  
who I and presumably they themselves would regard as  
responsible—who had lost control of a drone. It had  
flown more than 10 miles at a height of 100 metres  
before running out of power.

So my first question to the Minister is what work is  
being done to ensure that all purchasers of drones,  
whether for leisure or commercial use, are aware of  
existing regulations. Although I believe that further,  
tighter regulation is essential—I will come on to that—the  
Department and CAA can do much right now.

Looking ahead to what needs to be done, the first  
task is to establish how much damage the collision of a  
drone with an aircraft would cause. The Government,  
together with the CAA, BALPA and the Military Aviation  
Authority, have carried out research on that and the  
report is complete; I understand that it will be published  
soon. When will that be and what action does the  
Minister intend to take on publication?

From speaking to those involved in this area, I understand  
that the risks arising from a drone impact are likely to  
be serious, even with very small drones, and that there is  
a particular risk to helicopters, military or civilian, such  
as those used by the police, search and rescue or air  
ambulance services. The possibility of a drone strike is  
now listed by the Joint Helicopter Command of our  
armed forces as one of the five greatest risks to life in its  
sphere of operations.

BALPA believes that a drone of only a few tens  
of grams could cause serious damage in a collision  
at speed. The most popular drone weighs 1.5 kg—

1,500 grams. We will need careful and comprehensive  
regulation covering all but the smallest and least powerful  
of drones.

**Richard Burden** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): The  
hon. Gentleman is making a telling speech about the  
need for action. Is it not time for some Government  
action? They consulted on possible regulations some  
time ago now; the consultation finished months ago.  
They were then waiting for a framework of regulation  
from the European Aviation Safety Agency. That was  
published in May. It is not too much to expect Ministers  
to come forward with a proper action plan for the  
appropriate regulation of drones, which could promote  
safety and at the same time safeguard the innovation  
that the responsible use and production of drones can  
provide.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but  
I know that the Minister takes the matter extremely  
seriously and that the Government are looking at it. It is  
important that it is taken up quickly, because technology  
moves on. People are buying drones in the thousands  
every week and they need to know what the situation is.  
Airprox incidents are occurring at more than one a  
week at the moment, and some of them are extremely  
serious. That is not just in the UK but across the world.  
The UK could be a world leader in ensuring safety in  
this area.

I believe that we will need careful and comprehensive  
regulation covering all but the very smallest and least  
powerful of drones. In other words, it is likely that  
almost all drones sold will need to be covered by specific  
regulations, not just those over 7 kg, which are currently  
subject to the stricter rules. As the hon. Member for  
Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) said—he  
speaks from great experience, having looked at these  
matters for the Opposition—the Government published  
a consultation in December 2016 with a final date of  
March 2017. He also rightly referred to the European  
publication from May this year. It is time that we had a  
response. One of the major reasons for my calling this  
debate is to give the Government the opportunity to set  
out the timetable for their response.

It has become clear to me as I have looked at this  
problem that there is no one solution. More regulation  
needs to be introduced urgently, and I am grateful to  
BALPA for sharing with me the work that it has done  
on this issue.

First, we need compulsory regulation for all drones.  
Perhaps there could be a de minimis exemption for the  
very smallest and least powerful, but, as I said, BALPA  
reckons that even a drone of a few tens of grams can  
cause serious damage, so it would have to be de minimis  
in the strict meaning of that phrase. It is essential that  
any drone capable of causing damage to aircraft and on  
the ground is registered to a named individual on purchase,  
and the registration should be transferred if the drone is  
sold on. All drones should be sold with a copy of the  
drone code, and the registration process should include  
a statement that the owner has read and understood it,  
and agrees to abide by it, so that it is taken seriously by  
purchasers of all drones.

Secondly, if somebody wishes to operate drones above  
a certain size and capability—again, I suggest it should  
be a fairly small size, given the potential damage of a

243WH

Drones: Risk to Aviation

18 JULY 2017

Drones: Risk to Aviation

244WH

*[Jeremy Lefroy]*

small drone on impact—they should be required to  
acquire a licence that shows their competence to do so.  
Thirdly, there should be mandatory geo-fencing around  
airports and other sensitive areas, such as prisons, so  
that drones are prevented from flying in places that  
would create significant safety risks.

Fourthly—I believe this needs to be looked at carefully—  
third-party liability insurance should be considered for  
all registered drones. It is clear that even relatively small  
drones are capable of causing serious damage or injury.  
Accidents do happen, and people should know that  
they are protected from potential bankruptcy when  
they are buying something that does not cost them very  
much in the first place. In addition, if people have to  
take out insurance, they think about what they are  
doing much more carefully than they would if they  
think there are no risks involved. Buying insurance  
shows that a person knows there are serious risks.  
Finally, investment in technology is required to allow  
air traffic controllers to see drones when a conflict with  
manned aircraft is possible.

As always, there is a balance to be struck when  
introducing tighter regulation. However, consider how  
safe aviation is now, compared with 50 years ago. That  
was brought about by sensible and effective regulation,  
both in the manufacture of aircraft and engines and in  
the control of airspace. The same must apply to drones.

11.13 am

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** It is a pleasure to respond to this brief debate. I  
thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy  
Lefroy) for bringing these matters to the House's attention.  
He is right that they are salient. His concernment about  
drones is a result not of any amaritude, but of a fear of  
risk and an understanding that drones may not only  
pose problems but may have beneficial uses. I shall  
speak about both those things in a moment.

Before I start to do so, I want to deal with the  
intervention of the hon. Member for Birmingham,  
Northfield (Richard Burden). He is right that it is time  
that we did more. We looked at these matters closely  
and consulted—I shall speak about that in more detail  
in a moment. The Opposition have publicly made it  
clear a couple of times recently that they are happy to  
work with us in looking at what more can be done. I  
have spoken to them privately—I am happy to make  
that known—and I can confirm that that is very much  
our spirit too. As a Parliament, we want to act properly  
and reasonably swiftly to take action before any of the  
fears that I ascribed to my hon. Friend become realities.  
There is a seriousness about this and an intent to act.  
That is what I want to make clear to the Chamber, and  
the intervention of the hon. Member for Birmingham,  
Northfield gives me the opportunity to do so.

Let me deal rather more widely with the issue of  
drones. Of course, we are aware of the risks to safety,  
security and privacy. A misuse of this technology is  
wholly unacceptable, as my hon. Friend said. However,  
it is important to recognise that this is an emerging  
technology with potential benefits. There is a growing  
market as the technology offers the UK opportunities,  
and not just economic ones. The positive use of drones

was well illustrated when, as many here know, the  
firefighters at Grenfell Tower used them after the incident  
to inspect the top floors, which had been deemed too  
unsafe to be inspected by any other means. The west  
midlands fire service has been using drones since 2007  
for assessing sites and for wide-area searches. Drones  
can be used beneficially and safely, and they can increase  
effectiveness and efficiency.

Some airlines are using drones to conduct safety  
inspections of their planes in much less time, making  
the operations more efficient and leading to fewer delays  
on the tarmac for customers. Using pioneering technology  
that improves services and delivers economic benefits is  
a key element of the Government's industrial strategy.  
Drones have the potential in many ways to transform  
the way in which businesses operate and interact with  
their consumers. They have a range of applications. We  
are working with industry to explore those uses, but my  
hon. Friend is right to say that that has to be done  
within a framework that guarantees safety and security.

**Jim Shannon:** The hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy  
Lefroy) and I referred to the British Airline Pilots  
Association, which has asked for a protocol to be put in  
place. Has the Minister had the opportunity to speak to  
it and hear its ideas about how a protocol would work?

**Mr Hayes:** I hope to deal with that later, but if I do  
not, I am more than happy to get back to the hon.  
Gentleman. As this is a short debate, we will not necessarily  
have time to explore all aspects of the subject, and there  
some important matters I want to make absolutely  
clear.

The misuse of drones poses a significant challenge.  
We already have regulations that prohibit some of those  
misuses. Alongside those offences, we can prosecute  
operators for the negligent or malicious use of drones.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford will be aware  
that it is an offence under the Air Navigation Order  
2016 to endanger an aircraft. Those convicted can face  
a prison sentence of up to five years. The order applies  
to all aircraft, including drones, and stipulates that

“a person must not recklessly or negligently cause or permit an  
aircraft to endanger any person or property”.

Under article 94 of the order, the person in charge of a  
drone weighing under 20 kg must maintain direct, unaided  
visual contact with the aircraft to avoid collisions, and  
small drones should not be flown above 400 feet.

My hon. Friend asked whether we can do more. It is  
important to broadcast those measures as widely as  
possible. We have worked with the CAA to do that—I  
shall speak about that—but I accept that there is always  
more to do. I will look again at whether we need to go  
still further with those discussions and with the work  
that results from them and this debate. As you know,  
Sir Roger, I take the view that Westminster Hall debates  
musthaveapurposebeyondtheMinistersimplyrepeating  
what he has said already or affirming Government  
policy; they must help us move that policy on. I will  
happily look again at whether we can do still more.

In addition, the Secretary of State is able to make  
restriction-of-flying regulations as necessary. Flying  
restrictions already prohibit drones from being flown  
over high-risk areas, which are sensitive sites such as  
airports and so on. When incidents occur, drone users  
are for the most part clearly unaware of the rules, or

245WH

Drones: Risk to Aviation

18 JULY 2017

Drones: Risk to Aviation

246WH

recklessly breaking them. The point about awareness  
was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford.  
We need to make people absolutely aware that if they  
behave in a way that is prohibited, they will be pursued,  
and that if they act recklessly, action must be taken. It is  
as simple as that.

We have taken action. We worked with the Civil  
Aviation Authority and the industry to launch safety  
advice via a new drone code and a consumer drone  
website. A Drone Assist app has also been created by  
NATS to educate users about local flying restrictions.  
However, as I have said, one can always do more, so I  
will take a look at that.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** Does the Minister agree that knowing  
who the person is who is responsible for a drone is vital?  
That is the point I made about compulsory registration.  
There is a story—perhaps apocryphal, but perhaps  
not—that quite recently a drone was flown into the  
Shard, in London. People only found out who owned  
the drone when the owner went to retrieve it and asked  
for it back—which strikes me as quite an example of  
chutzpah. Does the Minister agree that registration and  
individual responsibility for drones is critical?

**Mr Hayes:** I have heard the point my hon. Friend  
makes very clearly, and if we are to consider further  
action, that will be one of the areas to look at closely  
and, as I said, urgently. The argument in favour of  
registration is advanced frequently, but it is none the  
worse for that. Certainly, I have heard what he said and  
we will take it into account.

The CAA launched a campaign to get large retailers  
such as Maplin and John Lewis to have drone code  
leaflets alongside drones sales. CAA research demonstrates  
how those efforts have been successful: awareness of the  
drone code has risen by 50% in the six months from  
August 2016 to February 2017.

The Government have also been working with drone  
manufacturers to ensure that airspace restrictions are  
adhered to. The software that implements such a restriction  
is known as geo-fencing, to which my hon. Friend made  
reference. Many of the leading drone manufacturers  
already include forms of geo-fencing capability in their  
drones. For example, DJI, the world's leading drone  
manufacturer, builds geo-fencing into all of its drones.  
As a result, when someone tries to fly a DJI drone in a  
geo-fenced area, the drone either refuses to take off or,  
if already flying, refuses to enter a geo-fenced area and  
instead hovers in place.

My hon. Friend and I have had a private conversation  
on the subject—it is only fair to let the Chamber know  
that—which made clear to me that we both understand  
the significance and value of geo-fencing. It is a good  
example of the industry pioneering new technology  
safely. The Government are working with the industry  
to improve how geo-fencing can be made more secure  
and effective in future. Other wider security measures  
need to be considered, and we will discuss those with  
industry as well.

There is also a cross-Government counter-drones  
group, which has been undertaking a programme of  
work to improve our defences against drones with a  
focus on sensitive and important locations. Many trials  
and demonstrations have taken place to examine the  
applicability of various technological options to detect

and counter the misuse of drones. Work is also being  
done by the Department for Transport in conjunction  
with UK airports and the Centre for the Protection of  
National Infrastructure on implementing operational  
mitigations against drones being launched near an airport.  
Furthermore, for those users who still seek to break the  
rules, we have acted to improve enforcement. We have  
delivered a memorandum of understanding agreed between  
the DFT, the CAA, the Home Office and the police  
with regards to the policing and monitoring of drones.

We heard earlier about the consultation, which took  
place up to March this year, as my hon. Friend the  
Member for Stafford and the hon. Member for  
Birmingham, Northfield mentioned. The consultation  
looked at three key areas: stimulating drone innovation  
and enterprise; ensuring safety and operation within  
the law; and laying the foundations for a developed  
drone market. It set out our firm intention to keep rules  
and regulations at pace with this emerging market and  
to ensure that actions to tackle misuse can be taken.

To be clear, the Government intend to introduce  
further measures once we have fully analysed the evidence  
presented in our consultation process. My hon. Friend  
asked, not unreasonably, when that would be. I have  
assured him previously, and do so now again publicly,  
that it will be very soon indeed. I have also committed  
to the Opposition that I will keep them fully informed  
of that. The approach they have taken on this is a good  
illustration of how Government and Opposition can  
work together. The hon. Member for Birmingham,  
Northfield has been pressing properly, as Oppositions  
should, for the Government to take action, and we will  
do so in the spirit that has been engendered by the  
conversations we have already enjoyed. Let us move  
together as a Parliament on this matter, which stretches  
beyond any party political divide.

It goes without saying that this is a matter of public  
safety, but it is also a matter of not inhibiting the  
beneficial use of drones. It is easy to say, “If we didn't  
have any drones, everything would be fine,” but as I  
have already mentioned in the illustrations I have given  
and the examples I have offered, drones can be used  
productively, helpfully and safely. Nevertheless, the  
framework for the technology has to be in place. As  
with all technological change and innovation, it is a  
challenge for legal frameworks to keep pace with such  
highly dynamic circumstances.

**Richard Burden:** During discussions on the Vehicle  
Technology and Aviation Bill in the last Parliament, the  
Minister said that he hoped to respond to the consultation  
and produce draft regulations in the summer. Are we  
still looking at that kind of timeframe?

**Mr Hayes:** For me, summer is an endless affair—my  
life is a constant summer, with a touch of spring and the  
warm glowing fires of winter—but frankly we need to  
act early this year, and given where we are, that means  
summer. The hon. Gentleman asks the question, perfectly  
reasonably, and I am happy to answer that I hope to be  
able to do something in the summer—if it can be done.  
I want to get it right, as I do not do not want to proceed  
on the basis of hastily doing something that we then  
regret, because this is a challenging and complex area for  
the very reasons of technological change that I mentioned,  
although they are not a reason to do nothing.

247WH

Drones: Risk to Aviation

18 JULY 2017

248WH

**Jeremy Lefroy:** Will the Minister, who is indeed a  
summery person, undertake to publish the report on the  
impact of drones on aircraft during the extended summer  
to which he referred?

**Mr Hayes:** I have talked about the critical role of the  
CAA and about the existing restrictions around airports,  
so there are two points there: first, to ensure that the law  
is in the right place; and, secondly, to ensure that  
enforcement is adequate. As it is about both those  
things, airports in particular, but also other critical  
national infrastructure, will of course need to be taken  
into account in our consultation response and any  
further measures that we might consider.

Shakespeare said in “Henry V”:

“All things are ready if our minds be so”,  
and our mind is ready to take further action. Tennyson,  
the great Lincolnshire poet, said:

“dream not that the hours will last”,

by which he meant that there is a time when we should  
act, and that we should not dream that it will go on  
forever. Notwithstanding my sunny disposition, my eternal  
summer, it is important that we act swiftly, proportionately  
and carefully, but without delay. That is the message  
that I take from this short debate.

In the near future, we will publish the consultation  
response—as I said, in the summer. I hope that will  
address some of the concerns expressed, but we will  
also consider further steps as necessary.

*Question put and agreed to*.

11.29 am

*Sitting suspended*.

Taxi Trade

[PHIL WILSON *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): I beg to move,  
That this House has considered the future of the taxi trade.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Wilson. The black hackney carriage is one of the  
great icons of our capital city, the knowledge of London  
produces the most qualified taxi drivers in the world  
and the licensed taxi trade is a mainstay of public  
transport systems in towns and cities across the UK,  
but unless action is taken, London's famous black taxi  
risks being driven off the road altogether.

The taxi and private hire industry is, in many respects,  
at the cutting edge of an industrial revolution that is  
sweeping the world at unprecedented scale and pace.  
Breakthroughs in technology offer unlimited potential  
to improve our quality of life and revolutionise the way  
we travel, but we have seen on the streets of London  
and other major cities around the world how technological  
advances can be exploited by multinational companies  
that seek to drive competitors off the road with a  
business model based on poor pay and conditions for  
drivers, exploitation of regulatory loopholes and predatory  
pricing that is made possible by huge venture capital  
and aggressive tax avoidance.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): I am  
sure my hon. Friend knows that black cabs are actually  
manufactured in Coventry and on its outskirts. A lot of  
investment—Chinese investment, actually—has gone into  
black cabs over the past few years. The developments  
that he describes may have a consequence for the production  
of black cabs, meaning that a lot of jobs could be at  
stake. I studied the Taylor report, and I noticed that it is  
actually very weak in dealing with that situation. A lot  
of people—not least taxi drivers themselves—are quite  
concerned about the consequences.

**Wes Streeting:** I wholeheartedly agree. My hon. Friend  
can be proud of the role that Coventry's manufacturing  
plays in the licensed taxi industry. My argument is that  
there are two possible futures, both for the manufacturing  
of vehicles and manufacturing jobs, and for other areas  
of the taxi and private hire industry: a bright future or  
an existential crisis. The Government have a clear role  
in ensuring that we head towards a bright future rather  
than a bleak future.

The all-party parliamentary group on taxis, which I  
am proud to chair, was founded with that in mind, to  
ensure that the trade has a strong voice in Parliament.  
For the past six months we have conducted a wide-ranging  
inquiry on the future of the trade, which led to the  
publication of our report, “Lessons from London: The  
future of the UK taxi trade”. I will focus on that report  
and its recommendations.

I am glad to see the Minister here. I know that he  
takes an interest in the future of the trade and in these  
issues, and I look forward to working with him. He will  
be pleased to know that, during our inquiry, we engaged  
with a wide range of stakeholders in and around the  
industry to look at issues such as passenger and public  
safety, the effectiveness of regulation, and the future of  
the taxi trade. I was delighted that an APPG inquiry, as

249WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

250WH

opposed to a Select Committee inquiry, generated such  
interest. We received 115 pieces of written evidence and  
heard from a wide range of witnesses at three oral  
evidence sessions.

I want to place on the record my thanks to that wide  
range of stakeholders, which included the Licensed  
Taxi Drivers Association; United Private Hire Drivers;  
Transport for London; the GMB and Unite trade unions;  
Addison Lee; Gett; mytaxi; the London Taxi Company;  
Guide Dogs UK; and the Chair of the Select Committee  
onCommunitiesandLocalGovernment, myhon.Friend  
the Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts). I also  
want to say a particular thank you to my constituents. It  
would take some time to name all the constituents  
I have had conversations with about this issue—as  
many people know, Ilford North still has a reputation  
for being “green badge valley”—but I particularly thank  
Danny Fresco, Jim Ludlow, Steve Kenton and Sean  
Harris for the time they have taken to engage with me  
throughout my time as their Member of Parliament. It  
is a source of regret that, although Uber was invited to  
give evidence, it chose not to, because it has a direct role  
and responsibility in many of these issues. I hope that  
its level of engagement will change.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his work  
with the all-party group, particularly in producing such  
an excellent report. Does he agree that a lot of the  
report's recommendations are applicable not just in  
London but across the whole of the UK? He will be  
aware that taxi drivers from my constituency in Cardiff,  
and many others, made submissions to the inquiry. The  
group's findings apply to many of the issues that the  
trade faces across the UK.

**Wes Streeting:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right,  
and I really welcome his engagement with the inquiry as  
a Cardiff Member. In many respects, London bears the  
brunt of these issues, but many other towns and cities  
across the country are equally—if differently—affected.  
Our intention when producing the report was to ensure  
that we learned lessons from London but also addressed  
issues that apply across the UK.

**Mr Jim Cunningham:** I am sure my hon. Friend  
realises that the regulations were actually eased some  
years ago, under the coalition Government. That makes  
local authorities powerless to do anything about these  
issues—Coventry, for example, has the same problem  
withUber.Likemyhon.FriendtheMemberforCardiff  
South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty), I have consulted  
trade unions and taxi drivers themselves, and they are  
very concerned.

**Wes Streeting:** My hon. Friend leads me neatly into  
the inquiry's first theme: the effectiveness of regulation.  
Some taxi and private hire vehicle legislation is more  
than 100 years old. It includes the Town Police Clauses  
Act 1847 and, in London, the Metropolitan Public  
Carriage Act 1869 and the London Cab Order 1934. I  
should probably declare that I am a vice-president of  
the Local Government Association and an elected member  
of the London Borough of Redbridge. I strongly agree  
with the Local Government Association and the Law  
Commission that we need a taxi and private hire vehicle  
licensingreformBill.Therehavebeensweepingchanges

across the taxi and private hire industry, and legislation  
and regulation have not effectively caught up. That is  
causing a wide range of issues.

**Julia Dockerill** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con):  
Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Wes Streeting:** I certainly will. I welcome the hon.  
Lady to her place.

**Julia Dockerill:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. He  
mentions looking again at taxi legislation. Does he  
agree that pedicabs, which are something of a problem  
in central London—they have created a lot of concern  
about passenger safety and congestion, particularly in  
the west end—should come within that legislation?

**Wes Streeting:** I wholeheartedly agree. Rickshaws are  
not just a nuisance on the streets of central London that  
add to congestion, but given some of the exorbitant  
prices that their riders propose to charge, they increasingly  
also rip off tourists. I saw a rickshaw outside Parliament  
the other day whose rider was proposing to charge  
£10 for a cycle up the road from Parliament Square to  
Trafalgar Square. That is terrible value for money and  
reflects badly on our city. If tourists want an expert  
guide to take them around London, they should hail a  
black taxi.

Turning to the need for effective regulation, there has  
been an explosion in the number of private hire vehicles  
on the streets of London, and new entrants to the taxi  
and private hire market have emerged. I am in no way  
opposed to competition, and I strongly encourage  
innovation, but the Minister and licensing authorities  
need to address the issue of fair competition. There  
have been calls for improvement. The APPG took evidence  
about the impact of the considerable growth in private  
hire on congestion on the streets of London. Similarly,  
many passenger groups and drivers complain about the  
erratic driving of people who are not properly qualified  
to drive cabs. I commend to the Minister the  
recommendation in our report that licensing regulations  
for private hire vehicles should be updated to include  
mandatory enhanced topographical tests for PHV drivers,  
so that they have some awareness of the local community  
in which they operate.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I commend  
my hon. Friend and the all-party group for the report,  
and I apologise for the fact that I cannot stay for the  
whole debate.

This is also an issue in my constituency and in the  
borough of Trafford. Does he agree that, although it is  
obviously an issue of safety, it is also an issue of  
customer confidence and trust? When unregulated or  
poorly regulated drivers, or drivers who are subject to  
poorly enforced regulation, come into an area that they  
do not know, and where they do not know the customer  
needs, that has an impact on the reputation of the  
whole of the legitimate industry.

**Wes Streeting:** I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, many  
passengers have experienced the frustration of being in  
a car where the driver has their nose in the sat-nav,  
rather than concentrating on the road in the way they  
ought to. Often drivers choose to take routes that the  
passenger, who lives in the area, knows full well will be  
heavily congested, but because the driver lacks basic

251WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

252WH

*[Wes Streeting]*

awareness of the roads around them they end up taking  
routes that are inefficient and add to congestion, which  
delays passengers. That is why we recommend in our  
report that the licensing authorities should produce a  
code of conduct for the use of apps by taxi and private  
hire vehicle drivers, and that the Government should  
consider introducing a national code of conduct with  
basic minimum standards for drivers in all parts of the  
country to adhere to.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): I am grateful to my  
hon. Friend for securing this debate, which is long  
overdue. We really need an in-depth debate on taxi  
licensing, and he is making the argument for why. I  
congratulate him on his review.

My local licensing officer makes a point relevant to  
the one that my hon. Friend is making, talking about  
the problem of:

“Cross-border hiring and control of taxis coming into our  
area. We cannot set the standards for these vehicles and we have  
no authority to enforce...them. We are concerned about the  
impact that this could have on public safety.”

One of my local councils, Rossendale Borough Council,  
was licensing taxis the length and breadth of the United  
Kingdom not so long ago, which affected other authorities.  
That cannot be right.

**Wes Streeting:** I strongly agree with my hon. Friend,  
who leads me neatly on to cross-border hiring, but I  
want to address plying for hire first.

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): I have read the  
report, which is very good. As a former taxi driver, I  
know how taxi drivers operate and the issues that they  
face along with passengers. Cross-border hiring is a  
massive issue. The report says that there has been a 30%  
reduction of income for drivers in London, but in other  
areas it is even bigger. A lot of drivers are leaving the  
trade because other drivers are coming in from other  
authority areas where following regulations and getting  
licenses is easy. There should be a cap not only on  
private hire vehicles—

**Phil Wilson (in the Chair):** Order. I remind the hon.  
Gentleman to keep his intervention short and to ask a  
question, not make a speech.

**Mohammad Yasin:** I am going to do so. I have another  
meeting to go to, so I have to make the point now. Does  
my hon. Friend agree that there should be a cap not  
only on vehicles but on private hire drivers' licences?

**Wes Streeting:** I strongly agree with my hon. Friend,  
and I welcome him to his place in the House. He brings  
with him considerable expertise on this topic and others,  
and he will be a great representative for the people of  
Bedford. He anticipates what I am going to say about  
cross-border hiring and the cap on private hire numbers.  
However, before I do that, I want briefly to pick up one  
issue that has been floating around for some time but  
has yet to be addressed properly.

The Government recognised that the pace of change  
in the taxi and private hire industry necessitated some  
change to legislation and regulations, so they asked the  
Law Commission to do some work on that. In 2014, the

Law Commission produced a report, including a draft  
Bill, in which it identified plying for hire as one of the  
grey areas in need of clarification by legislation.

Many hon. Members will know that under existing  
regulations licensed taxi drivers in London have to  
undergo about 8,000 hours of training to pass the  
knowledge, and only licensed taxi drivers are allowed to  
ply for hire by picking up from a rank or in response to  
someone hailing a cab. With the introduction of new  
technology, there are people effectively hailing private  
hire vehicles all the time through the click of a button,  
and that is causing real anger and anxiety on the part of  
licensed taxi drivers. It is not simply that people feel that  
the existing law is being flouted. There is a lack of  
clarity about how we move forward when things have  
changed, with new technology platforms.

**MrsAnneMain**(StAlbans)(Con):Thehon.Gentleman  
is making an excellent point. My local taxi drivers have  
shown me where they can locate 15 or 16 Uber cabs  
sitting around St Albans in car parks. Because they are  
hailed from the station, that does not count as plying  
for hire, but it is—it is touting for business but being on  
another street. Surely that cannot be allowed.

**Wes Streeting:** I agree. Actually, in some cases, Uber  
cars use taxi ranks constantly on the streets of central  
London. There are real issues about how the existing  
law is enforced and there is a need to clarify it. In our  
report, we strongly supported those who made  
representations, particularly the National Union of Rail,  
Maritime and Transport Workers and other trade unions,  
including Unite, for which Mike Hedges gave evidence  
to our panel. We need Ministers to clarify their position  
on the two-tier system by issuing a formal response to  
the Law Commission's 2014 report and by introducing  
a legally enforceable statutory definition of plying for  
hire.

**Graham Stringer** (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab):  
My hon. Friend is making a case for the updating and  
modernisation of the regulation and law applying to  
private hire and hackney carriages. He referred to the  
Law Commission report, which recommends a national  
system, and we have had reports from competition  
authorities that refer to deregulation. Does he agree  
that the licensing of hackney carriages and private hire  
vehicles should remain a local authority affair and that,  
when we look at the facts, deregulation nearly always  
leads to a worse service?

**Wes Streeting:** I strongly agree with my hon. Friend,  
who leads me directly on to cross-border hiring. He is  
correct that, although the Government have not formally  
responded to the Law Commission report and have not  
introduced as anticipated a new licensing reform Bill for  
taxi and private hire vehicles, the Deregulation Act 2015  
meant that private hire vehicle drivers operating in one  
area could be licensed in a different area: an issue  
known as cross-border hiring. In practice, that means  
that where local authorities have rightly and appropriately  
determined specific licensing conditions suitable for  
their local community and population, drivers can abuse  
the patchwork quilt of licensing regulations across the  
country to flout rules.

Most alarmingly, we saw evidence of that happening  
in Rotherham. Right hon. and hon. Members will be  
acutely aware that in response to the terrible child

253WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

254WH

sexual exploitation scandal, Rotherham Metropolitan  
Borough Council rightly introduced one of the toughest  
licensing regimes in the country, including the requirement  
for drivers to have a recording device—either a camera  
or audio equipment—in operation at all times when  
someone under the age of, I think, 16 was travelling in  
the vehicle. However, the council found that private hire  
drivers could flout those conditions by licensing their  
vehicle in another part of the country. They could then  
operate on the streets of Rotherham quite legally and  
the council could do nothing about it. We heard compelling  
evidence from my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham  
(Sarah Champion) about the risks presented to the  
people of Rotherham because those robust standards  
are being undermined.

Rotherham is the most serious example, but it is not  
the only example. Reading Council decided not to grant  
Uber a licence, yet drivers from Uber license themselves  
in London and drive around the streets of Reading. I  
was struck by the evidence provided to my office by the  
Mayor of London about the number of TfL licences  
granted and where the drivers live. For example, 747people  
haveTfL-issuedlicensesbutliveinBirmingham,260people  
live in Manchester and yet have licences granted in  
London, and 378 people live in Bristol but have licences  
granted by TfL in London. That is clearly flagrant  
abuse of the system.

We set out a common-sense approach to dealing with  
this problem: to create a statutory definition of cross-border  
hiring under which a journey must begin or end in the  
licensing authority where the licence was issued. That  
would be simple and easy to enforce and would solve  
the problem instantly.

**Stephen Doughty:** My hon. Friend is making a strong  
point, and I completely agree with him. Is he aware that  
this problem is replicated in other parts of the country?  
In Cardiff we see people with licences granted in Rhondda  
Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, Newport and other locations  
coming in and working almost entirely in Cardiff, which  
has different standards. There may also be a specific  
issue on insurance. People are often insured in other  
authority areas and may be underinsured for where  
they operate the majority of their work, or indeed for  
where they leave their car on the street.

**Wes Streeting:** My hon. Friend again makes a powerful  
point, which was very much reinforced by the evidence  
we received during our inquiry. I really hope that the  
Department for Transport acts on cross-border hiring; I  
thinkmeasuresonthatwillbewelcomedbylocalauthorities  
across the country. I am conscious of time and the fact  
that several hon. Members wish to speak, so I will  
canter through some of the report's other recommendations,  
but I will indulge my hon. Friend the Member for  
Bedford (Mohammad Yasin) before I do.

**Mohammad Yasin:** I have to go to another meeting,  
so I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene.  
One main issue that is very important but is not mentioned  
in the report is the safety of drivers. Drivers are very  
vulnerable, especially at night time, and if they have  
four or five passengers in their car they can get a lot of  
abuse. There is no mention of driver safety in the  
report, and I would like something to be added. Does  
he agree that driver safety is a serious issue that we need  
to be concerned about?

**Wes Streeting:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for  
that point, and I will pick it up when I talk about  
passenger safety. He is quite right that driver safety is  
something we should take seriously.

We heard compelling calls from a range of stakeholders,  
particularly people from London, about the need for  
local licensing authorities to have the power, to be  
exercised when they need it, to cap the number of  
private hire vehicles on the streets of a particular town  
or city. In London, we have seen an explosion in the  
number of private hire licences to around 120,000—up  
from 60,000 in, I think, 2010, which is a huge increase.  
Those private hire vehicles contribute to the congestion  
on the streets of London, which is filling our air with  
toxic emissions that result in the preventable deaths of  
more than 9,000 Londoners each year.

A report by the London Assembly, “London Stalling”,  
found that the number of private hire vehicles entering  
the congestion zone had increased by 54% since 2013,  
and that private hire vehicles are a cause of rising  
congestion. Those are not necessarily the most polluting  
vehicles on the streets of London, but the congestion to  
which they contribute means that more toxic fumes are  
being pumped into the air. There are two aspects to  
that. One is that Transport for London and the Mayor  
of London have been clear that they would like to cap  
the number of private hire vehicles on the streets of  
London to tackle the problem, but that they do not  
have the power to do so. The Government should be  
permissive in this area, trust local authorities to make  
appropriate decisions and give them the power to cap  
the number of private hire vehicles where appropriate.  
Of course, such a cap would only work if the Department  
for Transport also tackled cross-border hiring. I hope  
we will see effective action in both of those areas.

On passenger safety, I have already talked about  
cross-border hiring and the flouting of local licensing  
rules, but there is also the issue of insurance, which has  
already been referred to. All taxis and private hire  
vehicles are required to hold hire and reward insurance  
whenever they are carrying a passenger. However, we  
found during our inquiry that licensing authorities had  
no way of confirming whether a private hire vehicle had  
a hire and reward policy in place after its initial licensing,  
and that police and enforcement officers were only able  
to tell whether a vehicle was insured or not, rather than  
what type of insurance the driver held. We recommend  
that the Government legislate to require all private hire  
vehicles to have full hire and reward insurance for the  
duration of a licence, and explore the potential for  
private hire vehicle operators to have their own hire and  
reward fleet insurance, to cover all their registered drivers  
and vehicles.

We also heard powerful evidence on accessibility. I  
am proud that black hackney carriages are accessible  
and are a key part of the disability transport network of  
this city and many others across the country. However,  
there is still further to go on this. Some 42% of assistance  
dog owners were refused by a taxi or private hire driver  
in a one-year period, so although I strongly welcome  
the action that the Government have already taken in  
this area—introducing a £1,000 fine for taxi and private  
hire vehicle drivers who refuse to transport wheelchair  
users—there is a lot further to go.

First, we need to make sure that all drivers can  
communicate with passengers and understand their  
disability access requirements. That is why I strongly

255WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

256WH

*[Wes Streeting]*

support the measures that the Mayor of London is  
trying to introduce on English language testing for  
drivers before they are able to take a licence. Secondly,  
the Government and the licensing authorities should  
require all private hire and taxi drivers who are given a  
licence to undertake mandatory disability equality training  
and take an associated test to make sure that they can  
properly support disabled passengers.

**Mr Jim Cunningham:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Wes Streeting:** I will have to make progress, otherwise  
I will encroach on the time for other Members to speak.  
I have talked about the need for taxi and private hire  
drivers to undergo topographical training, so that they  
are better drivers and have better skills.

However, my hon. Friend the Member for Bedford—he  
is no longer in his place; he has another commitment—made  
a powerful contribution on driver safety, and we really  
need to look at that, particularly since card payment  
machines have been put in the back of black taxis.  
Drivers in my constituency feel more vulnerable than  
ever if something goes wrong with that machine, because  
they have to get out of the vehicle to deal with an issue  
in the back. I have heard stories of drivers being abused  
or people not paying their fare. Drivers put themselves  
at risk, and we might want to look at increasing the  
penalties and sentences for people who abuse taxi drivers  
in the way we are considering for other public sector  
workers.

On the future of the taxi trade, it is often said that  
taxi drivers are not interested in modernisation and are  
stuck in the past, but I have not found that to be the  
case. Drivers are keen to drive the new zero emission  
capable taxis and are excited about the opportunity to  
reduce polluting emissions from their vehicles. To ensure  
that they are able to drive them, we hope that the  
Government will put in place an adequate rapid charging  
infrastructure to support their use. We also need to  
make sure that those cabs are affordable. I know that  
the Government are already looking at grants, as is the  
Mayor of London, but we also need to look at exemptions  
from vehicle excise duty. I know that we will have to  
make that case to the Chancellor and the Treasury, but  
exemptions would make a real difference to drivers'  
ability to take up that challenge.

We also need to have a serious discussion on the fares  
regime, particularly in London, and the extent to which  
taxi drivers are heavily disadvantaged by fares, which  
are often set without adequate consultation with the  
trade. We also need a discussion about the extent to  
which competitors—particularly Uber—are able to offer  
artificially low prices and flood the market with drivers  
in order to drive their competitors off the road. That  
affects not just licensed taxi drivers but private hire  
drivers, including Uber drivers, who have seen their  
incomes fall in recent years because it is in Uber's  
interest to flood London with as many drivers as possible  
to maximise its revenues, even if that is at the expense of  
fast journeys and decent pay and conditions for both  
taxi drivers and private hire drivers. We need to approach  
this from the point of view of fair competition, rather  
than the elimination of competition.

Action by Ministers is long overdue. The debate  
about the future of the taxi trade has often been unfairly  
characterised as a debate between those who support

competition and innovation and those who want to  
cling to the past. That is a lazy analysis. As I have  
demonstrated this afternoon, the taxi drivers I represent  
are not afraid of innovation or competition; increasing  
numbers of drivers are embracing new platforms such  
as Gett and mytaxi. Many cab drivers also accepted  
card payments long before it was mandatory, and a  
great many more are keen to get behind the wheel of the  
new generation of carbon neutral, electric-capable taxis  
to play their part in improving air quality and protecting  
our environment.

However,theconsistentthemeIfoundasaconstituency  
MP during our inquiry was that taxi drivers find it  
increasingly difficult to compete with both hands tied  
behind their backs in a changing marketplace. Our  
challenge now is to make sure that the trade enjoys a  
bright future as well as a proud history. I strongly  
believe that, with smart and effective regulation and  
new national standards, the taxi and private hire industries  
can succeed. I say to the Minister, who is a good man,  
that many small businessmen and businesswomen and  
their families are counting on Ministers to act.

**Phil Wilson (in the Chair):** I do not intend to put a  
time limit on speeches at the moment. I think we will fit  
everybody in, so long as everybody bears in mind that  
other hon. Members want to speak. I want to bring in  
the Front-Bench spokespeople at about 3.30 pm.

2.59 pm

**Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson. I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes  
Streeting) on securing this debate and on an excellent  
report. As a vice-chair of the all-party group on taxis, I  
would love to take lots of credit for the report, but he  
has worked really hard on it, and we need to take on  
board many of the things in it.

In Sutton, as in many London constituencies, there is  
a range of black cab drivers, Uber drivers and other  
private hire drivers, and some have approached me over  
the last couple of years to speak about the trade. Black  
cabs are having an incredibly difficult time, and especially  
yellow badge drivers, who are restricted to ply for trade  
in outer London, not least because there are few pick-up  
points. Business is really drying up for them, and they  
are finding it very difficult. We need to find ways, as the  
hon. Gentleman outlined, of modernising the trade,  
while giving the premium product that a black cab is  
and allowing them to survive and thrive in and around  
London.

I know that, until recently, Heathrow was a significant  
issue for cab drivers because a lot of Uber drivers were  
taking up parking spaces around the airport. That  
added to the congestion around Heathrow, which as we  
all know is pretty horrendous at the best of times.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that people  
want to become environmentally friendly with their  
vehicles, but there is a huge onus and cost on black cab  
drivers when they have to renew their cars. The boundaries  
are always being pushed, environmentally. To invest  
maybe £35,000 or £50,000 in a new vehicle is really  
hard for black cab drivers when they are seeing their  
trade reduced at the same time. That is partly because  
of the environmental issues, and it is partly because  
over the years there have been too few suppliers—only

257WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

258WH

two or three—of black cabs. That has helped to push  
the price up, to the cost of the drivers.

We have talked about the modernisation of the trade.  
It is good to see the change in drivers' attitudes; they are  
keen to look at card payments and to have greater  
access for wheelchair users. I remember, probably about  
15 years ago, joining my best friend in trying to get a  
cab. At the time, black cab drivers had to pay about  
£1,500 to get ramps to make the cabs accessible. The  
driver stopped, took one look at us and said, “I don't  
want to get my hands dirty,” and got back in his car and  
drove off. That was ridiculous, so I complained to  
Transport for London, and the driver rightly got hauled  
over the coals. I knowthat all the cab drivers I see would  
be rightly horrified by that. They stick together and  
keep together as a trade really well, so any stain on the  
trade from one rogue driver does them all no good  
whatsoever. It is great that they stick together and stick  
up for black cabs.

Black cabs are a premium product, so they will  
always cost more than, for example, Uber cars. A few  
people want to drive Uber off the ground, but the  
majority of the black cab trade take the view outlined  
by the hon. Member for Ilford North: they accept  
competition; they just want fair competition. That is  
absolutely right. Uber is disruptive by nature, so it will  
always come in and cause difficulties for a long-established,  
regulated trade such as black cabs. However, it has to be  
fair. The pricing has to be fair to drivers and to competition.

Uber does supply something that we have not talked  
about yet, which is flexibility for drivers. We were talking  
about the modernisation of the economy last week as a  
Government, with the release of the Taylor report. A  
lot of Uber drivers like the flexibility. They like being  
able to have a few hours here and a few hours there,  
possibly as a second income to supplement a lower-paid  
job. It is important that we do not throw the baby out  
with the bathwater when looking at Uber and how to  
tackle this, to ensure a relatively level playing field for  
all concerned. TheaverageUberdrivergetsabout£15an  
hour, and we need to look at that in the bigger scheme  
of things when talking about competition between the  
two and how drivers are affected.

I totally agree that we must tackle cross-border hiring.  
I would be interested to know exactly how it would  
work. The hon. Gentleman talked about cars starting  
and stopping in a particular regulated area. I live on the  
outskirts of London. If I lived quarter of a mile further  
south, I would be in Surrey. I wonder how it would  
work in those border areas, when we are trying to get  
out of central London, but the principle is absolutely  
right. I have the same figures as him, and it cannot be  
right that we have 69 people coming from Cardiff and  
83 people coming from Leeds to drive cabs around  
London. I do not think it would be too difficult to  
tackle cross-border hiring between Leeds and London,  
but maybe Carshalton and central London is a bit  
different. I would be interested to see how that might  
work.

I agree that the plying for hire definition needs to be  
modernised. I would not want it to exclude the competition  
being established in London, but the grey area needs to  
be removed, so that everybody knows exactly where  
they stand. It is all part of the modernisation. I agree as  
well that the Mayor should have the power to cap the  
number of private hire licences. I asked the Department

for Transport on 27 April what representations it has  
had from the Mayor of London on changing the law, so  
that he can cap that number. The answer came back  
that the Department has had zero formal representations.  
I am interested to know what has happened since April  
and what the Mayor of London has done to push that  
forward. I would certainly support him on that.

I agree that we need to incentivise the take-up of  
electric cars. I know that companies such as BluePoint  
are establishing charging points around London. It  
would be good to look at how that might work in taxi  
ranks, so that black cabs could have better access to  
charging points, rather than them just being for the new  
generation of private electrical cars.

Finally, it is absolutely right that an English test is  
being introduced for private hire drivers, but we need to  
ensure it is measured, practical and does what it needs  
to, to ensure that drivers can speak to passengers and  
understand signs. The idea of writing essays about a  
variety of things seems a little distracting. I would  
rather see a really practical English test, so that they can  
do their job.

We need to get the balance right between black cabs  
and the competition, including Uber. There is a lot to  
commend in the report, and I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Ilford North once again on his work.

3.7 pm

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson. I commend  
my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North (Wes  
Streeting). His account was exhaustive, and the work of  
the all-party group has been extremely helpful. A proper  
discussion of the issues around the industry is long  
overdue. I do not want to rehearse the arguments that  
have been made, but I will make a few observations on  
some of the things I have learned over almost a decade  
of trying to understand how the trade works in my area.

Although the APPG's report is excellent, it has a  
picture of a black cab on the front—it has a London  
focus, which is entirely reasonable. However, one thing  
that has struck me as I have gone around the country is  
how different things are in different places, and how  
difficult that makes it for us to cope with all the different  
local circumstances. That is why there will always be a  
role for the local licensing authority.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for  
Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne), who led an  
Adjournment debate on this subject just over a year  
ago. He gave a brilliant account, which should almost  
be obligatory reading for Members as they start to  
consider this issue. I also pay tribute to the local people  
in my area who have explained the issue.

The complexity of the issue is shown by the Law  
Commission report back in May 2014. Whatever one's  
viewof that report, the fact that it ran to nearly 300 pages—I  
am not sure how many people have got through it from  
beginning to end; I have started it on a number of  
occasions on trains—and had 3,000 submissions  
demonstrates a huge amount of complexity and detail.  
I will come back to how we respond to it, but as I read  
it, I found myself thinking about how it applied to my  
area. I am very grateful to several local people: Paul  
Bradley and Rashel Mohammed of the Cambridge  
Hackney Carriage Association, and David Wratten,  
who works for Cambridge City Licensed Taxis and

259WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

260WH

*[Daniel Zeichner]*

represents the taxi drivers working from the station. As  
we begin to look at just one area, we realise how many  
different groups and interests there are within one trade.

The Local Government Association handbook advises  
councillors on how to deal with such issues. It runs to a  
full 60 pages and involves a lot of training. I am grateful  
to my councillors, Jeremy Benstead, Kevin Blencowe  
and Gerri Bird, for putting up with simplistic questions  
from me over the years as I try to understand the issues.  
I recommend that hon. Members go out with local taxi  
drivers to understand the job from their point of view  
and to see some of the problems they face on a daily  
basis. Many of us use taxis as passengers, but going out  
with the drivers and hearing them explain what they are  
up against is a very different thing. I am grateful,  
particularly to Paul and Rashel, who have taken me out  
on numerous occasions.

We have hackney carriages in Cambridge, but we do  
not hail them. It may be different in other places, but  
they all work from ranks and a lot of them are dual  
licensed, which causes total confusion in the minds of  
the public. People really do not understand the difference  
in a city such as Cambridge, and I think it might be  
similar in other places. We have a different set of distinctions  
from London. In many places the cap on numbers for  
taxis was lifted some years ago. I am pleased to say that  
the Labour council in Cambridge acted bravely. They  
went through the process of testing the market and  
reintroduced the cap a year or two ago, which has  
helped. We had a massive over-ranking problem, which  
is typical of historic cities. The problem is not completely  
solved, but the cap has helped. The problems that we  
still have are how to deal with basic technological things  
such as making sure the ranks are filled from feeder  
ranks.

Also, there is the problem, which was touched on by  
the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully),  
of cross-border issues when neighbouring authorities  
have different approaches to taxi licensing. That is not  
untypical. The Cambridge Labour authority takes a  
rigorous view. The councillors are very hands-on in  
their approach to managing appeals. However, neighbouring  
authorities take a different view, which creates a real  
problem when they are contiguous and we see large  
numbers of taxis coming in from other areas.

We have also had some self-inflicted problems. The  
Deregulation Act 2015 created additional problems.  
The idea that someone's booking can be passed on to  
someone else might have seemed a good idea in terms of  
efficiency, but it means people do not know what they  
are getting. It is like going to a supermarket checkout  
with a box of Jaffa Cakes that gets substituted for an  
own brand and being told it is the same thing when it is  
not. People have told me that they have phoned up to  
get their taxi—or, in this case, their private hire vehicle—and  
then someone else has turned up, someone who they did  
not want to see turning up because they had had  
problems with them before. In a way, that has taken  
choice away from the consumer, and I am not sure that  
was what the Government intended.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North made  
strong points about the access issues and guide dogs. I  
have heard about heart-rending cases from people who  
have told me about disagreements they have had with

taxi drivers who have not exactly welcomed them into  
their cab with either a guide dog or a wheelchair. As we  
have heard, progress has been made on that, but more  
needs to be done. Training is needed. My hon. Friend  
the Member for Denton and Reddish tried to introduce  
a Bill in 2016 to make such training mandatory, so I  
hope the Government will come back to that.

Another set of issues raised with me around the  
country are the opaque set of charges for drivers using a  
rank at a railway station, supermarket, hospital or retail  
park. All those institutions are now trying to maximise  
the value of their assets. In the old days, railway stations  
were places for getting people around, but now they  
seem to be a source for raising funds. I have asked  
questions and I still have not had satisfactory answers.  
The issue is decidedly opaque and we need to make sure  
that such privileges are not being abused.

A huge range of issues needs to be tackled, as evidenced  
by the Law Commission report. We have seen the  
change in technology—I will not re-rehearse the arguments.  
I am not one of those opposed to changing technologies.  
Technology can be applied in the right way, as Gett and  
other applications have shown. I hope that in the future  
we will see such technology used in a transformational  
way for public transport, not just for taxis and private  
hire vehicles.

There are so many challenges, yet we still do not seem  
to have had a response from the Government. I really  
hope that at some point we will see a substantial piece  
of legislation introduced to deal with the issues. There is  
clearly a consensus around the idea of national standards  
to deal with the cross-border hiring issues. The Local  
Government Association, the all-party group and many  
others have called for that, and it was a manifesto  
promise from my party. It cannot be right that someone  
denied a licence in one area can turn up on the same  
streets within a few days, as we have seen in some places  
around the country, with a licence from somewhere else.  
That completely undercuts public confidence and frustrates  
local councillors, who feel they have no enforcement  
powers. We have to find a way forward. I hope I am not  
abusing the system, Mr Wilson, if I conclude by saying  
that I will be presenting a private Member's Bill tomorrow,  
which I hope will tackle the issues.

3.15 pm

**Mrs Anne Main** (St Albans) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson.

I like this quote from GMB section secretary, Andy  
Peters:

“It appears that London has become the licensing centre to  
send London minicabs all over the UK rendering local councils  
redundant in taxi licensing.”

That about sums it up. In St Albans we have reliable and  
heavily regulated taxi licensing, but my local taxi drivers  
have said, “What is the point of being licensed with St  
Albans if TfL can license drivers?” TfL does not seem  
to have such high standards. We have heard from other  
speakers that if someone has lost their licence in one  
area, they will be denied a licence elsewhere. But it  
seems TfL is not so picky, because someone denied a  
licence in St Albans was told to try TfL, which is  
dreadful. The cost to register with TfL for a private hire  
driver's licence is £250 plus a medical fee, and registering  
a vehicle costs an additional £100, so that is a total of  
£350. In St Albans, the cost to register for a private hire  
licence is £420.50 plus a medical fee, and registering a

261WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

262WH

vehicle costs an additional £300, so that is £720.50 plus  
a medical fee. There is also a driver's knowledge test,  
which is £95 for a first attempt and £64 thereafter.

It does not take a mathematician to work out that  
someone might as well hop down the road to London  
and get a TfL licence if there is no way of stopping  
drivers coming from there to St Albans, where our  
drivers are heavily regulated. St Albans drivers have  
told me that if they infringe their driving licence in any  
way, shape or form, the licensing authority jumps on  
them.Ifthereisnopointinhavingourlicensingregulations,  
everybody might as well be licensed with TfL and then  
work all over the place.

It worries me enormously that when I talk to St  
Albans District Council, it says that although it is  
trying to work with London, TfL and Uber vehicles are  
allowed to come to the district to collect or drop off  
pre-booked jobs. My taxi drivers have shown me an app  
that shows where all the Uber cars are, and they are not  
simply dropping off in St Albans and heading back.  
They are stopping there. They come first thing in the  
morning and hover about until someone is looking to  
bookataxi.Itoldmylocal taxi drivers that the problem  
is young people saying, “I'll get an Uber cab. It's cheaper.”  
But it is cheaper because Uber is not obeying the rules.  
It is outside the licensing rules and touting for business.  
It claims to offer a journey within six minutes, but if the  
driver is supposed to be in London when they start a  
journey, they could not possibly be in St Albans in six  
minutes. They hover around in supermarkets and nearby  
roads and offer cheaper fares.

My council has stated:

“During enforcement checks any TFL or UBER vehicles that  
are found in the District without pre-booked jobs are advised to  
go back to the area that they are licensed. We have found that the  
amount of TFL and UBER vehicles...has declined”  
when enforcement happens. That is the equivalent of  
swatting a fly off the rump of a horse. A taxi driver who  
is in the wrong area is simply asked to go back to where  
they are supposed to be. Nothing happens as a consequence,  
so they are all back within a few days. There are not  
enough licensing officers in St Albans, paid for by the  
heavy licensing fee, to ensure that we can keep those  
drivers out of the area. So we have a situation in which  
my local taxi drivers, many of whom are Bangladeshi,  
are faced with losing their livelihood.

There are big complaints when Tesco or other such  
companies move into areas and mop up all the trade.  
Local authorities can protect themselves from big rapacious  
companies that hoover up all the vacant premises and  
suppress other small operators in the area. It seems to  
me particularly poor form, then, that London can spew  
out licences and the taxi drivers can go off and, in  
effect, operate remotely. They are not obeying the spirit  
of the law, and they certainly have a detrimental impact  
on taxi facilities in areas such as mine. It worries me  
that local authorities that can stop numerous shop  
premises being turned into coffee shops because they  
think that would alter the area's feel and offer, or deny  
Tesco a huge superstore because they feel it would draw  
trade from the city centre, cannot deny a fleet of rapacious  
Uber taxi drivers in my constituency the right to hover  
around in the car park, sucking the lifeblood from taxi  
services.

Maureen, who operates for Gold Line in St Albans,  
saidto me much the sameas the hon. Member forIlford  
North (Wes Streeting) has said: there should be strict

rules that a job must be started in the area where a  
driver is licensed. There are obviously a lot of journeys  
from St Albans to Luton and Heathrow airports, and  
there is no thought of stopping people going out of  
area, but when a taxi driver turns up in an area and  
hovers about all day, that is completely outside the  
regulations that cover their licensed hire vehicle. I am  
told that operating outside the licensing provision also  
has the potential to negate their insurance, so young  
people who think getting into these cars is the cheap  
option might find, if they were in a car crash or some  
other kind of accident, that they were not insured.

Unite the union has spearheaded a cross-border taxi  
campaign against Uber. Frankly I do not care whether  
the firm concerned is Uber or anyone else. What I am  
saying is not anti-Uber; it is anti-unfairness in the taxi  
trade. As for just shooing away taxi drivers who are  
meant to be licensed and operating in a proper fashion  
but are found hovering where they are not supposed to  
be, no licensing authority in the country can afford to  
be shooing out Uber drivers full-time. If those drivers  
do not behave and Transport for London will not do  
anything about it, the Government need to do something.  
Iaskthe Minister to look at the matter as a serious issue  
of unfair business competition and health and safety.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Phil Wilson (in the Chair):** Order. I am imposing a  
four-minute limit on speeches now, because I want to  
bring in the Front-Bench speakers at half-past 3.

3.22 pm

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/  
Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Wilson. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for  
Ilford North (Wes Streeting) for doing so much hard  
work on the report. I also thank the Cardiff taxi drivers  
with whom I have worked for a number of years—  
particularly the members of Taxi Drivers Cardiff—and  
the GMB union. I draw attention to the relevant declaration  
inthe Register of Members' Financial Interests. I thank  
the GMB for raising these issues with me in the first  
place, and for working alongside me to get under the  
skin of what is going on.

At the root of the matter is the fact that drivers tell  
me they work all the hours God sends, but cannot make  
a decent living. That comes down to several factors,  
which break down into three areas. One is drivers'  
experience with the companies they work for. Another  
is their experience of dealing with councils, as well as  
the resources available and the implementation of licensing  
regulations—but, fundamentally, it is about the powers  
thatcouncilshave.Althoughpowerswererecentlydevolved  
under the Wales Act 2017, we are dealing with the  
legacy of legislation that is well over 100 years old and  
takes us back to the 19th century. Clearly, that is not fit  
for purpose. The third factor is the wider regulatory  
environment.

I thank Dragon Veezu, which owns taxi firms across  
the country, for itswillingness to engage. I criticised it in  
the House some time ago, and since that time we have  
had some positive and constructive engagement. I welcome  
the fact that it dealt with some of the charges and unfair  
fees that drivers faced, for example. A lot of progress is  
still required in that relationship, but at least we are  
having a dialogue and there is openness. I welcome that  
and hope that it will continue.

263WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

264WH

*[Stephen Doughty]*

I am also pleased about the engagement that we have  
had with Cardiff Council in particular. I want to praise  
the new council leader, Huw Thomas, and the cabinet  
member, Michael Michael, for their willingness to put  
the creation of a fair playing field for the Cardiff taxi  
trade at the heart of their new “Capital Ambitions”  
document, which was published a couple of weeks ago.  
There will be a meeting with them shortly to discuss  
practical methods of implementation.

I also want to praise the Welsh Labour Government  
for opening up a consultation on the taxi trade in Wales,  
using their new powers. There have already been meetings  
between the Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken  
Skates and representatives of the GMB and others. I  
hope the Cabinet Secretary will listen to the debate, as  
many of the issues that are being raised are relevant in  
Wales.

There are four issues that I particularly want to  
highlight. First, the question of cross-border hires is  
clearly at the centre of the debate. Many people who  
have been licensed in neighbouring authorities, at lower  
standards, and often with lower insurance costs, come  
in and do all their work in Cardiff. Their cars can be  
seen parked in Cardiff every week. That is not supposed  
to be going on. Not only do they undercut the market  
in Cardiff, but the council often cannot enforce  
against them because of the regulations. Uber drivers  
also come in, perhaps using the TfL licences that have been  
referred to. I have even heard of Uber drivers being paid  
large sums up front to drive down from London and  
other cities to Cardiff, effectively to run a loss-making  
business and undercut the existing Cardiff trade. That is  
simply unacceptable, and it cannot go on.

The second issue is that it seems absurd not to be able  
to impose a cap on the number of private hire vehicles.  
That is clearly at the core of the matter. There is a cap  
on hackney drivers in Cardiff, but the number of private  
hire licences has continued to go up. It is simple  
economics—supply and demand. There are too many  
taxis in Cardiff, and the result is that each driver gets a  
much smaller part of the pie, so that they cannot get by  
on their daily wage.

Thirdly, on the question of a fair playing field, standards  
are not implemented fairly across authorities. A particular  
issue is safety glass in cars. Drivers in Cardiff are often  
asked to remove glass, at their own expense, whereas  
that is not required in neighbouring authorities.

The fourth issue is taxi companies dealing with such  
issues as account work and introducing a fair playing  
field. Those are the issues that drivers in Cardiff want to  
have addressed, and I hope that the Welsh Government  
and this Parliament will listen.

3.26 pm

**Jon Cruddas** (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab): This  
is a hot-button issue for many of my constituents, and it  
will continue to be so, as it was during the general  
election campaign, until we sort out a basic framework  
of fair competition. In my view that would include the  
capping and regulation of taxis in London, which has  
been mentioned, the powers afforded to the Mayor of  
London, and wider issues to do with cross-border hiring  
and minimum standards across the sector.

Like other hon. Members, I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) on  
securing the debate and on all his hard work on the  
matter since he was elected. Like him, I have many  
constituents who are black cab drivers, and there is  
frustration about the effects of deregulation and the  
lack of effective licensing. There are implications for  
passenger safety in this city and across the country.  
There has been a dramatic effect on the livelihoods of  
many of my constituents and their families. Many cab  
drivers I know have had their income slashed in the past  
few years, and many are considering leaving the trade  
for good. That is tragic for some of the most qualified  
taxi drivers on the planet, and for the iconic black  
hackney carriage in this city. This is a big debate.

One point in the introduction to my hon. Friend's  
report that is worth mentioning is that there is a tendency  
to simplify the debate as being about the past versus the  
future and innovation. In my experience that is not the  
case. The cab drivers I know and represent have not  
been afraid of technology or innovation. On the contrary,  
they have embraced it, but there is a need for a fair, level  
playing field. Technological innovations cannot be used  
to destroy drivers' conditions and residents' protections.  
Moreover, big multinational companies cannot be allowed  
to ride roughshod over our democracy and to undermine,  
through lobbying and personal connections, attempts  
to create minimum standards and effective protections  
in cities such as London.

I want to make three basic points, which have been  
made earlier and will no doubt be made in the Front-Bench  
speeches. The first is about the number of minicabs in  
the capital, and the implications for congestion and  
pollution. As we have heard, it is estimated that in seven  
years the number of private hire car drivers has doubled  
to 120,000. As things stand, TfL is legally obliged to  
issue a licence to any driver who meets the criteria. We  
should put a cap on that.

That leads to my second point, about the general  
licensing environment. The simple reality is that drivers  
can dodge areas with more robust licensing by gaining a  
licence from an authority with weaker regulations. So  
standards designed to keep residents safe are being  
dodged through the avoidance of other licensing regimes.  
Minicab drivers should not be able consciously to acquire  
licences in areas with less stringent conditions.

On the more specific question of cross-border hiring,  
private hire vehicles are currently not restricted from  
taking bookings anywhere in England and Wales, provided  
that the vehicle driver and operator are licensed by the  
same licensing authority and the booking is accepted  
within that authority. There is little that licensing authorities  
can do about drivers who work outside the area for  
which they are licensed. The obvious question is how  
licensing authorities can effectively regulate and enforce  
private hire activity in the areas in question. They  
cannot. As we have heard, a significant number of  
London-licensed private hire vehicles appear to be working  
solely in areas outside the capital, so there appears to be  
a clear need for the Government to legislate to create a  
statutory definition of cross-border hiring. Should a  
journey have to begin or end in the licensing authority  
area where the licence was issued? That appears to me a  
pretty sensible suggestion. It would allow flexibility for  
private hire operators to fulfil passenger requests.

265WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

266WH

My final point is about national minimum licensing  
standards. The problems associated with cross-border  
hiring are linked with variations in licensing standards  
across the country. In some areas, drivers do not need  
even a Disclosure and Barring Service check to receive a  
licence, so drivers are not necessarily screened for criminal  
convictions before being allowed to carry passengers.  
Surely we need new minimum licensing standards for all  
licensing authorities to impose.

Overall, the proposed reforms are pragmatic and  
sensible. I very much welcome them and support the  
work of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North  
and the coalition that he has assembled.

3.30 pm

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): It is  
a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson;  
I think this is the first time that I have done so. It is  
probably good news for you and others that I will not  
take up too much time.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Ilford North  
(Wes Streeting) on introducing the debate, on the sterling  
work that he has clearly done as chair of the all-party  
parliamentary group on taxis and on producing the  
report. He started today by saying how iconic the black  
hackney carriage is in its association with London. I  
certainly concur with that. When I was growing up, my  
dad's aunt stayed just outside London, and we certainly  
associated the hackney carriage with London. The training  
and knowledge that these drivers have has been well  
documented in TV series, documentaries and so on.

It does seem a wee bit ironic that at the same time, as  
the hon. Gentleman mentioned, Transport for London  
is clearly undercutting other taxi services around the  
country in terms of the licences they are issuing. As we  
heard from the hon. Member for St Albans (Mrs Main),  
that is having a real impact on drivers in her constituency.

The hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner)  
touched on the fact that taxi operation varies from area  
to area and from country to country. Where I stay, my  
experience of taxis is that passengers phone local private  
hire companies; in my licensing area, people are not  
allowed to flag down vehicles. That makes it harder for  
unlicensed operators to operate, and it makes the whole  
start-or-finish issue or cross-border issue a bit more  
difficult. I am fortunate because I know all the local taxi  
drivers. I can phone the company and say “It's Alan. I  
want to go to x, y or z.” I do not even have to give full  
details of the address. I can take my pet dog in the car;  
that is not a problem. That is in stark contrast to the  
experiences of people who rely on their guide dog  
because of mobility issues. We have heard about the  
unsatisfactory experience of people not being able to  
get their guide dog in cars. I certainly support the call  
for equality training to ensure that people are not  
effectively discriminated against, which would be under  
the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

That brings us full circle. It is really important that  
we do not have a race to the bottom, which is the concern  
that we have now about Uber and how it operates. The  
hon. Member for St Albans said that she does not care  
whether it is Uber or whatever; the bottom line is that  
there is an issue that we need to address. In Scotland,  
Uber operates only in Glasgow and Edinburgh; it certainly  
does not operate in my area, so it is not the same issue  
as we face here. Clearly, that company has a model, and

once it undercuts people and puts other drivers out of  
business, it will continue to expand that model elsewhere.  
As I said, we cannot have a race to the bottom. We have  
heard about insurance issues. Clearly, some people are  
getting into these cars and do not understand the wider  
implications. Yes, they might save a few pennies, but it  
could cost them in the long run.

The key theme that came out in the debate was that  
the existing legislation is outdated. I have just touched  
on the DDA. I agree that there should be penalties for  
abuse of taxi drivers; they need more protection. Another  
good point made by the hon. Member for Ilford North  
was about providing assistance for taxi drivers to upgrade  
their cars, particularly given air pollution issues. The  
Government have still to respond to the air pollution  
case. They have lost three times in the High Court now;  
they cannot afford to lose in the High Court again. I  
think that further grant assistance must be given for the  
upgrading of black cabs, particularly in London. I will  
throw out one further thing to the Minister. Previously,  
there was a grant system for conversion to liquefied  
petroleum gas. I do not think that is available any more,  
but it is a good interim step towards reducing emissions  
before we get to zero-carbon transport, so I ask the  
Government to think again about LPG.

In Scotland, the Scottish National party Government  
have already made changes to licensing, under the Air  
Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015. The process  
began in 2012-13, but even by the time the legislation  
was going through Parliament, in 2015, it was already  
recognised that it had not kept pace with technology  
and the apps system that is now used for taxi drivers.  
The SNP Government have therefore pledged to review  
it and bring in changes accordingly. I urge the UK  
Government to think likewise.

3.35 pm

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Wilson,  
and to speak in this important debate on the future of  
the taxi trade. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member  
for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) on securing it. I also  
congratulate him and the all-party parliamentary group  
on taxis on publishing the report, “Lessons from London:  
The future of the UK taxi trade”.

I draw hon. Members' attention to my declaration in  
the Register of Members' Financial Interests regarding  
my membership of the GMB, which organises in this  
area.

As has been mentioned, all too often debates about  
the taxi trade in the past have been wrongly framed as  
innovation versus tradition. It is not the case that there  
is a trade-off between innovations that improve the taxi  
trade and regulations that provide protections to the  
existing trade and deliver improved safety and accessibility  
for passengers. Sadly, however, the Government's hands-off  
approach to taxis and private hire vehicles means that in  
too many areas we are seeing a race to the bottom on  
quality, accessibility and, perhaps most worryingly of  
all, safety.

As technology and the industry have evolved, our  
regulation of the taxi and private hire industry has  
failed to keep pace. To address that, the Law Commission  
published recommendations and a draft Bill in May  
2014. The commission recommended significant regulatory  
changes. The report found that the

267WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

268WH

*[Cat Smith]*

“balance struck between national and local rules lacks an overarching  
rationale, resulting in duplication, inconsistencies and considerable  
difficulties in cross-border enforcement...The outdated legislative  
framework has become too extensive in some respects, imposing  
unnecessary burdens on business and artificially restricting the  
range of services available to consumers; and insufficiently  
comprehensive in other ways, undermining the fundamental goal  
of protecting the travelling public.”

The Government have not responded to that report to  
date. I ask the Minister when he intends to do so, or  
whether the Government ever intend to respond. We  
are now at the point at which the Government risk  
waiting so long to respond that elements of the Law  
Commission's work become outdated, and at present  
the Government have no plans to introduce a taxis Bill.

One significant challenge facing the taxi trade that  
has yet to be addressed by Ministers is cross-border  
workingbyprivatehirevehicles.Therehavebeenincreasing  
concerns about private hire vehicles operating outside  
their licensed geographical areas. We have heard about  
that practice in this debate. It puts taxis at a competitive  
disadvantage, as they have to return to their licensed  
area after taking a fare outside their borough, unlike  
private hire vehicles, and some councils in this country  
hand out too many licences, clogging up the streets and  
worsening congestion and air quality. Because of the  
lack of national standards, there are implications for  
quality, safety and accessibility, which cross-border licensing  
undermines.

If a private hire driver has obtained a licence by  
having to pass a local knowledge test in one area, but  
primarily operates elsewhere, there is no guarantee that  
they will know the local roads well. There is almost no  
way a potential customer can know that at the time of  
booking. The implications for safety are worrying. Local  
authorities are currently permitted to set their own “fit  
and proper” criteria for licensing; there is no minimum  
national standard. Private hire drivers are therefore able  
to operate in an area with stringent safety criteria, but  
can legally fail to meet those criteria by obtaining a  
licence elsewhere. Concerns have been raised about that  
occurring in Rotherham and Oxford, where strict safety  
measures were put in place following instances of child  
sexual exploitation.

The questions of what steps should be taken to  
ensure passenger safety and how to prevent sexual  
assaults should not be for each licensing authority to  
decide, but should be decided at national level on the  
basis of what regulations would best protect passengers.  
Rather than addressing the problem, measures in the  
Government's Deregulation Act 2015 permitting  
subcontracting have made the situation worse. Those  
make enforcement by local licensing authorities more  
difficult, in addition to stripping customers of their  
right to choose which operator they wish to travel with.  
I therefore ask the Minister what steps the Government  
will take to combat the problems associated with cross-  
border working. One obvious measure to mitigate the  
problemwouldbetheintroductionofnationalstandards  
for licensing authorities—something that the Labour  
party has repeatedly called for. Will the Minister now  
commit to introducing such standards? The Government  
have previously stated that many of these issues should  
be the responsibility of licensing authorities, but issues

such as disabled access and safety standards should not  
be at the discretion of localities, varying greatly across  
the country.

While the industry has changed significantly throughout  
the years, and continues to do so, increasingly spurred  
on through technological change, legislation has not.  
As a consequence, the distinction between taxis and  
private hire vehicles is increasingly confused, in part  
because of the imprecise concept of plying for hire,  
which is not defined in statute. The Law Commission's  
2014 report supported this distinction remaining in  
place; however, we have seen a growing number of apps,  
such as Uber, that allow users to see the position of  
available vehicles at any particular moment—in effect,  
virtually plying for hire. The result has been a reduction  
in the number of people taking the geographical training  
for licensed taxi drivers.

The former Mayor of London identified the need for  
action and planned to introduce a minimum five-minute  
wait for customers requesting a car and beginning a  
journey. That was motivated by concerns about the  
impact that Uber's business model has had on the city,  
including Uber's contribution to rising congestion. Those  
plans were abandoned, reportedly after intense lobbying  
by the then Prime Minister and Chancellor of the  
Exchequer. As reported in the *Daily Mail*, the then  
Prime Minister and Chancellor enjoyed close relationships  
with Uber and were hostile to the idea that the company  
should be subject to further regulation. The advent of  
smartphone apps is changing the industry and presents  
many clear benefits to passengers, but companies such  
as Uber can enjoy unfair competitive advantages because  
they do not have to follow the same regulation and  
compliance as incumbent businesses. The current Mayor  
of London has committed to supportingalegaldefinition  
of plying for hire, and the Law Commission supports a  
statutory definition of pre-booking. I hope the Government  
are no longer acting as a paid lobbyist for Uber, and  
that the Minister will today outline what steps he intends  
to take to ensure a level playing field between operators.

Everyone in this room wants to see the future of the  
taxi trade, and indeed the private hire industry, accessible  
to all. It should therefore concern us all that  
42% of assistance dog owners were refused a journey by  
a taxi or private hire vehicle, despite that being illegal.  
That has a devastating impact on the confidence and  
independence of disabled people, and I would like to  
praise the work of Guide Dogs on this issue. Will the  
Minister commit to mandatory disability equality training  
for all taxi and private hire vehicle drivers?

Finally, we have seen real progress in London towards  
zero emission vehicles. What steps will the Minister take  
to secure a greener trade across the whole country in  
future?

3.42 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John  
Hayes):** Prejudice gets a worse name than it deserves.  
Burke said that prejudice

“engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue and  
does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision  
sceptical, puzzled, and unresolved.”

I seek, I strive, I emule to little more than to match the  
prejudice of the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes  
Streeting), whom I congratulate on securing this debate,  
in his advocacy of the importance of London black  
cabs.Theyaddqualitytoourkingdomandaresymptomatic

269WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

270WH

of the best of British and emblematic of its capital's  
character. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that in  
anything I subsequently say that is my starting point.  
We can be proud of our London cabs and should be  
hesitant about anything that endangers their future,  
which is certainly not the Government's intention.

The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that in  
recent years the taxi and private car hire market has  
experienced very significant change. That has been  
particularly true in our capital city. My suspicion is that  
it is not the end of a process but the beginning. I suspect  
that we will see continuing change as the ways in which  
people communicate and acquire services change. He  
said that it was important not to be stuck in the past. I  
spend a good deal of my life wishing that I could be,  
only to be dragged to the present by imperatives and  
drawn to the future, seduced by the promise of improvement  
and opportunity. Nevertheless, it is right to say that,  
whether we like it or not, changing communications are  
likely to mean that the services provided to us—in this  
case, by private hire vehicles and taxis—will change too.  
That does not mean that we should allow ourselves to  
be seduced—to use the word a second time in a short  
debate—by the Whiggish idea of progress. It is not true  
that all technological change is beneficial, and it is not  
true that all the alterations that the hon. Gentleman set  
out are likely to add to the quality of what is provided  
to people in London and elsewhere.

Let me now address some of the specifics in the  
excellent all-party group report and congratulate the  
whole of that group on producing it. It is clear to me  
that we share a common aim: open, safe and fair  
competition in the taxi and private hire car market.  
There will be a debate—a proper discussion—about  
how we can achieve that objective, but it is one to which  
we can all sign up. I am reassured that in the report  
there is an appetite to continue to encourage the best of  
the trade and to seek out ways to improve what is not as  
good as it should be.

As the hon. Gentleman argued, the Government are  
responsible for the legislative framework within which  
licensing authorities set their own standards and  
requirements, so have an important role to play, but  
those licensing authorities must play their part too. I  
will come back to that point, which was raised by the  
hon. Member for Dagenham and Rainham (Jon Cruddas)  
when he spoke of inconsistencies, and by my hon.  
Friend the Member for St Albans (Mrs Main).

**Stephen Doughty:** Obviously, that is the case; however,  
the Minister is aware that the law in this area dates back  
almost 170 years—some of it is under the Town Police  
Clauses Act 1847. Given that the Welsh Labour  
Government are now looking at introducing new legislation  
to deal with many of the issues we have discussed today,  
will the Minister make a similar commitment on the  
UK Government's behalf ?

**Mr Hayes:** Most of what inspires me goes back to the  
time of Jesus Christ, so I do not think the fact that  
something goes back a long way is necessarily indicative  
that it is inappropriate, but I certainly want to make  
sure that it is fit for purpose. Part of the job of government  
is to make sure that the legislative framework that we  
operate in is suitable for the changing circumstances, as  
I described. If they are as dynamic as the hon. Member  
for Ilford North and I suggest, we certainly need to

review these matters regularly and thoroughly. He is  
right that in the light of that changing landscape, we  
need to look at such things closely.

I am aware of the changing landscape of the taxi and  
private hire market, and the impact that changes in the  
way people engage services have for the public and on  
traditional business models, which, in my own use of  
taxis, I personally prefer. It is right that we address  
some of the specific issues raised in the report, and I  
shall try to do that in the short time available to me.  
Having said all that, using an app to request a taxi or a  
private hire vehicle is increasingly popular with the  
public and has the potential to change the structure of  
the market significantly. There is a taste for a certain  
kind of access to a certain kind of vehicle. That is an  
undeniable fact. I see it among people I know—friends  
and others—although personally, I prefer to hail a taxi.  
I like the theatre of that, as well as the quality that it  
ends in, but that is not the way that everybody goes  
about their lives and business, and we have to face that  
reality. Given that appetite, the important thing is that  
we are mindful of the disadvantages that it might  
bring too.

It is the case that in addition to accepting pre-booked  
journeys, taxi drivers have the exclusive right to ply for  
hire in the area in which they are licensed. This is the  
fundamental difference in the licensing of taxis and  
private hire vehicles, and underpins the requirement for  
taxi drivers to have the geographical knowledge that is  
indicated, in London at least, by the knowledge—the  
acquisition of detailed understanding of the character  
and geography of our city.

The all-party parliamentary group recommends that  
the Government introduce a legally enforceable statutory  
definition of plying for hire. That will, of course, be  
considered, but the Law Commission's view was that it  
was not practical to define plying for hire:

“No statutory list of factors could be sufficiently determinative  
to give clear guidance, leaving many of the current grey areas  
unresolved.”

I welcome the recent efforts of Transport for London  
to ensure that competition within the taxi and private  
hire market is fair. Private hire vehicles do not have the  
hard-earned right to ply for hire, and I wholeheartedly  
endorse action against those who break the law. As the  
hon. Gentleman will be aware, Transport for London  
has quadrupled the number of dedicated compliance  
officers on the street, meaning that there are now more  
than 250. Not only do those enforcement officers ensure  
fair play among legitimate parties, they play a vital role  
in preventing unlicensed, unvetted, uninsured and unsafe  
drivers and vehicles from circumventing the regulations  
and stealing business from the legitimate trade.

**Mrs Main:** The thing is that those officers do not  
come into the areas where Uber drivers licensed by TfL  
operate, so the one or two officers in my area have all  
the responsibility for driving them out.

**Mr Hayes:** Yes, that is true; my hon. Friend makes a  
valid point about the scope and powers of those missioned  
with doing what I described. I am certainly prepared to  
consider both of those things in direct response to this  
debate. If these debates are to be meaningful, they must  
take policy further forward; they must not simply be  
repetition of the status quo or an opportunity for

271WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

Taxi Trade

272WH

*[Mr John Hayes]*

Ministers to read out speeches written for them by  
other people. We will certainly consider those matters  
particularly.

Clearly, we place premium importance on passenger  
safety, and points have been made about that; again, I  
will re-examine those matters in some detail. The  
Department has undertaken to monitor the adoption of  
the recommendations made in the statutory guidance,  
and I assure all here today that I will give the matter my  
personal attention. I will be judged on what I do, rather  
than what I say, so I serve notice on all taxi and PHV  
licensing authorities that I will be asking those that do  
not adopt the recommendations made as a result of  
consultation and engagement why not and for what  
reasons. I will write to all licensing authorities accordingly  
as a result of this brief debate.

A point was made about access for disabled people.  
That point has been raised previously, and I return to  
it—indeed, I had a discussion this morning with the  
Minister responsible in my Department about this very  
subject. We want to say more about it quickly, and we  
will do so; we have been considering it for some time, as  
the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat  
Smith) will know. Again, we have been partly catalysed  
by the fresh opportunity that this debate gives us to  
consider these matters.

The other thing that I commit to is further discussion  
with the all-party group. I invite the hon. Member for  
Ilford North to come to my Department to explore each  
of the detailed recommendations in the report. Time  
does not permit me to go into them now, but I am  
happy to have a dialogue with him to see what more can  
be done. By the way, there are some contentious things  
in the report. I do not want to give the impression that I  
have read it assuming that it is all fine and dandy. The  
issue of the difference between licensed vehicles and  
licensed drivers is—I say this in the kindest, most general  
way possible—fudged in the report, and we need to  
explore it. To say that there were 88,000 vehicle licences  
and 120 licences issued to people is a slight misrepresentation  
of the facts. I could go on; there is the effect on  
congestion as well. Light goods vehicles and other  
vehicles may well do more damage in terms of congestion  
than the growing number of private hire vehicles, and  
we need to explore that. However, the report is a useful  
and valuable contribution to the debate, and we will  
discuss it and be inspired by much of what it says.

In addition to all of that, there is more work to be  
done. I have established a working party to look at  
licensing, and I am extremely keen to deal with the  
inconsistencies across licensing authorities. There is a  
strong case for considering the cross-border issues; they  
are not straightforward, as the hon. Gentleman knows,  
but we must consider them closely. As I have mentioned,  
I am keen to move forward on accessibility and how  
disabled people must sometimes, for example, endure  
drivers not being prepared to take guide dogs in taxis.  
That is not acceptable, and it cannot be allowed to  
continue. The checks put in place by licensing authorities  
must be thorough and consistent to ensure safety.

I have repeatedly stressed my admiration for black  
cabs, but I hope also to recognise that it is a dynamic  
marketplace where technology has changed, and I will  
continue to do so. To return to the fundamental message

that I want to articulate in this short debate, it is  
important that the framework that we have put in place  
is fit for purpose, recognises those changes and preserves  
the best of what we have now.

There will be a working party, consideration of licensing  
and cross-border issues, and an urgent meeting with the  
hon. Gentleman to discuss the report. I am prepared to  
go further and meet the Mayor of London, representatives  
of the London taxi trade and, of course, Uber. Devising  
a plan for the future will require us all to work together  
for the common good.

I started with Burke, so I will end with Disraeli, who  
said:

“The secret of success is constancy to purpose.”

My purpose is to get this right, not for its own sake but  
for the effect that it has on all those who work in the  
industry and all those who use taxis and private hire  
vehicles. Our responsibility—indeed, I go further—our  
duty is to ensure that that is done thoughtfully, carefully  
and effectively. In securing this debate, the hon. Gentleman  
has aided that purpose.

3.57 pm

**Wes Streeting:** I thank all right hon. and hon. Members  
for their contributions to this debate. Having listened to  
others' remarks, I am minded to draw attention to my  
declarationintheRegisterof Members'FinancialInterests.  
I thank all members of the all-party parliamentary  
group on taxis, the secretariat for their hard work and  
the sponsors, Gett, mytaxi and the Licensed Taxi Drivers'  
Association, which are reflected in our group register,  
for making all the work possible.

I am grateful to the Minister for how he summed up  
and responded to the debate. All that we can ever hope  
for as Back Benchers putting the case to Government  
on various issues is open minds and open doors. I am  
glad that he has offered both open-mindedness to the  
range of issues presented and the various challenges of  
solving those problems and, most importantly, an open  
door to discuss each of the recommendations, as he has  
generously offered, so that we can feed back to the  
thousands of drivers across the country who are following  
the issue. Of all the issues that I hear about as a  
constituency MP, there is more, and more consistent,  
engagement among members of the public on this issue  
than on any other. As the Minister acknowledged, the  
drivers whom I represent are more interested in what  
will be done; I hope that in the autumn, we will start to  
see some progress. I am glad that work is under way in  
the Department to secure progress.

I am reflecting on this debate. One ongoing concern  
that is still with the courts is working conditions and  
rights for taxi and private hire drivers. We touched on it  
to some degree—

**Mr Hayes:** I know that the hon. Gentleman has only  
a few seconds left. The Taylor review has just been  
published, and we will consider how it applies to the  
sector. That is specifically why I set up the second  
working party. I do not want to pre-judge the courts,  
but I assure him of that.

**Wes Streeting:** I agree. Similarly, we did not want to  
pre-judge the courts when we did our work. I am none  
the less glad that GMB is pursuing a test case in the  
courts about the legal status of many private hire drivers.

273WH

Taxi Trade

18 JULY 2017

274WH

Self-employment is a great thing; exploitation of self-  
employment rules by private operators is something else  
entirely. That is where the tension lies.

With just a few seconds left, I thank all right hon. and  
hon. Members for their contributions to this debate. I  
look forward to meeting the Minister, and I know that  
my constituents will be glad to hear about progress  
thereafter.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the future of the taxi trade.

Catfishing and Social Media

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

4pm

**Ann Coffey** (Stockport) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the matter of catfishing and  
social media.

Catfishing is a growing phenomenon. The internet  
has brought about many positive changes, but it has  
also brought the complex challenge of safeguarding  
people from those who want to deceive and harm them  
online. A catfish, as everybody knows, is a predator fish  
that scuttles along the bottom of the ocean feeding on  
smaller and more vulnerable fish. A human catfish will  
use another person's online identity to create a fake  
account and will then try to form relationships online,  
over social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter,  
Instagram or Snapchat, or dating apps such as Tinder.  
The victim believes that they are communicating with  
the person whose identity the catfish has stolen. The  
catfish often deceives another person into an online  
romance, perhaps getting them to send sexually explicit  
images or money. However, there is always more than  
one victim, because as well as those who are deceived by  
the catfish's fake identity, the person whose identity has  
been stolen is also a victim.

One in three relationships now starts online. The  
public should not have to continuously contend with  
the prospect that the person they are in communication  
with is not who they say they are. I want to explore how  
we can better protect victims of catfishing, including  
the person who has had their identity stolen.

I have been approached by a number of people who  
have been catfished. Their cases are all different. The  
extent of catfishing first came to my attention last year  
when I was informed by the Lady Detective Agency  
that one of my constituents, Matt Peacock, had had his  
information used by a man who created fake social  
media profiles in order to meet women online. Mr Peacock,  
a male model, has had his identity stolen online for the  
past four years by the catfish, who has used his pictures  
on dating websites to lure women. The catfish has also  
used photographs of Matt's nephews and nieces, claiming  
that they were his own children in order to appeal to  
single mothers as being caring.

Matt's family has been put under tremendous strain.  
His wife has been contacted on many occasions and  
wrongly told that her husband was cheating on her by  
asking girls and women for sexual photographs and  
videos. Matt got so frustrated that he contacted private  
detective Rebecca Jane Sutton in Manchester for help.  
Within 48 hours, they tracked down and met the catfish,  
who admitted using Matt's identity to deceive dozens of  
women. The man apologised, which, crucially, Matt  
and Rebecca captured on tape. He also revealed names  
of other women he had deceived and promised Matt  
that he would stop doing it. However, just four days  
after the confrontation, a woman the detective agency  
had warned about the catfish rang to say that he had  
contacted her again, pretending to be Matt and asking  
for graphic videos. Being unable to resolve this, the  
detective agency contacted Stockport police and handed  
over all the evidence, including the full taped confession,  
but the police said that they would not be taking any  
action because they did not consider any notifiable

275WH Catfishing and Social Media

18 JULY 2017

Catfishing and Social Media

276WH

*[Ann Coffey]*

crime to have been committed. According to Ms Sutton,  
the police officer said, “This is the same as going into a  
bar in the 1980s and pretending to be a millionaire  
when you actually work on the bins. There is nothing we  
can do about it.”

But this is not the 1980s. It is 2017, and there is a  
world of difference between exaggerating one aspect of  
yourself and creating an identity online that has been  
stolen from somebody else. Many people tell white lies  
about their age, occupation or height to seem more  
attractive to a potential partner, but the difference with  
catfishing is in the totality of the misrepresentation and  
the creation of a completely stolen identity with the  
intention to exploit.

At the moment, there is no specific criminal offence  
of catfishing. Matt and Ms Sutton are campaigning for  
a new law to make it illegal to use another person's  
identity online. Matt has told me about his disappointment  
when the police said that no crime had been committed:

“It affected me and my whole family. We spoke to one girl who  
the ‘catfisher' had targeted, pretending to be me. She told me she  
had felt like committing suicide after being deceived by this man.  
I vowed then to do all I can to sort this out. I do not want a phone  
call from a girl who has harmed herself after falling for this  
fraudster who is pretending to be me. Something needs to be done  
and if people knew pretending to be someone else online was an  
offence then they might be put off.”

Matt believes that the only way forward is through a  
new law. He contacted Facebook, which asked him to  
prove who he was and eventually took the fraudulent  
page down. However, the next day, the catfish had  
created another profile, again using pictures of Matt to  
lure women in. Matt says:

“People of my generation live their lives through social media  
and trust in an entity that is massively flawed. The law has not  
kept up and I am determined to do something about it.”

I have also been contacted by other victims of catfishing,  
includingAnna Rowe, who started a petition in February  
2017 to make it illegal to create a fake online profile  
with the intention of using it to make sexual contact. So  
far, she has collected nearly 42,000 signatures. Anna's  
catfish used Facebook accounts, emails, Skype, Snapchat  
and Instagram accounts to create a fake identity with  
the background story of a man divorced for 15 months  
and looking for a meaningful long-term relationship.  
She eventually discovered that she was in a relationship  
with a man who had used stolen profiles and was  
married. Since she publicised her case, Anna has been  
contacted by many other women who have been deceived  
by the same man.

In a third case, I was contacted for help by a mother  
who was worried about the traumatic effect that being  
catfished had had on her son. The 20-year-old young  
man, Axel Grassi-Havnen, had been catfished for four  
months. He has been so upset by the emotional strain it  
put him under that he has put a video on YouTube to  
warn other young people to be aware of catfish.

What can be done? Technology is limited in what it  
can do to deal with persistent catfish who are determined  
to deceive others and are uncaring of the trauma and  
emotional distress they inflict. Having a better  
understanding of privacy settings on Facebook and  
sharing images only with friends rather than making  
them public gives some protection, but that does not  
help people with high public profiles or those who are  
inexperienced in using social media.

Facebook has launched an initiative in India to counter  
personal photos being stolen. It has introduced profile  
picture filters to mark the photograph, because research  
has shown that a photo marked with a filter is 75% less  
likely to be stolen. There are now a number of websites  
for searching someone's information to confirm their  
social media profiles and suggest whether they are  
catfish. A number of dating websites have dedicated  
fake accounts teams; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and  
Snapchat have measures in place so that an account that  
impersonates somebody can be taken down. Using artificial  
intelligence to detect fake accounts helps to deal with  
the enormous challenge that the sheer volume of them  
poses to identifying and removing them; Facebook  
announced an initiative in that area earlier this year.  
Nobody wants to stop people setting up anonymous  
accounts—they may want to do so to express an identity  
that they cannot reveal in real life, because of prejudice  
or discrimination—but there is a difference between  
that and stealing somebody else's identity in order to  
exploit another person.

However, it is very challenging for technology to set  
up enough barriers to stop the determined catfish. I  
welcome the work that is already being done by social  
media websites with internet charities such as the UK  
Safer Internet Centre and Get Safe Online in promoting  
awareness of potential risks online and measures that  
canbetakentopreventindividualsfrombeingexploited  
by catfish. However, more can be done by the social  
media giants to be proactive in safeguarding people  
from harm—for example, regularly flashing warning  
notices about catfish.

The Government's new digital charter and the Green  
Paper on internet safety provide an opportunity to  
arrive at agreements with companies about how to  
make websites safer. I am pleased that the Government  
have proposed to work with technology companies and  
charities to develop the digital charter, which will

“seek to balance freedoms with appropriate protections to improve  
safety on line, particularly for children”.

It is important that we have initiatives by Government  
and by the companies that will work, that are acceptable  
to users and that develop partnerships with the police  
and other agencies on the sharing of information.

There is a gap technologically at the moment, but  
there is also a gap legally. Action Fraud, the UK's  
national fraud and cyber-crime reporting centre, estimates  
that two thirds of all romantic fraud cases begin on  
online dating websites. In the UK in 2016, there was a  
record number of romantic fraud cases being reported,  
with a record £39 million thought to have been given by  
victims to those they believed to be romantic partners  
online. These were all cases that involved prosecution  
for committing financial fraud online, but in the three  
catfishing cases that I have outlined, it is the emotional  
trauma caused by someone creating a fake online account  
that has been particularly damaging.

As I have indicated, there is no specific criminal  
offence of creating a false profile online. However, such  
conduct might—depending on the circumstances—fall  
within one of about six more general criminal offences.  
The most pertinent to catch catfish include malicious  
communications. Under section 1 of the Malicious  
Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person  
to send to another person an electronic communication  
that conveys

277WH Catfishing and Social Media

18 JULY 2017

Catfishing and Social Media

278WH

“information which is false and known or believed to be false by  
the sender”.

Sendingfalseinformationviaelectroniccommunications  
on social media could fall within this offence, but only if  
the sender can be shown to have had the purpose of  
causing distress or anxiety. That would be difficult to  
prove, and the Crown Prosecution Service would be  
reluctant to prosecute.

Under section 127 of the Communications Act 2003,  
it is an offence for a person,

“for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless  
anxiety to another”,

to

"send... by means of a public electronic communications network,  
a message that he knows to be false”.

A person who sends a social media message that they  
know to be false—that is, by pretending to be someone  
else—could fall within this offence, but only if the  
sender had the purpose of causing annoyance,  
inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, which  
again is difficult to prove.

In 2016, the CPS updated specific prosecution guidelines  
for cases involving social media communications. The  
guidelines say that prosecutors should begin by conducting  
an initial assessment of the content of the communication  
and the conduct in question, and classifying them in  
one of four categories. The fourth category refers to  
communications

“which may be considered grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or  
false”.

However, the guidelines say that cases that fall within  
category 4 will be subject to a high evidential threshold  
and in many cases a prosecution is unlikely to be in the  
public interest.

We need some clarity in the law, and that could be  
achieved if stealing another person's identity, as happened  
in the case of my constituent, was made an offence. Of  
course, the argument for adding intent would be that an  
absolute offence would catch people who were just  
playing a prank on a friend and were not intending to  
cause harm, unlike the catfish. However, it is for the  
police and the CPS to decide on prosecution, and if  
the accompanying prosecution guidance made clear the  
scope of the offence, that concern would be overcome.

Creating a new offence of catfishing would have the  
very desirable effect of making people less likely to steal  
somebody's identity online, and it would certainly enable  
the prosecution of persistent catfish, who cause others  
such distress, including my constituent and his family  
over so many years. As yet, we do not even know how  
many victims that man preyed on or the extent of their  
emotional distress.

The law has a purpose in reflecting what people know  
to be wrong and enforcing that through penalties against  
the person who breaks the law. Catfishing is wrong. As I  
said earlier, there are huge positives about the internet  
and the digital revolution, such as instant access to  
information, the ability to keep in touch with friends  
and family across the world, and the ability to share  
interests with people thousands of miles away. There  
are currently 37 million users of Facebook in the UK,  
which is 65% of the population over the age of 10. That  
is a massive number and it is growing. The challenge is  
to harness the positives of the internet and balance  
them with the need to protect and safeguard people

from predators. That is not an easy task. People need to  
be informed and be responsible, but we as a Parliament  
have a role, as have social media platforms. The digital  
charter and the Green Paper provide an opportunity  
both for the development of a real partnership between  
legislators and technology companies, in order to protect  
users from aggressive and harmful predators, and for  
subsequent legislation to outlaw the menace of catfishing.

4.16 pm

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Stockport (Ann Coffey) on securing  
the debate. I know that this is an important issue for her  
and for her constituent, Mr Peacock. I am glad that she  
has brought it to the attention of the House, and I  
welcome the opportunity both to raise awareness of the  
problem and, as she has done, to set out clearly the legal  
position and what might be done about it.

The UK is a world leader in the fight against online  
abuse, exploitation and harmful content. We take the  
approachofworkinginpartnershipwiththetechnology  
industry, using legislation where necessary, and we also  
work with groups across society to ensure that behaviour  
that would not be tolerated offline cannot thrive online.  
That is the principle that underpins the internet safety  
strategy, which is part of the wider digital charter that  
the hon. Lady mentioned. I listened to her contribution,  
and I will endeavour to address all the points that she  
raised in my response.

I will start by saying that I agree with her about the  
vital need to balance freedom and responsibility online,  
so that we can enjoy all the benefits of the internet but  
try to mitigate the harms and harmful practices that the  
internet has allowed to come about.

**Mr Jonathan Lord** (Woking) (Con): Like the Minister,  
I first pay tribute to the hon. Member for Stockport  
(Ann Coffey) for an absolutely superb exposition not  
only of her constituent's case but of the wider situation.

Members listening to and participating in this debate  
would like the Minister to address a couple of points.  
First, there is no excuse whatsoever for people taking  
someone else's identity online. Such behaviour is  
reprehensible and creates two potential victims. The  
hon. Member for Stockport outlined how the law has  
proved to be absolutely deficient so far in this area. I am  
not one for jumping to legal remedy, but the lack of  
legal redress for her constituent is obvious, and the  
Government need to look at that situation carefully and  
sympathetically.

**Matt Hancock:** That is an important point, and I will  
come on to it later.

The internet brings benefits, but also the new challenges  
that we are considering. The central point is that fraud,  
whether it is committed online or offline, can cause  
serious damage, and fraud includes identity theft. Victims  
can suffer both financial and emotional harm, and we  
know that fraudsters not only make money but exploit  
social relationships. Both those things need to be taken  
seriously.

The Fraud Act 2006 already includes offences that  
would apply to anyone who assumes a false or non-existent  
identity to commit fraud. In particular, section 2 sets  
out the crime of fraud by false representation, which  
would cover a person pretending to be someone else for

279WH Catfishing and Social Media

18 JULY 2017

Catfishing and Social Media

280WH

*[Matt Hancock]*

the purposes of making a gain for himself or another.  
That obviously applies in the online world, too. The use  
of a false identity for fraudulent purposes is a crime, but  
identify theft in and of itself is not a criminal offence,  
which speaks to the point that my hon. Friend the  
Member for Woking (Mr Lord) raised about taking  
someone else's identity. That is the situation as we  
find it.

Perhaps I should go through some of the things the  
Government are considering to try to address the problem.  
First, there is the question of raising awareness of  
identity fraud. Identity fraud and wider cyber-crime are  
important issues. We need to ensure that people understand  
the safer behaviours they can use online. The hon.  
MemberforStockportmentionedtheUKSaferInternet  
Centre and Get Safe Online, which provide advice on  
relationship scams and online dating issues. Get Safe  
Online is an independent organisation funded by industry  
and Government to ensure that there is a place to go for  
high-quality advice. Often even basic research, such as  
checking social media sites or using search facilities, can  
help in checking whether a person is actually who they  
say they are.

We expect websites, including social media companies,  
to respond quickly to reports of harmful content and  
abusive behaviour on their networks. That includes  
having easy-to-use reporting tools and robust processes  
in place to respond promptly when abuse is reported,  
including the suspension or termination of the accounts  
of thosewho do not comply with acceptable use policies.  
As the hon. Lady said, social media companies are  
taking some action using people and artificial intelligence,  
but it is clearly not solving the whole problem.

We have taken action to tackle online harms through  
legislation where necessary, including in relation to  
cyber-stalking, harassment and perpetrators using grossly  
offensive, obscene or menacing behaviour. We have  
introduced a new law making the fast-growing incidence  
of revenge porn a specific criminal offence, which is  
what the hon. Lady is seeking. The most relevant legislation  
is the Malicious Communications Act 1988, which contains  
the offence of sending material, including electronic  
communications, to another person that is false and  
known or believed to be false by the sender, with the  
purpose of causing distress or anxiety to the recipient  
or any other person to whom it is intended to be  
communicated. The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015  
made changes to that offence, and to section 127 of the  
Communications Act 2003. The changes were aimed at  
ensuring that people who commit those offences are  
prosecuted and properly punished. Where there is emotional  
abuse, it might be captured under the domestic abuse  
offence of controlling or coercive behaviour. That is the  
legal position.

The Crown Prosecution Service has revised its guidelines  
onsocialmediato incorporate new and emerging crimes  
beingcommittedonline.Advicewasaddedtotheguidelines  
about the use of false online profiles and websites with  
false and damaging information. For example, it may be  
a criminal offence if a profile is created under the name  
of the victim with fake information uploaded that, if  
believed, could damage their reputation and humiliate  
them. Whether the CPS prosecutes any offence will  
depend on it meeting the evidential and public interest  
tests in the “Code for Crown Prosecutors”.

The Digital Economy Act 2017 requires us to publish  
a code of practice for social media companies. We have  
not yet published it, but we are required to, so we are  
working on it. The code of practice will include guidance  
on arrangements for notification by users; the process  
for dealing with notifications; terms and conditions in  
relation to those arrangements and processes; and the  
giving of information to the public about the action  
providers take against harmful behaviour. We will be  
consulting on that shortly.

The hon. Lady said that no one is seeking to end  
anonymity. It is interesting that on some social media  
sites anonymity is not allowed or made very difficult,  
but that is not true across the board. For instance, we  
welcome Facebook's real name policy, which requires  
all its users to provide their real and full name when  
signing up. Claiming to be another person, creating a  
false presence or creating multiple profiles goes against  
Facebook's terms and conditions, but that is not the  
case for all social media sites. Policing such things is  
incredibly important, but there is collaboration between  
social media sites and dating sites to link up online  
presences. For example, Tinder allows users to link their  
accounts with other forms of social media, such as  
Facebook or Instagram. That can help, andwe welcome  
such things, but it is not necessarily for Government to  
tell social networks how their facilities should work.  
The very nature of social networks is that they are  
designed for people to share information, but all social  
networks are expected to act responsibly to protect the  
privacy of users. Getting the balance right between  
freedom and safety online is a key part of the internet  
safety strategy and the digital charter.

**Mr Lord:** I have been listening carefully to the Minister's  
remarks. A minute or so ago, I think he said that if the  
victim—in other words, the person whose identity has  
been stolen—has reputational damage, that is potentially  
a criminal offence. I cannot think of anything worse  
than that damage. In this case, it was proven that this  
man's identity was taken and that multiple women—perhaps  
many women—were contacted and asked for graphic  
and sexual images of themselves.

**Ann Coffey** *indicated assent.*

**Mr Lord:** I see the hon. Lady is nodding. Either the  
law is deficient, or the police and the CPS are giving the  
wrong advice to her constituent. Things need to be  
tightened up.

**Matt Hancock:** As I said, the CPS guidance in this  
area has been updated, because technology moves fast  
and the CPS has to update its guidance and interpretation  
of the law from time to time. My hon. Friend is exactly  
right in what he said and in reporting what I said, which  
will be in *Hansard*, but I said it as a conditional—such  
activity could be a criminal offence, because it depends  
on potential prosecutions. It is not for this place to  
determine guilt or innocence; it is for this place to  
determine what the law should be.

The guidance was updated fairly recently, and we  
need to see the impact of that, but my hon. Friend  
should rest assured that we put in place the internet  
safety strategy to look broadly at the impact of the  
internet and ensure that we protect the freedom, innovations  
and magnificent improvements that it brings to many  
areas of life, while doing that in a safe way that protects

281WH Catfishing and Social Media

18 JULY 2017

282WH

people from harm. Freedom exists within a framework  
of protecting others from harm, hence why the internet  
safety strategy will look into all these issues. Since I am  
responsible for that strategy and have heard the debate  
today and looked into the case in preparing for the  
debate, I will ensure that the issue of catfishing is  
considered.

There have been movements in this area, and I look  
forward to working with the hon. Member for Stockport  
and my hon. Friend the Member for Woking to ensure  
that the victims of catfishing, who can suffer both  
financial and emotional harm, have their voices properly  
heard. They need a strong response to ensure that the  
law is properly and appropriately up to date to deal with  
the challenges that the internet has brought in this area  
and in this case. We have to learn the lessons. I hope that  
I have provided assurance that we take harm caused  
online extremely seriously, and I look forward to working  
with the hon. Lady to find the solution.

*Question put and agreed to.*

British Prisoners in Iran

4.30 pm

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): I beg  
to move,

That this House has considered British prisoners in Iran.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Hollobone. Many hon. Members, and many people  
watching the debate across the world, will be aware in  
some sort of manner of my constituent Nazanin Ratcliffe.  
The reason I called this debate—why I think it is  
important to discuss the issue in the House—is that  
many hon. Members here and people around the world  
may not know the details of Nazanin's condition and  
that of other such prisoners who are detained in Iran at  
the moment.

Nazanin Ratcliffe, her husband Richard and daughter  
Gabriella lived in West Hampstead until April last year.  
Nazanin went to work every day in a charity. On the  
weekends, Richard and Nazanin would take their daughter  
to play in a soft play area in the Sherriff Centre opposite  
West Hampstead tube. They would play on the swings  
in a park in Fortune Green, near my house. The biggest  
worry in their lives in the early months of last year was  
which school Gabriella would go to when she grew up.  
Their situation was not any different to many of the  
young families who live in my constituency of Hampstead  
and Kilburn.

Last year, Nazanin, a British citizen, went to Iran on  
holiday and took her daughter Gabriella, who was then  
two years old and is also a British citizen, to see Nazanin's  
parents in Tehran. After two weeks, they decided to  
return home to London. Nazanin was detained at the  
airport in Tehran and the daughter was placed with the  
grandparents.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): Nazanin is a British  
citizen and I understand that she also has Iranian  
citizenship. Obviously, the Iranians do not recognise  
her British citizenship. As far as they are concerned, she  
is Iranian, so we have a real problem in trying to  
influence the Iranian authorities. Have I got that wrong?

**Tulip Siddiq:** That is no excuse for evading responsibility  
for a young mother, a British citizen, who has been  
detained in Iran, and a three-year-old daughter who has  
been separated from her mother and father. Those  
excuses are used by the Government to evade responsibility.

**Mark Pritchard** (The Wrekin) (Con): I apologise,  
Mr Hollobone, as I will have to leave this debate early  
for another engagement. I congratulate the hon. Lady  
on introducing this timely and important debate. Is it  
not the case that Nazanin Ratcliffe's situation is  
symptomatic of a regime that is systematically abusing  
human rights? If the Supreme Leader and the re-elected  
President Rouhani want to learn anything, they should  
look back to the history of ancient Persia and King  
Cyrus, who founded the first ever fundamental charter  
of human rights, a facsimile of which currently sits in  
the UN building in New York. They should look back  
for leadership—and also look forward and get into the  
international norms of human rights, not just for British  
or joint citizens but for Iranian citizens as well.

283WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

284WH

**Tulip Siddiq:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. There  
are problems with Iran as a whole in terms of human  
rights. In this debate, I will concentrate on my constituent  
Nazanin, and Kamal Foroughi, who the hon. Gentleman  
may be aware of.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I pay tribute  
to my hon. Friend for securing this debate. Nazanin's  
sister-in-law lives in my constituency. She sent me a  
letter signed by a number of my constituents. It says:

“As part of her family we have been tirelessly campaigning for  
the British Government to do more than just raising their concern  
about her treatment and the effective abandonment of her young  
daughter Gabriella in Iran.”

Does my hon. Friend join me in calling on the British  
Government to do far more?

**Tulip Siddiq:** I will call on the British Government to  
do a lot more.

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con) *rose—*

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab) *rose—*

**Tulip Siddiq:** I am going to make some progress  
before taking interventions. I know that a lot of hon.  
Members want to come in and I will take interventions.  
Before I do that, I want to outline the plight of my  
constituent Nazanin.

Gabriella's short life has already been spent in exile.  
After they were unlawfully detained at the airport, what  
followed was a shambolic process of secretive courts,  
secretive trials and secretive convictions. Nazanin was  
placed in solitary confinement, in a room one and a half  
metres square, with no window and no natural light,  
and with no access to lawyers or to her family. Before  
Nazanin went to prison, she was in perfectly good  
health. We then found out that she had suffered from  
arthritis in her neck and body. There were times when  
her limbs stopped working and she could not move for  
periods of time. She suffered from weight loss and hair  
loss. She was often denied access to medical treatment.  
The one time she did have access to a specialist, he said  
that Nazanin needed urgent hospitalisation.

**Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): I congratulate the  
hon. Lady on securing this important debate. I am  
particularly concerned about the continued incarceration  
of my constituent Roya Nobakht, who is being held in  
Evin prison, having been charged with gathering and  
participation with intent to commit crime against national  
security, due to a comment on Facebook. Will the hon.  
Lady join me in calling on all the authorities to ensure  
that appropriate medical attention and health assistance  
is always available for our constituents?

**Tulip Siddiq:** I will mention the hon. Lady's constituent  
later in my speech. I agree with her about access to  
medical treatment, but it is not just physical treatment,  
as hon. Members will be aware. Mr Hollobone, I am  
sure you will agree that if a woman is separated from  
her husband, her daughter and her family, it has an  
impact on her mental health as well. Through the  
monitored conversations that Nazanin has with her  
family, we are aware that she has been suicidal and has  
gone on hunger strike.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): Richard  
Ratcliffe, Nazanin's husband, has immediate family in  
my constituency. The way Nazanin has been treated is  
dreadful. Will my hon. Friend also consider how Richard  
has been treated, since he is now separated not only  
from his wife but from his daughter?

**Tulip Siddiq:** Richard Ratcliffe lives about 10 minutes  
down the road from me. Theirs is a family I can relate  
to. It is like many young families in my constituency. I  
am pleased to say that Richard is in the Public Gallery  
today listening to the debate. He has been tirelessly  
campaigning for the release of his wife and daughter  
since they were detained.

**Oliver Dowden** (Hertsmere) (Con): I pay tribute to  
the hon. Lady for securing the debate. She is well aware  
of the circumstances in Iran of Mr Foroughi, whose  
son is a constituent of mine; both families have been  
working very closely together. She makes an eloquent  
point about the humanitarian treatment of the detainees,  
in particular the medical treatment. Does she agree that  
itis notjust that they should get treatment but that once  
the assessment has been undertaken or the treatment  
has been given, the results should be shared with the  
family? I know that in Mr Foroughi's case the trauma  
has been increased by the lack of knowledge of the  
outcome of the medical examination.

**Tulip Siddiq:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his  
intervention and for coming with me to deliver a petition  
to the Foreign Secretary. I agree that the toll taken on  
the families of those who are held in Iran, who have  
no contact with their families other than monitored  
calls, is really shown when speaking to and meeting  
members of the families. That is, if people bother to  
meet with them.

Thousands of people in the world have spoken out  
because of the sheer level of injustice in Nazanin's case.  
Led by Richard Ratcliffe, organisations such as Amnesty  
International, Redress and Change.org have galvanised  
thousands of people to campaign for the release of  
Nazanin. At this time, almost a million people have  
signed a petition saying that Nazanin should be released.  
Six UN rapporteurs have also said that Nazanin should  
be released, and the European Parliament has adopted  
a resolution to say that Nazanin and other EU citizens  
with dual nationalities should be released.

**Mr Jim Cunningham:** I congratulate my hon. Friend  
on bringing this issue to the House of Commons and  
asking the Government to do something about it. Last  
November, an article in *The Sunday Times* suggested  
that these political prisoners were being tortured and,  
more importantly, that Iran seeks a ransom from the  
British Government of £400 million. What does my  
hon. Friend make of that? Surely it is diabolical, to say  
the least.

**Tulip Siddiq:** That is very worrying. The problem is  
that, when the families speak to prisoners of conscience  
in Iran, the calls are heavily monitored and there is no  
freedom to express exactly what is happening. It is all  
shrouded in secrecy, so there is no real evidence of what  
is going on behind closed doors. It is no surprise that  
the UN working group on arbitrary detention said that  
the detention was unlawful, arbitrary and against  
international law.

285WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

286WH

**Martin Whitfield** (East Lothian) (Lab): I thank my  
hon. Friend for securing this debate. I have listened to  
that shocking case. Does she agree that it is incumbent  
on our Government to do far more to seek the release of  
those people?

**Tulip Siddiq:** My hon. Friend anticipates the conclusion  
of my speech, when I will ask the Government and the  
Minister to do more to release not just Nazanin but  
Mr Foroughi, Roya and all other prisoners of conscience  
who have been held in Iran for so long. I have tried my  
best to raise this matter in the House as much as  
possible with the two Foreign Secretaries who have been  
in office in the time that Nazanin has been in prison.  
This is the second Minister with responsibility for the  
middle east I have addressed about this issue. I also  
raised it at Prime Minister's questions, and the Prime  
Minister said that she had raised the case with the  
Iranian President, but she did not go into whether she  
would call for Nazanin's release.

**John Howell:** I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing  
this important debate. She is being very generous with  
her time. She is describing a scandalous systematic  
abuse of human rights in Iran. Does she accept that,  
when the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 was  
put together, we missed an opportunity to put a human  
rights clause in there? In the two years since it was  
signed, there has been no improvement at all in Iran's  
activities.

**Tulip Siddiq:** I agree that it was a missed opportunity,  
but there have been other big missed opportunities,  
including a visit by diplomats to Evin prison, which I  
shall talk about later.

To mark Nazanin's 100 days of detention, Richard  
Ratcliffe and I went to No. 10 when David Cameron  
was Prime Minister and handed in a petition. With the  
hon. Member for Hertsmere (Oliver Dowden), we went  
to the Foreign Secretary's office to deliver a petition  
signed by 261 MPs and peers calling for Nazanin's  
release. I have tried to raise this issue as much as  
possible in the House, especially during the International  
Women's Day debate, in which the rights of women  
were examined over and over by Members of the  
Opposition but Nazanin's case was largely ignored. It  
has been raised in the House several times, and people  
are worried about it, but the Government, to their  
shame, have not echoed the calls for Nazanin's release.

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):  
Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the elements of  
this case that the family cannot understand is why the  
Foreign Secretary and the former Foreign Secretary  
have not taken the time to meet Richard and the family?  
I know Ministers have, but surely the Foreign Secretary  
can give a case of this seriousness some of his personal  
time.

**Tulip Siddiq:** That is something the families have  
raised with me over and over again. Why will the  
Foreign Secretary not meet with the families? Let me be  
clear: we do not doubt the sincerity of the Foreign and  
Commonwealth Office staff, but the fact is that this is  
not working. The Foreign Secretary needs to meet the  
families.

**Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): I am grateful to my  
hon. Friend for giving way. She is being very generous  
with her time.

It seems to me that the Foreign Office has behaved  
somewhat defensively in relation to this case and others.  
Given that there are 600,000 dual nationals in Britain,  
this is not going to be a single issue. Does my hon.  
Friend agree that the Government need urgently to  
develop a policy on diplomatic support for dual nationals?  
Currently, we seem to be responding to the Iranian  
Government's appalling policies and behaviour with  
poor treatment.

**Tulip Siddiq:** I am highlighting just one case, but  
there are many more involving people with dual  
nationalities. At the end of the day, they are still British  
citizens, and we have to give them the respect and time  
they deserve.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):  
Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Tulip Siddiq:** Just before I do, I would like to ask the  
Minister a few questions, which I hope he will answer in  
his speech. First, it remains incomprehensible that our  
Government are yet to call for Nazanin's release, and  
that they have failed to join the UN in maintaining her  
innocence. As I said, 261 MPs and peers signed a letter  
seeking the release of Nazanin, Kamal Foroughi and  
Roya Nobakht. Will the Government finally join them  
today?

**Mr Carmichael:** The hon. Lady is making a compelling  
case. It is perhaps unsurprising that Iran is not receptive  
to the United Kingdom Government's overtures, but  
may I remind her and the Minister that we have many  
allies in the region, and that we could be doing more to  
get them to assist us in making representations to Iran  
in that regard?

**Tulip Siddiq:** This is a matter of life and death, and  
we should be relying on any allies and friends we have in  
the region to try to get our prisoners of conscience  
released.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Does my  
hon. Friend think, therefore, that it might be useful for  
the Foreign Office to talk to Ministers in the Department  
for International Trade, who seem to be intent on  
developing a relationship with Iran? If they can speak  
about trade, perhaps we can talk about human rights.

**Tulip Siddiq:** Absolutely. My hon. Friend makes a  
good point, as usual. That is something I will be asking  
the Minister to address in his conclusion.

Secondly, given the seriousness with which the  
Government say they are treating Nazanin's case, is it  
acceptable that the Foreign Secretary is yet to meet with  
her family? They are told that he raises concerns with  
Foreign Minister Zarif, but a meeting would reassure  
them of progress. Will the Minister help me to get a  
meeting between the families of those prisoners of  
conscience and the Foreign Secretary?

Thirdly, last year, Amnesty International produced a  
report on Iran's prisons, which highlighted 17 cases in  
which

“The Iranian authorities are callously toying with the lives of  
political prisoners by denying them adequate medical care—putting  
them at risk of irreversible damage to their health or even death”.  
Will the Minister therefore clarify the role of the  
45 diplomats who recently went on a visit to Evin  
prison—the very prison in which Nazanin is being

287WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

288WH

*[Tulip Siddiq]*

held—and were given a tour to show them how well  
prisoners are treated? That consular team, which is  
denied access to Nazanin and Kamal Foroughi because  
they are dual nationals, was sitting literally outside the  
cell in which Nazanin is being held, exchanging pleasantries,  
drinking refreshments and taking photos, and yet they  
did not help her. Did they ask to see her? If not, why  
not? Does the Minister agree that it is outrageous for  
our Government to take part in a public relations stunt,  
in which diplomats go to Evin prison and take pictures  
at the very location where human rights abuses are  
taking place? I would like the Minister to respond to  
that question. Will he ask for a full report from the  
embassy in Tehran, which was reinstated recently?

I would like to ask the Minister some broader policy  
questions, which my hon. Friend the Member for West  
Ham (Lyn Brown) raised, about the implications for  
those with dual nationalities. Nazanin has been denied  
justice at every turn during her 14-month ordeal, but  
she is not the only British dual national to be detained  
in Iran—Kamal Foroughi and Roya have already been  
mentioned. The treatment of British prisoners in Iran  
speaks to the need for a review of the Government's  
broader policy towards dual nationals who are detained  
abroad. If we accept the status quo, we are accepting  
that the way Nazanin and Kamal are being treated is  
okay. That is not acceptable for many Members of this  
House.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I  
congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate and  
on her eloquent speech. She is keen for the Government  
to act after a period of delay. Would it help her to know  
that many constituents have written to me and to my  
Scottish National party colleagues, so many British  
citizens in Scotland are keen for the Government to act?  
A couple of weeks ago, I wrote to the Secretary of State  
about that on behalf of the SNP, and I am waiting to  
hear back from him. Would it help the hon. Lady to  
know that constituents of hon. Members throughout  
the United Kingdom are anxious for those people with  
dual British citizenship to be assisted by our Government?

**Tulip Siddiq:** I thank the hon. and learned Lady for  
her intervention. A full Public Gallery and the number  
of emails received by hon. Members show how strongly  
people feel about the sheer injustice of this case. Facebook  
groups of which I am a member, Hampstead Mums and  
Mums of West Hampstead, normally never get in touch  
with their MP, but they have been in touch about this  
case, because it resonates with people and it is so  
unfair—the Government need to do more.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I know the commitment  
that the hon. Lady has to raising awareness of this case.  
As chair of the all-party group for women in Parliament,  
I have seen her raising the issue in the Chamber.  
Constituents have also written to me, as have others  
from across the country, in support of this debate and  
to express concern about the heartbreaking and awful  
situation of a very small child and her family. May I  
take this opportunity to support the hon. Lady, and to  
ask the Minister, who I know is extremely caring, to  
ensure that our Government do everything in their  
power to make changes in this and the other cases we  
have heard about this afternoon?

**Tulip Siddiq:** I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention  
and her support. I thank all Members from across the  
House who have pledged their support. This is not a  
party political issue; this is about constructive working  
to ensure that we achieve the release of prisoners of  
conscience who are our citizens.

I have a few more questions for the Minister to  
answer in his summing up. Will the Government state  
that there should be no exception to taking clearly  
documented action on behalf of all UK nationals who  
face breaches of their human rights? According to a  
2011 report by the Office for National Statistics—my  
hon. Friend the Member for West Ham mentioned this  
figure—more than 600,000 people living in Britain hold  
another passport. They are of course not at risk of  
being detained, but we need to address deficiencies in  
our law to ensure equal protection for dual nationals.

Will the Government commit to making complaints  
about all breaches of the Vienna convention on consular  
relations, and consider bringing cases before the  
International Court of Justice if such breaches continue?  
Furthermore, will the Government bring the strongest  
possible pressure to bear on Iran to cease its pattern of  
arbitrary detention of dual nationals? Will the Government  
support and work towards the implementation of any  
findings of the United Nations monitoring bodies  
concerning UK nationals?

Finally, will the Government accept that there is a  
fundamental accountability gap between what the Foreign  
Office says it is doing and what the families can know is  
happening to their relatives? Families cannot be left in  
the dark about the framework of work that exists when  
their relatives are treated in such a way. A Foreign  
Office approach of discretion encourages inertia, but  
also defines the kind of foreign policy that the Government  
are mandated to deliver.

The Conservative manifesto states that the party  
believes in the values of

“freedom, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law”

around the world. When I asked about this case at  
Prime Minister's questions, she said that she was concerned  
about the effect that detention was having on Nazanin.  
Pat Frankland, who is apparently a good friend of the  
Prime Minister, said that her politics and morals are  
based on Christian values, of being decent, “not doing  
people down” and looking after people, so I ask the  
Prime Minister, and the Minister, to do the decent  
thing. I am asking them to do more—to do more to  
restore this family who have been ripped apart by a  
senseless miscarriage of justice; to do more to bring this  
toddler back together with her family, her mother and  
father, before even more of her childhood is blighted;  
and to do more to bring Nazanin, Kamal and Roya  
home to the UK where they belong.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** Order. The debate  
finishes at 5.30 pm. Four Members have written to me  
requesting to speak. I have to call the Front Benchers  
no later than seven minutes past 5, and there will be  
five minutes for the Scottish National party spokesman,  
five minutes for the Opposition spokesman and 10 minutes  
for the Minister. Tulip Siddiq will then have three  
minutes to sum up at the end. I will therefore have to  
impose a three-minute time limit on our four speakers,  
the first of whom will be John Howell.

289WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

290WH

4.54 pm

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con): I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) on  
her excellent speech and on securing this brilliant debate.  
She did not comment on another British value—a belief  
in human rights. I have a fundamental belief in human  
rights, but Iran is not a place where human rights are  
prevalent.

Human rights were not discussed at all during the  
P5+1 nuclear negotiations with Iran, in spite of Iran  
having one of the worst human rights records on this  
planet. In per capita terms, Iran leads the world in  
executions, and overall is second only to China. In Iran,  
moreover, it is mandatory for all women to veil their  
hair, homosexuality is illegal—I could go on and on.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I am grateful to my  
hon. Friend for giving way, and to the hon. Member for  
Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) for securing this  
crucial debate. My hon. Friend is making some important  
points, and I want to add one. An important human  
right is that of legal representation to ensure access to  
justice. One of the most horrifying aspects of both  
Nazanin and Kamal's cases is the absence of that legal  
advice. Will he comment on that?

**John Howell:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to  
stress that point.

At least three British citizens are detained in Iran. I  
have heard that a fourth person, whose name I do not  
know, has also been detained. We will have to see who  
that person is. Those four people stand in great contrast  
to the four Americans who were released from Iranian  
prisons in 2016 as part of a prisoner swap that came  
about following the Iran nuclear agreement. Nothing  
similar has occurred with regard to those Britons who  
have been detained in Iran over the same period.

In the few seconds I have left, I make the point that  
the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn fully  
identified the reasons why we need those people released.  
It is fine to hear warm words from the Foreign Secretary  
and the Prime Minister, but we need to see action on  
those words. We need a real release of prisoners from  
Iran as quickly as possible.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** Order. I have had  
a late request to speak from a Member who has a  
constituent interest, so I will have to cut everyone's time  
limit from three minutes to two minutes to get him in.

4.57 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the  
hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq)  
on putting a very good case forward. When I consider  
international issues, there is a phrase that resounds in  
my heart: evil triumphs when good people do nothing.  
We cannot fix the world's problems, but I believe that  
we have a role to play in this case and that we can bring  
about change.

Nazanin Ratcliffe has been jailed for five years under  
secret charges and is being held in solitary confinement.  
In September 2016, the Foreign Secretary said that the  
“upgrade in diplomatic relations” between the UK and  
Iran would provide an opportunity to raise consular  
cases

“about which I am deeply concerned”.

Will the Minister further outline how he believes that  
our recently restored diplomatic ties have enabled us to  
influence such matters?

May I also put a marker down for Kamal Foroughi,  
who has been arrested and kept in solitary confinement  
in Iran for six years after being convicted of spurious  
charges? Iran has been desperately hard on him and in  
detaining British citizens and denying them their basic  
rights.

Iran executed some 977 people in 2015 and an estimated  
one per day in 2016. The regime continues to execute  
juvenile offenders, in violation of international law. If  
there are human rights abuses, this is a country that  
does them with a vengeance. It executed 73 juvenile  
offenders between 2005 and 2015, and girls are held  
criminally accountable from the age of nine. The  
Government deem them to have reached puberty at that  
age, compared with 15 for boys. I ask this question  
again: where are the human rights in Iran, given what it  
does to young children from the age of nine? The  
nuclear deal failed to address a number of critical  
issues. I respect the Minister greatly, as he knows, but I  
ask him that question again given Iran's human rights  
abuses and the fact that it gave Hezbollah, which controls  
Lebanon, rocket factories. These are deep issues that we  
are all concerned about. The human rights abuse in Iran  
is despicable, and young people of all ages are held in  
little regard. I look forward to the Minister's response.

4.59 pm

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con):  
I congratulate the hon. Member for Hampstead and  
Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) on securing this important debate.  
It seems that this matter hinges on dual nationality,  
which is the barrier to the British Government being  
able to provide the services that we would expect them  
to provide to any British citizen. That is not good  
enough. We need to find ways forward.

I respect the Minister and his predecessor, who have  
always honestly set out that they are doing what they  
can diplomatically. The alternative, which I am sure no  
one would advocate, is to send in gunboats. The reality  
of the situation is that we either use force or work through  
the appropriate channels, as the Minister's predecessor  
did and I know he will too. I simply ask him, exactly as  
the hon. Lady did, to do more. I ask him to redouble  
our efforts to ensure that the Iranian Government are  
under no illusion about where we stand, and to continue  
to provide as much consular assistance as possible  
under the diplomatic arrangements that we have.

I turn to a slightly different point, which was made  
earlier. The Governments of the P5+1 made an agreement  
to lift sanctions, and the majority of international sanctions  
were lifted, with near-immediate effect, in January 2016.  
Given that, we have lost the leverage that we need, so I  
urge the Government to work with our allies—not just  
those in the region but President Trump in the United  
States, who criticised that deal for removing leverage.

5.1 pm

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): Thank  
you, Mr Hollobone, for calling me to make my first  
speech in Westminster Hall. I also thank my hon.  
Friend the Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip  
Siddiq) for securing the debate and introducing it in  
such a comprehensive manner.

291WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

292WH

*[Alex Sobel]*

I have received more than 100 emails from constituents  
about this matter, which shows that the cases of Nazanin  
and Kamal have touched the hearts of the nation. It is  
all too common for people to claim that a situation is  
Kafkaesque, but to me, as an avid reader of Kafka, the  
similarities between those cases and the case of Josef K.  
in “The Trial” are all too apparent. Kafka himself  
described the seeming basis of the Iranian judicial  
system when he wrote in “The Trial” that

“it's characteristic of this judicial system that a man is condemned  
not only when he's innocent but also in ignorance.”

Both Nazanin and Kamal were charged and convicted  
without adequate representation or due process—indeed,  
they were condemned in ignorance.

Like other hon. Members—particularly my hon. Friend  
the Member for Hampstead and Kilburn—I call upon  
the Foreign Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth  
Office and the Minister to press the Iranian Government  
on a number of issues that my constituents, Amnesty  
International and I have raised. They should press them  
to allow Kamal and Nazanin any specialist medical care  
they may require; give Kamal access to his medical  
records; apply without discrimination article 58 of the  
Islamic penal code, which allows for someone to be  
conditionally released after serving a third of their prison  
sentence and would ensure the immediate release of  
Nazanin and Kamal; ensure that Kamal and Nazanin  
have regular access to a lawyer of their choice; allow  
them to be in contact with their families, including  
relatives abroad; and allow them to communicate with  
British consular officials—although that seems to be a  
contentious issue. I ask the Minister to respond to those  
points.

The United Kingdom has a well-deserved international  
reputation for its justice system. I hope that the Government  
will press for the most basic justice in Iran for our  
citizens, whether they are British citizens or dual citizens,  
and particularly for Kamal and Nazanin. It is clear  
from the contributions to this debate that that is completely  
and utterly lacking.

5.3 pm

**Oliver Dowden** (Hertsmere) (Con): Thank you for  
finding time to accommodate me, Mr Hollobone. I  
apologise for my lack of proper notice.

I want to talk briefly about the case of Mr Foroughi,  
whose son is a constituent of mine. I have been involved  
extensively with the campaign that we have run jointly  
with the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn  
(Tulip Siddiq) to secure the release of Mr Foroughi and  
others.

There are many similarities between the cases that  
have been mentioned, but Mr Foroughi is a 78-year-old  
man. He really is an old man, and he is an ill man. He  
has been detained for more than 2,000 days. He is the  
longest-serving European national in a prison in Iran.  
There are many questions about his detention, but in  
the short term, there are genuine humanitarian issues  
for the Iranian Government, principally about his health  
and the need for them to share his medical files, which  
would at least provide some comfort.

I know that the British Government have raised this  
issue at every level. I used to work for Prime Minister  
David Cameron, and I know that he raised it directly

with his opposite number, as have the current Prime  
Minister and Ministers at other levels. However, Iwould  
be grateful if the Minister addressed three matters that  
have been brought out during the debate.

First, there are genuine questions about the EU  
delegation. It seems extraordinary that it could have  
been just outside where these people were detained, and  
that has caused a lot of anguish. Secondly and thirdly,  
on trade and the nucleardeal, I seek guidance, reassurance  
and information from the Minister about what we are  
doing to try to leverage opportunities. I was always  
sceptical about that deal, but I hoped that it would  
provide an opportunity to improve Iran's humanitarian  
record. That does not seem to be happening, so any  
further guidance that he can give would be gratefully  
received.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** We now come to  
the Front-Bench speeches. The guideline time limits are  
five minutes for the Scottish National party, five minutes  
for the Opposition and 10 minutes for the Minister.

5.6 pm

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): It is a pleasure  
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone, and  
to be back in Westminster Hall. I am grateful to the  
voters of Glasgow North for giving me this opportunity.  
I congratulate the hon. Member for Hampstead and  
Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) on securing this important debate  
so early in the Parliament.

The cases we have heard about today, particularly  
those of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Kamal Foroughi,  
are of huge concern to constituents and campaigners  
across the country. Like almost everyone in the room, I  
have received at least dozens of emails from constituents,  
individual campaigners and organisations calling for  
the prisoners to be set free. I pay tribute to those  
campaigners, and particularly to the families of Nazanin  
and Kamal, who have to live daily with the reality of  
their loved ones being imprisoned yet refuse to give up  
the fight.

I also want to recognise other UK citizens detained  
overseas whose cases have been discussed before in  
Westminster Hall. They include Andy Tsege in Ethiopia  
and other prisoners of conscience around the world,  
such as Raif Badawi in Saudi Arabia, whose wife I had  
the privilege of meeting during the recent general election  
campaign. In all these situations, we see a particular  
injustice and a personal cause that ought to be rectified,  
but we also see wider questions about the UK's diplomacy,  
its foreign policy and, ultimately, its role in the world.

We have heard about the situation of Nazanin Zaghari-  
Ratcliffe, who has been detained for more than a year.  
Her final appeal against her five-year sentence, which  
was originally handed down in a secret trial on unspecified  
charges, was rejected in April by the supreme court. We  
have heard about how she was lifted without warning in  
Tehran airport, and how her physical and mental health  
continues to deteriorate during her incarceration. Her  
employer, Monique Villa, chief executive officer of the  
Thomson Reuters Foundation, recently told *The Guardian*:

“She is not a spy, but an innocent mother who travelled to Iran  
only to show her baby to her parents”.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for  
Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) said, Nazanin  
Zaghari-Ratcliffe has thousands of supporters across  
this country. In previous debates, I have mentioned

293WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

294WH

seeing and hearing the demonstrations that have taken  
place outside Parliament in solidarity with Nazanin,  
and both her case and Kamal's have been raised with  
me by my local Amnesty group, yet the UK Government's  
response is still lacking. I will ask specific questions, but  
I note the comments of Nazanin's husband, Richard,  
who told *The Guardian*:

“As her husband, I can say Nazanin is innocent until I am blue  
in the face. I have spent a year doing it. But it makes a clear  
difference that the government”—  
that is the UK Government—  
“hasn't. It indulges the whispers.”

I turn to the case of Kamal Foroughi—“Grandpa  
Kamal”, as he is known. I had the privilege of meeting  
Kamran, who is a constituent of the hon. Member for  
Hertsmere (Oliver Dowden) and is here today. Kamal  
Foroughi was first detained in 2011 and was convicted  
at an unfair trial on charges that he did not know about  
until the day of his trial. His situation has been described  
by the UN working group on arbitrary detention, which  
has called for his immediate release, as a “violation of  
international law”. Once again, there are serious concerns  
about his health and wellbeing, and his access to  
communication with his family and the outside world  
has been severely limited. As I said, I had the privilege  
before the election of meeting Kamran Foroughi, and  
that brought home to me the human dimension in all  
this—the personal struggle, the lives affected and the  
simple wish of the family to have their grandpa brought  
home.

I echo all the questions that have been asked of the  
Minister already. As I said, as is so often the case with  
prisoners of conscience, there are both personal situations  
and broader policy issues. What engagement have the  
Government had with the families of the prisoners?  
What channels of communication remain open to them?  
Do the Government accept and understand the huge  
public concern about the cases, and that it is clear from  
the cross-party show of support from Members that  
they would have huge support if they stepped up their  
efforts to secure the release of Nazanin and Kamal?

The Prime Minister recently called on us all to work  
together, come to consensus and find things we can  
agree on. Here, surely, is an example of that. We hear  
repeatedly from Ministers that they raise issues with the  
Iranian regime—what does “raise”mean? Do they explicitly  
call for the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and  
Kamal Foroughi? Will the Minister do so here today?

Do the Government pass on the concerns raised in  
these debates? Do they suggest to the Iranian regime  
that if they want to continue to build global good will  
and make progress on the journey they began with the  
nuclear deal, recognising international concern about  
their prisoners of conscience would be a big step in that  
direction? What does that tell us about the UK's wider  
foreign policy goals? If the Government want to promote  
a global Britain and show that Britain is still relevant on  
the world stage, surely securing the release of a young  
mother and an older grandfather who are its own  
citizens would be a pretty good place to start.

I echo the comments made by the right hon. Member  
for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) about the  
role of our influence with regional allies and by the hon.  
Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) about trade  
deals.WeneedmorethanwarmwordsfromtheMinister.

I hope that when he responds to the debate we will hear  
about some concrete action that will ultimately help to  
free Nazanin and Kamal and reunite them with their  
families.

5.11 pm

**Fabian Hamilton** (Leeds North East) (Lab): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone.  
I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead  
and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq), who has secured this timely  
debate and has never given up on behalf of her  
constituents—especiallyNazaninZaghari-Ratcliffe, who  
is serving that terrible and immoral sentence in the  
dreadful Evin jail in Tehran. She gave us a comprehensive  
account of how her constituent happened to be convicted  
and of her appalling treatment by the Iranian authorities.  
She was passionate, as always, and she has fought hard  
for her constituent, who has been denied justice for the  
past 14 months in detention in Iran.

We have also heard contributions from the hon.  
Members for Henley (John Howell), for Strangford  
(Jim Shannon)—he was passionate as always—and for  
North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena), and from  
my new colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for  
Leeds North West (Alex Sobel), who pointed out that  
he had received 100 emails from constituents and that  
the situation really was Kafkaesque. He is absolutely  
right. I hope the Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
takes his advice and presses the Iranian Government at  
least to allow the medical care and attention needed.

We know that Iran does not recognise dual  
nationality—we have heard that many times this afternoon.  
It will not allow our diplomats to see dual nationals  
who are imprisoned in Iran. The Iranian Government  
view dual nationals with intense suspicion. That is an  
historical situation, and the United Kingdom is viewed  
with even more contempt owing to its historical interference  
in the country. The BBC's Persian service is loathed by  
Iranian officials. As we know, dual nationals are barred  
from holding Government positions. The imprisonment  
of dual nationals has been seen by many as a way of  
extracting political and financial gains from the countries  
that dual nationals share their citizenship with.

The *Financial Times* says:

“These arrests are part of the tense power struggle between  
those who would like to get closer to the US and those who are  
scared of any impacts of that on Iran's domestic politics. The  
goal seems to be spreading fears to undermine the government of  
Rouhani in western states' eyes and foreign businesses.”  
We know that the Government restored full diplomatic  
relations with Iran in September 2016, but Kamal  
Foroughi's son, Kamran, has criticised the United Kingdom  
for doing so without pushing harder for his father's  
release as part of the diplomatic normalisation process.  
I wonder whether the Minister will comment on that.

In April 2017, Amnesty International criticised the  
Foreign Secretary for his lack of action over Nazanin.  
Kathy Voss of Amnesty International was quoted in  
*The Daily Telegraph* as saying:

“It's baffling that the Foreign Secretary still hasn't had a single  
meeting with Nazanin's family who are of course sick with worry  
about her.”

Nazanin was arrested, as we have heard, by the  
revolutionary guards at the airport on 3 April 2016, just  
before she was about to return to the United Kingdom  
after a family visit. They accused her of fomenting a  
soft overthrow of the Islamic Republic—a notably common

295WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

296WH

*[Fabian Hamilton]*

and broad definition of crime—but her husband, Richard  
Ratcliffe, claims that his wife is being held to be used as  
a pawn by the Iranian authorities in exchange for unspecified  
political and financial deals in the UK. He has mentioned  
in the past that he has been approached by unspecified  
Iranian officials with offers for Nazanin's release. That  
is shocking, and I wonder if the Minister could comment  
on it.

The United Kingdom Government, as we have heard,  
have not publicly called for Nazanin's release. However,  
they have stated that they have raised their concerns  
with the Iranian Government. The shadow Foreign  
Secretary said on 9 September 2016:

“It is no longer good enough for Downing Street and the  
Foreign Office to ‘raise concerns' about this case. It is time for  
them to demand answers.”

Let me conclude with the words of Richard Ratcliffe,  
Nazanin's husband, quoted on 2 July:

“I don't think the [UK] government has been protecting us;  
they have provided consular assistance and they have expressed  
concerns...but in terms of criticising her treatment and saying it's  
abuse, they've never said that this does not meet the minimum  
legal standards, that it's not a fair trial. That this is a nonsense.  
She's obviously not important enough yet.”

I want to remind Members here that Roya Nobakht  
and Bahman Daroshafaei are also British dual nationals  
in jail in Tehran.

5.16 pm

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** As  
always, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Hollobone. May I begin by congratulating the hon.  
Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) on  
securing this debate? I thank all Members who have  
spoken—principally my hon. Friends the Members for  
Henley (John Howell), for North East Hampshire  
(Mr Jayawardena) and for Hertsmere (Oliver Dowden)  
and the hon. Member for Leeds North West (Alex  
Sobel). I also thank the Front-Bench spokespeople,  
particularly the hon. Member for Leeds North East  
(Fabian Hamilton), for an appreciation of some of the  
politics behind this.

I certainly recognise the intense interest in this issue,  
not only across the parties in this House but among the  
public in the United Kingdom and beyond. Of course  
I recognise the deep concern felt about all the cases  
mentioned today and the huge frustration at the lack of  
progress. I will try to offer as much clarity as I can and  
set out what the Government are doing to assist the  
detainees and their families. I will also explain the  
limitations on what we can do.

Like everyone else, I wish to see all those mentioned  
today returned to their families and to the UK. My  
responsibility and our responsibility is to work in the  
most effective way we can, in all the circumstances, to  
achieve that, and to explain what we do and why.  
I know everyone here would welcome me doing more.  
I am not sure how much people would welcome me  
doing something that made life more difficult. That is  
the dilemma in which we find ourselves.

Let me say what I am trying to do. This issue has been  
a priority for me since my appointment last month. I  
spoke to the deputy Foreign Minister of Iran about our  
prisoners on 21 June and raised the subject again when  
I met the Iranian ambassador on 6 July. Two days

before that, I met relatives of Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe,  
and earlier this afternoon I met the family of Mr Foroughi.  
At both those meetings I assured the families that I  
would do everything I could for their loved ones. The  
families also have round-the-clock access to support  
and assistance from our dedicated Foreign Office officials.  
I know how much the officials put into this, and I think  
the families involved know that as well. There is no  
intention to keep anyone in the dark about anything.  
There is a limit to how much information we have, but  
everything that we can communicate is communicated  
directly to the families. They have 24-hour access to  
consular officials, and they and all colleagues here have  
constant access to me.

**Annaliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): Will the  
Minister give way?

**Alistair Burt:** No, because I want to leave time for the  
hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to speak at  
the end. I cannot possibly answer all the questions  
raised. All colleagues who have a question on the table  
will get an answer by letter, but I want to address as  
much as possible of what the hon. Member for Hampstead  
and Kilburn said.

I want to assure all colleagues that we are doing  
everything we can for our detainees. Our strategy is  
based on decades of experience—both our own experience  
and that of international partners—of dealing with  
Iran. We judge that approach to be in the best interests  
of those detained, but we keep it under constant review.  
If our assessment of the right way to handle this is to  
change, we would consider any alternative courses of  
action, but for now we judge the approach we are taking  
to be the most constructive one.

Our ambassador raises the issue of our detainees  
with the Iranian authorities at every opportunity; he  
seeks to secure consular access and to ensure their  
welfare. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary  
have raised all our consular cases with their counterparts  
and have stressed the importance of resolving them as  
quickly as possible. My predecessor, the right hon.  
Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), discussed  
the issue with the Iranians on numerous occasions, both  
in London and Tehran. However, we must recognise  
that there are limitations on what we can do.

I turn now to some of the questions raised by the  
hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn, starting  
with dual nationality. Nationality is a key factor. All the  
British nationals currently detained in Iran also hold  
Iranian nationality. Questions of nationality are for  
individual states to decide. Unlike the UK, Iran does  
not legally recognise dual nationality. It considers our  
detainees to be Iranian, which has implications for  
consular assistance, which are set out in the passports  
of those with dual nationality. Under international law,  
states are not obliged to grant consular access to dual  
nationals, which is why our passports state that the  
British Government are unable to assist dual nationals  
in the country of their other nationality.

Our travel advice for Iran reiterates that statement  
and highlights the additional potential risks for British-  
Iranian dual nationals travelling there. None the less,  
we try to help dual nationals in exceptional circumstances.  
In practice, that is often difficult, as we are finding in  
Iran. We have repeatedly asked the Iranian authorities  
to grant us consular access to our dual-national detainees.

297WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

298WH

However, as Iran considers them to be Iranian, it does  
not recognise our right of access. We know that other  
countries face similar difficulties, but we will continue  
to press for consular access.

Let me turn to some other issues. On publicly calling  
for the release of the detainees, we are doing everything  
we can for them, including trying to secure access to  
them and to ensure their welfare. However, we do that  
in the way that we judge is in their best interests, and we  
assess that the approach we are currently taking is the  
most likely to be in the best interests of all our prisoners  
in Iran.

As has been stated, there are new opportunities with  
Iran's opening up. Following the destruction of our  
own embassy there some years ago, a new embassy has  
opened and new relationships are opening up. It is a  
complex country with a complex power structure, as the  
hon. Member for Leeds North East made clear, but I  
am hoping to take the opportunity—and I am sure the  
Government are hoping to take it—to explore what this  
new chance of a relationship with Iran means, both for  
us and for them. That will take some time, but it  
provides the opportunity for contacts to be made in a  
different way from before. That will supplement the  
efforts already being made on a regular basis to raise  
the issue by our consular team and by Ministers at the  
highest level.

Raising the issue can mean a variety of different  
things, from just mentioning it at a particular time to,  
following the development of a relationship, an opportunity  
to go into the issue further. Some of the issues that we  
consider here are blindingly obvious, such as how a  
country is seen by others around the world. We understand  
that very well. Different aspects of the Iranian Government  
understand some of that, but not others. We want to  
make sure that they see an issue like this as we see it, so  
that they can take the steps that we need to see our  
nationals returned.

Human rights in Iran generally are another key part  
of the debate, but what do we do about them? The  
Government take human rights and the rule of law  
seriously, and the human rights situation in Iran remains  
dire. I am putting that on the record, so that we in this  
Chamber, and the Iranian Government and the Iranian  
ambassador, who will read the account of the debate,  
will see it and know exactly what we mean. The human  
rights situation in Iran remains dire, and we are determined  
to continue to hold the Iranian Government to account.  
We frequently release statements condemning the human  
rights situation in Iran and regularly take action with  
the international community.

For example, we designated more than 80 Iranians  
responsible for human rights violations under EU sanctions,  
helped to establish the UN special rapporteur on human  
rights in Iran and strongly support the human rights  
resolutions regarding Iran at the UN. We believe that  
continued engagement with Iran on economic development  
and openness are the best ways to develop our relationship  
and will give us better leverage to discuss other issues.  
We do not pursue trade to the exclusion of human  
rights and the rule of law; they can be, and are,  
complementary.

We considered very carefully the invitation to visit  
Evin prison earlier this month. The decision to participate  
in the tour was taken because we felt it would provide  
an opportunity to engage directly with prison authorities

regarding the dual-national detainees. We felt that taking  
this opportunity should be taken, in the best interests of  
all our detainees and their families. Our consul repeatedly  
asked to see the British-Iranian detainees but was denied  
access. The risk of not accepting the invitation was the  
Iranian authorities saying, “We gave you an opportunity  
to see the conditions. You didn't take it. What do you  
expect?” There are occasions when we are trapped if we  
do and trapped if we don't.

Everyone in the FCO who deals with this—the consular  
team, which has been in constant contact with the  
families—knows how hard people are being pressed,  
but the truth is that this is not a matter in the hands of  
the UK Government to resolve. If it is to be resolved, it  
has to be resolved by the Iranian regime, and we have to  
play a part in making sure that we have done everything  
we can to facilitate that and make it work. There are  
different approaches to that. There is a public approach,  
which people can see; it is right that this issue is brought  
up here and in the most direct way by the hon. Member  
for Hampstead and Kilburn and all hon. Members who  
represent those who have been detained, and it is right  
that this is carried worldwide. However, different groups  
have different responsibilities, and my responsibility is  
to do what the Foreign Secretary and I consider to be  
most effective to secure the return of the detainees to  
their families. As we can see, that means our having a  
different approach from that which people might like  
to see.

All I can say is that, so long as I have the conviction  
that everything we are doing is as appropriate as it can  
be and is best designed to get the result we all seek, I will  
continue to do it. If the Government need to change  
course, we will, but I will not put an artificial barrier in  
the way of our progress by doing something that I  
might subsequently regret. I assure colleagues that we  
are doing everything we can to seek the result that we all  
want, but we are doing it in the way that we consider—with  
our experience of Iran and the experience of those who  
have worked with Iran for a long time—to be the best  
way possible. That does not in any way deny the efforts  
of others to do things in their way and to make sure that  
the Iranian authorities know how we feel, how the  
public feel and how the world feels.

We must do the work that we can to ensure the best  
interests of those who have been detained. That is why  
we are doing what we are doing, and I pledge to  
colleagues that I will continue to do what I consider to  
be in the best interests of those detainees, but I will  
constantly listen to those with other ideas and to the  
families, so that we do as much for them as we possibly  
can.

5.27 pm

**Tulip Siddiq:** I thank the Minister for his constructive  
response; I must say, he is much more constructive than  
his predecessor. I welcome his saying that he will look  
after the interests of the prisoners who have been mentioned  
in the debate. However, there are a few questions I  
would still like to hear him answer; perhaps he can write  
to me. I understand that he did not have time to respond  
to all of the questions I posed.

We would like a full report on the visit of the 45 diplomats  
who went to the prison. What kind of resistance was  
faced when they actually asked to see Nazanin—I am  
glad they asked to see her—and what response did we

299WH

British Prisoners in Iran

18 JULY 2017

British Prisoners in Iran

300WH

*[Tulip Siddiq]*

give to that? It seems alarming that they would allow  
the consul on a tour of a prison but now allow them to  
see the dual-nationality prisoners. The shadow Foreign  
Secretary and I sent a letter to the Foreign Secretary  
requesting that he meet the families of the prisoners  
and he did not respond. Can the Minister convince him  
to meet them? I would like to be present at that meeting.

Will the Minister write to let me know whether our  
Government will publicly say that Nazanin is innocent  
and that we demand her release—and the release of  
Kamal Foroughi and Roya Nobakht? We would like to  
know whether the Government believe in their innocence  
and that they should be released and returned. I understand  
that there are diplomatic ways in which to apply pressure,  
but to say that they are innocent and to ask for their  
release would send a strong signal to the Iranian authorities.

I only have a minute left, so let me take this opportunity  
to thank all Members who have contributed, particularly

the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Oliver Dowden), because  
he has worked very constructively with me. We all have  
the same interests at heart: we want to bring our prisoners  
back to this country, to protect them and to reunite  
them with their families.

I will put forward a ten-minute rule Bill that will look  
at how we can offer better protection to dual nationals,  
because it is not good enough to keep talking about  
existing laws. Times have changed and more people  
with dual nationality live in this country than ever, and  
there has to be some means of protecting and looking  
after them when they go on holiday. They are British  
citizens, they are proud to be British and are part of the  
country we live in, so I would appreciate cross-party  
support for that Bill to see if we can change some of the  
legislation.

5.30 pm

*Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question  
put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).*

19 JULY 2017

Queen's Speech: Implications for 302WH

Wales

301WH

Westminster Hall

*Wednesday 19 July 2017*

[MR GEORGE HOWARTH *in the Chair*]

Queen's Speech: Implications for Wales

9.30 am

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Wales and the Queen's Speech.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Howarth. I am delighted to see so many Welsh  
Labour colleagues on the Opposition Benches; what a  
shame that there are no Conservative colleagues here to  
speak from the Government Benches. In the Gracious  
Speech on 21 June, the Queen said:

“A priority will be to build a more united country, strengthening  
the social, economic and cultural bonds between England, Northern  
Ireland, Scotland and Wales. My government will work in cooperation  
with the devolved administrations, and it will work with all of the  
parties in Northern Ireland to support the return of devolved  
government.”

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I am grateful  
to my hon. Friend for securing this important debate.  
Does she agree that the Conservatives' giving money to  
Northern Ireland outside the Barnett formula and not  
giving the other UK nations their fair share is hardly  
likely to strengthen the Union?

**Jo Stevens:** I absolutely agree; it is nothing more than  
a bung to the Democratic Unionist party to hold up a  
minority Government. In her briefing on the Queen's  
Speech, the Prime Minister said that

“this Government will do everything in our power to build a more  
united nation and strengthen our precious union of England,  
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We will take seriously our  
responsibility to govern for the whole United Kingdom and will  
seek to work closely with the devolved administrations.”

The Prime Minister and her Government have not got  
off to a very good start, as my hon. Friend referred to.  
The DUP bung—a minimum of £1 billion in exchange  
for 10 votes to prop up the Government—hardly builds  
a more united nation and certainly does not demonstrate  
a will to work with all parties in Northern Ireland.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): Does the hon. Lady  
think that the deal actually busts the Barnett formula?

**Jo Stevens:** The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting  
point. I know that there has been commentary from the  
Welsh First Minister about whether it needs to be  
reviewed. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that in his  
response.

The paucity of the Government's programme for this  
two-year parliamentary Session was laid bare in the  
Queen's Speech. Much of the Conservative party manifesto  
was abandoned: dementia tax; means testing the winter  
fuel allowance; grammar schools in England—of course,  
we do not have them in Wales—a vote on repealing the  
fox hunting ban, although I suspect that Plaid Cymru  
Members would have been glad at that policy; fixed-term

Parliaments; the energy price cap; and the removal of  
free school lunches. The U-turns and concessions have  
continued apace since then.

What exactly was on offer for Wales in that Speech  
and since from the Government? After the dog's dinner  
of the Wales Act 2017 in the last Parliament, there has  
beennoprogressontidyingupandprovidingmuch-needed  
clarity on the devolution settlement, nothing to offer on  
rail electrification or anything concrete on scrapping  
the Severn bridge tolls and no Swansea bay tidal lagoon  
announcement, despite the Government sitting on the  
favourable Hendry report since January.

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Mon) (Lab): My hon. Friend  
mentioned rail electrification in north Wales. Although  
I welcome the announcement of an HS2 hub in Crewe,  
does she agree that that was an ideal opportunity to  
announce at least a plan for the future of connectivity  
from Crewe to north Wales? Electrification could be a  
part of that.

**Jo Stevens:** My hon. Friend raises an important point,  
which I think demonstrates the Government's lack of  
vision for Wales; they are always concentrating on what  
they can do for England, rather than Wales.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): Myhon. Friend  
also mentioned the Severn bridge tolls. The Conservative  
party had a very late conversion to scrapping the tolls  
during the election campaign, yet there was nothing  
about it in the Queen's Speech. Does she agree that  
businesses and commuters in south Wales need clarity  
about what will happen next?

**Jo Stevens:** I absolutely agree. We need clarity on that  
now, just as we need clarity on so many other things  
that the Government are dealing with—or not dealing  
with—at the moment.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Does my hon.  
Friend agree that another big gap in the Tory agenda is  
the issue of low pay in our valleys? Should they not  
really have brought in a real living wage of £10 an hour,  
which would make a big difference for our communities?

**Jo Stevens:** Absolutely. Our party's manifesto promised  
a £10 minimum wage by 2020—a proper living wage, as  
opposed to the fake living wage introduced by the  
Government.

There was no confirmation in the Queen's Speech of  
any investment to expand our capital city rail station at  
Cardiff Central and no confirmation that the Wylfa  
Newydd project will be delivered to ensure a sustainable  
economic legacy for Anglesey and the wider north  
Wales region. There was no devolution of air passenger  
duty and no transitional help for the WASPI—Women  
Against State Pension Inequality Campaign—women  
of Wales, whose campaign here and in Wales has been  
led with such distinction by Welsh Labour MPs, including  
my hon. Friends the Members for Swansea East (Carolyn  
Harris) and for Ogmore (Chris Elmore). There was also  
no announcement on scrapping child burial fees, which was  
another campaign led so passionately in the House  
by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East.

19 JULY 2017

303WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

*[Jo Stevens]*

The Government have even cut the number of Ministers  
in the Wales Office, which is a clear illustration of their  
lack of interest in Wales.

All we have been offered from the Queen's Speech is  
an arrogant, hard and damaging Brexit and a repeal  
Bill—after reading it last week, I see why the word  
“great” has been dropped. It is a dangerous Bill that  
offers two power grabs by the Executive for the price  
of one: from Parliament and from the devolved  
Administrations. That continues the Conservative party's  
strategy of many years of minimising scrutiny, challenge  
and oversight. This week we had the deliberate sabotage  
of our Select Committees and even the disgrace of the  
public being locked out of presenting online petitions  
to Parliament until at least September—an undemocratic  
and desperate act by a desperate Government.

We have all lived and breathed Brexit for the past  
15 months, and today I will focus some of my remarks  
on what influence women, and Welsh women in particular,  
have had and will have on the path to Brexit. I do not  
know about other hon. Members here, but I thought  
that the EU referendum campaign was the worst I have  
ever been involved in, for a number of reasons. It was  
not just the nastiness and vitriol spewed out by some—I  
emphasise “some”—campaigners, using the excuse that  
it was a discussion about immigration. It was not just  
because my friend and our colleague Jo Cox was  
assassinated by a right-wing fascist the week before the  
referendum. It was not just the insurmountable task of  
trying to undo 40 years of negative press and stories  
about the EU and what membership meant, and it was  
not just because we had to listen to and watch the then  
leader of UKIP spout bile every single day of the  
campaign.

I felt alienated by that campaign because the voices I  
heard time after time were men's; I rarely heard women's  
voices, despite our best efforts to be heard. I wrote a  
piece in our national newspaper in Wales before the  
referendum urging women to get involved, to get their  
voices heard and to talk about the issues that concerned  
all of us. I particularly wanted young women's voices to  
be heard. A University of Loughborough analysis of  
the referendum campaign showed that men received an  
astonishing 91% of EU referendum coverage in newspapers  
and 84% of the coverage in broadcast media.

The voting patterns by gender in the referendum were  
also interesting. In all age categories up to age 64,  
women voted to remain in higher percentages than  
men. In the 18-24 age group, 80% of women voters  
voted to remain, compared with 61% of men. The  
majority of women were notheardduringthecampaign  
and the majority did not get the result they wanted in  
the referendum either. However, it was a woman, Gina  
Miller, who took on the Government after the result.  
She suffered horrendous abuse and character assassination  
in the process, but it was her determination and bravery  
in the face of all of that that led to the Prime Minister  
being dragged back to Parliament to obtain specific  
permission to trigger article 50.

What about the withdrawal negotiations, now that  
they have started? I know the Minister will say this, so I  
will pre-empt him by saying that I know we have a  
female Prime Minister. However, her ministerial negotiating

Queen's Speech: Implications for 304WH

Wales

team is entirely male: the Brexit Secretary and the  
Secretaries of State for International Trade and for the  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Their teams at  
the Departments for Exiting the European Union and  
for International Trade, and the Foreign Office are also  
all entirely male—there is not a single female Minister  
from the House of Commons in those teams. That  
negotiating team is working on behalf of 65millionpeople,  
more than half of whom are women.

We have a lot to lose through Brexit. Wales is a net  
beneficiary of EU membership and has been in receipt  
of EU structural funds for a number of years. The  
availability of the European social fund has supported  
a range of programmes in Wales that have focused on  
not only tackling the causes of poverty, but investing in  
skills and young people. Many of those programmes  
have focused on addressing the barriers that continue to  
hold women back and contribute to ongoing economic  
inequality. Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation 2 project is one  
of them. Others include Agile Nation 1, funded as part  
of the previous round of structural funds, and the  
WelshGovernment'sParents, Childcare and Employment  
programme—PaCE—which provides targeted support  
to help women gain employment.

On its own, the Agile Nation 2 project is worth  
£12 million and is funded by the European social fund  
and the Welsh Government. The project works with  
women and with small and medium-sized enterprises in  
priority sectors in Wales to address the causes of the  
gender pay gap. Those projects not only deliver services  
that support women; many also provide employment  
for women. The third sector workforce in Wales is  
predominantly female, and 66% of the public sector  
workforce in Wales is female.

European funding has been used to deliver projects  
directly focused on equalities and, probably more  
importantly, cross-cutting themes of equality and tackling  
poverty. So far there has been no guarantee from the  
Government that funds repatriated to the UK will be  
made available to Wales to continue work similar to  
that which has been possible through funding streams  
such as the European social fund.

Membership of the EU has had a very positive  
impact on equalities legislation in both the UK and  
Wales. It is vital that we receive guarantees that the  
rights and protections from EU-derived equalities legislation  
in the UK will be maintained post Brexit. The current  
EU framework of legislation has acted as an absolute  
equality protection here in the UK. For example, it has  
prevented the scrapping of parts of the Equality Act  
2010 as part of the Government's one-in, two-out  
deregulation red tape challenge.

Membership of the EU has ensured not only that  
legislation is passed that explicitly deals with the causes  
of inequality, but that the impact of all Government  
policies on equality is considered, in relation to preventing  
discrimination and advancing equality. We have kept  
equality impact assessments in Wales, but the UK  
Government have scrapped them. As a result, the cumulative  
impact on women of seven years of austerity policies,  
such as welfare reform and tax changes, under the  
coalition Government, the previous Conservative  
Government and the current Conservative Government  
has not been accurately assessed by Government  
Departments, and policy is not being developed with a  
focus on equality. It has been the Labour party and

305WH Queen's Speech: Implications for 19 JULY

Wales

groups such as the Women's Budget Group that have  
illustrated the damaging effect of the past seven years  
on women in Wales and the UK.

Brexit will lead to a further lack of focus on preventing  
discrimination and advancing equality, and the full  
impact of Government decisions on women will continue  
to be ignored by this Government. The Women and  
Equalities Committee report, “Ensuring strong equalities  
legislation after the EU exit”, published in the previous  
Parliament, made a number of good recommendations.  
I hope that the Minister has read them and might  
discuss them with his colleagues. They included bringing  
forward an amendment to the Equality Act 2010  
“to empower Parliament and the courts to declare whether legislation  
is compatible with UK principles of equality”,  
including a clause in the repeal Bill that

“explicitly commits to maintaining the current levels of equality  
protection when EU law is transposed into UK law”  
and developing a cross-Government equality strategy.

I am really concerned about access to equalities data  
and research and European networks post Brexit. Similar  
concerns were raised by those who submitted evidence  
to the Women and Equalities Committee for its inquiry.  
Wales and the UK must have access to European civil  
society and equalities networks, and funds must be  
ring-fenced to allow current equalities research to continue  
undisrupted. That evidence base is crucial to shaping  
domestic policy and demonstrating the UK's progress  
in meeting international obligations such as the sustainable  
development goals.

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): Is my hon. Friend  
concerned that the Government are now proposing in  
the repeal Bill to give themselves so-called Henry VIII  
powers to modify a whole raft of legislation as seems  
appropriate, which could have an impact on legislation  
relating to women?

**Jo Stevens:** That is absolutely right. Those Henry VIII  
powers are part of the strategy I mentioned earlier of  
avoiding scrutiny, challenge and debate.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): My hon. Friend  
mentioned the WASPI women. Did we not see here in  
Westminster Hall recently the Government's contempt  
for Parliament when the motion on that debate was  
rejected by Members, and instead of there being a  
deferred Division on the WASPI issue, the Government  
have completely ignored it and not brought it to the  
Floor of the House? That shows they cannot be trusted  
with the Henry VIII powers they are bringing in via the  
Queen's Speech.

**Jo Stevens:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right and  
makes an important point. I do not think there is any  
trust in what the Government are trying to do with the  
repeal Bill.

As negotiations progress, it is crucial that thought is  
given to the financial impact that Brexit will have on  
women in Wales and the steps that should be taken to  
ensure that strong equalities legislation is maintained.  
Leaving the EU must not mean throwing away the  
decades of positive work that has been achieved in  
relation to equalities by the trade union and labour  
movement and progressive labour lawyers. Equality must  
be at the forefront of the agenda. This is why I, along with

2017 Queen's Speech: Implications for 306WH

Wales

the Mother of the House, have written to the Prime  
Minister to express our concern about the lack of  
women involved in the Brexit negotiations. Where is our  
voice? I cannot see where it will come from.

The Prime Minister has said:

“As we leave the European Union...we will make Britain a  
country that works not for a privileged few, but for every one of  
us.”

I am afraid I simply do not have faith in those negotiating  
with our EU partners. I am going slightly off-piste here,  
but does anyone remember the opening lines of the  
song from the “Pinocchio” Disney film?

“When you get in trouble and you don't know right from  
wrong, give a little whistle.”

After the £350 million a week to the NHS promise on  
that bus, the Foreign Secretary's latest insult to the  
EU 27 just reinforced his Pinocchio credentials. I make  
a joke of it, but when the task ahead is almost too large  
to comprehend, we need to have confidence in those  
negotiating on our behalf, and I do not.

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend  
think that one of the rare shafts of light that occurred  
during the general election campaign from the Prime  
Minister was her refusal to guarantee the people of  
Wales that they would not suffer by losing out financially  
as a result of the Budget negotiations? Will my hon.  
Friend ask the Minister to give an assurance that there  
will be no reduction in the settlement for Wales as a  
result of the Budget negotiations and the conclusion of  
the deal?

**Jo Stevens:** I thank my hon. Friend for making that  
point. The Minister heard the question, and we look  
forward to hearing his answer.

There are more than 40 years of laws made in the  
context of European Union membership. The former  
Lord Chief Justice, Lord Judge, has described Brexit as  
unleashing a “legislative tsunami”, and he thinks it will  
be the greatest challenge in history to the integrity of  
Parliament's procedures. The repeal Bill published last  
week does nothing to reassure us that the integrity of  
Parliament's procedures will be sustained, and my hon.  
Friend the Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan)  
gave the example of what happened in the WASPI  
debate.

The Bill does nothing to reassure me and women  
across Wales that the Government will protect and  
maintain our hard-fought-for rights when we exit the  
EU. When I hear the Brexit Secretary say, for example,  
that all current workers' rights under existing law will be  
protected, I am not convinced at all. It is not a promise,  
and it is certainly not a guarantee. We know what the  
Government are up to with the inclusion of those  
dangerous Henry VIII powers in the Bill. As we all  
know, Henry VIII's powers never did much good for  
women—I'm here all week.

Wales is far more dependent than the United Kingdom  
as a whole on trade with the European Union. We know  
that 67% of Welsh exports went to the EU in the last  
quarter of last year. More than 190,000 jobs in Wales  
are connected to demand from the single market, yet  
the Wales Office has declined to publish any formal  
analysis of the effects that different forms of trade  
partnership with the European Union would have on  
the Welsh economy.

19 JULY 2017

307WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

*[Jo Stevens]*

On higher education, we have more than 5,500 students  
from the EU enrolled in Welsh universities. Analysis  
from 2011-12 shows that EU students generated nearly  
£133 million for the economy and more than 1,200 jobs.  
Cardiff University in my constituency has gained from  
live framework programme 7 and Horizon 2020 projects  
awarded up to the end 2016, amounting to more than  
£24 million, with further applications to Horizon 2020  
in the pipeline to the value of another £20 million. For  
Cardiff University alone, European structural fund projects  
are worth an additional £39 million, with a further  
£22.5 million of projects in development. One significant  
recipient of the funding is CUBRIC—Cardiff University  
brain research imaging centre. That is set to become one  
of Europe's leading facilities for brain imaging, but it  
was able to exist only because of more than £4.5 million  
of EU funds.

Cardiff University is collaborating with other EU  
universities on more than 50 research projects, and  
16% of Welsh university research funding comes from  
the EU; that is far more than the 10% from private  
sources. More than 4,500 students and nearly 1,000  
staff from Welsh universities have studied in other  
countries under the Erasmus scheme. Where is the  
guarantee from the Government that the EU funding  
streams will be replaced in full after 2020? Please will  
the Minister address that when he responds to the  
debate?

However, the most pressing issue, which has left at  
least 3 million EU citizens in Britain and more than  
1 million UK citizens in the EU in complete uncertainty,  
is their immigration status. EU citizens moving to the  
UK at the moment do not know under what immigration  
rules they will have to apply to live here. The Home  
Office website currently states:

“The cut-off date will be agreed during the negotiations but we  
are clear that it shouldn't be earlier than 29 March 2017...or later  
than the date the UK leaves the EU.”

That raises the possibility of the Government telling  
EU citizens who arrived in Wales after 29 March 2017  
that they will have to apply under a completely different  
set of immigration rules, despite that deadline not existing  
when they arrived here. Not only have the Government  
failed to guarantee the rights of EU citizens, but the  
repeal Bill is absolutely clear that the Government will  
have the power to modify, limit or remove the rights  
that UK law gives to EU citizens. That can be found on  
page 10 of the explanatory notes to the Bill if anyone  
wants to look at it.

Thereare73,000EUnationalslivinginWales.Welsh  
public services are acutely reliant on non-UK citizens to  
take on public sector roles, and about one third of  
non-UK citizens living in Wales work in the public  
sector.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I apologise for not  
being here at the start of my hon. Friend's speech. She is  
touching on a very interesting point. During the general  
election campaign, I met a flower seller in Mountain  
Ash market who is Italian and lives in Cardiff. He said  
he was very upset, and when I asked why, he said,  
“Because ever since Brexit has been talked about, people  
keep coming to me and saying, ‘You'll be going back  
home now, won't you?'” He has lived in Cardiff for  
15 years and is extremely upset. There are many people  
in that situation, as I am sure my hon. Friend will agree.

Queen's Speech: Implications for 308WH

Wales

**Jo Stevens:** I agree entirely: we will all have examples  
of families and individuals in our constituencies who  
feel exactly the same way. This is a complete mess.  
People want to know what will happen to them. It is  
having a terrible effect on their lives, their family life  
and their work.

I will give an example. Just last week, a couple came  
to see me who are living and working in the United  
Arab Emirates. He is a UK citizen; he is from Cardiff  
Central and has a home there. He has worked abroad  
for 20 years, in Greece and now in the UAE. His wife is  
a Greek national, and their child was born in Greece  
but has a UK passport. His wife has never lived in the  
UK and neither has the child. They want to come back  
to Wales in order for their child to sit his A-levels, and  
they wanted to know whether they should come back to  
Cardiff before March 2019 and, if so, whether they  
would all be able to stay and work in the UK, or, if they  
left it until after March 2019, whether the mother, with  
a Greek passport, would be allowed to live and work in  
the UK. I cannot advise them on what to do. I have  
absolutely no idea whether they will be able to do that  
or when they will be able to do it, and I do not even  
know when I might be able to tell them. I do not think  
the Prime Minister knows either. Why are the Government  
treating people in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland  
and England in that way?

I have mentioned before in the House my constituent  
Bashir Naderi, who came to the UK more than 10 years  
ago as an unaccompanied child refugee. Now aged 20,  
he has been living in Cardiff and made his home there.  
Last year, the Home Office attempted to remove him  
forcibly back to Afghanistan. Before fleeing Afghanistan  
as a child, he had seen his father murdered by the  
Taliban; that happened in front of him. He does not  
know whether any of his remaining family are still alive.  
In Cardiff, though, he has a girlfriend, Nicole, and a  
Welsh family who love him. He has been to school in  
Cardiff and then to college. He has worked hard to  
complete his training and is now ready, as an adult, to  
play his part in the economy and the workplace. That is  
what Wales needs—people who have worked hard and  
developed skills to play a part in our communities.

We handed in to the Home Secretary a petition with  
nearly 15,000 signatures. I organised it, along with  
Bashir's family and supporters, and it was presented to  
the Home Secretary in January. I have raised in the  
House Bashir's case and the wider policy issues about  
child refugees, and I have written to the Home Secretary  
about it. However, I have not even had an acknowledgement  
of my letters, never mind the petition, and when I will  
get a substantive answer, I do not know.

The Government's current policy on child refugees  
such as Bashir—forcing them to reapply for asylum  
when they turn 18—is not only callous, but an ineffective  
use of Home Office time when the Government could  
be supporting people who need it. I have large numbers  
of constituents, as I am sure many hon. Members have,  
who are appealing Home Office decisions to reject  
asylum claims.

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Order. I am  
sure that the hon. Lady is about to relate her remarks  
back to Wales and the Queen's Speech. I can see the  
direction of travel, but perhaps she will want to get  
there a bit sooner.

309WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

Queen's Speech: Implications for 310WH

Wales

19 JULY 2017

**Jo Stevens:** Thank you, Mr Howarth; I will do that. I  
gave that example because many of these constituents  
have skills that they want to contribute to the Welsh  
economy, but they are not allowed to do so because  
they cannot work while their asylum status is unconfirmed.  
That is UK Government policy that applies to Wales  
and is affecting the ability of people to contribute to the  
Welsh economy.

The current target time for asylum appeals to receive  
a court date is 48 weeks. That is 48 weeks when people  
are in limbo. It is partly because of civil service cuts, but  
also because of cuts to the tribunals service, which have  
left Wales with inadequate services, too few people to  
process cases and insufficient judges to hear them.  
Without action from the Government to improve case  
processing and decision making, and increasing capacity  
in our courts system in Wales, the problem will only get  
worse, but there was nothing in the Queen's Speech to  
address it.

Those examples show the negative impact of the  
Government's approach to Wales and our people, and  
the general election results confirmed that Welsh voters  
agree. We saw the loss of three Conservative seats,  
resources poured into target constituencies that the  
Conservatives failed to win, and the majorities of their  
re-elected MPs slashed across Wales. We should not be  
surprised by that. People in Wales know that the  
Conservative party does not care about Wales. What  
exactly is the point of Tory MPs in Wales? They have  
stood by and let the Prime Minister dole out an enormous  
bung to the DUP and have done nothing and got  
nothing for Wales. Wales knows that Welsh Labour  
MPs, Labour councillors, Labour Assembly Members  
and the Welsh Labour Government continue to stand  
up for the people of Wales and to fight for an equal and  
progressive nation. That is why the Conservative party  
has never been, and never will be, elected to form a  
Government in Wales.

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Before I call the  
next speaker, I would point out that we have just 33 minutes  
before the winding-up speeches and seven hon. Members  
hope to be called. I will at this point give informal  
guidance. If everyone sticks to a five-minute time limit  
voluntarily, we might just get everyone in. Even then it  
will be a bit of a push, but I am leaving that as informal  
guidance at this point. I call Madeleine Moon.

9.58 am

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): Thank you,  
Mr Howarth; I will speak fast. I commend my hon.  
Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) for  
an amazing speech and for arranging for the debate to  
take place. The focus on the rights of women in relation  
to Brexit was spot on and something that no one else  
has raised so far. I am so pleased that she has done so.

One highlight of the Queen's Speech was the customs  
Bill. I want to focus on that and the impact in Bridgend  
and in particular on Ford's automotive engine plant.  
Like many other automotive companies in the UK,  
Ford relies heavily on tariff and customs-free trade.  
Automotive experts, including the Society of Motor  
Manufacturers and Traders, have made it crystal clear  
that customs barriers and tariffs will cripple the industry.  
It is no secret that the single market and customs union  
have been critical to the sector's competitiveness. That is  
critical; we cannot allow that to change. The most

recent figures show how significant the industry is to  
the UK economy. Its turnover was £71 billion and it  
supports 800,000 jobs. The EU is the largest market for  
the UK's automotive sector, with 56% of exported cars  
going into it.

The Government should heed calls from the sector  
and ensure that the benefits of the single market and  
tariff and customs-free trade with the EU is retained.  
That is essential. Keeping free trade and the supply  
chain unaffected is imperative, otherwise costs will increase.  
It is estimated that the effect on the automotive industry  
of losing free access to the customs union will be  
catastrophic. This is a highly integrated global industry,  
with vehicles and parts crossing borders multiple times  
in the assembly process. It relies on the just-in-time  
manufacturing process, so we need to maintain a seamless  
customs arrangement. Without that just-in-time process,  
we will have companies' cash tied up in making sure  
that parts are available and stockpiled rather than arriving  
just in time. That will have a devastating impact on the  
viability of the automotive trade in the UK.

Leaving the EU without a deal would mean reverting  
to World Trade Organisation tariffs and customs checks  
atUKborders,whichwouldincreasedelays,significantly  
increase costs and impact competiveness. The Society  
of Motor Manufacturers and Traders found that a  
10% tariff on finished vehicles because of World Trade  
Organisation rules would cost the industry a staggering  
£4.5 billion, which would inevitably increase costs for  
consumers—the average cost of a car in the UK is  
expected to rise by £1,500 as a result. Research from the  
PA Consulting Group has found that the cost of moving  
to a World Trade Organisation regime would impose a  
4.5% tariff on vehicle components alone, including the  
parts needed for the engines being built in Bridgend.  
That would impact the competiveness of companies  
such as Ford in Bridgend, and then there is the knock-on  
effect of 14,000 jobs associated with that factory in  
Bridgend—14,000 jobs that I am determined to protect.

I cannot stress enough how important tariff and  
customs free trade is. Investment in the UK car industry  
has already sharply declined in the first half of this year  
tojust£322million,comparedwiththetotalof£1.66billion  
that was invested in the UK's automotive sector last  
year. Companies are delaying spending because it is  
difficult to plan amid uncertainty over our future trading  
arrangements and concerns relating to the World Trade  
Organisation tariffs. The Government should carry out  
an impact assessment on how changes to customs  
procedures will affect the automotive industry, and  
absolutely avoid the possibility of resorting to World  
Trade Organisation rules.

The industry needs concrete reassurances and further  
details on how the customs Bill will ensure frictionless  
trade. Nothing is being told to the companies, everyone  
is living with uncertainty and employees are deeply  
concerned about their future, their ability to invest in  
mortgages and the uncertainty of their job prospects.  
Are they actually going to be in work in two years' time?  
Nobody knows. Without doubt, the imposition of tariffs  
by losing access to the single market and customs union  
puts our businesses across Wales, such as Ford, at a  
significant disadvantage.

**AlbertOwen:**Myhon.Friendismakingaveryimportant  
point about the Government's industrial strategy. It  
talks about the whole of the UK, but in the automotive

19 JULY 2017

311WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

*[Albert Owen]*

sector they have done a sweetheart deal with Nissan,  
putting greater uncertainties on the other car plants in  
the United Kingdom. If we are going to have an industrial  
strategy for all, there must be a level playing field.

**Mrs Moon:** This Government do not like level playing  
fields. They do bungs to the DUP, and goodness knows  
what bung has gone into the north-east—I don't know,  
nobody knows. We have to have transparency, and we  
do not have transparency.

A completed car being exported into the EU would  
face a tariff of 10%, with 4.8% on assembled engines  
and 2% on components. Currently, banking passporting  
of capital across the EU is allowed. Is the Wales Office  
monitoring the number of Welsh businesses applying  
for banking licences in the EU? SMEs will need time to  
cope with dealing with the customs transition. Are  
SMEs going to have support, training and opportunities  
to ensure awareness of the impact of exiting the customs  
union on their businesses? There is a great deal of  
concern that that is not there. Finally, will the Minister  
comment on REACH rules, on the registration, evaluation,  
authorisation and restriction of chemicals, which are  
used widely in the automotive industry, and say what he  
is doing to look at the impact on the automotive industry  
in Wales?

10.5 am

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): I congratulate the hon.  
Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) on securing  
this debate and on her very fine speech.

This is a pivotal period in our history. It is a point  
that will determine the future of our economy, our  
governance and our relations with the rest of the world—  
that is, the world beyond just England—but I regret to  
say that the Prime Minister's legislative programme is a  
deficient plan for defining times. The UK Government  
have no majority of their own, a compromised mandate  
and, as far as I can see, no real plan for Wales. They do  
have a split Cabinet, a lame duck premier and a legislative  
programme dominated by what one senior EU diplomat  
described to me recently as a vanity project for a few  
politicians who have now largely jumped ship—all that  
based on an unassailable sense of entitlement and an  
optimism that all will be well and the world will beat a  
path to our door.

My contribution today will be focused on two of the  
most wretched elements of the Queen's Speech: the  
European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and the Government's  
wilful neglect of Wales's infrastructure. It is now quite  
clear that Westminster intends to claw back powers  
from the people of Wales. The UK Government intend  
to encroach on our basic power to govern ourselves,  
trashing the settlement that, since 1999, has allegedly  
been based on an agenda of respect. Plaid Cymru MPs  
will do all that we can to oppose the Bill. We have  
always said that we will never vote for legislation that  
takes power away from the people of Wales. Now that  
the Brexit Secretary has conceded that his withdrawal  
Bill will need the consent of the devolved Governments,  
the way that he achieves his purpose will be revelatory,  
if not miraculous. I look forward to how he will explain  
himself, but there we are—we live in very strange times.

Queen's Speech: Implications for 312WH

Wales

One way to avoid the provisions of the withdrawal  
Bill that would most damage Wales would be to make it  
largely unnecessary by maintaining our economic links  
with our soon-to-be-former partners. Staying in the  
single market and the customs union would render  
much of the Bill nugatory. Yet, as I said, there is no  
majority, no mandate, no plan, a split Cabinet, a lame  
duck premier and a legislative programme dominated  
by a vanity project. As the Prime Minister might say,  
“Remind you of anyone?” Well, actually, it does; but it  
is more John Major than Margaret Thatcher.

Turning to infrastructure commitments, where is the  
concrete commitment—literally concrete—to deliver for  
Wales? There is a further commitment to HS2, and  
Welsh taxpayers will be contributing to building the  
most expensive railway in the world without an inch of  
it being in Wales. Whatever benefits might come to  
north and north-east Wales, and perhaps even my  
constituency, objective commentators have said that it  
will actually damage the economy of much of the south  
of our country. I do not think that has been given the  
attention that it should have been.

The most glaring omission is the electrification of the  
south Wales main line. I understand that we are to have  
a further Government U-turn—possibly today, or perhaps  
it has already been announced—just before we leave for  
our constituencies. The Prime Minister said the other  
night that she hoped we would leave Westminster to  
settle down. Well, we are here not to settle down but to  
settle up. The Labour Government promised us full  
electrification in 2009—I took their word for it then,  
and I am sure their intentions were sincere—and full  
electrification was promised again in 2010. It is enough  
of a scandal that eight years later we are still waiting for  
it, but for the British Government to scuttle electrification  
of the line to Swansea while expecting the people of  
Wales to stump up for England's HS2 is breathtakingly  
arrogant and totally indefensible. I should be glad to  
hear the Minister's attempt to defend it.

The UK Government are backtracking on the  
electrification of the south Wales main line. As for the  
equivalent electrification of the north Wales main line, I  
suppose we can join the long line of honest people  
queuing up to whistle for their money from this dodgy  
Government.

**Albert Owen:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way on  
that point?

**Hywel Williams:** I think not, because time is rather  
short.

The Queen's Speech claws away at our ability to  
strengthen our country, and it indulges the country's  
constitutional obsessives and imperial Walter Mittys at  
the same time. Plaid Cymru will oppose this destructive  
and offensive stupidity.

10.10 am

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): I congratulate my  
hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens)  
on securing the debate. We had to wait longer than we  
expected for the Queen's Speech, apparently because  
the ink took longer than expected to dry on the vellum.  
When it came, it made no mention whatever of the tidal  
lagoon. It did include five interesting objectives: working

313WH Queen's Speech: Implications for 19 JULY

Wales

with the devolved Administrations to ensure prosperity  
outside the EU; an industrial strategy that spreads  
opportunity throughout the UK; backing infrastructure  
to support economic growth; backing new industries;  
and acting to reduce energy bills. However, it seems to  
me that, unless I can be convinced otherwise, the  
Government have no interest in Wales.

Five years ago, in 2012, the first formal planning  
document for the Swansea bay tidal lagoon was submitted  
to the Planning Inspectorate. The construction of the  
tidal lagoon featured in the Conservative party manifesto  
in 2015, but not in 2017. In January this year, former  
Energy Minister Charles Hendry published his independent  
review of tidal lagoons, which concluded that the Swansea  
bay tidal lagoon would be cost-effective and

“a significant economic opportunity for Wales and the UK more  
generally.”

Crucially, Hendry stated that moving ahead with a  
lagoon off the Swansea coast should be seen as “a no-regrets  
policy” and that it should be built

“as soon as is reasonably practicable.”

The Swansea bay tidal lagoon is set to be the blueprint  
for tidal energy in the UK. It is a game changer for  
Wales, but despite the support of the Welsh Government,  
a number of MPs, AMs, councillors, Wales Office Ministers  
and Charles Hendry, the UK Government have still not  
committed to backing the project. We have had enough.

As Cardiff bay, which attracts more than 1 million  
visitors per annum, has shown, developments that increase  
the attractiveness and usefulness of Wales's shoreline  
can provide a catalyst for further investment and leisure  
use. There is a strong expectation that the new tidal  
lagoon would support national events and raise Swansea's  
profile. It could build on Swansea's very strong existing  
maritime heritage, which includes the National Waterfront  
Museum and the water sports centre of excellence. As  
hon. Members will have read in the review, the range of  
employment opportunities will be far-reaching, not just  
in design, build and manufacturing, but in related services  
such as tourism, recreation and recruitment. That will  
be of huge benefit not just to Gower, Swansea and  
Wales but to the rest of the United Kingdom. I feel I  
need to highlight that point, because we are being very  
short-sighted.

As an educationalist, I feel it pertinent to note how  
the University of Wales Trinity Saint David is responding  
by focusing on the skills, needs and opportunities that  
the tidal lagoon will bring, including the digital skills  
that are needed to deliver it.

**Stephen Kinnock** (Aberavon) (Lab): My hon. Friend  
is making an excellent speech on the tidal lagoon. It is  
also worth mentioning that 100,000 tonnes of British  
steel will go into the project. The Prime Minister said  
that she was disappointed with Donald Trump for  
withdrawing from the Paris climate accords, yet she  
refuses to give the go-ahead to this vital, clean, green  
energy project. How are those two positions compatible?

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Order. The hon.  
Gentleman may be leading the hon. Lady down a  
rose-strewn path—unless she can find some way of  
relating his point to Wales and the Queen's Speech.

2017 Queen's Speech: Implications for 314WH

Wales

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** I can tie it back in: the Government  
missed the opportunity to include our green agenda in  
their Queen's Speech.

It is through education and training that we can  
provide job opportunities for our young people to thrive  
and prosper in the communities they grew up in. I feel  
strongly about that, as does a very good friend of mine,  
an Assembly Member for Llanelli. We do not want the  
children of Gower to think that they have to get out of  
Wales to get on. Let them have opportunities locally so  
that families and future generations can survive in  
Gower and Wales.

My constituency and the Swansea bay area, which is  
represented by several hon. Members present, will not  
see the project's full benefits unless the Government  
commit to it. Recent reports have stated that the tidal  
lagoon is in its most precarious position since its inception;  
it is in danger of not happening. Funding is available  
until Christmas, but what will happen then? We need  
answers. More than £200 million has been provisionally  
committed, with investors ready to raise hundreds of  
millions more to fund the project, but David Stevens,  
the founder of Admiral Insurance, recently said:

“If there's no evidence that the government is committed then  
at some point the patience of investors will be exhausted”.

He is right. Swansea tidal lagoon investors have reportedly  
now decided to delay their investment. We have to have  
the go-ahead. It is reported that staff have been asked  
to cut back to a four-day working week. In the words of  
Mr Stevens, unless the Government act,

“an opportunity will have been lost and it will be very hard to  
piece together again”.

This is about the future of my constituency. The tidal  
lagoon would provide a £1.3 billion infrastructure  
investment in Swansea bay and the surrounding areas.  
In each year of operation, it would save approximately  
236,000 tonnes of carbon, while still fully powering  
155,000 Welsh homes.

My constituents and I are very disappointed. I am led  
to believe that the last Secretary of State for Wales, the  
right hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen  
Crabb), was pushing the tidal agenda forward quite  
forcefully, but the incumbent is stalling. Like my predecessor,  
he has failed to deliver for Gower and Wales.

Why have the Government not given their support?  
Are they not interested in green energy, or do they  
simply not care about Wales? The tidal lagoon project  
would bring billions to the local and national economy.  
Wales and the UK would lead the world in exploring  
green energy alternatives. This project was started five  
years ago, and now it could be at an end—unless the  
Government give the tidal lagoon in Swansea the go-ahead  
immediately.

10.17 am

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) on  
securing the debate. One thing she said that struck me  
forcibly was that the Government lost the general election  
in Wales. I was pleased to see my hon. Friends the  
Members for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane), for Gower  
(Tonia Antoniazzi) and for Cardiff North (Anna  
McMorrin) gain their seats from the Conservative party.

Having three new Labour Members of Parliament in  
Wales is relevant to the Queen's Speech, because it has  
put a stop to the Government's grammar schools policy,

19 JULY 2017

315WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

*[David Hanson]*

their proposed legislation on free schools meals and  
their dementia tax proposals, which caused tremendous  
upset in my constituency during the election. Positive  
things have happened because of the general election  
result, such as last week's announcement of the inquiry  
into contaminated blood that my hon. Friend the Member  
for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) had  
demanded. *[Interruption.]* The Minister looks quizzical,  
but he knows that 28 Labour Members and four Plaid  
Cymru Members were elected in Wales. The Government's  
majority is non-existent in Wales.

To secure the passage of the Queen's Speech through  
the House of Commons, the Government have effectively  
had to bribe the Democratic Unionist party with more  
than £1 billion. I ask the Minister: if the Government  
are going to give a significant £1 billion boost to Northern  
Ireland—including £400 million for infrastructure  
development, £150 million for the roll-out of ultrafast  
broadband, an extra £200 million investment in health,  
and further investment to tackle deprivation and mental  
health issues—is the Barnett formula now dead, as the  
hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) suggested? I  
support the Barnett formula; it works well, ensuring  
that UK Government expenditure is distributed on a  
par across the regions of the UK. However, if the  
Government can find £1 billion from the magic money  
tree that they said did not exist and give that money to  
Northern Ireland to invest in things that Wales also  
needs, such as broadband roll-out, strategic transport  
infrastructure, housing support and investment in health,  
then they need to come to defend the Queen's Speech  
today.

As the First Minister of Wales has said, if that £1 billion  
had been apportioned correctly to Wales, it would have  
meant an extra £1.6 billion for the economy of Wales.  
That money would have been used, for example, to help  
to boost the projects that other hon. Members have  
mentioned today, including not only the south Wales  
tidal lagoon but proposals for a tidal lagoon in north  
Wales. It would also have helped us to build on the  
announcementmadebytheSecretaryofStateforTransport  
two days ago on High Speed 2 at Crewe, to ensure that  
we get the benefits of HS2 in north Wales through  
investment in the line from Crewe to Chester and the  
electrification of the lines across to north Wales. It  
would have ensured that we met the commitment that  
the Chancellor of the Exchequer made in the Budget  
statement to provide money for a growth deal for north  
Wales, which I am yet to see; I hope the Minister will  
give some indication of it in his winding-up speech  
today. There are a range of things that could have been  
done in the Queen's Speech, but which the Government  
failed to do while giving money to Northern Ireland.

I will mention one other thing, because it is happening  
today. Today in the House of Lords, there is a by-election  
for a Member of these Houses of Parliament. It is a  
by-electionforanhereditarypeer,andamongthehereditary  
peers who are standing is one of my constituents, Lord  
Mostyn. I had to fight an election six weeks ago to  
convince thousands of people to vote for me. His electorate  
today is 31 people—hereditary peers. I hope the  
Government will bring forward proposals to ban hereditary  
peers, to stop this nonsense in the House of Commons  
and the Houses of Parliament. We must abolish hereditary  
peers and end this system today.

Queen's Speech: Implications for 316WH

Wales

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales  
(Guto Bebb): Who created that system?

**David Hanson:** The Labour Government did in 1999,  
with the pledge to abolish it at an appropriate moment.  
Now is the appropriate time—let us do it today.

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** We have  
approximately seven minutes before I have to call the  
Front-Bench speakers to respond to the debate. I ask  
the remaining two Back-Bench speakers to divide the  
time judiciously between them.

10.22 am

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Mon) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Howarth,  
for calling me to speak. I will certainly do my best  
to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris  
Elmore) to make a contribution on equal parity.

The Queen's Speech was an opportunity lost. It was a  
two-year programme that did not have a Welsh dimension,  
which is an absolute disgrace, particularly when we  
heard warm words from the Prime Minister, and indeed  
in the Queen's Speech, that there would be a programme  
for the whole of the United Kingdom.

I will concentrate on three main points; other Members  
have touched on them, but I want to elaborate on them  
and get some answers from the Minister. The first is the  
north Wales growth deal. We have seen Cardiff and  
Swansea city deals, which I welcome. In no way do I  
want to take away from them, but north Wales needs a  
focus of attention. This growth deal has been announced  
in numerous autumn statements. It is supposed to be  
bottom-up from the councils in north Wales, but the  
reality is that they have been squeezed; they do not have  
the finances or other resources that are needed. If we  
are to have an industrial strategy for the whole United  
Kingdom, we need the United Kingdom Government  
to take the lead and not pass the buck.

Many of us here in Westminster Hall today received  
increased mandates from the people of Wales, including  
the people of north Wales. We want to have a voice  
when it comes to growth deals, and we want to be able  
to say that we can help deliver the best for our constituents,  
so I ask the Minister: what is happening with the north  
Wales growth deal and why are we as MPs being excluded  
from its consideration?

I know that the Minister has sympathy with me on  
the second issue I will raise, which is Welsh ports. That  
is because Welsh ports will be impacted by Brexit more  
than any other ports in Europe, because they are the  
corridor to the Republic of Ireland. If we are to have a  
“seamless” or “frictionless” border, we want to know  
what that means; businesses need to know exactly what  
that means. If we have tariffs in Welsh ports, including  
Holyhead, then we will have delays and additional  
costs, which will impact on jobs in north Wales, in  
Wales as a whole and in the whole United Kingdom.  
We need clarity on that. I understand the issues with the  
border in Northern Ireland—I understand the Good  
Friday agreement and the fragility of that policy. However,  
the issue of Welsh ports is very important, and thus far  
it has not been given the attention it deserves.

Finally—I want to allow my hon. Friend the Member  
for Ogmore to make as long a contribution as possible—I  
will refer to the Hendry review and the Swansea bay

317WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

Queen's Speech: Implications for 318WH

Wales

19 JULY 2017

tidal lagoon. The policy has just been kicked into the  
longgrass, with excuse after excuse. I support the policy,  
and when I was on the Energy and Climate Change  
Committee we conducted an inquiry into it. We concluded,  
across parties, that it was a good thing for British  
energy and British industry. The Hendry review was an  
independent inquiry, based on a model that this  
Government had put in—contract for difference strike  
prices. It is their model, it is their review and it is time  
they delivered.

I will finish with one last point. The DUP has had  
£1 billion—in many ways, good on it—but that has  
taken money and attention away from Wales, which is a  
disgrace. It is the job of the Wales Office to stand up  
and be the voice of Wales in Westminster, but it is  
failing us.

10.26 am

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): Thank you for calling  
me to speak, Mr Howarth; I am grateful for the brief  
time I have.

I want to make three points. I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) on  
securing the debate. I agree entirely with her, and indeed  
with the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams),  
about the power grab that the repeal Bill is now conducting  
against the Welsh Government. I believe that we could  
be bordering on a real constitutional issue in how  
devolution moves forward if—at the moment it appears  
that this will be the case—not all the relevant powers  
that currently reside with the EU are devolved to the  
Welsh Government by the UK Government.

There were two things missing from the Queen's  
Speech that I feel quite passionate about, because they  
have an impact on Wales and should have been referred  
to. The first relates to rail electrification. We have had  
the Transport Secretary on the train to Paddington and  
we have had the Welsh Secretary driving the train from  
Paddington to Cardiff, and then saying that we will  
have additional funding for electrification to Swansea.  
That would have a significant impact on my constituency  
and many others across the south Wales belt, and it  
would have further implications for the electrification  
of the valleys lines, including the lines through Pencoed  
up to Maesteg and possibly even to the constituency of  
my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon)—  
that would create a transport hub in Bridgend.

That electrification is vital, and the UK Government—  
the Conservative Government—are failing the people  
of Wales by not securing it. That is simply unacceptable,  
especially given the hundreds of promises that Ministers  
have made time and again to provide electrification.  
Maybe the Transport Secretary and the Secretary of  
State for Wales just like driving trains—that might  
explain why they are so keen to make false promises.

The key area I wish to focus on is the impact of  
pension changes on women born in the 1950s, which  
was not considered in the Gracious Speech. I thank my  
hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff Central for plugging  
the work of our hon. Friend the Member for Swansea  
East (Carolyn Harris) and myself on this issue. The  
issue is specific to Wales—

**Albert Owen:** And to the rest of the UK.

**Chris Elmore:** Yes—sorry; it was a comment made by  
my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East, rather  
than by myself.

There was nothing in the Queen's Speech to aid  
women born in the 1950s. As a result of the pension  
reforms introduced by the Conservative Government  
between 1990 and 1997, and indeed by the coalition  
Government—we must not forget the role of the Lib  
Dems in this, because it was their Pensions Minister  
who made the changes—those women have been severely  
disadvantaged. I am sure that every Member was made  
well aware of the issue by their constituents during the  
general election campaign. These women, who account  
for about 8% of my constituents, had planned their  
retirements, from both a financial and a social perspective,  
only to have the goalposts moved. That is a grave  
injustice, and this Government continue to ignore it.

Public pressure is mounting. Since the swathe of  
public opinion was made known at the general election,  
there has been another spike in support for these women.  
My understanding is that close to 50 Conservative MPs  
now publicly support the campaign, in addition to all  
the opposition MPs across parties. I encourage all Members  
who are concerned about the issue—I will make a plug  
here—to attend the all-party parliamentary group on  
state pension inequality for women, which is meeting in  
Committee Room 5 at 3 pm. Perhaps the Minister  
would like to come along and listen to accounts of the  
issues these women face.

In conclusion, the Queen's Speech was littered with  
missed opportunities. The repeal Bill, in its current  
form, flies in the face of devolution and makes no effort  
to respect the constitutional arrangements in Wales  
while arranging our exit from the EU. The continued  
lack of clarity about the electrification of the Cardiff to  
Swansea railway line will serve only to aggravate my  
constituents and local businesses. The silence on the  
issue of women born in the 1950s shows the continued  
ignorance about the injustice of the Government's pension  
changes. The Queen's Speech was a disappointment and  
serves only to show that this Government are not seriously  
considering the issues that impact Wales.

10.29 am

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
MrHowarth.Icongratulatethehon.MemberforCardiff  
Central (Jo Stevens) on her very good speech and on  
securing this debate. We in Scotland share many of the  
concerns she outlined. She spoke about the lack of  
vision for Wales in the Queen's Speech and asked what  
was on offer for Wales from the Government. She then  
went on to mention a long list of major projects they  
have failed to announce. There was also no mention of  
transitional help for the WASPI women. We have had  
all that while the Government also apparently cut the  
number of Ministers in the Welsh Office. It hardly  
suggests a Government greatly interested in listening to  
Welsh concerns.

The hon. Lady went on to highlight the dangers for  
Wales of the repeal Bill, which features power grabs  
fromthedevolvedAdministrations,astheFirstMinisters  
of Scotland and Wales made clear in their joint statement  
condemning it. She deplored the nastiness and vitriol of  
the EU referendum campaign, and I very much share

19 JULY 2017

319WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

*[Deidre Brock]*

those concerns. She rightly deplored the awful attack on  
Jo Cox and highlighted the drowning out of women's  
voices in the campaign, quoting figures and giving  
examples that I continue to find shocking, and I look  
forward to the Minister explaining those.

The biggest part of her speech was on Brexit and the  
mess we should expect from the EU (Withdrawal) Bill.  
I, too, think the situation is unsustainable. There is still  
no proper formal input from the Welsh and Scottish  
Governments on an issue that we all know will cause  
massive damage to both nations. The Government's  
obstinacy is matched only by their eagerness to get a  
deal done with the DUP, as several Members have  
highlighted. What are the priorities? Does the DUP get  
a greater say than the Governments of Scotland and  
Wales? When will there be proper engagement? If I may  
press the Minister, what happens if either Scotland or  
Wales, or both, withhold legislative consent for the  
repeal Bill?

In a Backbench Business debate on 2 March, the  
hon. Lady laid out the huge damage being done to the  
higher education sector in Wales by Brexit and how  
much damage was likely to follow as research funding  
dried up. To be clear, Scottish MPs have the same  
concerns for Scottish universities, but does she consider  
that the damage will be so great and so long-lasting that  
it will be too much for Wales to bear? She might  
conclude that she should be doing whatever she can to  
frustrate the headlong rush of the Government and her  
party towards a Brexit cliff.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon) rightly  
highlighted the threat to the automotive industry from  
Brexit, specifically to Ford in her constituency. As was  
mentioned, Nissan received some assurances from the  
Prime Minister early on after the Brexit referendum. I  
do not recall any similar help or assurances being  
offered to Ford at Bridgend. Forgive me if I have missed  
that, but I cannot recall a Minister ever having said that  
action would be taken to help the Ford workers keep  
their jobs. What investments will the Government consider  
to help keep Welsh jobs?

The hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) made  
a very good speech. He spoke of a deficient plan for  
defining times and focused on the EU (Withdrawal)  
Bill, the clawback of powers from Wales and the lack of  
investment in Welsh infrastructure. His comments about  
the power grab from the devolved Administrations were  
rightly scathing. We in Scotland very much share his  
view. I must also mention the very good contributions  
from the hon. Members for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi),  
for Ynys Mon (Albert Owen) and for Ogmore (Chris  
Elmore). *[Interruption.]* Apologies for that pronunciation;  
my Gaelic is not too bad, but my Welsh is sadly lacking.

Finally, looking at the list of Bills in the Queen's  
Speech that affect Wales, I cannot escape the conclusion  
that those things would be better done in Wales. Does  
anyone seriously believe that Welsh agriculture is better  
served by legislation made here rather than in Cardiff?  
Tackling domestic violence and abuse in Wales—would  
that be better done here or there? I think the Welsh  
people are plenty smart enough to do those things and a  
whole lot more in their own capital city.

Queen's Speech: Implications for 320WH

Wales

10.34 am

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. You are  
known throughout Parliament as a just and fair man  
and an excellent Chair.

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Order. May I  
suggest that the hon. Gentleman does not put it to the  
test?

**Chris Ruane:** I withdraw. I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) on  
securing this important debate and so eloquently illustrating  
her points about Brexit by way of graphic examples  
from her constituency. I pay tribute to her for highlighting  
a refreshing and original analysis of the gender imbalance  
in the whole Brexit debate. I also pay tribute to my hon.  
Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon), who  
spoke about Brexit issues and the impact on the car  
industry in her constituency.

This debate should have been about the Government's  
vision for Wales and the rest of the UK. It debate  
should have offered the Government an opportunity to  
show their deep understanding of the needs, wants and  
aspirations of the people of Wales. It should have  
provided us all with an opportunity to discuss and  
improve the Government's Wales-specific proposals.  
Regrettably, as contribution after contribution has  
highlighted, there is no such opportunity, because the  
Tories have no vision for Wales. The Tories have no  
programmeforWales.TheTorieshavenounderstanding  
of Wales. We are an afterthought.

The people of Wales saw through the Tory manifesto  
in the general election. They realised they were being  
sold a pup—a pig in a poke—and rejected the offer,  
instead choosing Labour's visionary manifesto. That  
risible Tory offer stands in stark contrast to Welsh  
Labour's general election manifesto. From a position of  
weakness, the Tory Government are now asking for  
consensusandagreementtogettheiremasculatedmanifesto  
into statute. In the spirit of co-operation, I wish to  
highlight some of Labour's positive popular policies,  
which they are welcome to introduce. Imitation is the  
sincerest form of flattery, and the Government have  
already flattered Labour by stealing our ideas for an  
energy price freeze and ending austerity, which is being  
discussed in the higher echelons of the Tory party. The  
more they steal Labour's policies, the more they show  
themselves to be a party bankrupt of ideas, out of  
touch with ordinary people and lacking in leadership.

However, there are other policy areas where the  
Government could learn from Labour to create a more  
prosperous, healthier, fairer country in Wales. Our manifesto  
had Wales-specific policies. It had a proudly Welsh  
agenda, with Welsh values of community, equality,  
efficiency and hope. It shows that a UK Labour  
Government working with a Welsh Labour Government  
would not launch a power grab.Ipaytribute to the hon.  
Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) for highlighting  
that aspect of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. It is a naked  
power grab to take powers back to Westminster. The  
manifesto shows that a UK Labour Government would  
be committed to investing in Wales, not another five  
years of austerity, cuts and indifference.

321WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

Queen's Speech: Implications for 322WH

Wales

19 JULY 2017

Many families in Wales, and indeed the UK, are  
financially worse off than they were 10 years ago. On  
average, a family is £1,400 worse off. Voters are sick to  
their hind teeth with austerity, which does not work.  
Low and middle-income earners are taking all the pain,  
and the high-income earners are making all the gain.  
Even Tory Ministers now accept Labour's analysis of  
austerity. Our manifesto promised investment, reward  
for hard work and, most of all, hope. It made a commitment  
to work with the Welsh Government to tolls on the  
Severn bridge—I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden), who  
highlighted that—and pledged to end years of Tory  
under-investment in national rail infrastructure. We  
promised to commit more than £700 million from a  
national transformation fund to fund electrification of  
the Great Western main line to Swansea. That was  
highlighted by my hon. Friends the Members for Ogmore  
(Chris Elmore) and for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock).

The manifesto contained a commitment to transform  
transport networks in north Wales, with electrification  
from north Wales to Crewe, which would link the region  
with HS2 and create capacity for new, more frequent  
services into Liverpool, and beyond to the north of  
England. The manifesto had clear support for the Wylfa  
Newydd project to ensure a sustainable economic legacy  
for Anglesey and the wider north Wales community.  
Those issues have been thoroughly explored by many  
Members today, especially on the Labour Benches. Also  
mentioned many times was the impact on our proposals  
for the tidal lagoon. I commend and congratulate my  
hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi)  
on raising that issue.

I have outlined numerous Labour policies, but which  
of those bold, much needed commitments have the  
Government committed to fully fund in their Queen's  
Speech? The answer is none—not a single one. Perhaps  
we should not be surprised, because not only do the  
Government have no vision for Wales; they have no  
overall mandate for Wales. My right hon. Friend the  
Member for Delyn (David Hanson) mentioned the  
Conservatives' target seats and my success and that of  
other hon. Members in the Chamber today. The Tories  
proposed a Labour wipeout across Wales. They tried to  
plant their Tory tanks on Labour lawns in Bridgend,  
Wrexham, and Newport East. The ConservativeHome  
website listed the seats they were going to win from  
Labour Alyn and Deeside, Bridgend, Cardiff South and  
Penarth, Cardiff West, Clwyd South, Delyn, Newport  
East, Newport West, Wrexham, Ynys Mon and Torfaen.

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Order. I am  
following the hon. Gentleman closely. I do not remember  
any of that being in the Queen's Speech in relation to  
Wales. Perhaps he will return to the matter of the  
Queen's Speech and Wales.

**Chris Ruane:** I will return to the Queen's Speech and  
Wales and probably the grubbiest element, Mr Howarth:  
the alliance of the Conservative party with the DUP.  
The Prime Minister was reduced to securing her own  
position by throwing money from the magic money  
tree, which was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the  
Member for Delyn—the magic money tree that  
Conservatives alleged Labour had. Well, I want a branch  
of that magic money tree in Wales. Does the Minister

want a branch of that tree in Wales? *[Interruption.]* He  
says he will respond in due course. I hope that will be in  
the positive and the affirmative.

So there is a magic money tree in Northern Ireland  
that is worth £1 billion. As has been mentioned before,  
ifitwastransferredtoWales, that would mean £1.6 billion  
that we could invest in the infrastructure of Wales.  
After years of cuts from central Government, amounting  
to £1.2 billion a year from the Welsh block grant, our  
constituencies are suffering because of the lack of  
infrastructure and investment.

I hope the Minister will address the issue of the magic  
money tree for Wales when he winds up. We are in the  
mother of Parliaments. We are one of the best democracies  
in the world, yet we are reduced to pork-barrel politics  
for Northern Ireland, which is not a way to run a  
democracy. We need fair, open and transparent funding  
across the UK. Our people are crying out for it. The  
Minister knows his people are crying out for it. That is  
why his majority was reduced by such a massive amount  
and why I am here today. I will not have a word said  
against my benefactor and patron, the Prime Minister,  
who has allowed me to return to this place.

**Chris Elmore:** Hear, hear.

**Chris Ruane:** I thank my hon. Friend for his “Hear,  
hear.”

The debate has been very good. There was not much  
to debate because there was not much in the Queen's  
Speech to benefit Wales, but we have picked over what  
little scraps there were. We have done justice to the  
peopleofWalesbyanalysingtheConservativeprogrammes,  
or lack of them, proposed in the Queen's Speech.

10.43 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales  
(Guto Bebb):** It is a pleasure to serve under your  
chairmanship thismorning, Mr Howarth. I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens) on  
securing this debate. I also congratulate the hon. Member  
for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) on his return to the  
House and to the Front Bench. I am not sure whether  
that is a reflection of the fact that nobody else was  
willing to take the position under the current leader of  
the Labour party. It certainly seems that the only speech  
to indicate support for the leader of the Labour party  
was the final speech, from the shadow Minister, but we  
might have expected that.

The debate has been interesting. It has drifted away  
from the Queen's Speech as it affects Wales on numerous  
occasions. Westminster Hall is a forum where hon.  
Members have more of an opportunity to make a point  
that is relevant to their own constituencies or to highlight  
issues of a partisan nature.

On the issue of my survival, which the hon. Member  
for Vale of Clwyd highlighted, I remember that in 2015  
the hon. Gentleman was in my constituency on the  
Wednesday prior to the election. I can assure him that I  
was not in his constituency in 2017, because I was  
looking after my own patch. If a little less hubris had  
been shown in 2015, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would  
not have had a two-year break. Now I will take an  
intervention.

323WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

Queen's Speech: Implications for 324WH

Wales

19 JULY 2017

**Albert Owen:** On the Minister's point about debating  
the Queen's Speech in Westminster Hall, is it his intention  
to have a fuller debate in the Welsh Grand Committee,  
which was set up for Welsh issues only? It would also  
provide an opportunity for Conservative Welsh Members  
to attend and to speak up for Wales.

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Order. Welsh  
politics has always held a great fascination for me,  
although I do not think this debate is the occasion to  
run either the last general election, or, as the Minister  
seems to be doing, the one before that. If we can stick to  
the issue at hand, I am sure the people of Wales will be  
very grateful to us.

**Guto Bebb:** I will take your advice on board,  
Mr Howarth, and will quickly respond to the hon.  
Member for Ynys Mon (Albert Owen). We agreed to a  
Welsh Grand Committee on the subject of the Queen's  
Speech, but the people of Wales would think it odd if  
we had the same debate twice. However, we will of  
course have a Welsh Grand Committee in due course.

It is important to highlight that the point of the  
Queen's Speech, to be perfectly frank, was to deal with  
the issue of Brexit. The hon. Member for Cardiff Central  
is a passionate advocate of remain. I have nothing but  
respect for her position, but I question whether her  
comments were more of a cry for help against the  
Labour manifesto rather than a complaint about the  
Queen's Speech.

We are dealing with a decision taken not only by the  
people of the United Kingdom, but by the people of  
Wales.ThedecisionwasmadeinWales,intheconstituencies  
of many Labour Members, that Wales would leave the  
European Union. A vote was held and I suspect that  
every person here would describe themselves as a democrat.  
As such, we are left in a situation whereby the Government  
have an obligation to legislate for what was decided  
democratically in a referendum by the people of Wales  
and the United Kingdom. The Queen's Speech therefore  
highlights the fact that a significant portion of the Bills  
in it deal with our leaving the European Union. It is  
clear from the constructive and not so constructive  
comments made by Opposition Members that everybody  
recognises that the process by which we will leave the  
European Union will be complicated and difficult and  
will require a degree of co-operation across the Floor of  
the House. I am certain that that will happen. The  
intention of the Government is to work with, not  
against, Opposition parties on these issues.

Before we turn to the content of the Queen's Speech,  
it is worth reminding hon. Members that there was little  
difference between the Labour and Conservative manifestos  
at the general election when it came to leaving the  
European Union. Although the Government remain  
united in dealing with our exit from the European  
Union, in contrast with the Labour party, which has  
already lost shadow Ministers following disagreements  
about leaving the European Union. I therefore say to  
Labour Members that although we have 27 Bills in the  
Queen's Speech, the vast majority of which have an  
impact on Wales, it is worth highlighting that the aim of  
the legislation on leaving the European Union is to  
provide clarity, continuity and certainty for people,  
businesses and organisations in Wales that are dealing  
with leaving the European Union.

**Hywel Williams:** As the Minister has said, the bulk of  
the Queen's Speech is about exiting the European Union.  
Is he confident that the economy, foreign affairs and a  
whole host of other issues will get the attention they  
require while we spend our time discussing the minutiae  
of the regulations on fish fingers or whatever?

**Guto Bebb:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important  
point. It is imperative that all of us try to ensure that  
while we deal with this complex issue in a constructive  
manner, we also do not take our eye off the day job. I  
agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman's comment.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill was introduced  
in the Queen's Speech. The aim is to provide certainty  
and continuity to businesses, workers and consumers in  
Wales and across the UK as we leave the European  
Union. The aim of the Bill is to fulfil the Government's  
promise to end the supremacy of EU law in the UK by  
repealing the European Communities Act 1972, removing  
the supremacy of EU law and returning control to the  
UK. That is the only way for the UK to leave the  
European Union and ensure that our future laws are  
made in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast.

That is an important point. We have talked about this  
so-called power grab, and I assure hon. Members that  
there is no intention whatever of a power grab. The first  
person to talk of the importance of UK frameworks as  
we leave the European Union was none other than  
Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales. I agree. We do  
not want to find ourselves in a situation where we leave  
the EU single market and damage the UK single market.  
Thewholepointofframeworkswithinanyfuturesettlement  
is to ensure that the UK market and the UK system  
work on the basis of equality between businesses and  
individuals across the United Kingdom. Although I am  
not surprised that the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel  
Williams) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh North  
and Leith (Deidre Brock), who represents the Scottish  
National party, would disagree, it is fair to say that I am  
surprised that the Labour party, which claims to be a  
Unionist party, seems to be very annoyed at the prospect  
of having rules that apply across the United Kingdom  
agreedacrosstheUnitedKingdomaspartofthewithdrawal  
process.

It is clear that withdrawing from the European Union  
and repealing the European Communities Act 1972 will  
leave a large hole in our statute book. We therefore have  
to ensure that there is no cliff edge on the day that we  
leave the European Union. Part of the intention of the  
legislation is to ensure that the body of law is incorporated  
into UK law, which will be known as EU retained law,  
to ensure that on the day after departure, businesses,  
consumers and so forth will be in a situation of certainty,  
knowing that the rules and regulations that applied on  
the day before we left the European Union apply the  
day after we leave. That is an effort to ensure continuity,  
which will be absolutely crucial.

As the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon)  
highlighted in a passionate speech—I agreed with every  
single word, I must say—the certainty that businesses  
require in our departure from the European Union  
means that the regulations currently in place as part of  
EU law need to be in place as part of our own law, on  
the basis of continued EU legislation within the UK.  
We are trying to ensure that the issues raised about  
Bridgend are dealt with as we leave.

325WH Queen's Speech: Implications for

Wales

Queen's Speech: Implications for 326WH

Wales

19 JULY 2017

**Jo Stevens:** If the point really is about providing  
certainty, why include all the Henry VIII powers in the  
repeal Bill? That is what is leading to the mistrust. We  
believe—we are certain—that the Government will try  
to change EU law as it comes back into UK law.

**Guto Bebb:** The hon. Lady is a member of the Labour  
party, so I understand her suspicion of the intentions of  
a Conservative-led Government, but the aim of the  
Henry VIII powers are to correct deficiencies within the  
law as it stands. There will be thousands of deficiencies  
where legislation refers to European regulations and  
European laws. There will be a need to correct them.  
The same need to correct deficiencies will be granted to  
the Governments in Cardiff, Edinburgh and, I hope,  
Belfast. The intention is to correct deficiencies. The last  
thing the hon. Lady would want to see on the day after  
we depart the European Union is for our legal system to  
be inoperable. That would be a dereliction of duty on  
behalf of this Government.

I hope that gives some degree of comfort to the hon.  
Lady. Ultimately, there is an obligation on the Opposition  
to scrutinise as we go through the process of putting  
that the legislation in place.

**Albert Owen:** Would the Minister give way on that  
very point?

**Guto Bebb:** Not for the time being; I have to make  
some progress.

Converting EU law into UK law is not enough to  
ensure a functioning statute book on exit day. As I have  
mentioned, retained EU law will contain a broad range  
of deficiencies that need to be corrected; the intention is  
that that those deficiencies can be corrected both at a  
devolved level and in Westminster.

In addition to the withdrawal Bill, there will be other  
EU exit Bills, which are absolutely essential for the way  
in which we can operate as we leave the European  
Union. The customs Bill will provide for a stand-alone  
UK customs regime on exit, and the trade Bill will put  
in place the essential and necessary framework to allow  
the UK to operate our own independent trade policy. I  
suspect Opposition Members, who respect the result of  
the referendum, would not argue against the need for a  
customs Bill or a trade Bill.

On the comments of the hon. Member for Ynys Mon  
about ports, the Wales Office is aware of the issues in  
relation to Holyhead port. I think I am right in saying  
that the Secretary of State has visited. I have recently  
had meetings with Irish Ferries, for example, to discuss  
the issue in detail. Although we all recognise the sensitive  
nature of the border in Northern Ireland, it is imperative  
that we ensure that the ports in Wales are also protected.  
The Wales Office is certainly very aware of that issue,  
and I am more than happy to deal with the hon.  
Gentleman on that in due course.

The trade Bill is also crucial because, as has been  
pointed out by many hon. Members, Wales is more  
dependent on exports than any other part of the United  
Kingdom. We saw a significant increase in our exports  
in the year to March 2017. When I hear the doom and  
gloomofOppositionMembersabouttheWelsheconomy,  
I would remind them that our exports are increasing,  
notdecreasing,andweareexportingmoretotheEuropean

Union than we did in the year prior to the decision to  
leave the European Union. That is some source of  
comfort.

It is also imperative that we have an immigration Bill  
that deals with some of the issues raised about the  
concerns of EU citizens and the wider implications. On  
the point made by the hon. Member for Cardiff Central  
about her constituent and the lack of response from the  
Home Office, I would personally be more than happy to  
take that up on her behalf with the Home Office, if she  
would care to write to me about it. Such a delay in  
responding is simply not acceptable; I will happily look  
into it on her behalf.

We will also bring forward a fisheries Bill and an  
agriculture Bill, which will undoubtedly have an impact  
on Wales. Some 60,000 people are employed in the  
agriculture sector in Wales—we all know the importance  
of agriculture to our rural communities. We need to  
ensure that we have a functioning sector as we leave the  
European Union.

There are other pieces of legislation in the Queen's  
Speech that are important to Wales. We will bring  
forward a number of proposals, for example modernising  
the courts system and dealing with domestic violence  
through the creation of a domestic violence and abuse  
commissioner. Those issues are not England-only; they  
apply in Wales.

I will try to respond to some of the points raised by  
hon. Members. Ihave touchedonthefactthatanumber  
of pieces of legislation in the Queen's Speech have a  
direct impact on Wales. Anybody who denied that would  
be wrong.

On the financial settlement for Wales, hon. Members  
have very short memories. Just before Christmas, we  
announced a fiscal framework for Wales that ensured a  
Barnett floor—something that has been called for by  
many interested parties in Wales for a very long time  
and was never delivered by the Labour party when they  
were in power in Westminster and in Cardiff Bay. It has  
been delivered by this Conservative Government. The  
fiscal floor currently ensures that for every £100 spent in  
England, £119 is spent in Wales. It guarantees that there  
will be a floor. In other words, because of that funding  
commitment, the Barnett squeeze will not happen again.

Over and above the Barnett consequentials, the  
Government have also delivered support for growth  
deals for Cardiff and Swansea. Iassurethehon. Member  
for Ynys Mon that we are working very hard on achieving  
a growth deal for north Wales. The hon. Member for  
Wrexham (Ian C. Lucas) is in discussions with us on a  
regular basis on the growth deal for north Wales.

**Stephen Kinnock:** Will the Minister give way?

**Guto Bebb:** I do not have time.

I have recently met every council leader and chief  
executive in north Wales, and I will be meeting the final  
ones this afternoon. If the hon. Member for Ynys Mon  
wants to meet me about the growth deal, I would be  
more than happy to have such a meeting.

I would point out to the hon. Member for Arfon that  
he is incorrect in stating that there are no consequentials  
from the High Speed 2 project. There are: HS2 is  
included in the Department for Transport budget and  
therefore there have been consequentials.

19 JULY 2017

328WH

327WH *Queen's Speech: Implications for*

*Wales*

**Mr George Howarth (in the Chair):** Order. Although  
it is not required, as a courtesy, the Minister normally  
allows the Member who introduced the debate time to  
wind up.

**Guto Bebb:** Yes, I am aware.

There have been Barnett consequentials to the Welsh  
Government's capital budget from HS2. I also support  
the fact that the Crewe hub is essential for north Wales  
and will be very positive for that area. I hope that I have  
highlighted that the Queen's Speech is not just positive  
but relevant for Wales, and that this Government are  
delivering for Wales.

10.58 am

**Jo Stevens:** I thank you, Mr Howarth, for your robust  
chairmanship this morning. I also thank all hon. Members  
on this side of the House who contributed to an excellent  
debate. The fact that we have debated much that was  
not in the Queen's Speech for Wales but should have  
been is indicative of the current Government's attitude,  
as is the fact that we have had no contributions whatever  
from Conservative Members to the debate, other than  
the response from the Minister. I am sure we will pick  
this up in September. I hope that “in due course” means  
September for a Welsh Grand Committee and that we  
can carry on with these discussions later in the year.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Wales and the Queen's Speech.

Strategic Road Network: South West

11 am

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger** (Bridgwater and West Somerset)  
(Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the strategic road network in  
the South West.

First, I welcome the welcome the Minister to his  
place. As you are aware, Mr Howarth, I worked with  
him on the nuclear issue and Hinkley Point. I also  
thank his Parliamentary Private Secretary, my hon.  
Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey), and my  
hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) for being  
here. I am glad that my hon. Friends the Members for  
Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose), for Gloucester (Richard  
Graham) and for Torbay (Kevin Foster) are here too. I  
am sorry about the pink specs, Mr Howarth—I managed  
to lose mine.

I am grateful to be able to raise issues about the road  
network in the south-west. They relate exclusively to  
that network, and they have to be cured. The strategy  
for the major roads can be a bit of a beggar's muddle,  
which roughly translates as a complete and utter mess,  
liable to cause confusion and dismay. I represent Bridgwater  
and West Somerset, and the M5 is our only official  
strategic route. It covers the whole of our area. If  
someone needs to get strategically to Watchet, Williton  
or Minehead, they need the A39. That road is every bit  
as strategic for hundreds of thousands of holidaymakers  
and for anybody who happens to live there, yet the M5  
and the A39 come under entirely different management.

Most A roads in this country are looked after by  
county councils. All motorways and a handful of A  
roads are the responsibility of Highways England Ltd.  
Two years ago, the Government quite rightly shook up  
the old Highways Agency, turned it into a flash new  
company and hoped it would learn to operate within  
budget and focus more attention on customers. There  
was frustration in Whitehall that new roads took far too  
long to complete—we have all suffered from that. It  
would be much better, it was thought, if one company  
was given a big budget and simply allowed to get on  
with it. The Government also wanted to speed up the  
whole planning process.

A chief executive with an impressive track record was  
hired. Jim O'Sullivan used to be the chief engineer at  
British Airways, and claims he can still change the  
brakes, wheels and engines on an aeroplane, but I would  
rather he concentrated on his day job. After all, Highways  
England spends £7 million of public money every single  
week. That is enormous bucks, given that the highway  
under its control adds up to just 2% of the total road  
network. The company got a rap over the knuckles from  
the rail and road regulator in its first appraisal last year.  
The regulator said that it was not transparent enough  
about plans or accurate enough about accounting. I can  
think of quite a few level-headed Somerset people who  
would agree and go further.

Highways England has sparked a monstrous planning  
row that shows what is wrong with the whole process of  
strategic road development. At the end of the week,  
I will get in my car and drive home to the west country. I  
usually travel on the M4, then on to the M5 and home.  
Occasionally, if I am in a hurry, I will risk the A303 and  
the A358 into Taunton—my hon. Friend the Member

329WH Strategic Road Network: South West 19 JULY 2017 Strategic Road Network: South West 330WH

for Yeovil knows how tricky that is—but from drivers'  
point of view that is a gamble. They face swarms of  
druid-fanciers at Stonehenge, armies of articulated lorries  
struggling up hills and enough caravans to drive Jeremy  
Clarkson bonkers—all going at a snail's pace throughout.

You are probably not aware, Mr Howarth, that parts  
of the A303 are still single-carriageway. Most of the  
A358 is a bottleneck, and Taunton has become a snarled-up  
no-go area. As a matter of fact, there is no good reason  
to go anywhere near Taunton since the useless council  
lost its famous cattle market to Bridgwater and is  
allowing the shopping centre to waste away and die.  
Councillor John Williams is now the sheriff of a wild  
west tumbleweed town. He struts about spending oodles  
of taxpayers' money on gold taps and new showers for  
Deane House, and people say he is on the take—more  
of him later, I promise.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend on his rose-tinted spectacles. On the  
issue of strategic roads, does he agree that the other key  
road in the south-west that is worth a mention today is  
the A417—in particular the bottleneck at the Air Balloon  
roundabout, which prevents the link between the M4  
and the M5?

**Mr Liddell-Grainger:** My hon. Friend is absolutely  
right, and it is quite correct to highlight such situations.  
His constituents suffer in the same way as those of my  
hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil on those inadequate  
roads. We need a policy that covers A roads and motorways.  
My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester has done a  
noble job for his constituents, and I am glad he has  
raised that point.

Highways England had a brief to create an alternative  
route to the far south-west using the A303 and the  
A358, even if it effectively bypassed Taunton. As my  
hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil is aware, it would  
have made much more sense to upgrade the A303 and  
carry on over the Blackdown hills with improvements  
to the A30. Devon County Council wanted that option,  
and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and  
Honiton (Neil Parish), who unfortunately cannot be in  
his place today, argued for it. It would be a much  
shorter route, and cheaper too.

The most cost-effective solution is just to improve the  
M5 and widen it. It would save a fortune—problem  
solved. That would be it sorted. The trouble is that  
Highways England did not get the choice. It was lumbered  
with the A303 and A358, and it came up with a series of  
wildly expensive plans. Surprise, surprise, it picked the  
cheapest option, although it makes no strategic sense  
whatever.Theresulthasbeenastormofprotest.Highways  
England has totally cheesed off Somerset County Council,  
which thinks the plan nuts. Highways England stupidly  
cancelled the public consultation meetings during the  
May general election campaign. Why? It has made so  
many blunders that the Campaign to Protect Rural  
England is threatening to take it to court for a judicial  
review—ridiculous.

Worstofall,HighwaysEnglandwillbeusingsomething  
called a development consent order to secure the right  
to build the road. It does not matter how many people  
protestorwhatthelocalcouncilsays,becausedevelopment  
consent orders were designed to put time limits on all  
objections. Basically, unless the Secretary of State intervenes,

a development consent order can be a legal bulldozer. I  
should add that the long list of objectors to the proposal  
includes Taunton Deane Council, bizarrely, which  
desperately wants a new road but would much prefer  
a link with one of its plum building projects called  
Nexus 25.

**Mr Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): Does my hon. Friend  
agree that one of the key issues with the A358 is that we  
must ensure that we have a north-south link between  
our parts of Somerset, which would enable the Somerset  
economy to grow to its full potential?

**Mr Liddell-Grainger:** I thank my hon. Friend for that  
intervention. He has been a champion for the A303 and  
A358 since he stood as a candidate. He has done a  
remarkable job in ensuring that the Government are  
fully aware of the feelings of the people of Yeovil.  
Yeovil and Bridgwater are the only two industrial towns  
in Somerset. This issue matters enormously given that  
the railway station for Yeovil is outside the town, so we  
have double strategic problems.

Nexus is a rosy apple in the eye of Tumbleweed  
Town's Wyatt Earp, Councillor John Williams. Quick  
on the draw as he is, Wyatt Twerp intends to make sure  
it happens. Anyone who objects could end up on Boot  
Hill with an overdose of lead poisoning. Nexus is a  
plan for a giant business park on green fields next to  
junction 25, off the M5. Wyatt Twerp's builder pals from  
Summerfield bought the plot cheap a few years ago.  
Taunton Deane now intends to use a local development  
order to force it through. Local development orders  
were designed for one purpose: to enable the development  
of brownfield sites, but Nexus is greenfield, and Wyatt  
Twerp is on the fiddle again with legal trickery to stifle  
objections. Local development orders, like development  
consent orders, make a mockery of consultation, but in  
lawless Tumbleweed Town that's the way they do things.  
Wyatt Twerp wants to win, which is why he complained  
so strongly about the plans of Sir Tim Smit, the architect  
of the world-famous Eden Project, which we have all  
been to and know so well. Sir Tim Smit wants to build  
an extensive complex at junction 27 on the M5. It is a  
well-engineered proposal from a team with excellent form.  
Sir Tim Smit understands consultation. He actually attends  
all public meetings in person, which is impressive.

Wyatt Twerp sees any rival development, even in  
neighbouring counties, as a dreadful threat. Right now,  
he is getting his posse together to ride out and lynch the  
man—bizarre, I know. Imagine: Sir Tim Smit's plans  
might lure people away from the invisible attractions of  
Tumbleweed Town.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of another  
crazy caper dreamed up by Wyatt Twerp to merge West  
Somerset Council, which is in my constituency, with  
Taunton Deane. That could result in a new authority,  
no doubt to be called Greater Tumbleweed. West Somerset  
would end up without a single local office, and with no  
staffandfewelectedcouncillors.WyattTwerporganised  
a consultation process, which, as hon. Members would  
expect, was shallow, shabby, inaccurate and so badly  
drafted that few people took part. It was not worth the  
paper it was written on.

Once again, Wyatt Twerp is on the fiddle. His bid to  
merge has been submitted to the Secretary of State  
using a piece of law that gets around the need to consult

331WH Strategic Road Network: South West 19 JULY 2017 Strategic Road Network: South West 332WH

*[Mr Liddell-Grainger]*

anybody. Needless to say, my constituents are crying  
foul play. When they finally rumble his bent regime and  
boot him out, he would be very well qualified—dare I  
say it to the Minister?—to join Highways England as a  
consultant.

That brings me back to the A358 and the road that  
Highways England wants to build with no links to  
Nexus 25. I have a suspicious mind. I have already  
discovered that Summerfield Developments has bought  
another large plot of agricultural land, which happens  
to be remarkably close to all of Highways England's  
route options for the A358. At present, Summerfield  
would not get permission to erect a garden shed on it,  
but if the A358 becomes a dual carriageway, nearby  
land will become ripe for new homes and Summerfield  
will be quids in. I wonder how much more land it has an  
option on already. I wonder which well-known land  
agents are scouting on its behalf, and who else has  
invested in that beautiful green-belt corner of Somerset.

Perhaps Wyatt Twerp himself will come clean and tell  
us why he bought a 30-acre plot close to Stoke St Mary  
parish church all those years ago. He might claim that it  
was because of his love of rural scenery or his abiding  
affection for the great crested newt, which we have all  
come across. Perhaps it was because of his desire to  
safeguard a precious plot for posterity. Or was it an  
early bid for a garden town—“Williamsville”, for instance,  
which is a great name—which my hon. Friend the  
Member for Yeovil has championed? We know that  
there are fairies at the bottom of his garden and pink  
pigs flying above them, but the leader of Taunton  
Deane Council is a greedy builder at heart, and he must  
have known that 300 houses would fit on 30 acres.  
Wyatt Twerp bagged a bargain when he bought that  
land.

The point is this: if the A358 is turned into a highway,  
there will be huge building opportunities. Highways  
England understands Wyatt Twerp's ambitions. Taunton  
Deane Council has been involved in secret talks with  
Highways England for months, but it took a freedom of  
information request from a gentleman called Dave Orr,  
who is not one of my constituents, to prove it. Two  
weeks ago, he obtained a memo from Highways England's  
global consultants. Those experts recognised Taunton  
Deane's extraordinary plan to build 17,000 houses and  
advised that 3,460 could be built on the land near the  
motorway junction. As far as I can make out, Mr Orr is  
a fair man. He decided to alert officers of Taunton  
Deane Council and Somerset County Council in case  
they had not seen the document. Nobody reacted, so  
Mr Orr called the press. It was a story—it was all  
true—but Wyatt Twerp went bananas and ordered his  
deputies to threaten the local paper for publishing “fake  
news”. Wyatt had a nasty attack of the Trumps.

That is a revealing episode in a very sad saga. I  
believe that this is the wrong strategic route for the  
south-west. We now know for certain that any road  
developments around this green part of Taunton will  
bring extra houses by the thousand, which will affect  
my hon. Friends the Members for Wells and for Yeovil.  
No wonder so many people are angry. No wonder there  
is growing distrust of the system and growing contempt  
for the local politicians—my hon. Friends excluded—who  
have conspired to allow this to happen. On that point, I  
rest my case.

11.12 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Jesse Norman):** It is a pleasure to serve under your  
chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset  
(Mr Liddell-Grainger) on securing this debate, which  
has the very wide title “The strategic road network in  
the south-west”, and on his extremely pungent and  
colourful speech. I will start generally and then focus on  
the specific issues that he raised and the area itself.

As my hon. Friend knows, our road network is the  
backbone of Britain. Let me remind him and colleagues  
that the strategic road network, which comprises  
approximately 4,300 miles of motorways and all-purpose  
trunk roads valued at more than £100 billion, supports  
the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.  
Whatever the optics might be in terms of the percentage  
of road length the network represents, it is vital to the  
UK economy and to our current and future economic  
growth. Around 80% of all goods travel by road, with  
about two thirds of large goods vehicle traffic being  
transported on the network. Some 4 million vehicles use  
the network each day.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, this Government  
and the previous Government have made a strategic  
decision to continue to develop the strategic road network  
by providing extra lanes on our motorways and improving  
key routes, but also by investing in parts of the country  
that have suffered due to poor transport connections.  
That is why the Government are investing £23 billion in  
England's roads, £15 billion of which will be spent on  
our motorways and major A roads.

That funding underpins what has become known as  
the road investment strategy, a five-year plan launched  
in December 2014 that sets out the schemes and funding  
levels from 2015 to 2020. In the five years from 2015,  
the Government will invest around double the capital in  
strategic roads that was invested in the five years from  
2005. That is a record of which the Government and, in  
fact, all Government Members can be very proud.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I congratulate my hon.  
Friend the Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset  
(Mr Liddell-Grainger) on securing the debate. The Minister  
highlights the investment that is being made. Will he  
confirm that that will include finally sorting out the  
issues at Stonehenge that mean that so much traffic  
from London to the south-west ends up going via  
Bristol?

**Jesse Norman:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his  
intervention. I will discuss the A303 and Stonehenge  
later in my speech.

The road investment strategy is the biggest upgrade  
to our strategic roads—our motorways and major A  
roads—in a generation. It will see the addition of more  
than 1,300 extra lane miles to our busiest roads. The  
schemes cover every region of England; in the two years  
since 2015, 12 major schemes have opened for traffic  
and 16 more have started construction.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): Does the Minister agree with me and with  
Conservative-run Plymouth City Council that it is time

333WH Strategic Road Network: South West 19 JULY 2017 Strategic Road Network: South West 334WH

that we continued that investment in our strategic road  
network by extending the M5 from Exeter to the Tamar  
bridge?

**Jesse Norman:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman  
for raising that question. The answer is that we have a  
number of funds available and we look forward very  
much to the submission of bids, which will be given the  
full scrutiny that they deserve and merit.

Let me turn to the questions raised by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset.  
He started by referring to the A39, which I will touch  
on for a second. He will be aware that that is a local  
road, but as he also knows, the Government recently  
announced that from 2020, under the new roads fund  
that we have set up, which is entirely funded by vehicle  
excise duty—that is a tremendous innovation, or rather  
a move back to the future for our road network—we  
will segregate what we consider to be a major road  
network investment programme. I think that the A39  
will be eligible to be funded under that programme.  
Once the consultation has been done and work is under  
way to programme that investment, my hon. Friend and  
local authorities will be absolutely welcome—indeed,  
they will be invited—to submit bids. I am aware of his  
strong feelings, rose-tinted spectacles or no, and those  
of my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey)  
about the importance of dualling that road in both  
directions.

Overall, the Government are investing heavily in the  
road network in the south-west and have committed  
some £2 billion to major schemes through the road  
investment strategy. Later this year, we will announce  
the preferred route for the A303 Stonehenge tunnel,  
which is a very significant project in its own right, and  
for the A358 Taunton to Southfields and A303 Sparkford  
to Ilchester schemes. I understand that my hon. Friend  
the Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset has  
particular concerns—concerns that he expressed with  
considerable pungency—about the route that the A358  
should take into Taunton.

**John Penrose** (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): Will the  
Minister reassure us all that, regardless of which of  
those routes and attendant end points for the A303 are  
eventually chosen, utmost priority will be given to  
completing that work as fast as possible? My hon.  
Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey) cannot  
contribute to this debate—he is the Minister's Parliamentary  
Private Secretary—but I know that he and my hon.  
Friend the Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster) feel  
strongly that taking the pressure of long-distance traffic  
off the M5-M4 triangle and allowing it to make progress  
down the A303 corridor is absolutely essential for everyone  
who lives on the M5, as well as for the long-distance  
traffic that uses it to get through Somerset.

**Jesse Norman:** I very much take my hon. Friend's  
point. Of course, the point of the tunnel is not merely to  
safeguard the extraordinary and historic global asset we  
have at Stonehenge; it is also part of a much bigger  
programme of trying to improve the A303 for trunk  
purposes, in a way that is designed precisely to lift some  
of the pressure off other arterial routes. I take his point  
very well.

I should say that I do not recognise the description  
that has been given of Highways England. From my  
limited experience as a Minister, I know that it is not a  
perfect institution, but it has made significant progress  
since becoming Highways England. It is undoubtedly  
focused on the task of the effective delivery of schemes  
in order to get the best outcome for local people, which  
my hon. Friend mentioned.

**John Penrose:** May I reassure the Minister that there  
are those of us who do rather enjoy working with  
Highways England? It is certainly being helpful on the  
question of junction 21 of the M5 and junction 21A in  
my constituency. I can vouch for his point of view.

**Jesse Norman:** I am glad of that intervention, and if I  
may, I will proceed with my remarks.

To return to the A358, of course my hon. Friend the  
Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset made some  
quite colourful remarks about that. I am sure he will  
understand if I do not take a position on the issue, but  
he has made his concerns, and the public concerns of  
others, very well, and they sit in the record for further  
excavation and inquiry.

As my hon. Friend will know, Highways England  
recently held a public consultation on the routes that  
the A358 should take, and it will work closely with local  
partners to advise the Secretary of State and myself on  
the preferred route. Those schemes are just the first part  
of the £2 billion plan I mentioned to create a new dual  
carriageway route from the south-west to London.

If I may range slightly further outside the specific  
issue of the A358 and the A303, improvements to the  
A30 in Cornwall—both a planned improvement and  
one nearing completion—will extend dual carriageway  
standard road as far as Camborne. The Temple to  
Higher Carblake section opened last week and Highways  
England announced the preferred route for the Chiverton  
to Carland Cross scheme earlier this month.

Highways England is also creating a new junction on  
the M49 to support development at Avonmouth. The  
port of Avonmouth and the Avonmouth Severnside  
Enterprise Area to the west of Bristol currently have no  
direct access to the M49, which is hindering proposals  
to support economic growth in the area. A new junction  
on the M49 will improve access to those areas, ease  
congestion and contribute to the economic growth of  
the region.

Richard Graham *rose—*

**Jesse Norman:** If I may respond in anticipation of the  
much-welcome but inevitable intervention from my beloved  
colleague from Gloucester, a little further afield, to the  
north-east, Highways England is also developing the  
A417 Air Balloon roundabout improvement—I should  
say that it is not a small scheme. Potential route options  
are being identified for public consultation before the  
end of 2017. That scheme will tackle a missing link in  
the dual carriageway between Gloucester and Cirencester,  
and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for  
Gloucester (Richard Graham) on his tireless championing  
of that important scheme, which will certainly have  
through benefits for trunk users of that road coming  
from Herefordshire to London.

335WH Strategic Road Network: South West 19 JULY 2017 Strategic Road Network: South West 336WH

*[Jesse Norman]*

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater  
and West Somerset has a particular interest in the M5  
junction 23 Bridgwater scheme and wrote to the Transport  
Secretary recently on that matter. Let me turn to that, if  
I may. The Government's view is that it is vital that  
there be a good connection to Hinkley Point. The new  
power station—and one must not forget the existing  
power station there—is of strategic importance to the  
UK, and the Government will ensure that the road  
network around it gives all the necessary access to the  
plant and works. That will support local economic  
growth, housing and local jobs.

**Mr Liddell-Grainger:** I thank my hon. Friend for  
bringing that up, partly because it affects the seat of my  
hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey) as  
much as mine, and also those of my hon. Friends the  
Members for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose) and  
for Yeovil (Mr Fysh). We have heard about Weston, and  
I certainly know, as will my hon. Friend the Member for  
Wells, that Burnham is a very tight junction. The Secretary  
of State has been helpful to Somerset MPs in sorting  
this out, but will my hon. Friend the Minister allude  
to the need for more capacity at all the junctions from  
27 to 21? We may need to revisit that, but I am grateful  
to him for what he is saying about junction 23.

**Jesse Norman:** I absolutely take the point. It would  
have been remiss of me as the Minister not to have  
addressed this important issue, on which my hon. Friend  
has been vociferous—and rightly so—along with other  
colleagues in the past. That is why I have raised it now.

Highways England has been assessing a larger-scale  
upgrade of the Bridgwater junction, as set out in the  
road investment strategy. When my predecessor wrote  
to my hon. Friend recently, he relayed the fact that  
Highways England was continuing to collect data to  
inform its assessment so that it could continue to ensure  
the right solution for the local area. I will make certain  
that Highways England presses on with that process. I  
have encouraged it to continue to improve its engagement  
with colleagues—this is a valuable case in point—so  
that all relevant views are properly taken into account.

In addition, in March 2017 the Government named  
27 proposed small congestion relief schemes that can be  
delivered quickly. The south-west was allocated some  
£32 million for improvements, better driver information  
and queue protection on the M5. Of course, we welcome  
further inquiries as to how junctions elsewhere in the  
region and on that road can be improved.

In the time that remains, I will briefly turn to the  
question of the future. As I have said, the £15 billion  
currently being invested represents a substantial increase  
in the rate of investment in roads, but even so, the first  
road investment strategy—what we call RIS 1—remains  
only an initial step, albeit more strategic than hitherto.  
That is why we have already started work on developing  
the second road investment strategy, RIS 2, which will  
handle further investment in the network beyond 2020.

The Department is currently gathering and analysing  
evidence about the performance of the network and the  
future pressures it faces. Of course, that is a dynamic  
process as further changes are made and ways of using

the road network themselves change. Central to that  
approach has been Highways England's work to refresh  
its 18 route strategies, each focusing on different sections  
of the strategic road network, which were published in  
March. As part of that work, Highways England gathered  
information fromMPs, road users, local authorities and  
other stakeholders through an online public consultation  
last summer and through face-to-face meetings.

My hon. Friend will be particularly interested in the  
Birmingham to Exeter route strategy, which identified  
areas along the M5 where there are current and anticipated  
future pressures on the network. I am sure that also  
goes for other Members of all parties present in the  
Chamber.

We will use that evidence, and the results of a public  
consultation planned for later this year, to develop an  
investment plan that is affordable and deliverable and  
that will meet our key aims for RIS 2, specifically to  
support economic growth; improve network capability;  
enhance integration with local roads and other transport  
modes; reduce the number and severity of accidents;  
and protect the environment. We remain on track to  
publish the second RIS before the start of the next road  
period on 1 April 2020. In that context, I will pick up a  
point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-  
super-Mare (John Penrose). That approach also needs  
to take into account some of the pressures that a route  
strategy has in relation to other arterial roads to ensure  
that the counterbalancing we have discussed is properly  
discharged.

While I am aware that the focus of this debate has  
been on the strategic road network in the south-west, I  
hope that I may acknowledge quickly the value of the  
local road network. Most journeys that use our motorways  
and major A roads start on the local road network. The  
Government continue to provide funding for local  
authorities and local enterprise partnerships in England  
to help fund large transport schemes that improve  
connectivity, ease local congestion and improve or update  
existing infrastructure, thereby helping to promote growth  
and deliver more housing. Most of the Department's  
funding for large schemes now sits in the local growth  
fund, with some £6 billion provided to local enterprise  
partnerships through different growth deals.

Since 2011, the Department for Transport has invested  
over £360 million in major local schemes in the south-west.  
As well as the largest schemes, we continue to fund  
smaller schemes designed to open up developments and  
help maintain roads and bridges. The Government are  
also keen to invest in road maintenance to make roads  
better for users. That is why £12.5 million has been  
made available to fix potholes—a topic of great interest  
to every member of this House—in the south-west.

Shortly, I plan to announce the winners of the 2017  
to 2018 highways maintenance challenge fund, whereby  
the Government will be investing £75 million to improve  
smaller local roads, including through resurfacing, pothole  
filling and other infrastructure projects. In summary,  
we are delivering on our plans for investment in the  
south-west's road network, both strategic and local, to  
give the south-west the roads it needs for the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.28 am

*Sitting suspended.*

337WH

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

338WH

Armed Forces

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Good afternoon, ladies and  
gentlemen.Ihaveacoupleof housekeeping announcements  
before we kick off the debate. First, you may have  
noticed that the clock that we are working to is running  
about 40 seconds behind the annunciator clock. That  
will become relevant later when I put a time limit on  
speeches, because a lot of Members want to take part  
this afternoon. Secondly, in view of the climate, I am  
prepared to allow gentlemen to remove their jackets if  
they wish—but not their ties under this Chairman,  
thank you very much.

**Leo Docherty** (Aldershot) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the future shape of the armed  
forces.

As the new Member for Aldershot, the traditional  
home of the British Army, I am honoured to lead the  
debate. In the limited time I have, I will touch on the  
nature of current threats and dwell for a little longer on  
my central point, which is that our people—our servicemen  
and women—must be at the heart of our defence policy.

When we consider the future shape of the armed  
forces, we are seeking to assess current threats but also  
to predict what threats may arise in the future. That is  
very difficult, and the only certainty we have is that  
threats are and will continue to be manifold and deeply  
alarming. After 15 years or so of engaging in counter-  
insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, we still  
face a threat from global terrorism, which is more  
dangerous, more mobile and more transnational than  
ever before. It has recently struck in our cities, and,  
indeed, at the very gates of Parliament. The middle east  
is highly unstable, ISIS is diminished but not defeated,  
we have failed states, we have Hezbollah, we have a  
dominant Iran and we have North Korea in nuclear  
stand-off with the rest of the world. We also have a  
resurgent Russia and the rise of cyber-conflicts.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): I congratulate my hon.  
Friend on securing this important debate. Does he agree  
that one vital element of our national defence and  
resilience is the threat to our cyber-security? Is he  
concerned, as I am, about whether our armed forces  
and their hardware are fully protected from that threat,  
and whether they have sufficient capability to be effectively  
deployed to deter such a threat?

**Leo Docherty:** I share my hon. Friend's concern. I  
think we all agree that the internet has now been weaponised  
to an extremely alarming degree. That should be at the  
heart and centre of our defence strategy. I imagine the  
Minister will take the opportunity to address that.

Wefacetodaythesimultaneousthreatsofstate-on-state  
conflict and global terrorism. We are facing down those  
threats with our allies in NATO and elsewhere, such as  
our friends in the Gulf states. We will continue to need a  
very large and potent armed forces to do that; mass  
matters, and it will continue to matter. It will come as  
no surprise that, as a former soldier, I am and will  
always be an advocate for a bigger armed forces. In an  
ideal world, I would like to see not 2% of GDP spent on  
defence but somewhere nearer 3%. However, we have to

live in the real world, and we have to play the pitch we  
inherited. We are still dealing with the legacy of Labour's  
mismanagement of the economy, which left a large  
black hole at the heart of defence spending.

In my judgment, the 2015 strategic defence and security  
review did a good job of assessing and responding to  
the current global threats I described, and combined  
with the ongoing investment of £178 billion over the  
next 10 years, it will deliver a raft of impressive new  
hardware and, more importantly, an agile and highly  
deployable force. All of that is against the background  
of significant financial constraints. I am particularly  
pleased that elements of the new strike brigades formed  
asaresultof that SDSR—including 4 Rifles, 1 st Battalion  
the Royal Regiment of Scotland, 2nd Battalion Princess  
of Wales Royal Regiment and 2nd Battalion The  
Duke of Lancaster's Regiment—will be based in my  
constituency. We have two impressive carriers coming  
online, new submarines and new frigates, as well as a  
total and unreserved commitment to our continuous  
at-sea deterrence, Trident.

While we praise all that, we must, as parliamentarians  
and constituency MPs, always critically assess our  
own Government's policies. We must ensure that our  
procurement is smart and that the carrier group we are  
investing in can fight. We must ensure that 2% of GDP  
spent on defence actually means a real 2%, and we must  
ensure that projects such as the F-35 are completed on  
time and on budget. I know that my hon. Friend the  
Minister will reassure us on that note today.

We clearly need significant force, but just as important,  
especially when it comes to dealing with global terrorism,  
is our approach and attitude towards using that force.  
I think the primary lesson of the last 15 years of  
expeditionary counter-insurgency wars is that it is only  
when we are discreet in the use of force, and when we  
work to empower and partner with local allies, that we  
achieve great results in combating terrorism.

**James Gray** (North Wiltshire) (Con): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend on securing the debate. However, I am  
puzzled by his line of argument. He seems to be saying  
that expeditionary counter-insurgency warfare is what  
we expect to do in the years ahead, while at the same  
time saying we must be flexible. What does he think  
about the notion that NATO has this entirely wrong,  
that we are focusing on the last war and that the next  
war may well be, for example, in the north Atlantic or  
high Arctic? That is something that the Select Committee  
on Defence is halfway through studying.

**Leo Docherty:** If my hon. Friend is unsure of the  
meaning of my remarks, I am saying that mass is  
important—we absolutely need a very large and potent  
armed forces—but the lesson of the past 15 years in  
Iraq and Afghanistan is that we may get counter-productive  
results if we engage without the politics being right, as  
he will see from the remainder of my remarks. It is only  
when we engage and work with allies that results that  
match our interest and theirs can be achieved.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, our good intentions  
were overtaken by the realities of local politics on the  
ground and an over-optimism about what the British  
state can achieve politically by the overt use of military  
force. We must guard against that in future. I learned  
that lesson as a soldier in southern Iraq more than  
10 years ago. I remember one particular day when I

339WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

340WH

*[Leo Docherty]*

visited a police station run by an Iraqi police unit that  
we were mentoring in al-Amarah in southern Iraq.  
Despite our working very closely with them, I was  
alarmed to find, on visiting the interior of the police  
station, a picture of Muqtada al-Sadr, who was the  
leader of the Mahdi army—the very insurgent group we  
were fighting, supposedly with the Iraqi police. That  
kind of duality and duplicity undermined our capability  
and the likelihood of us having a positive outcome in  
Iraq.

I have carried that insight with me over the years, but  
for many others, including my friend and fellow soldier,  
Captain Richard Holmes, that duplicity and the central  
dilemma of our presence in Iraq had lethal consequences.  
Richard was a classmate of mine at the Royal Military  
Academy Sandhurst and went on to be a fine Parachute  
Regiment officer. He deployed on his second tour of  
Iraq in the winter of 2005 to mentor the Iraqi police—  
something he put his heart and soul into. Progress was  
made thanks to his efforts, but despite his commitment  
and earnest professionalism, the forces of sectarianism,  
violence, Shi'ite rivalry and Iranian meddling prevailed.  
One day, after leaving the very same police station that I  
had visited the previous winter, his patrol was struck by  
an IED, and he and his driver, Private Lee Ellis, were  
instantly killed.

The point I am making is that no matter how good or  
how dedicated the servicemen or women are, politics—in  
the middle east, it is often the politics of violence—will  
always trump good intentions. The lesson at the heart  
of this is that we must be discreet, and we must work  
with allies whose interests match ours and who genuinely  
need our help. That lesson and that approach should  
shape the way we do business in the future and the way  
we train and deploy our forces. If we follow that approach,  
we can achieve great results.

In Iraq, we are now having a very positive impact.  
Today we have more than 1,200 personnel deployed on  
Op Shader across Iraq and Syria, co-ordinating Royal  
Air Force airstrikes, taking the fight to Daesh and,  
critically, working very closely with Kurdish peshmerga  
forces, whose interests match ours. That type of involvement  
—helping our allies to achieve their goals with the  
bespoke use of expertise and hard power—is a model  
for the future. We can and should replicate that approach  
around the globe.

The other primary lesson we have learned from the  
campaigns in both Iraq and Afghanistan is that the  
current generation of British forces men and women are  
equal to the example shown by their forebears across all  
three services. Young men and women join the armed  
forces today in order to deploy. We are in their debt, and  
it is our duty to arm them, equip them and protect them  
as best we can. Our servicemen and women are this  
country's most precious asset, and we must put them at  
the heart of our defence policy. I welcome the Armed  
Forces (Flexible Working) Bill, which will have a very  
positive impact on the working lives of our armed  
forces men and women. We should celebrate the fact  
that they are prepared to take risks. They are not  
victims, but heirs to a remarkable and magnificent  
tradition. The recent remarks made by the Chief of the  
General Staff about service personnel needing empathy  
rather than sympathy were very welcome and apt.

We must maintain our resolve to deploy whenever  
and wherever necessary. We must not lose our nerve. On  
that note, I will conclude my remarks by quoting from a  
letter sent to me recently by a veteran who, as a young  
commander, led a team in Afghanistan at the height of  
the conflict. At one point he survived an IED strike so  
powerful that it destroyed the armoured fighting vehicle  
he was commanding. His letter reads:

“In Afghanistan I was scared of many things. I was frightened  
of the Taleban, I doubted myself, I worried about the availability  
of helicopter medical support. The one thing I never doubted or  
questioned was the willingness of the soldiers under my command  
to fight tooth and nail. No matter how badly they were bleeding,  
no matter how cold, how hot, how tired or how dehydrated they  
were, time and again their willingness to take a step forward, put  
their hand up and say ‘ok then, let's go' was extraordinary. 18 year  
olds who had volunteered to go 5000 miles to protect the Afghan  
people. These much-maligned members of the ‘PlayStation generation'  
were in fact the heirs to boys who stood at Waterloo, sailed at  
Jutland and flew in the Battle of Britain.”

I quote from that letter because those words so eloquently  
convey why we are proud to have the finest armed forces  
in the world, why our servicemen and women will  
always be our greatest asset and, importantly, why,  
despite all the financial and fiscal constraints of the  
current time, we should be confident and assured of our  
future as a formidable military power.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Order. Nine Members  
have submitted their names in advance to speak. I  
intend to call the Front-Bench spokespeople at 3.30 pm,  
so I am imposing a four-minute time limit on speeches.  
It may assist Members to know the batting order, so  
that they know where they stand: it will be Rachael  
Maskell, Robert Courts, Chris Evans, Jack Lopresti,  
Jim Shannon, Andrew Bowie, Luke Pollard, Eddie Hughes  
and—last but by no means least—Colonel Stewart.  
Those whose names have not been called will understand  
that they are not on the list. This is not an open  
invitation to make lengthy interventions; it is an indication  
that if they wish to intervene, they should keep it brief.

2.45 pm

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Aldershot (Leo  
Docherty) on opening this debate so thoughtfully.

I want to pay my tribute to the armed forces and the  
incredible work that they do in an ever-changing and  
complex world that evolves day by day. We owe a debt  
to the vital strategic and critical thinking and actions of  
our serving men and women as they seek to de-escalate  
the risk of conflict and bring reparation when not in the  
throes of the theatre of war.

We know that building strategic alliances secures  
greater global resilience. We know too that warfare is  
changing and therefore the shape of our armed forces  
needs also to evolve. What is really important is that the  
needs of our armed forces are met. One thing that is  
clear is that they are not necessarily content at this time,  
as we saw in the continuous attitude survey this year,  
which did not make good reading for the Government.  
They feel let down. Only half are satisfied with the  
standard of their accommodation and less than a third  
with the maintenance programme—and those figures  
are in free fall. We know that low morale in the Army is

341WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

342WH

up by 12% and satisfaction with service life has fallen  
by 18% since 2009. Yesterday's Pay Review Body  
announcement will not help either. Only 33% of personnel  
are satisfied with their pay, 27% with their pensions and  
just 23% with the recruitment and retention pay. That is  
serious, and that is why it is so vital that we listen to our  
armed forces—which is exactly what I have done in  
York.

I can tell this Government very clearly that the  
community wants the armed forces to stay in York.  
The economy needs the armed forces to stay in York.  
The armed forces want to stay in York and the families  
do too, and they are a crucial part of our armed forces.  
After 2,000 years of the armed forces being in York, the  
cry from my city is that they should remain there. The  
City of York Council, which is a Conservative-Lib Dem  
coalition, has resolved to oppose the Government's  
plans to remove the Army from York. All stakeholders,  
except for Government Ministers, have gathered together  
against “A Better Defence Estate”.

The Queen Elizabeth barracks in Strensall and Towthorpe  
is where the 2nd Medical Brigade and 34 Field Hospital  
are based. We know of the work they do, not least their  
work in the recent Ebola crisis. They have recently  
received a £2.3 million investment, yet are due to close  
in 2021—a waste of taxpayers'money—despite wanting  
to remain in York. Imphal barracks in my constituency  
is also due to close by 2031. That will have a devastating  
impact, and not only due to the loss of 1,600 jobs from  
my city. The proper checks and balances have yet to  
take place, including economic and social impact  
assessments. Document JSP 507 says that those assessments  
must take place before closure proceeds, but they have  
not been carried out. I was told by the Minister's  
predecessor that it will take 18 months to do that.

The armed forces want to stay in York because Army  
families'children catch up with their education with our  
excellent education system, and the spousal employment  
opportunities and opportunities for future career  
development are there for all to see. The Nepalese  
community also wants to remain in my city, and their  
needs must be addressed.Most of all,Iwant to stress to  
the Minister that guarantees were given to my predecessor  
as late as 2015, after the rebasing programme, that the  
Army would remain in York. My plea is for the Minister  
to listen to my city and ensure that they do.

2.49 pm

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I, too,  
congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot  
(Leo Docherty) on securing this extremely important  
debate. I also welcome him to the House, because itis so  
important that we have Members with his experience to  
bring first-hand knowledge of the issues that we are  
discussing today and throughout our deliberations.

My brief comments will be about the need for flexibility.  
I am conscious of the words of the Select Committee on  
Defence: that in many ways we face a world that is  
“more dangerous and unstable” than at any time since  
the end of the cold war. The point has already been  
made that there is a real danger that we plan how to  
fight the conflict that we have just fought. Having spent  
15 years fighting asymmetric warfare, we are in real  
danger of considering that that is the sort of warfare  
that we will always face, but of course we face, in the

east, a resurgent and much more aggressive Russia. We  
find ourselves in the extraordinary situation, which I do  
not think any of us would have thought a few years ago  
that we would be in, of having to defend and train  
against a potential conventional threat, with a need for  
training with heavy armour and eastern forces in the  
forests of eastern Europe, as opposed to the hot, high  
and sandy warfare that we have been engaged in for the  
last few years. My contention is that this dangerous  
world is best met by flexibility.

We must be careful because history is full of surprises.  
We know that as soon as we plan for one area of  
warfare, the one that we are most likely to be fighting  
will be totally different. The onlywaywecan face that is  
by having the flexibility in our armed forces to meet the  
evolving threat, but how do we do that within the  
constrained budget that we have?

The first factor, as my hon. Friend rightly said, is our  
people. We must ensure that the armed forces are seen  
as an optimistic, exciting, challenging, profitable and  
worthwhile career, so that we attract young people to  
join and they know that they will learn a trade and,  
crucially, be looked after. That is why I place such  
importance on the armed forces covenant. I commend  
everything that the Government have done to ensure  
that retention rates in the armed forces are kept at the  
high level where they ought to be.

For the same reasons, I applaud the Armed Forces  
(FlexibleWorking)Bill,whichthisHousewillseeshortly;  
I look forward to seeing the detail of it. The Americans  
do a great deal of that, with greater use of reserve  
forces. I applaud the Government for looking at the  
issue, thinking creatively and ensuring that we can get  
the best from our young people as we go forward.

The two aspects to equipment are hardware and  
software. Let me deal first with hardware. I am very  
lucky that my constituency contains Royal Air Force  
Brize Norton, where the whole of the Royal Air Force's  
transport fleet is based, and we have the Voyager programme  
there. The Voyager has the classic capability of a tanker  
and transport aircraft but, because of the way the  
AirTankerconsortiumissetup,thereisasurgecapability.  
Theaircraftnormallycanundertakeair-to-airrefuelling,  
and there is a relatively limited fleet for peacetime, but  
were we to need it, we have the ability to bring in a great  
many more very quickly. With the C-17, C-130 and  
A400M programmes, we also have outstanding transport  
capability, so we have very high capability aircraft, but  
also a greater number of less complex aircraft, which  
means we can have more for the resources available.

A great emphasis on intelligence is of course critical.  
That is why, particularly in terms of Waddington, I  
encourage the Government to keep the Sentry, the  
Sentinel and the Rivet Joint aircraft at the forefront of  
their mind—because it is that intelligence that we need  
to fight the wars that we will be fighting.

Lastly, I come to the software point. Of course, not  
all warfare these days is fought through hardware, kit  
and equipment. Much of it is software-based, and if we  
do not have the intelligence gathering and, crucially, the  
cyber-skills, we would very quickly find that our aircraft  
were unable to fly while the others were. Thank you,  
Sir Roger, for giving me time to speak in this debate.  
Flexibility is the key, because after all, history is full of  
surprises, as we know, and so of course will the future be.

343WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

344WH

2.53 pm

**Chris Evans** (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): I begin by paying  
tribute to the hon. Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty),  
who spoke with passion based on his own distinguished  
service. Even though I am on the Opposition Benches, I  
also pay tribute to all those Government Members—who  
I am looking at now—who also served in our forces and  
served Queen and country with distinction. Thank you  
very much.

On Saturday 24 June, I joined my hon. Friend the  
Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David), who will respond  
to the debate for the Opposition, to witness our armed  
forces marching through Caerphilly town centre as part  
of Armed Forces Day. Anyone watching on that day  
would know the esteem in which the public hold our  
armed forces. If we asked anyone marching, they would  
tell us that they are able to serve only because they have  
the support of their family. However, many feel that  
they are being badly let down by the Government. No  
one will be able to give their best in theatre if they are  
worried about their loved ones back home, yet that is  
the reality that those living in service accommodation  
have to face each and every day.

All regular service personnel are entitled to subsidised  
accommodation, and those who are married or have  
children are entitled to service family accommodation.  
The accommodation is provided by the Ministry of Defence  
and managed by the private contractor CarillionAmey.  
The armed forces covenant dictates that service  
accommodation must be of good quality, in an appropriate  
location and reasonably priced. However, under the  
current contract, very few properties seem to meet those  
criteria.

A National Audit Office report earlier in the year  
about service accommodation was absolutely damning.  
One family were left without hot water and heating for  
weeks, despite informing the contractor, CarillionAmey,  
that they had a seven-week-old baby and a four-year-old.  
In fact, in 2016, an NAO report found that satisfaction  
levels with the contractor's maintenance request responses  
and the quality of maintenance works undertaken had  
reached lows of 32% and 29% respectively. At the  
Public Accounts Committee hearing, we were even told  
that such was the worry on the part of the Department  
that the contractor had to face the then Secretary of  
State for Defence to discuss the way forward.

Since taking up the contract in November 2014,  
CarillionAmey has consistently failed to meet the key  
performance indicators that it was contracted to attain.  
One case in particular highlights the poor treatment of  
service personnel and their families by the company.  
The wife of a serviceman reported that their family had  
been provided with a damp and mouldy property and,  
despite there being alternative accommodation available,  
the contractor refused to move them. Thefamilyreported  
that the property's carpets were stained and the oven  
was dirty, but rather than cleaning the property and  
getting rid of the mould on the walls, CarillionAmey  
painted over it. On top of that, the family spent up to  
hours on the phone to the contractor every day for eight  
weeks trying to get somebody to help them to deal with  
the property's many issues.

**James Gray:** The hon. Gentleman is of course right  
to criticise CarillionAmey—in many respects it is not  
great at all—and his party of course does not like

anything being contracted out, but if we took the  
contract away from CarillionAmey, what would an  
incoming Labour Government do?

**Chris Evans:** I am criticising CarillionAmey quite  
rightly, but what I am saying is that we need a different  
contract or a different way of tendering for these contracts.  
Thisisnotgoodenough;itisnotgoodenoughforforces'  
families or for our men and women in the field. I hope  
that the Minister will take these comments away and look  
with urgency at the way the contract with CarillionAmey  
is being managed. This is not good enough, and I think  
all of us in the House would agree with that.

On 24 occasions, the family to whom I was referring  
were told that they would receive a call back regarding  
the issues, yet they did not, and technicians refused to  
progress the issues and deal with them. It would be an  
absolute disgrace if any family had to suffer in that way,  
but these are the families of our bravest men and  
women. Joining the armed forces is not like joining  
Barclays or Tesco; we are asking people to risk their  
lives each and every day for our safety at home and  
abroad. No one should underestimate just how huge an  
impact the standard of service accommodation can  
have on those in the armed forces. Impact on family life  
is the most cited reason why people leave the armed  
forces, and accommodation is a critical factor in that.

I urge the Minister to look at the contract again, to  
look at the way CarillionAmey is treating our forces'  
families and to do something about it. I think all of us  
in the House can agree with those sentiments.

2.57 pm

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): It is  
a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger,  
even if only for four minutes—I will keep to that. I  
congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot  
(Leo Docherty) on securing this crucial debate and on  
the eloquence of his speech. It is a privilege to be able to  
speak in the House about our armed forces as someone  
who has also worn the Queen's uniform. I must declare  
an additional interest: one of my sons, Michael, recently  
joined the Army and serves with the 1st Regiment Royal  
Horse Artillery as a gunner—the fourth generation of  
my family to do so.

I note the Government's policy on the armed forces  
as stated in the Gracious Speech:

“My ministers will continue to invest in our gallant Armed  
Forces, meeting the NATO commitment to spend at least two per  
cent of national income on defence, and delivering on the Armed  
Forces Covenant across the United Kingdom.”

For me, the key words are investment, commitment and  
covenant—words that we in this House would do well  
to reflect on. Investment means not only providing the  
resources that our armed forces need, but supporting  
and encouraging our servicemen and women and their  
families. Of course, it also means that we must invest in  
training and equipping our armed forces so that they  
can do the job we ask them to do. We all remember the  
shameful stories of service personnel in the 2003 Gulf  
campaign who were ordered to give away their body  
armour only for casualties to be suffered subsequently;  
indeed, there was one fatality. Also, there is no point in  
having defence assets if they cannot be used. Training  
on equipment such as fast jets can be expensive, but it is  
necessary to maintain the war-winning edge that our  
forces need.

345WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

346WH

Commitment means that the UK supports its allies,  
whether in NATO, the Commonwealth or elsewhere.  
Not only will we need to do that in time of need, but we  
will help to develop and train our allies' armed forces so  
that we can prevent conflicts from developing in the first  
place. It also means that when we commit to spending a  
minimum of 2% of GDP on defence, we mean a minimum.  
Some colleagues are calling for 3%, given the uncertainty  
of the times we are in. That is something we should  
consider seriously, looking at all the aspects of defence  
policy and the fact that we are looking to increase our  
global presence and reach. What matters most for our  
service personnel and allies is that the UK has the  
capability to make a difference when we arrive in a  
theatre of operations.

Last but certainly not least is covenant, which has  
almost a sacred feel and echo to it. It reminds us that  
the bond between service personnel and the society that  
they serve is special, in which case it must be a duty of  
the Government and this House to ensure that we keep  
our side of the covenant. Too often we hear tales of  
administrative incompetence, which adversely affects  
the lives of our service personnel. Support for families  
and decent housing is often seen as an additional  
administrative burden that detracts from frontline fighting  
efficiency. With an all-volunteer force and a need to  
recruit a reserve force as well, we must ensure that the  
conditions of military service are as attractive as in any  
other vocation, particularly when service personnel are  
injured and need good medical support and rehabilitation.

Iamgoingto skip forward in my speech. Representing  
a constituency that is a world-renowned hub of excellence  
in aviation and defence manufacturing, with companies  
such as Rolls-Royce, Boeing, GKN and Airbus, I can speak  
with conviction of the benefits that this brings to local  
communities and the wider economy. Aerospace Defence  
Security, the defence manufacturers' trade association,  
estimates that in 2016 the UK defence sector directly  
supported 142,000jobs, of which 32,000 were in research,  
design and engineering. The sector also supports 4,300  
apprenticeships along with the MOD, which supports a  
further 18,000 apprenticeships, making it the largest  
provider in the UK.

I am running out of time, but broadly we need more  
spending, to maintain our commitments and our global  
reach and technological advancement, but never forget  
that we need men and women who are prepared to  
make the ultimate sacrifice. We should never forget that.

3.1 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon.  
Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty) for bringing  
forward an issue of great concern to all of us here. I  
declare an interest, having served as a part-time soldier  
in the Ulster Defence Regiment for three years and in  
the Royal Artillery for 11 and a half. When I look around  
this Chamber I see many hon. and gallant Members  
who have also served, and I congratulate them on being  
here.

I have said this before in this House, but it bears  
repeating: our armed forces are without doubt the premier  
armed forces in the entire world. We have highly trained  
and highly skilled individuals who place Queen and  
country above their own lives and often ahead of their  
family lives. I am often concerned when we debate these  
issues in this House that it is very easy to concentrate on

numbers and not on the human aspect. Some of the  
contributions so far have dwelt on the human aspect,  
and I understand how important that is.

I understand that times are changing, and I can grasp  
the importance of technology and of having the best  
andbrightestmindsintheArmy.Iwatchmygranddaughter,  
who can work a tablet without any bother. There is a  
real need for us to recruit the best into the ranks;  
however, having served in uniform, I also understand  
the discipline and understanding that comes from  
someone making their way up the ranks. I believe that  
the recommendation to recruit civilian cyber-warfare  
specialists, aviation experts and tech wizards is essential—  
hopefully the Minister will respond to that—but there  
must also be a carefully monitored structure that enshrines  
the qualities that are taught and lived while in training  
and in the first years in the armed forces. Those of us  
who have served and those who have an interest in the  
armed forces will understand what I mean.

In my office we saw at first hand the effects of the  
cyber-attack. Indeed, probably all of us in the Chamber  
witnessed how hard it was to work in an office without  
the use of computers—it was back to the old times of  
telephone calls to the executive and the road service.  
The attack showed just how reliant our society has  
become on computers, and it is clear that the armed  
forces must be at the top of their game to handle  
situations and scenarios like that.

I wish to address the issue of falling numbers in the  
armed forces. The Minister, whom I and all of us in this  
Chamber greatly respect, understands the issue—82,000  
was the number set out, and we are at 78,000. What is  
being done to ensure that the target is met? In particular,  
the special forces regiments are suffering a shortfall in  
numbers, as others are, especially in those training in  
information technology and communications. I am anxious  
to understand what format measures will take to recruit  
those extra numbers and get back to where we were.

I am conscious of time, but I will just say this: in the  
confidence and supply co-operation plan that we have  
with the Government—I want to make it clear that we  
are very pleased to be part of that, by the way—we  
secured some more recruitment for Northern Ireland,  
based upon the fact that out recruitment levels are already  
up and we can fill some of the gap that I mentioned.  
The Government responded to us on that point, and we  
are doing some more recruitment through the Territorial  
Army and the reserves. I am also conscious of the fact  
that there are those who have risen through the ranks of  
life and those who come in at graduate level. A delicate  
balance of understanding must be found.

I will quickly touch on the spending plans, another  
issue that weighs upon my heart. While we can and  
must be wise and good stewards of money, we cannot  
afford to cut back on the planned spending of £178 billion  
on kit and maintenance and projects such as the F-35 fighter,  
Dreadnought nuclear submarines and the P-8 Poseidon  
spy planes. On procurement, I make a plea to the  
Minister to make sure that we get some of the contracts  
in Northern Ireland. The Minister knows that I want  
that—I have said it before, and I ask for her consideration  
on that matter. We look to her to honour the spending  
commitments and to honour our troops.

I would and could not finish without thanking those  
who wear our uniform for all that they do and reiterating  
our determination to do right by our past and present

347WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

348WH

*[Jim Shannon]*

military personnel. I say to them: your sacrifice will ever  
be appreciated, and we will stand with you in and out of  
uniform.

3.6 pm

**Andrew Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)  
(Con): I am pleased to serve under your chairmanship,  
Sir Roger. I would like to congratulate my hon. Friend  
the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty) on securing  
this very important debate.

Britannia Royal Naval College in Devon stands high  
on a hill overlooking the Dart estuary and the town of  
Dartmouth. It is an impressive building, designed to  
instil a sense of pride and purpose in all those who have  
marched up its famous steps, to awe all who set eyes  
upon it and to leave no one in any doubt about the  
importance that this island nation places on the strength  
of its Navy. Along the front of the building are engraved  
the following words:

“It is upon the Navy, under the good providence of God, that  
the Wealth, Prosperity and peace of these Islands do depend”.  
Those words are as true today as they were when they  
were first set down more than 340 years ago. For  
although it is very easy to forget, this is an island  
nation, forever dependent on open sea lanes and peace  
on the high seas for its survival.

To prove that point, let me go through some facts and  
figures. Some 90 % of global trade is carried at sea. The  
top ten trading nations in the world account for 47% of  
the total of world trade, and the UK is the fifth largest  
trader, with 17.3 billion tonnes of goods imported  
alone, with a value of more than £525 billion. UK  
ports, the shipping industry and trade support more  
than 600,000 jobs in this country, and 40% of the UK's  
food is imported at an annual value of more than  
£32 billion. Oil is of vital importance to my constituency  
in Aberdeenshire, and more than half the world's oil  
supply is moved through set maritime routes, mostly  
through eight maritime choke points. Disruption at any  
one of those can have a devastating impact on the oil  
price. The strait of Hormuz between Iran and the UAE,  
for example, sees 17 million barrels of oil per day pass  
through a 29 mile-wide corridor. In the very recent past  
we have seen how easy it is to disrupt that trade. It is  
estimated that piracy off the Horn of Africa in the last  
years of the previous decade cost global trade $6.9 billion  
per year, before it was brought under control though the  
actions of, among others, British vessels working with  
our partners in Operation Atalanta—an operation with  
its headquarters here, at Northwood in Hertfordshire.

My point is that as we are a global, island nation,  
maritime trade is our lifeblood. As such, a strong,  
flexible, globally deployable Royal Navy is vital. The  
future make-up of our armed forces must reflect that,  
and not only for the reasons that I have set out. If we  
truly want to be at the forefront of the war on drugs or  
the war on terror, and to be a nation that does not shirk  
from its international responsibility to provide humanitarian  
aid to parts of the world ravaged by natural disasters,  
we need a senior service that is equipped with the tools,  
and manned with the people, to do the job.

**Julia Dockerill** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con):  
Flexibility has been a watchword in this debate. Would  
my hon. Friend support flexibility in the budgets of

Government Department's engaged abroad? I would like  
to see aid, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, defence  
and security budgets interlinked, to allow us to focus on  
the most pressing priorities in each country where we  
have a presence, rather than seeing each Department  
working on their own independent causes without the  
proper co-ordination that is sometimes required.

**Andrew Bowie:** I very much agree with my hon.  
Friend's sentiments on that point.

I stand here proud that, for all we talk today about  
moving towards a more flexible, agile armed forces,  
armed and trained to fight the asymmetric wars of the  
future, the Conservative Government have proven, in not  
only words but actions, that they do not suffer, as other  
Governments have, from sea-blindness. In this year of  
the Navy we have already seen major developments,  
including HMS Queen Elizabeth, the largest warship  
and most advanced aircraft carrier in the history of the  
Navy, sailing from Rosyth in Scotland and undertaking  
sea trials before arriving in Portsmouth later this summer.  
Her younger sister, HMS Prince of Wales, will enter the  
water for the first time at Rosyth—again, in Scotland—later  
this year. The Type 26 frigate programme, to be built in  
Scotland, continues apace. The first of the Navy's five  
next-generation patrol ships, HMS Forth, also built in  
Scotland, will begin her sea trials.

Outside Scotland—I suppose I have to mention that  
as well—design and manufacture will continue on the  
multi-million pound Crowsnest, the early-warning eyes  
in the sky system for the helicopters that will protect the  
new carriers. The first of our four Tide-class tankers,  
RFA Tidespring, has arrived and is undergoing UK  
customisation work. The fourth Astute-class submarine  
has entered the water at Barrow. I am proud that it is  
Scotland, specifically HM Naval Base Clyde at Faslane,  
that is home to our continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent,  
the cornerstone of our defence policy. I am equally  
proud that it is the Conservative party—and, it would  
seem, only that party—that is truly committed to renewing  
our deterrent, thereby contributing to the security of not  
only ourselves but our friends, overseas territories and  
allies.

I know there are problems in recruitment and retention.  
I know that the propulsion issues on the Type 45s are  
not good for the image of the fleet or for the morale of  
those serving in it. Cuts, although necessary after we  
were left, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot  
mentioned, with a £30 billion black hole in the defence  
budget, obviously left the Navy feeling leaner and more  
stretched than before. Many, possibly including me,  
hanker for the days when ships lay six abreast at Pompey,  
Devonport or Rosyth, when you could cross the Solent  
without even getting wet—at least, that is what is said.  
Those days are sadly behind us. What we must do now,  
and what the Government are doing by not only increasing  
the budget but for the first time in many years increasing  
the size of our fleet, is to ensure that as we debate the  
future of our armed forces in general, the Royal Navy is  
fit to fight the battles of the 21st century.

3.11 pm

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/  
Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for  
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie),  
because I also intend to speak about the Navy. I want to

349WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

350WH

pay tribute to not only our armed forces but all the  
civilians who work with them. It is important that their  
contribution is also noted, because without them we  
would not have the armed forces that we have today.

Defence is an issue close to my heart. I have asked the  
Minister a few questions on the subject, and I am sure I  
will ask more. I am the son of a submariner, and the  
future shape of the Royal Navy is important not only to  
my family but to Plymouth, which I represent. The  
challenge now is how to adapt the Navy to serve the  
challenges that we face as a country. I fear that the 2010  
and 2015 SDSRs did not do us many favours in creating  
the shape of the Royal Navy that we need. We have too  
few escort frigates. We need more, and they need to be  
more capable in their defensive and offensive weaponry.  
I am deeply concerned about the armaments on the  
Type 26 and Type 31, because they do not provide the  
full-spectrum capabilities that those frigates require in  
the face of the threats they will be asked to meet.

I am concerned that there is a broad capability gap in  
our Royal Navy at times, which can best be summed up  
inwhatishappeningwithHMSOcean,aDevonport-based  
helicopter carrier. In 2015 there was much hullaballoo  
in Plymouth after rumours that the Conservative  
Government were going to scrap HMS Ocean. We had  
reassurance from the Minister that that was not true,  
but three months later it was announced that HMS  
Ocean was indeed to be scrapped and sold off. I am  
concerned that the Government have still not addressed  
in the latest SDSR the lack of helicopter carrier capability,  
especially carriers able to operate in littoral waters, and  
that needs to be looked at. It is inconceivable that we  
would put a carrier—a capital ship of that size—so  
close to the shore that it can adequately deploy a two  
company lift without having the support of a littoral  
capability. Our carriers do not have such capability, so I  
am concerned as to how that fits.

HMS Ocean is not our only amphibious craft. HMS  
Bulwark and HMS Albion, two more Devonport-based  
ships, are also vital to the Royal Navy's ability to deploy.  
One of them is tied up alongside at the moment and the  
other one is back on sea trials. We need to look again at  
our full-spectrum capabilities in the Royal Navy to  
make sure they are adequate.

On the frigate conundrum, I am pleased that the  
Minister has ordered three Type 26 frigates. I would like  
to see a full order book. I was in nappies when previous  
Governments ordered the Type 23s, the workhorse of  
our Royal Navy, but if we look at the costs of splitting  
the batches of the Type 23s and at the procurement of  
ships in the past, we know that we derive greater value  
from ordering in larger batches. The large cost of the  
three Type 26s could be reduced further if we ordered  
more of them at the same time. There could be a risk  
that we will switch production from Type 26s to Type 31s,  
which means there is a concern about how skills and  
efficiencies can be derived from the yards in Scotland  
where they will be produced.

We have a huge opportunity to make sure that the  
Type 31 is an adequate and capable frigate. At the  
moment the outline for the Type 31 frigate includes only  
one offensive weapon, which is its main gun. Will the  
Minister think carefully about the capabilities of not  
only the Type 26 but the Type 31 as well? If we are  
asking the Type 31 frigates to be put in harm's way,  
having one offensive weapon on the entire ship is insufficient.

I am pleased that the Artisan radar for the Type 23s will  
continue on the Type 26s, but there is much to be done  
on capabilities. Will the Minister think again about how  
much weaponry we put on the Type 26s and the Type 31s?

3.15 pm

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): I thank my  
hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty)  
for securing this debate. In speaking this afternoon I  
feel a huge degree of deference to those in the room  
who have military experience, but we need to reach out  
to the public if we are to have any discussion of the  
future of our armed forces. In Walsall North we have  
three remembrance monuments: in Willenhall, Bloxwich  
and Short Heath. I will work with the Royal British  
Legion to ensure that we continue the Remembrance  
Day parades in those areas, although unfortunately the  
police are no longer agreeing to road closures for those  
areas.

Things have changed hugely since the world wars. At  
the time when I was born, we had Operation Banner in  
Northern Ireland. I understand that we had 21,000  
troops stationed in Northern Ireland at that time. Sadly,  
700 of those military personnel lost their lives owing to  
paramilitary attacks. Coming forward closer to home,  
the Good Friday agreement and lengthy diplomacy  
means that now we have only hundreds of troops there  
instead of thousands.

What is the state of the British military in terms of  
troop numbers? I read an interesting article from 2014 in  
*The Daily Telegraph* at the weekend that made a perhaps  
unfortunate comparison between the number of troops  
and the number of hairdressers that we have in the  
UK. At that time we had 185,000 hairdressers, but  
only approximately 160,000 troops. That feels like a  
disproportionate balance to me. Where are we today?  
The papers that came to us in preparation for this  
meeting suggest that we have not reached the 2020 targets,  
although we are trying hard to do that, and the adverts  
tell me that I have people who were born in Willenhall  
and Bloxwich, but have been made in the Royal Navy.

Our troops are operating in 80 different areas around  
the world. People in Walsall North will be familiar with  
some of those areas, such as the Falklands, but perhaps  
not so familiar with Bahrain, other than as a venue for  
the Grand Prix. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot  
has written about Bahrain, and I have read his papers. I  
understand that we have recently celebrated the  
200th anniversary of Anglo-Bahraini relations, and the  
port there is the second busiest area of activity for the  
Royal Navy outside of Portsmouth.

We deploy troops around the world, but the nature of  
combat is changing. On 7 October 2001, American  
forces used the first drone strike two months after 9/11.  
They have subsequently argued about whose fault it was  
that it hit the wrong target. The RAF took delivery of  
10 drones in 2007. For the benefit of people in Walsall  
North, I point out that those drones cost approximately  
£10 million each and fire Hellfire missiles at a cost of  
£120,000 each. That is sophisticated but expensive  
equipment. They can fly for 30 hours and can be  
operated by people thousands of miles away. However,  
they are no replacement for boots on the ground. We  
cannot over-exaggerate the reassurance that local people  
in war zones around the world will feel from having the

351WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

352WH

*[Eddie Hughes]*

benefit of our brilliant, brave and well-trained troops  
offering them reassurance on their safety for the future.  
The first rule for any Government is that they must  
protect their residents. We must ensure that we provide  
sufficient funding for them to do so adequately.

3.19 pm

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): We all know that  
the first duty of Government is the defence of the state,  
which historically has meant defending it at any cost,  
but that may no longer be the case. Western public  
opinion is not prepared for ever increasing amounts of  
money to be spent on defence. The last really big  
conflict, the second world war, was the best part of a  
lifetime ago. Never in modern history has there been  
such a gap between wars in Europe. Not being threatened  
by war makes the public increasingly reluctant to divert  
funds from such things as hospitals and schools towards  
military forces—just in case they are needed—when we  
need those hospitals and schools now. Clearly the armed  
forces will have many fewer soldiers, sailors and airmen  
than they did in the past, and almost every one of their  
training or operational activities will be gauged against  
cost.

The days of large-scale operations and exercises are  
over. We shall definitely need more specialised troops—  
special forces. Those forces are clearly expanding.  
The Special Reconnaissance Regiment—I was in one of  
its antecedents—has been formally established, and a  
parachute battalion is now specifically tasked with  
supporting 22 SAS. Increasingly we must expect our  
military forces to operate on the streets of the United  
Kingdom in plain clothes, supporting the police, the  
special branches and the security forces on such things  
as surveillance. It takes 20 people to watch one person.  
Also, the country is taking the threat of cyber-warfare  
seriously—witness the establishment of 77th Brigade,  
which combines Regular Army and Army Reserve forces.  
It draws on specialists nationwide, and does not necessarily  
look very military in what it does. Hacking can be more  
deadly than any gun.

Clearly our armed forces will be much smaller than in  
the past, which is disgraceful. I agree with my hon.  
Friend the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty) that  
we do not have enough troops; 82,000 is laughable. The  
total number of soldiers, sailors and airmen in uniform  
is about 160,000 to 170,000, which means our armed  
forces are smaller than they have been since the 17th century.  
Of course I want 2% of GDP to be spent on defence,  
but I want more than that: I want us to sort out what we  
need to spend on defence. We should conduct our  
reviews by looking at what we need—not against a  
figure. Some have suggested that the days of armoured  
vehicles are over, but developments such as the Russian  
T-99 and the Chinese Type 99A1 suggest that that view  
is not held by everyone. Armed forces must still be  
designed to combat state-on-state conflict. It is our duty  
to have decent soldiers who can deter.

3.24 pm

**James Cleverly** (Braintree) (Con): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger; I appreciate  
the opportunity to be squeezed into the debate, and  
I thank my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for  
Aldershot (Leo Docherty) for securing this important

and timely debate. I want to focus on a small number of  
issues that have been taxing my mind for some time,  
with regard to the structure of the British armed forces.  
A number of hon. Members have spoken with great  
knowledge about the senior service, the Royal Navy. No  
one has specifically discussed the RAF, and a crueller  
man than I am might suggest that that is because they  
are the RAF, and they kind of deserve it—but I would  
not want anyone to think that. *[Interruption.]* Ah, no—  
my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts)  
mentioned the RAF, so never mind, that is forgiven.

I want to focus on the Army, but some things that I  
say will be broadly applicable to the armed forces as a  
whole. I will echo some of the points made by my hon.  
Friend the Member for Witney, to the effect that the key  
word is flexibility. I was pleased that Her Majesty  
outlined in her Gracious Speech the Government's  
willingness to introduce the Armed Forces (Flexible  
Working) Bill. This is the right time, if not perhaps  
slightly overdue, to recognise the different demographics  
of people joining the armed forces. I cannot help thinking  
that if we were better at managing flexible working for  
armed forces personnel we would not lose so many  
people at the pinch point where personal and family  
circumstances and military commitments conspire to  
put them under pressure that forces them to leave. If we  
could find a way to manage the transitions from full-time  
to part-time and back, we would not lose so many  
highly experienced and important individuals.

I am going to be an unapologetic nerd on the subject  
of equipment. As a Conservative, I obviously believe  
that all the questions of the future are answered somewhere  
in the past, and I draw the Minister's attention to other  
periods in our military history when we have been  
under huge—often existential—threat as well as severe  
financial limitations. It should be noted that in the  
brigades and divisions that went ashore at Normandy  
the Sherman tank platform had commonality across a  
wide range of weapon systems. There were the standard  
Shermans, with the Sherman Firefly in support, the  
Sexton 25-pounder armoured gun and the Achilles  
anti-tank gun, all based on a common Sherman chassis,  
which meant that spares and repairs were easily and  
efficiently delivered to the front line. I welcome the fact  
that we are moving to a shared platform now for our  
strike brigades, and I urge Ministers not to do what we  
have done throughout our history, which is to start with  
the best intentions for commonality and shared platforms,  
and then drift until finally the hard-working men and  
women in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers  
are presented with a plethora of platforms that they  
have to repair and maintain during conflict. Flexibility  
as to people and platforms must be the watchword.

3.28 pm

**Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP):  
It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Sir Roger. I congratulate the hon. Member for Aldershot  
(Leo Docherty) on bringing the issue before the House.  
It is one that affects us all, irrespective of our background.  
I have been struck by the thoughtful, intelligent and  
knowledgeable contributions to the debate, which have  
done the House proud.

All roads lead back to the last strategic defence and  
security review, and it would be inappropriate if I did  
not mention the preceding one, too, which was an extremely

353WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

354WH

rushed and botched job as a preparation of the country  
for its own defence. However, the current SDSR is  
perhaps, if anything, slightly over-ambitious, in that  
many of the things it contains are difficult to deliver in  
the timescales. Indeed, it ignores some future challenges  
and, as has been mentioned, falls into the trap of  
fighting the last war when the Government should be  
considering the future threats facing the nation, and  
some of the opportunities for gain, such as using defence  
for the growth of the economy.

In Scotland, we are seeing cuts to bases and the  
diminution of our defence footprint. HMS Caledonia  
in my constituency, Fort George in the highlands and  
Glencorse barracks in Edinburgh are all under threat,  
and that is after decades of an imbalanced defence  
footprint across the UK. Many Members have mentioned  
bases and the support they have in their constituencies,  
whether in Wiltshire or Hampshire, which seem to be  
awash with military bases. I remind hon. Members that  
the Royal Navy surface fleet is based no further north  
than the south coast of England.

**Andrew Bowie:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Douglas Chapman:** I will try to make some progress.  
Just give me a second if that is okay, and I may take an  
intervention later.

The Navy, for example, has more admirals than ships,  
and not one of those admirals is based in Scotland,  
Northern Ireland or Wales. If there is to be another  
SDSR, it must balance the strategic defence needs of  
the whole of the UK.

The hon. Member for North Wiltshire (James Gray),  
who has just departed, has been a long-standing advocate  
of ensuring that the UK, and, by extension, Scotland,  
takes more account of the threats that face us from the  
north. The fact that we do not have a surface ship based  
in Scotland to protect our coastline from increasing  
Russian submarine incursions into our waters needs to  
be considered in any future SDSR.

**Andrew Bowie:** The hon. Gentleman says that there  
are no surface vessels based in Scotland, but that is  
patently untrue. The mine counter measures squadron  
is based solely at Faslane, which if I am not mistaken is  
north of the border in Scotland.

**Douglas Chapman:** What a tremendous example: one  
single minesweeper to deal with the whole of the North  
sea and the north Atlantic. I am sure everyone in  
Scotland will sleep easy in their beds tonight.

The hon. Member for Aldershot started his speech by  
talking about the importance of people. The overall  
issue is that all three services are currently running  
significantly under strength—I think the figure across  
the three services is in the region of 5%. I am told that  
some critical parts of those services, such as submariners,  
are about 25% under strength at the moment, and  
there is continuing pressure for qualified technicians  
and engineers. While I know that the Minister has made  
some good progress on recruitment and retention,  
which we welcome, that has clearly not gone far enough  
if we are to protect our nation at home, to defend  
communities here at home and look at our international  
obligations.

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con):  
On the positives, does the hon. Gentleman recognise the  
contribution of our cadet training forces across the  
United Kingdom, such as the 383 Alloa Air Training  
Corps in my constituency, and that we are investing in  
youth, which will help supply the manpower for our  
forces in the future?

**Douglas Chapman:** I am always happy to endorse a  
neighbouring constituency and the work done there.  
Again, recruitment into cadet forces and support for  
them is important if we are to build up the defence  
structure and infrastructure we need and invest in people  
from a very young age to ensure that they have the skills  
and competence to deal with future threats.

There has been much discussion in recent days about  
the 1% pay cap, and while we immediately think of  
teachers, nurses and people who work in the public  
sector, that cap is having a huge detrimental effect on  
our armed forces. Is the Minister in a position to  
consider the Government's policy on that in terms of  
recruitment and retention? For the people currently in  
our armed forces, there is often a much more attractive  
life for them in civvy street, where they are not away  
from home for months on end and the pay and conditions  
are much more amenable to family life. Will the Minister  
commit to considering the pay deal in a future SDSR?  
The issue for her in doing that is that the budget is  
predicated on an annual 1% increase in pay for all  
armed forces; any more than that and the overall defence  
budget begins to become seriously unbalanced. With a  
Government whose stated aim is to live within our  
means, there will be no wage increase for our serving  
personnel beyond the 1% until the Government promote  
another, more flexible SDSR.

On other financial commitments in the budget, big  
ticket items such as the F-35 and P-8 are two examples  
of very expensive pieces of kit procured in the USA. We  
have seen those costs rise because of the weakness  
of the pound, which makes imports more expensive,  
sometimes to the tune of 20%. I know the Minister has  
previously said that we are hedging as much as we can  
to ensure the budget is protected, but we cannot protect  
100% of costs involved in the current SDSR through  
hedging.

My final point is on shipbuilding and the Navy,  
which is critical to what is an island nation. After much  
asking, pushing and haranguing, the Minister will know  
that the national shipbuilding strategy is still to be  
published. As some people in Europe would say,  
“The clock is ticking.” We need a commitment to replace  
the Type 26s and Type 31s—ships used to protect our  
aircraft carriers. Although there has been an announcement  
for three, which is welcome, three is not 13. The clock is  
ticking on that one. We need an SDSR that does not  
fight previous wars but balances the needs of all of the  
UK and truly meets the needs of our serving personnel  
and their families. On all those issues, the clock is  
ticking.

On Monday, *The Times* talked about some of the  
problems with the F-35 programme. Sir Richard Barrons  
called for a move away from metal and platforms and to  
think seriously about how to construct armed forces fit  
for

“warfare in the information age”.

355WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

356WH

*[Douglas Chapman]*

That is where we are at the moment. I hope the Minister  
will give some consideration to the points raised and  
consider producing another SDSR that will meet the  
needs for a new century.

3.37 pm

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I congratulate  
the hon. Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty) on  
securing this debate. No doubt, the fact that he was the  
Conservative candidate in Caerphilly in 2015 stood him  
in enormously good stead in terms of his future career.

We have had a good debate, with a variety of  
contributions. We have heard about the Navy and the  
Royal Air Force as well as the Army. We have heard  
aboutScotland, accommodation and some of the problems  
and dilemmas that the armed forces face in the future.  
We all agree that the armed forces deserve our unreserved,  
full and unqualified support—we are all united on that.

It has to be said that when I saw the motion of the  
debate on the future of the armed forces, what sprung  
to mind was the problems we have seen at the Ministry  
of Defence in the past few months, and the continuing  
problems that have been widely reported. There have  
been reports in *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* only  
this week about: F-35 Lightning aircraft and their cost  
and suitability; Type 45, 26 and 31E surface ships; the  
lack of surface-to-air missiles in the Navy; the difficulties  
oftheAstutesubmarine;problemswiththeAjaxarmoured  
vehicle programme; the Warrior capability sustainability  
programme; and the difficulties with the new Queen  
Elizabeth carrier. The list could go on and on. I want to  
ask the Minister specifically: when will we see the new  
shipbuilding strategy? It has been promised and promised,  
and promised again. It is high time that we saw the  
strategy. When will it be published?

On top of all of those difficulties, there is the lack of  
personnel in our armed forces. The Army is, as we have  
heard, woefully under strength, and rumours are rife  
that there may well be further cuts in the future. The  
RAF could certainly do with more personnel, but the  
shortages are most acute—arguably in the short term—in  
the Royal Navy.

That is happening at a time when there is greater  
uncertainty and unpredictability across the world than  
ever before. Against that backdrop, the United Kingdom  
is in the process of withdrawing from the European  
Union and questions are being asked by our traditional  
allies about our future co-operation with them. It has to  
be said that even the Americans are questioning Britain's  
international commitments and our resolve to make  
sure that our armed forces are properly equipped, with  
sufficient and appropriate personnel. Our answer to  
those concerns must be that we want to see military  
co-operation with our European partners continue, and  
more than anything else we must strongly back NATO.

In the Army, despite the Government's promises—  
including their 2015 manifesto commitment to have an  
Army strength of 82,000—the full-time strength of the  
Army in May 2017 was only 78,150. That is nearly 4,000  
short of the MOD's 2020 target. According to information  
provided to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff  
South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty), the Minister of  
State for Defence, Earl Howe, has indicated that many

of the infantry training courses that we have in this  
country have large vacancies. That applies to Catterick,  
Purbeck, Winchester and Harrogate, for infantry training  
courses for 2015, 2016 and 2017. This must be a cause  
of concern for us all.

In the Navy, there is a worry that personnel are being  
transferred from other ships to the new carrier because  
of a lack of qualified personnel. The problem is most  
acute regarding engineering skills, and so serious is the  
problem that the Royal Navy is now offering short-term  
contracts for ex-Navy personnel who are in their late  
50s and even for 60-year-olds. Surely this highlights the  
need for a long-term strategic commitment to proper  
and well-financed training.

With regard to the Army, much of the recruitment is  
now in the hands of Capita, a private sector company.  
The contracts signed with Capita have been much criticised  
by the National Audit Office and there is growing disquiet  
in the Army itself about Capita's performance. Capita  
would argue that it is now meeting the targets set for it,  
but I am told that many of the young recruits are being  
falsely attracted and when they realise what the Army is  
all about, they leave. There is a growing problem with  
retention and it appears that Capita is contributing  
to it.

As we heard from the hon. Member for Aldershot,  
lessons must be learned from Iraq and Afghanistan;  
indeed, I would argue that lessons must be learned from  
all the conflict situations that we have been involved in  
recently. We have to recognise that the threats that we  
will face in the future will not be tackled simply. There is  
the ongoing threat of terrorism, which may assume  
other forms, but, as has been mentioned, there is also  
the threat of a growingly assertive Russia. That threat  
will not go away in the near future.

What we need in the future in response to those new  
threats is flexibility, diversity and adequate levels of  
funding. Yes, 2% may not be enough, certainly as it is  
defined by the Government, but we need appropriate  
co-operation with our allies, which will help to ensure  
the most vital ingredient of all—the good morale of all  
our armed forces.

3.43 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Harriett Baldwin):** It is truly an honour to serve under  
your chairmanship this afternoon, Sir Roger, and it is a  
privilege to respond to this debate. It has been a very  
good and effective debate on a topic that we often do  
not have the opportunity to discuss, so I congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty)  
on securing it. I also congratulate him and his gallant  
colleagues on participating in it. It has been truly fascinating  
to hear of his distinguished service and the contribution  
it makes to our deliberations in this place.

I would point out that it would normally be the  
Minister for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the  
Member for Milton Keynes North (Mark Lancaster),  
who would respond to this debate, but he is going out to  
visit some of our brave men and women on deployment  
atthemoment,sohesendshisregretsfornotbeingwith  
us today.

Several common themes emerged in the debate. I will  
attempt in the time available to me to touch on each of  
them. The first was the importance of the armed forces  
covenant in all our communities. I hope that everyone

357WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

358WH

here today can share with me the aspiration that next  
year, when we have the 10th anniversary of Armed  
Forces Day, we will help our local areas to put on a  
really tremendous celebration. I am proud to have been  
part of the Government that enshrined the armed forces  
covenant in law in 2011.

We also heard about some of the issues around  
accommodation; in particular, from the hon. Member  
for Islwyn (Chris Evans), who spoke very forcefully. A  
new contract was announced today with Carillion. In  
the last financial year we put another £68 million into  
accommodation, but I will certainly pass back what the  
hon. Gentleman said about the issues he has seen in his  
constituency.

I certainly heard a lot of support from Government  
Membersforspendingatleast2%ofGDPondefence.I  
hope that the Labour party shares that aspiration; it  
was in its manifesto.

**Wayne David:** We do.

**Harriett Baldwin:** Nevertheless, it is a shame that we  
have not had quite as good a turnout of Labour Members  
as we have had of Government Members.

A number of colleagues mentioned the Armed Forces  
(Flexible Working) Bill. That has started its passage  
through the House in the Lords, and I was glad to hear  
a range of supportive voices from the Government  
Benches for that legislation.

We heard about the issue around the base closure at  
York, which is scheduled to happen in 2031. We hope  
that setting such a long-term time horizon will give  
people the chance to plan around it, and of course there  
will be significant investment in the Catterick garrison,  
which is about an hour away from York, in terms of  
basing decisions.

**Bob Stewart:** I really must protest, Minister, that in  
my constituency there is not one military unit, and I  
want that rectified. What is she going to do about it?

**Harriett Baldwin:** I think that everyone can see that  
my hon. Friend himself embodies that military unit.  
Beckenham is well served in terms of the voice of the  
armed forces.

A number of hon. Members talked about celebrating  
the year of the Navy. It is a very exciting year, with  
HMS Queen Elizabeth going off on her sea trials from  
Scotland recently. It was also very exciting to announce  
recently the first of the new frigates, the Type 26. I  
assure the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and  
Devonport (Luke Pollard) that not only will the way we  
are ordering the frigates ensure that we have those eight  
anti-submarine warfare frigates, but it will provide the  
best value for the public purse. That idea is behind the  
approach we are taking.

As far as the Type 31e is concerned, we are still in the  
pre-concept phase on that, and the approach that we  
take on procurement is that we will always make decisions  
at the last responsible moment.

**Wayne David:** Will the Minister give an assurance  
that she will encourage the use of as much British steel  
in the new frigates as is humanly possible?

**Harriett Baldwin:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for  
raising that point. We have published our requirement—I  
think it is about 4,000 tonnes of steel per frigate—on  
the Government pipeline website, and we encourage  
our contractor to look where possible to procure British  
steel.

As for the other issues raised on the naval front, a  
number of hon. Members asked about the national  
shipbuilding strategy. I can certainly say that it will be  
published in due course, but we are aware of the excitement  
in Scotland among those awaiting the report. Given the  
previous exciting events I have mentioned in terms of  
the Navy in Scotland, we do not want to overexcite the  
hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife (Douglas  
Chapman) with everything all at once.

**Douglas Chapman:** I can assure the Minister that I  
am an extremely calm person. The time we have been  
waiting for the shipbuilding strategy has become  
unacceptable. We were told in previous debates and in  
answer to questions that the strategy was expected by  
spring. Then, in the Minister's own words, it was expected  
by summer. Going by the weather outside, it is summer.  
Can she give us a date for when she expects to make the  
announcement?

**Harriett Baldwin:** I am pleased that we are giving the  
hon. Gentleman ships. This week, we are cutting steel  
on the first of the Type 26s. We have had the HMS Queen  
Elizabeth sea trials. We will be naming the HMS Prince  
of Wales later this year. I was up in Govan cutting steel  
on an offshore patrol vessel earlier this year. We are  
giving him ships, and he will get his shipbuilding strategy  
in due course. By the way, he is wrong to say that there is  
no admiral in Scotland, because Rear Admiral John  
Weale, the Flag Officer for Scotland and Northern  
Ireland, lives on his road in Argyll and Bute.

**Douglas Chapman:** To clarify, I am not the Member  
for Argyll and Bute.

**Harriett Baldwin:** I apologise. The admiral lives nearby.

I want to reassure colleagues on the stories in *The  
Times* this week about the F-35 joint strike fighter. We  
strongly disagree with the conclusions that the journalists  
came to. We are confident that the programme is within  
its budget envelope, despite the fluctuation in the exchange  
rate. We are also proud of the amazing capability it is  
demonstrating. We already have 10 of the planes in the  
States,ascolleagueswillknow.Wehaveabout100British  
pilots and ground crew over there, with the pilots learning  
how to fly them. I have had the pleasure of speaking to  
one of them, who used to fly the Harrier. He said that  
this jet is the most amazing jet he has ever come across.  
The Navy and the Air Force are excited about the  
arrival of the planes into the UK.

In terms of our overall aspiration for defence, our  
vision is that we will protect our people, our territories,  
our values and our interests at home and overseas  
through strong armed forces and in partnership with  
allies to ensure our security and to safeguard our prosperity.  
This debate is a welcome opportunity to reaffirm the  
Government's commitment to the defence and security  
of our country and to the armed forces, which so many  
Members have spoken about and of which we are all so  
very proud. I pay tribute to the many servicemen and

359WH

Armed Forces

19 JULY 2017

Armed Forces

360WH

*[Harriett Baldwin]*

servicewomen who are currently involved in operations  
at home and overseas to ensure our safety, security and  
prosperity.

Our armed forces are exceptionally busy. More than  
24,000 servicemen and women were deployed on operations  
at some point during the past 12 months. The RAF has  
carried out some 1 ,300 air strikes in Iraq and more than  
140 in Syria as part of our comprehensive strategy to  
defeat Daesh, working with our global coalition partners.  
Nearly 400 British soldiers are providing engineering  
and medical support as part of the United Nations mission  
in South Sudan. Some 500 personnel are still serving in  
Afghanistan, working with the NATO mission to support  
the Afghan security forces. With NATO, we have deployed  
a battlegroup to Estonia. The Royal Navy continues, as  
it has done since 1969—that is nearly 50 years—to  
provide our nuclear deterrent patrols, which are at sea  
every minute of every hour of every day. The Navy  
maintains an enduring presence in the Gulf and the  
south Atlantic.

There are many, many other operations and deployments  
in which our forces are demonstrating daily their  
unparalleled commitment and dedication to duty, and I  
am sorry I can mention only those few examples in the  
time available. This debate is about the future shape of  
the armed forces. I remind Members that two years ago  
the Government announced the biggest programme of  
new investment in our armed forces for a generation.  
The 2015 strategic defence and security review identified  
an uncertain world—several colleagues have reiterated  
that—that is changing rapidly and fundamentally. In  
response, the SDSR defined the role, size and capabilities  
of the Navy, Army and Air Force for the next 10 years.  
Joint Force 25, which is now coming into being, will  
ensure that the armed forces remain able both to conduct  
the full range of operations that they might be called  
upon to undertake and to succeed against ever more  
sophisticated and capable adversaries.

Colleagues mentioned cyber-security, which is a very  
important area of investment. We announced a further  
£1.9 billion investment in the SDSR to go into our  
cyber capabilities, whether that is to defend the homeland,  
to deter people from attacking us or in the offensive  
capability that has been used in the conflict in Iraq and  
Syria. We have the fully comprehensive national cyber-  
security strategy too.

In the time available to me, I will skip quickly through  
some points. It is important to emphasise that we are  
committed to increasing our defence budget in every  
year of this Parliament. That increase is not only linked  
to thesizeof the economy, but will be at least 0.5% above  
inflation every year for the rest of this Parliament. We  
are already the second largest defence spender in NATO  
and the fifth largest in the world. We will sustain that  
investment by continuing to meet the NATO guideline.

We plan to spend £178 billion on new equipment and  
equipment support between 2016 and 2026. Colleagues  
raised points around that, but that investment will allow  
us to maintain the size and capabilities of the armed  
forces with impressive new equipment.

I have mentioned the first of the new aircraft carriers.  
The second is coming along pretty snappily behind. As  
my hon. Friend the Member for West Aberdeenshire  
and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie) said, they are the  
largest ships that have ever been built for the Royal  
Navy. It is an immense achievement for those who  
designed and built her, and for those nowservingaboard  
her. We have also committed to building the four new  
Dreadnought-class ballistic missile submarines to provide  
our nuclear deterrent through until the 2050s at least. I  
can confirm that we will have eight new Type 26 global  
combat ships—the anti-submarine warfare ones—and  
steel will be cut on the first of those by my right hon.  
Friend the Secretary of State for Defence tomorrow in  
Glasgow. I have mentioned other points about the Navy.

I wanted to talk about equipment for the Army.  
Divisions will be further reinforced by enhanced  
communications, which is very important. There will  
also be improved Warrior infantry fighting vehicles. I  
simply disagree with the tone of the hon. Member for  
Caerphilly (Wayne David), who talked down what we  
are doing and talked down all these programmes. The  
programmes are incredibly complicated and complex,  
and the people involved in delivering them are to be  
admired and thanked. We are also doing a life extension  
programme for our Challenger 2 tanks. We are ordering  
50 upgraded Apache and Chinook helicopters.

Without having enough time to touch even the tip of  
the iceberg in all the things that are happening, I will  
conclude. In every aspect of what makes our armed  
forces among the very best in the world—whether that  
is the equipment they operate, thetrainingtheyundertake  
or the men and women who serve in the Navy, Army  
andAirForce—theGovernmentareworkingandinvesting  
for the future; a future in which Britain has the right  
armed forces to ensure the safety and security of our  
people.

3.59 pm

**Leo Docherty:** Thank you very much for your  
chairmanship today, Sir Roger. I thank the Minister for  
responding and all colleagues who have taken the time  
to come and contribute today. The Romans were fond  
of saying, “If you wish for peace, you must prepare for  
war”, and I will be conclude by saying that I am  
confident that this Government and her Ministers will  
allow our great country to do just that.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the future shape of the armed  
forces.

361WH

19 JULY 2017 Closure of Sovereign House, Newport 362WH

Closure of Sovereign House, Newport

[MR ADRIAN BAILEY *in the Chair*]

4pm

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the closure of Sovereign  
House in Newport.

It is a special pleasure to meet under your chairmanship,  
Sir Roger. We know of your great contributions to  
debates in this House, in the Council of Europe and  
elsewhere, but it is the first time that I have had the  
chance to serve under your chairmanship.

The closure of Sovereign House in Newport is causing  
great anxiety in the city and elsewhere, because there is  
a threat to other jobs. We are not Luddites in Newport.  
We are very proud of the civil servants we have there,  
who have behaved magnificently over the past 50 or  
60 years. They are of growing importance in the economy  
of Newport because of the collapse of much of our  
manufacturing industry. They have done marvellous  
work and we are greatly proud of the contribution they  
have made. They are certainly at the heart of the Newport  
community.

Our civil servants turned out to be absolutely right on  
one of the few things on which they disagreed with the  
Government. They were very supportive of shared services,  
which was a disruptive but very successful Government  
move to concentrate services in Newport, but when  
there was a move to privatise services, the people involved  
quite rightly objected. They were absolutely right to do  
so, because we went from a position of having saved  
the country £120 million to one in which there was  
a loss.

As I have said throughout my time in Parliament,  
having watched the civil service grow, prosper and provide  
a marvellous service for the country, the concern is  
based not on any Luddite proposal or unbalanced view,  
but on the fact that the civil service goes through  
various stages in which there is a holy grail. It used to be  
the Next Steps agencies, and then it was outsourcing,  
and now we are in the era of the super-hub—people  
take “super-hubism” up with an almost religious fervour.  
I am sure that young civil servants are told, “If you want  
to have a successful career, go into hubism, because  
that'sthewaywearegoing.”Themomentumtakesover.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend on securing the debate. What the move  
to super-hubs neglects is the importance of having the  
jobs in local communities and the support they give to  
local communities. It also disregards the needs of workers,  
particularly those with caring and family responsibilities,  
who have the advantage of jobs close to home.

**Paul Flynn:** My hon. Friend makes his point with  
great force. That is precisely the position. People are  
attracted to super-hubs because they want their career  
to leave a legacy. If they can think that they have built  
super-hubs—great phallus symbols—in various places,  
they can relax when they eventually retire to their  
haciendas in Spain. It is something to be achieved, but  
it is not always rational or right.

I thank the Minister for having met my hon. Friend  
the Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden) and  
myself to discuss the matter. We want to see a clear,  
practical exposition of why this decision is the right one.

To my knowledge, Sovereign House has been operating  
since the early '60s and has provided jobs right in the  
heart of the city for all that time. There are 182 people  
working there now, but there is capacity for 400. It is a  
great asset to the city. One point that is not always taken  
into account is that the vibrancy of the city centre  
depends on the workers who are there. They have their  
lunch in the city, use the shops and so on, so they add  
to it. If a city is to thrive and survive, we need that  
working population at its heart. Where does that point  
come into the calculations of those who make the  
decisions?

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): Myhon. Friend  
quite rightly speaks about valuing the civil service jobs  
in both our constituencies, which we always speak up  
for. Does he agree that we not only risk losing the skills  
and expertise of those dedicated Department for Work  
and Pensions staff, but could end up spending vast  
amounts more by creating a more expensive super-hub  
that people will have difficulty travelling to?

**Paul Flynn:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We  
must not fall into that trap. If we are going to take a  
decision,letusseeallthefactslaidout.Makingpeople's  
jobs convenient for their homes is of paramount importance  
—it is at the heart of the Welsh Government's policy  
and I believe that they would say the same. They do not  
see this mania for super-hubs and bringing everything  
together as the answer.

There are fashions. There is a fashion for devolution  
and for economy of scale, and then we go in the other  
direction and there is a fashion for concentrating activities.  
These things go on, and we should not be borne along  
without making a reliable, scientific assessment of the  
advantages and disadvantages in this case.

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab):  
Does my hon. Friend share my concern that the possible  
closure and relocation of the offices in his constituency  
and in mine, in Merthyr Tydfil, will have a massively  
detrimental effect on the local economies in small towns  
across the area? Does he also share my concern that the  
added burden on staff having to travel much longer  
distances—in some cases requiring up to six bus journeys—  
would put undue pressure on workers travelling to work  
in those new hubs?

**Paul Flynn:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Although  
it is Newport that is mentioned in the title of the debate,  
the threats are spread right around—Merthyr and  
Caerphilly, the Newport service centre, Cwmbran pension  
service and the Gabalfa DWP centre in Cardiff. They  
are all under threat. It is difficult to get on a balance  
sheet what being told that they have to travel miles  
further, with more awkward bus routes, means to someone  
who is already struggling to get to work—particularly  
women with parental responsibilities—and who may  
just be managing to cope at the moment.

We know—not from the Government but from  
elsewhere—that there is a plan for a hub in the Treforest  
trading estate, which was set up after the slump in the  
'20s. It has seen the success, and has been the graveyard,  
of many enterprises over the years. We do not want to  
see the Government go down this path without fully  
considering the human consequences.

363WH Closure of Sovereign House, Newport 19 JULY 2017 Closure of Sovereign House, Newport 364WH

*[Paul Flynn]*

One of the great successes that we have seen in  
employment is in making buildings accessible to the  
disabled, including people in wheelchairs. It is now  
possible in many jobs for people to use the lifts and the  
desks, and to use the public services. We are going to  
add to those problems. Where do we put that in the  
equation?

The Government might talk about big being beautiful  
and the benefits of having a large group of people  
together, but modern technology teaches us that it is as  
easy to talk to someone in Australia, or indeed in any  
part of the world, using various computers methods,  
such as Skype, as it is to talk to someone sitting at the  
desk next to you. The location is therefore not that  
important, and nor is the idea of a hub.

Will the Minister assure us that the Government have  
made a full assessment of the alternatives to changing  
Sovereign House? It is an old building and I am sure  
that it is run down—they all are—but they should not  
just dismiss it and say, “We can't do anything with it.  
The hub is the only object we are considering and the  
only way we are going.” There should be a proper, full  
assessment of the costs of bringing Sovereign House up  
to standard. I hope that the Public Administration and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee will look at these  
issues. I have had the pleasure of being on the Committee  
for many years, and I will be going back to it. We must  
consider locations for the civil service in the future.  
There has not been a glorious record of unparalleled  
success recently—far from it. We need proper parliamentary  
surveillance of such decisions.

Has the Minister consulted fully with the Welsh  
Government on the closures and relocations? This seems  
to be in conflict with the policy of the Welsh Government,  
who have the motto, “better jobs closer to home”. They  
have gone that way, and we can all see the advantages.  
There are problems with the flow of traffic going into  
and out of Cardiff and Treforest—the bottom of the  
valleys—at that time of day. It is far better to expand  
Sovereign House than to move the jobs further away.

HastheMinistercompletelyruledoutanycompulsory  
redundancies? What is the situation? There is great  
anxiety among those involved. Some people are already  
at their limit of travel, and others may have already  
moved from another location. Can we guarantee that  
they will not be put under pressure? Have the Government  
looked at the equality impact of their proposals? Do  
they realise that women will be unfairly penalised by the  
change? Have they carried out an impact study of how  
the closures will affect the local Newport economy?

**Jessica Morden:** Does my hon. Friend agree that it is  
unfortunate that the Public and Commercial Services  
Union and staff learned about this plan from a leak on  
an architect's website before Ministers had a chance to  
do an equality impact assessment of the decision on  
staff? Does he agree that if the equality impact assessment  
shows, as we think it will, that staff with travel difficulties  
or caring responsibilities will experience difficulties, the  
Minister should think again?

**Paul Flynn:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am  
grateful to her for that intervention.

We are not looking for a reversal of Government  
policy if the change makes sense, but they have to prove  
that it makes sense not just in economic terms but in  
human terms. Thehubwillcause disruption, asIbelieve  
it will contain many more than 1,000 people. It will be  
a man-made hub. There are natural hubs in various  
parts of the country. Those in Blackpool and Newcastle,  
for example, have grown up due to certain unique  
circumstances.

This is a question of lumping together offices that  
have worked magnificently in Merthyr, Cardiff and  
Caerphilly, because of someone's administrative theory  
that hubs are better. I look forward to hearing from the  
Minister, who has been very courteous and open about  
this. I hope that he will keep an open mind and say that  
the Government will look at this and balance the full  
costs—not just those that show up on a balance sheet,  
but the heartbreaking human problems that are likely  
to arise, particularly for the women who are now employed  
in south Wales and are likely to be transferred to the  
Treforest hub.

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** Before I call the  
Minister, may I point out, for transcription purposes,  
that the Chair is Adrian Bailey, not Sir Roger Gale? I  
have been called many things in my time, but never  
Sir Roger Gale.

4.14 pm

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds):** That  
is something we share, Mr Bailey. It is a delight to see  
you in the Chair. I congratulate the hon. Member for  
Newport West (Paul Flynn) on securing this important  
debate about the closure of Sovereign House—an office  
of the Department for Work and Pensions—in his  
constituency. I thank him for his powerful words about  
the contribution made by the civil servants who work in  
Newport and elsewhere.

The Government are committed to building a country  
that works for everyone. We seek to protect the most  
vulnerable while supporting everyone to fulfil their potential  
and play their full part in society. That includes reforming  
the welfare system to make work pay, and examining  
our assets to ensure we are deploying our resources  
effectively.

As colleagues know, the private finance initiative  
contract with Telereal Trillium expires in March 2018.  
That gives us the opportunity—in fact, the imperative—to  
review which offices we will need in the future and how  
our estate will be managed. We have sought to deliver  
value for the taxpayer and make best use of the space  
available, while continuing to provide vital support to  
claimants and pursuing our reform agenda. In January,  
we announced proposals to rationalise the DWP estate.  
Those proposals encompassed most of our Jobcentre  
Plus offices and processing centres.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** My Torfaen constituency is  
adjacent to the two Newport constituencies. As the  
Minister is aware, there is a proposal to relocate the jobs  
that are currently at the Cwmbran pension centre down  
to Treforest. Can the Minister confirm whether any  
assessment has been undertaken of the effect on the  
Torfaen economy of the removal of those jobs from  
Cwmbran? If one has been, is he willing to share it  
with me?

365WH Closure of Sovereign House, Newport 19 JULY 2017 Closure of Sovereign House, Newport 366WH

**Damian Hinds:** If the hon. Gentleman will forgive  
me, I will come on in due course to the rationale for  
creating the new facility, which, as he said, will be at a  
site in the Treforest area, and the effect on the five  
places whose staff will feed into it, including Newport.

The announcement on 5 July finalised the plans to  
rationalise the DWP estate, which include merging some  
smaller and underutilised jobcentres, moving some to  
new buildings or shared Government premises, and  
creating larger strategic back-office sites. The changes  
will enable the Department to offer a more efficient  
service while delivering value for the taxpayer, and will  
save more than £140 million a year over the next 10 years.

Eight out of 10 claims for jobseeker's allowance, and  
99% of applications for universal credit full service,  
are now made online. That, together with the lower  
unemployment rates, means that there are fewer face-to-face  
initial meetings, and that some of the space is under-utilised.  
Our plans reflect how customers interact with the  
Department today. The changes are not about a reduction  
in frontline jobcentre staff. On the contrary, jobcentres  
are actively recruiting staff. The changes are being made  
in consultation with DWP employees and the trade  
unions. That will help preserve the important local  
knowledge and community understanding held by our  
staff, with customer service being maintained.

We plan to maintain the vast majority of jobcentres  
in Wales. Three are merging into nearby sites. Upon  
consultation, the moves have been received positively by  
some staff, who will join larger teams in which they can  
gain new skills and experiences. I believe that in itself  
will result in better service for customers. We want our  
back-office operations to reflect the Government's hub  
strategy, which aims to consolidate the delivery sites of  
departmental functions. However, in Wales in particular,  
we considered it important to retain offices away from  
Cardiff to preserve and grow employment in places  
where it is needed. It is worth mentioning that we are  
also growing our back-office presence at our Swansea  
site, which will grow to around 460 people, and at  
Bridgend, where our staff will eventually total around  
350. All in all, our back-of-house processing presence in  
Wales will increase by about 20%.

Of course, the change of most significance to the  
hon. Member for Newport West is the opening of the  
large DWP office in the Treforest area, just south-east  
of Pontypridd, in 2020-21. That strategically placed site  
will enable us to merge functions from five nearby  
smaller processing centres, including Sovereign House  
in his constituency. We intend to expand services at the  
new site and eventually grow it to around 1,600 staff,  
boosting employment in the area. The building will be a  
modern, digitally enabled working environment.

I understand that the relocation and consolidation of  
offices in south Wales will cause some disruption to  
staff. To maximise the number of staff at those five  
offices who could transfer to the new site, we studied  
their home postcodes to help determine that site's location.  
We were determined to retain staff who had built careers  
with us and minimise the loss of their valuable experience  
and expertise.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** When that postcode analysis  
wasdone,wasanalysisalso done of the public transport  
options between those postcodes and the new centre?

**Damian Hinds:** Yes, looking at both car transport and  
public transport opportunities was of course part of  
the analysis when these changes were evaluated.

The Treforest area borders some of the most deprived  
areas in Wales, and choosing it supports the aim of  
the Welsh Government's valleys taskforce of creating  
“better jobs closer to home”, which the hon. Member for  
Newport West cited. I met the Welsh Government's Minister  
for Skills and Science last week to discuss our plans and  
how we will support our staff through these changes.

In March this year, there were 212 staff at Sovereign  
House and only about 50% of the building was in use.  
As I mentioned, we assessed the distance that staff  
would travel to work at the proposed new site. Newport  
is 21 miles, or a 26-minute drive, from Treforest. There  
isalso a bus, which takes around an hour and 11 minutes.  
Of course, journey times will differ depending on where  
staff live in relation to the site.

From 2021, we will start to move staff to the new site.  
We want to retain Newport colleagues, along with their  
skills and experience, and we have deliberately chosen  
to phase the moves so that people have time to make  
decisions about their futures. We are also prepared to  
pay staff members' excess travel costs for up to three years  
to assist their transition. Along with other Departments,  
the DWP will continue to be a significant employer in  
the area, and I expect the skills and experience of  
people who work at Sovereign House to be in demand.  
These changes to back-of-house sites will have no effect  
on claimants in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as  
the jobcentre there will remain open.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I would go into  
detail about the rationale for the new site, including the  
financial rationale. Our strategy for the new service  
centre in the Treforest area is to bring colleagues together  
at a single location, resulting in better use of space,  
increased efficiency in how we work, and greater  
opportunities for staff development and progression.  
However, there isalso a financial rationale. Fitting out a  
bespoke new right-size property is better value than  
refurbishing our existing older properties. Although  
that is not necessarily universally true for all buildings,  
the sites in this region are particularly old.

Refurbishing older sites can have quite a high cost, as  
it generally entails substantial infrastructure requirements,  
whichmightincludeinstallingmorelifts,airconditioning,  
heating, lighting, and cabling and other technology to  
increase bandwidth for digital services and call centres.  
Although we have not acquired specific refurbishment  
quotes for the buildings in question, industry benchmarks  
suggest that refurbishing all our existing buildings would  
cost between 50% and 100% more in fit-out than setting  
up a new building. Of course, such refurbishment is  
also disruptive both to our work and to staff. We would  
need to vacate a property for six to eight months and  
incur the cost of moving and of temporary space for  
that period, or move within a building multiple times to  
free up floors for refurbishment.

**Jessica Morden:** Will the Minister give way?

**Damian Hinds:** Will the hon. Lady forgive me if I see  
how we go? If time allows, of course I will.

We also expect a new building to have significantly better  
environmental credentials and better energy efficiency  
than our old buildings, creating savings in the long term.

367WH Closure of Sovereign House, Newport 19 JULY 2017

368WH

*[Damian Hinds]*

The hon. Member for Newport West rightly asked  
about the risk of redundancies. Of course we want to  
minimise that risk. It is impossible to be absolutely clear  
at this stage, not least because we are talking about a  
move that is some years away, but we anticipate that  
approximately 20 staff might not be able to move to the  
new site. Now that announcements have been made, it is  
possible to be clearer about employment and career  
opportunities, and we will have detailed one-to-one  
meetings with staff between now and then.

I reassure the hon. Gentleman that we have met our  
equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010  
and paid due regard to the impact of the proposals on  
our communities, ourstaff and the customers they serve.  
He also mentioned the requirements of people with  
disabilities and how office facilities have become more  
accessible over time—a development we all welcome. It  
isof course worth considering the fact that new buildings  
can often be designed with the specific needs of our staff  
in mind, including features such as improved accessibility.

**Jessica Morden:** Will the Minister publish the proposed  
budget for acquiring the land and for designing and  
building the proposed hub?

**Damian Hinds:** As I think the hon. Lady knows, there  
are some things that are commercially sensitive and that  
it is not possible to release, and there are other things  
that it is possible to release. I am happy to follow up  
with her about that in correspondence.

I know that there is also interest in whether our plans  
will affect the roll-out of universal credit. I assure hon.  
Members that the changes take full account of the  
roll-out of the full universal credit service. We have  
ensured that our schedule of changes has the flexibility  
to react to changing demand—both expected fluctuations  
and future economic trends. From this month, we are  
expanding universal credit full service roll-out to  
30 jobcentres a month and putting extra resources into  
those jobcentres and the service centres that support them.

As the way we interact with our customers changes,  
so do their needs and expectations. Reforms have increased  
our online interactions with claimants so that face-to-face  
contact can be used for those who require additional  
support. We are committed to retaining an accessible  
jobcentre network and continuing to serve customers in  
all parts of the country. Our work coaches will continue  
to offer face-to-face support—a core part of our service—at  
our sites, but customers now have a range of ways to  
access employment support, including email, telephone,  
post and online.

Around 3 million more people in this country are in  
work than in 2010, and youth unemployment has fallen  
by 375,000. The employment rate has risen to 72.9%,  
which is a record high. In Wales, a near-record high of  
1.44 million people are in work. Now is the right time to  
consider how we can make best use of our resources to  
help bring into work those who are able to join the  
workforce while retaining support and safeguards for  
those who are not.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Thameslink

4.30 pm

**Mrs Anne Main** (St Albans) (Con): I beg to move,  
ThatthisHousehasconsideredThameslinkpassengerservices.  
A recent customer satisfaction survey on commuter  
trains by Which? ranked Thameslink third from bottom.  
Thameslink registered an approval rating of just 32%; it  
was ranked above only the beleaguered Southern and  
Southeastern. I want to make the Minister aware of  
that passenger dissatisfaction today and suggest some  
improvements.

My constituents report cancellations and delays almost  
every day on the network. Over the last twelve months,  
trains have been plagued with technical problems. One  
constituent told me that last year alone he counted  
15 broken-down trains on his journeys, including two  
on the same day, 14 August. Cancellations are often  
made at short notice. They cause later trains to be  
extremely busy, which makes it difficult for passengers  
to get on or off, giving rise to what have been called  
cattle-truck conditions and meaning that trains often  
cannot stop at their planned stations. Constituents tell  
me that on a bad day, which is not unusual, it takes  
them about two hours to get from London to St Albans,  
despite the 19 to 22 minutes timetabled for peak-time  
journeys. I have been told of constituents who have  
given up their jobs because they cannot afford the extra  
childcare—some nurseries charge an extra £50 per hour's  
delay—or are unable to see their children in the evening.  
Many are consistently late for work despite leaving  
home earlier and earlier.

The Train Suffragettes are 500 mostly female parents  
in my constituency who were so fed up with the poor  
service they receive that they set up a group to show  
their collective unhappiness. They have shared with me  
their terrible experiences trying to balance work in  
London with family life in St Albans. They have missed  
school plays and parents'meetings and rarely get to put  
their children to bed. Persistent delays have driven many  
of them to quit their jobs, and some have even moved  
away from the Thameslink line altogether. One mum  
told me:

“After calling in favours too many times from too many people  
and being late for nursery pick-ups three times in one week alone  
(once where I was actually stuck on the train for an hour with no  
phone signal and so unable to call anyone at the nursery), I quit  
my job in the city in October. Financially a difficult decision but  
I'd had a skinful of the stress of the commute, wondering if my  
train home would be on time or if I would have to sprint from the  
office to get the earlier train, which was often cancelled too.”

A lot of technical problems have been reported with  
the new Siemens 700 trains, mainly with electrics, software  
and heating. The doors often fail to open, especially at  
St Pancras, because they are now controlled by the  
driver; one day a train sat at the station for about  
20 minutes because the driver could not open the doors.  
I know that Thameslink is aware of those problems.  
There has been some welcome recent progress, including  
an increase in Govia Thameslink's public performance  
measurement from 60% to 83%, but that is still well  
below the national average of 88.95%.

Over the last year, Network Rail was responsible for  
54% of delays, Thameslink for 42%, and other causes  
for 4%. We appreciate that ongoing Network Rail works

369WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

370WH

have an impact on the line, but that is no excuse for rail  
services not to provide a reliable timetabled service or to  
try to deliver improvements to it. My constituents not  
only suffer a poor service but get far less generous  
compensation than Southern Rail passengers when incidents  
occur. That cannot be acceptable. Network Rail should  
have better lines of communication with Govia and  
passengers. People need to know as quickly as possible  
why they have been delayed and what they can do to  
avoid disruption.

In the 2016-17 financial year, one in 11 trains run by  
GTR was cancelled or more than 30 minutes late—the  
worst performance of all the rail operators in the country.  
In period 3 of 2016-17, GTR had a cancellation and  
significant lateness percentage of 15.7%, compared with  
a 5.7% national average. In period 3 of 2017-18, GTR  
had a considerably reduced failure rate of 6.6%, but  
that is still nearly double the national average of 3.7%.

In my first debate on this matter in 2012, I said that  
First Capital Connect, which then held the franchise—it  
has now been replaced by Govia—was ranked

“lowest in the country, including value for money, punctuality,  
sufficient room on trains, satisfaction with the stations and how  
the train operating companies. dealt with the delays.”—[*Official  
Report,* 2 February 2012; Vol. 539, c. 342WH.]

Five years on, despite the change of franchise, nothing  
has changed. GTR still consistently ranks among the  
operators with the lowest customer satisfaction public  
performance measures.

The failings that other hon. Members and I raised  
five years ago remain failings today. Something must be  
done to improve Govia passenger services for all those  
who rely on them. It is a simple premise that to deliver  
an efficient, mobile workforce, we need a decent, well  
run and affordable rail transport service. People of all  
ages expect a rail service fit for the 21st century. The  
travelling public are being asked to pay ever more for  
their rail fares, and we in Parliament must ask serious  
questions about the services they are experiencing up  
and down the country.

I could not speak in a debate on commuter train  
services in my constituency without referring to the  
shadow being cast by the Radlett rail freight proposal,  
which my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Oliver  
Dowden) and I believe may have a catastrophic impact  
on the already hugely inadequate commuter service.  
The application for this strategic rail freight site started  
in 2006. In December 2016—10 years after assurances  
were given that access would be granted—Network Rail  
said that it would be in a position to confirm an  
“efficient scheduling strategy” once the capability and  
capacity analysis team completed its evaluation. However,  
it responded only last week, and its response, which was  
about essential works disruption and pathing, raises far  
more questions than it answers.

The Government's national policy statement on national  
networks in 2014 identified London and the south-east  
as the areas with busiest passenger services, with passenger  
carriage set to increase by 46.1% by 2033. Moreover, the  
Department for Transport's 2016 rail freight strategy  
said:

“Rail freight services operate in response to customer and  
supply chain demands, making it more challenging to plan for  
freight services than passenger services, which tend to run to a  
regular timetable and route.”

Commuters in my constituency certainly wish passenger  
services would run to a regular timetable and route.

Will the Minister guarantee that the proposed strategic  
rail freight interchange will not add further delays and  
cancellations for my constituents, who are already at  
breaking point? Will he undertake to scrutinise any  
plans to deliver the site link tunnel, and will he test  
those plans against the potential disruption to services?  
I am concerned that the significant rail works necessary  
to deliver the site will mean a protracted period of  
disruption that cannot be justified by the site's limitations.  
In case the Minister is not aware, the site is in a village  
with no motorway access. It has a life span of 30 years  
and is constrained from expansion, unlike the expansion  
forecast for passenger services. This inadequate proposal  
cannot be allowed to interfere with the exciting prospect  
of better and more frequent passenger services for my  
constituents.

What can be done to improve the current situation?  
Commuter groups such as the Train Suffragettes in St  
Albans have suggested changes that would go a long  
way towards improving the overall service that passengers  
receive. The first is a consistent and user-friendly refund  
system to allow passengers to reclaim expenditure, including  
taxi costs incurred because of delays and cancellations.  
The second is opening station ticket barriers when there  
have been delays, in order to ease platform congestion,  
which is often described as being at a dangerous level.

The third suggestion, which is vital, is to improve  
communication at all levels. Passengers are fed up with  
being in the dark when trains have been delayed or  
cancelled. They have suggested following the model of the  
London underground, where—as I am sure the Minister  
is aware—when a tube is held in a tunnel, the driver  
immediately makes an announcement to let passengers  
know the reason for delay and how long a wait is  
anticipated. When a tube station is closed, the driver  
will helpfully suggest alternative connecting routes for  
passengers.

The fourth suggestion, which is regularly raised, relates  
to communication between drivers and staff at stations—  
St Albans station in my case. Passengers need to be able  
to speak to station staff to find out exactly what is  
going on and what has caused the delay or cancellation.

Finally, passengers demand that fares be reduced, or  
at least frozen, until Thameslink vastly improves the  
service on the line. I called for the same thing in 2012,  
but five years later the catastrophic situation that my  
constituents are experiencing is exactly the same. We  
also face the impact of the strategic rail freight interchange's  
disruptions being put into the mix. I suggest that we are  
on our knees in St Albans, and the Minister needs to  
take drastic action now.

4.40 pm

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey.  
I congratulate the hon. Member for St Albans (Mrs Main)  
on securing the debate; it is a welcome opportunity to  
raise the misery being caused to my constituents as a  
consequence of the failures of our rail services.

It is hard to overstate the cumulative impact of failing  
rail services on my constituents in Dulwich and West  
Norwood over the past two years. The hon. Lady mentioned  
the bottom three franchises for customer satisfaction

371WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

372WH

*[Helen Hayes]*

being Southern, Southeastern and Thameslink. Those  
are the only franchises that operate in my constituency,  
so we have, on different parts of the route, different  
combinations of misery. Commuting by rail from my  
constituency is a universally difficult and miserable  
experience.

The debate is focused on Thameslink passenger services,  
which I will return to in a moment, but it would be  
remiss of me to contribute to a debate on one part of  
the GTR franchise without putting on the record the  
utter misery caused to my constituents who travel on  
Southern Rail services, which are also run by GTR. I  
have heard from almost 2,000 constituents over the past  
18 months about the catastrophic impact that the collapse  
in Southern rail services has had on their employment,  
family life and wellbeing.

The Government's response to Southern Rail's problems  
has been, frankly, too little, too late. While everyone  
understands that many of the problems can only be  
resolved through infrastructure investment, there is much  
more that can and should be done in the short term to  
provide passengers with timely information about delays  
and cancellations, and to re-establish effective negotiations  
with the trade unions to address the safety concerns that  
have been raised and to resolve the industrial dispute. The  
fact that the chief executive of GTR, who has responsibility  
for the Southern Rail franchise as well as Thameslink  
services, received a pay package of almost half a million  
pounds last year simply adds insult to injury for my  
constituents.

Thameslink services run through Tulse Hill, Herne Hill  
and Loughborough Junction stations in my constituency,  
in addition to peak-time services through Sydenham  
Hill and West Dulwich. Those services are vital for people  
whoworkinareasofcentralLondon,includingBlackfriars,  
FarringdonandtheCityofLondon,orareasofintensifying  
employment, such as King's Cross and Old Street, or  
those who need to access the tube network from Elephant  
andCastle. I was a Thameslink commuter to Farringdon,  
and then to Blackfriars, for the best part of 20 years  
prior to being elected to Parliament.

Thameslink services have been becoming more  
overcrowded and less reliable for many years. Passengers  
who use stations in my constituency have suffered the  
consequences of residential densification further down  
the line, meaning that it is now often impossible to get a  
seat or even to stand comfortably on trains that were  
not previously so full. With the exception of Herne Hill  
station, which has lifts, the stations in my constituency  
are not accessible. Loughborough Junction is a particularly  
challenging station to use, with very steep steps and  
narrow, windswept platforms. At peak times, passengers  
at Loughborough Junction are often unable to board  
trains at all because they are so overcrowded. The  
Loughborough Junction area is currently subject to  
considerable new residential development, increasing  
the number of homes in the area. New homes are badly  
needed, but they must be supported by investment in  
transport infrastructure to ensure that everyone in the  
community can continue to get to and from work and  
to access the services they need.

The current services are also desperately unreliable.  
There are delays and cancellations every day, and my  
constituents are forced to organise their lives in order to

mitigate the impact of services they should be able to  
rely on. New rolling stock is slowly being introduced,  
and while to some extent those trains provide a more  
comfortable environment with more standing space,  
they are often just as overcrowded as the old ones. There  
is a view among many passengers that they should have  
been designed like Overground trains, with seating at  
the sides, to allow much more space for passengers who  
have to stand. We need 12-car trains across the network  
and investment to ensure that they can be accommodated  
at every station to maximise capacity for passengers.

I am also concerned about the potential loss of the  
direct service from my constituency to Luton airport.  
My constituents will now only be able to access that  
really important service by changing at Elephant and  
Castle, where trains are even more overcrowded. I am  
concerned that fewer trains will stop at Tulse Hill,  
Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction overall as a  
consequence of the timetable changes, in a situation  
where we need capacity to be increased, to cope with  
both current and future demand.

IamconcernedthatservicescurrentlyrunbyThameslink  
through Sydenham Hill and West Dulwich stations and  
not included in the current consultation may be lost if,  
in the Southeastern franchise renewal process, they are  
not considered to be sufficiently profitable. Those services  
are small in number but provide a vital route to work  
for many of my constituents. We need much more  
ambitious investment in rail infrastructure than is currently  
proposed to meet the transport needs of my constituents,  
as both our local population andthe population further  
out of London on the same commuter lines continue to  
grow.

I have the following asks of the Minister today. The  
experience of the failure of the temporary timetable on  
the Southern network into London Bridge tells us that  
the robustness of the timetable in relation to the capacity  
of the network is a paramount consideration for reliability.  
When will the Minister confirm the capacity of the  
Thameslink core in relation to the proposed new timetable?  
Will he commit to exploring the reopening of Camberwell  
station between Loughborough Junction and Elephant  
and Castle stations, to provide extra capacity and a  
modern, fully accessible station environment to serve  
local residents, staff and patients travelling to King's  
College Hospital and students travelling to the University  
of the Arts London sites in Camberwell and Elephant  
and Castle?

Will the Minister commit to ensuring there is no  
drop in the number of services through Loughborough  
Junction, Tulse Hill and Herne Hill stations following  
the consultations on the new timetable? Will he commit  
to securing the future of services to Blackfriars from  
Sydenham Hill and West Dulwich? Will he commit to  
exploring the reopening of the eastern platforms at  
Loughborough Junction station, to enable trains to  
stop there between Denmark Hill and Elephant and  
Castle? That would double capacity at Loughborough  
Junction station. Will he commit to working withTransport  
for London to open an Overground station at Brixton  
East, between Denmark Hill and Clapham High Street  
stations, to relieve pressure on the Thameslink network?

Will the Minister work to persuade the Secretary of  
State, who has not previously been inclined to do so, to  
work in a cross-party way with the Mayor of London  
to transfer all suburban rail services in south London to

373WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

374WH

Transport for London to run, so that profits can be  
reinvested in the improvements we so urgently need,  
rather than being used to reward the poor performance  
of senior leaders in the private sector? Finally, can the  
Minister tell my constituents when they will be able to  
rely on rail services to run to the agreed timetable,  
without delays and cancellations, and when they can  
stop having to organise their lives around the failures of  
the GTR franchise, including the Southern railway?

4.47 pm

**Oliver Dowden** (Hertsmere) (Con): May I begin by  
thanking you for your chairmanship, Mr Bailey? I pay  
tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for St Albans  
(Mrs Main). I know what a doughty campaigner she  
has been on this topic. My remarks are only intended to  
echo some of the points she has made, and indeed some  
of the points made by the hon. Member for Dulwich  
and West Norwood (Helen Hayes).

I should begin by declaring an interest: I commute,  
for my sins, on this line every day, so I have first-hand  
experience of it, but also a desire to improve it, as do  
many of my constituents. Literally thousands of my  
constituents commute every day from Radlett and Elstree  
and Borehamwood on that line into central London.  
They, like other hon. Members' constituents, have sorry  
tales to tell of the poor performance of the line.

I will give a few statistics. At times last year, less than  
two thirds of Thameslink trains ran on time. Almost  
one in five trains were cancelled or significantly late.  
The level of frustration and volume of correspondence  
that I received in relation to that poor performance  
led me eventually to compile a dossier of more than  
100 complaints from constituents, which I was able to  
present to the Transport Secretary. They were very  
similar to the complaints outlined by my hon. Friend  
the Member for St Albans. The most distressing cases  
were those of people who felt they had to give up their  
jobs because they could not rely on the service, and of  
younger mums and dads struggling with childcare. We  
know what it is like with childcare—we think we are  
going to pick our kids up at a certain time, so we allow,  
say, an hour for the train journey, but it takes two  
hours. The nursery is closing, and the level of stress  
involved if family or friends cannot pick our children  
up is enormous.

Commuters in my constituency are seeking a number  
of reassurances. I know that many of these do not fall  
within the direct purview of the Minister—they fall  
within the purview of the franchisee—but I hope he will  
be able to bring some pressure to bear on the franchisee  
in relation to them. Specific points that constituents  
have asked me to raise include the problem of trains  
switching at the last minute. I have seen that: people get  
on a train thinking it is an all-stopper or a semi-fast train,  
and literally moments before it is about to depart, they  
suddenly discover that it is either not going to stop where  
they thought or stopping at every stop. Communicating  
that effectively to commuters is very important. My hon.  
Friend drew the comparison with London Underground.  
Thameslink has been improving a little in this respect,  
but there is still a lot more it could do to keep passengers  
up to date with what is going on as it happens. If people  
know what is happening, it makes things that bit easier.  
Even if it just involves sending someone a text to say  
they will be late, it makes it a little easier.

There is also tremendous variability in the length  
of trains. There can be a full platform waiting for  
an eight-car train and suddenly there is a four-car train  
that not everybody can get on. A perennial bugbear for  
my constituents—although I admit it probably runs  
contrary to the interests of my hon. Friend's constituents—is  
that too few trains stop at Elstree and Borehamwood and  
Radlett, instead running directly to St Albans. When there  
are delays on the line, my constituents are just looking  
to get home, and in those circumstances they would  
look for trains stopping every time. I would be grateful  
for an update on anything the Minister can do to raise  
the pressure on that.

There is also a broader question about the infrastructure.  
A great number of my constituents drive to and park at  
the station. In both Elstree and Borehamwood and  
Radlett there are single-tier carparks. I simply do not  
understand why another level or two cannot be put on  
those carparks. Given the incredibly high parking fees  
charged by Thameslink, it would be in its interests to  
construct other levels. I am interested in the Minister's  
perspective on that. As the hon. Member for Dulwich  
and West Norwood said, as the level of densification in  
these areas of the south-east inevitably continues to  
rise, the demand for the station will only continue to  
grow. Equally, there is the issue of capacity at the  
station. I am grateful for the Government's progress on  
Borehamwood station—they have announced some  
additional funding, which is very gratefully received—but  
that money needs to continue to flow so that we can  
keep up with the ever-rising demand.

I echo the concerns about the pricing of the railway  
line. By many measures, this is the most expensive  
railway line per kilometre travelled not only in the  
United Kingdom but in the whole of Europe. If passengers  
are being forced to pay that much, the service really  
does need to improve to match it. I know that anything  
the Minister can do to keep pressure on the company to  
find further efficiency savings to keep the cost of  
commuting down would be very gratefully received by  
constituents.

It is also important to look at what happens when  
things go wrong. As my hon. Friend the Member for  
St Albans alluded to, the compensation scheme is still  
not simple and transparent enough, and does not cover  
a lot of the on-costs. For example, if the line is down,  
my constituents living in Radlett or Borehamwood  
often have no alternative than to go to the very end of  
the Jubilee line and then take a taxi from Stanmore.  
That is in no way covered in the compensation scheme.  
It is a completely unavoidable cost for my constituents,  
and that should be considered.

It is also important to look not just at the franchisee  
but at Network Rail. Too often, we concentrate on the  
failures of the franchisee, not those of Network Rail. It  
is to the Government's great credit that when faced with  
a dire financial situation in 2010 they decided not to cut  
back on railway investment. They kept the investment  
going for Crossrail and for the rather unfortunately  
named Thameslink 2000 programme. We are hopeful  
that Thameslink 2000 will be delivered by 2020, but that  
process has necessitated considerable upgrades at London  
Bridge. That was clearly necessary, but it has had a bad  
knock-on effect on commuter services, because capacity  
has been significantly reduced around the station. I would  
be grateful for an update from the Minister about

375WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

376WH

*[Oliver Dowden]*

progress on that upgrade. When can we expect London  
Bridge to be completed, and when can we expect trains  
to start fully running through there?

An issue has been flagged to me that I would be  
grateful if the Minister took very seriously. Capacity in  
the London core of Thameslink will be effectively doubled  
overnight when trains go up the northern stretch—on  
which my hon. Friend's and my stations lie—not just  
towards Bedford, but to Hitchin and Harpenden. That  
will mean huge pressure through the central core. At  
times, there could be trains every minute or two minutes.  
I know the system will be computerised, but I would be  
grateful if departmental officials stress-tested the system  
before roll-out so that we do not face a cliff edge. After  
all the pain, the moment the system at St Pancras is not  
working—my hon. Friend alluded to this—we would  
not want to go back to square one again and have a  
complete failure of the service.

I would be grateful if the Minister updated me on  
plans to integrate between franchisees and Network  
Rail, as announced by the Secretary of State. That is  
important. One of the problems of privatisation was  
the artificial distinction, and it is important that we  
close that distinction. An update would help us understand  
how that can be addressed in the longer run.

Let me quickly turn to two final issues. There is a  
desperate need for the Oyster card system to be extended  
to Radlett. I know the Minister is on the case, but an  
assurance from him to my constituents that that will be  
delivered by 2018 would be gratefully received—and the  
same goes for Potters Bar, which is not on Thameslink  
but is served by Govia Thameslink, the wider holding  
company.

We cannot discuss rail freight without looking at the  
rail freight terminal: the disastrous development that is  
entirely unsuited to our part of Hertfordshire. My hon.  
Friend the Member for St Albans and I continue to  
campaign against it, but if it is to go ahead, we must  
look at its impact on the railway line. At the meeting we  
both had with Network Rail, it updated us that the  
development will involve putting a line under the existing  
line to access the rail freight terminal. When we think  
about the infrastructure involved in building one railway  
line under another, it is difficult to conceive that that  
will not involve significant delays. I would be grateful  
for an update on that and, in particular, an assurance  
that the full cost will rightly be borne by the developer,  
and that means minimising disruption to passengers,  
even if that means a higher development cost. Given all  
that we have heard, it is simply not fair for commuters  
to bear the cost in terms of delayed journeys for the  
developer to get a cheaper deal.

Equally, I would be grateful for some reassurance on  
timetabling. I know Network Rail's argument is that  
there are already allocated slots, but those slots are not  
being used by freight trains at the moment. I fear we  
will lose capacity once they are being used continuously  
by the rail freight terminal. Some reassurances would  
be gratefully received.

I thank the Minister for coming here. I was on the  
radio just now talking about this, and the interviewer said,  
“This is the last day of term. You will all be watching  
videos, relaxing.” I trust that the Minister will completely  
disprove that and demonstrate that he will address this  
issue with vigour.

4.58 pm

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey,  
in this crucial debate. We have seen the passion presented  
by all hon. Members on the challenges that their  
constituents face not just day by day, but week by week,  
month by month and year by year. The sheer dissatisfaction,  
frustration and misery that commuters have had to put  
up with for such a long time shows that resolution is  
crucial. The passenger must be listened to. We have  
obviously heard about the disruption brought not only  
to the commute, but to family life. I give all credit to  
parents who try to arrange childcare under the best of  
circumstances, but when they face an unreliable train  
service as well, the pressures are immense. All hon.  
Members have articulated that well this afternoon.

When passengers turn into activists and take action  
against what should be a normal part of their routine  
and daily life—such as the Train Suffragettes and others  
I know as well—it really shows that the whole rail  
system is in meltdown and has to be addressed. As we  
have heard, it is not just about train operating companies,  
because this has been a sustained problem across the  
network for such a long time. However, Thameslink  
particularly stands out. It has the second-lowest level of  
passenger satisfaction, at 73%—only Southern, at 65%,  
is behind—and has issues with punctuality and reliability,  
as we have heard. Southeastern trains are also not  
delivering for passengers, which is now spreading to  
Northern as well. With regard to Thameslink, things  
have not improved for several years now. When a staggering  
23% are satisfied with how the company has dealt with  
delays, it really shows that it is left wanting, as has the  
whole situation.

What we have really picked up on today are the  
consequences of that unreliability, the infrastructure  
problems, the desperate need for investment and the  
massive overcrowding issues. The overcapacity issue  
will not going away, as more housing developments will  
put further strain on the network. We have also heard  
about challenges with the choice of destination, the  
obvious need for improvements right across the network  
and the impact that late or cancelled trains have on  
commuters.

It is important that we listen to these real frustrations.  
We cannot allow the situation to continue in which the  
Government point fingers but do not lift one to sort out  
what is happening. We know that there is real chaos in  
the way the franchise was set up, as was rightly highlighted  
when the Gibb report was debated in the main Chamber  
on 4 July. We know that there needs to be effective  
governance over the whole structure, which has been  
lacking, to ensure that issues are addressed expediently  
and that proper dispute resolution mechanisms are put  
in also. At the forefront of everything, we need to make  
sure that passengers' concerns are addressed and that  
their safety is safeguarded. We also heard about access  
needs, and the fact that some train journeys are simply  
impossible for passengers with disabilities.

Another point that was rightly raised was the financial  
cost to passengers. We have seen rail prices go up by  
27% since 2010 on this rail network, which is the most  
expensive not only in the UK but in the whole of  
Europe, meaning that passengers are having to pick up  
the cost of this failed network. We are expecting further  
price increases in August, and we have heard the figure

377WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

378WH

of 4%—perhaps the Minister can enlighten us on that.  
We need certainty on pricing; all passengers, whether on  
Thameslink or other networks, really want to know  
what is happening on pricing. The Opposition believe  
that price rises should be capped in line with the consumer  
prices index. We have heard different answers from  
different Ministers from the Department: we have heard  
that price rises will continue to be capped in line with  
the retail prices index; we have heard twice from the  
Minister that pricing is under review; and we have also  
heard that things will be kept as they are this year—but  
thatdoesnotsaywhatwillhappennextyear.Passengers  
need clarity on pricing.

We need to make sure that we move forward with  
smart ticketing, which we heard several contributions  
on. Where are we at with part-time smart ticketing,  
which will impact on many of those parents? It is an  
equality issue and we need to move forward on it. We  
also need to make sure that we see greater flexibility in  
smart ticketing, including the extension of the Oyster  
card. With the technology that is in place, how is delay  
repay being rolled out on the Oyster card? There are  
opportunities there. Of the amount of money that the  
network gains, only a minimal amount reaches the  
customer. The process of trying to reclaim after a delay  
is difficult.

**Mrs Main:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right. Many  
of my passengers say that they do not want to have to  
claim; they simply want the service they have paid for.  
Delay repay is better, but on the other hand the service  
needs to improve, because otherwise they just get money  
back for a bad service. That is not what they want; they  
want the journey they were guaranteed.

**Rachael Maskell:** I completely agree with the hon.  
Lady. However, we also need to ensure that, where there  
has been a delay, passengers are properly compensated,  
given that they have paid so much for the privilege of  
travelling on that network. Between 2010 and 2015, the  
train operating company generated £575 million from  
NetworkRailforinfrastructuredelays,yetonly£73million  
went to passengers, so we have to question who benefits.  
Again, it comes back to governance over the system,  
which is poor. That comes up many times. It is a theme  
that is repeated in every aspect of how the franchise  
works. The franchise has failed passengers. We need to  
see delay repay extended so that the customer can be  
compensated automatically, as opposed to trying to  
seek out that compensation.

We also need to look at what has happened with the  
Thameslink programme. It was first put in place in  
2006, so those years are moving forward. We need to see  
that the objectives now being met are not at the  
inconvenience of passengers—such as major track work,  
signalling and station remodelling, improvements to the  
lines approaching London Bridge and the overhead  
lines north of St Pancras. The programme was very  
ambitious, but without proper governance it has not  
been realised. On the issue of capacity, as 24 trains an  
hour move through the core of central London, the  
risks increase. We cannot even get the service moving  
right at the moment. We need to hear from the Minister  
what mitigation is being put in place to reduce risk and  
ensure that trains run on time and that passengers reach  
their destinations on time. About 14,500 additional  
passengers will use that network.

The Gibb report goes further on the issues that need  
to be addressed across the networks. It also addresses  
GTR's responsibilities and Network Rail. The issues it  
identified include rail renewal, switching and sleeper  
renewal. The list goes on to talk about telecoms and  
cable signalling and dealing with things such as vegetation,  
earthworks and fencing—it is comprehensive. We need  
to ensure that the improvement programme is put in  
place and delivered by 2018. We do not want the stop-start  
approach to maintenance and development. We want to  
see the investment running into the CP6 funding round  
from 2019. What exactly is the Minister doing to make  
sure there is ongoing investment in the railway?

We must thank Chris Gibb for his report, but we  
must also note the responsibility to move forward on  
many of the problems experienced across the Thameslink  
network. We also need to address the issues raised by  
the Transport Select Committee, which has identified  
how poorly the franchise has been established. The  
relationships do not work between the train operator,  
Network Rail and the passenger. That must be put  
right. Changing an operator does not change the  
environment, which is so important. It is right that the  
Committee highlighted the problems with the initial  
structuring of the franchise, the inadequate planning  
that was put in place, weaknesses in the franchising  
handoverperiod,infrastructureandrollingstockfailures,  
mismanagement, and poor industrial relations.

I want to talk about industrial relations, because it is  
so important that these issues are addressed. We have  
people working on the rail network who are seriously  
concerned about passenger safety and access. We have  
heard about the overcrowding, which increases risk,  
and the real challenges on the network. More commuters  
will be using the line and it is vital that public safety  
comes first. The unions have been clear that this is not a  
disputeaboutmoney;theirconcernisaboutpublicsafety.

I have spoken to train drivers in the last couple of  
days, and they say it is vital that they have a second pair  
of eyes. If they miss something, the other person can  
help pick it up. They say it is vital that there is someone  
there to deal with incidents, whatever they may be,  
because it is unpredictable. It could be a driver falling  
ill, a fatality on the rails, a terrorist attack, derailment  
or a crash, women's safety at night or antisocial behaviour  
disturbing other customers. Of course, guards play a  
much wider role in maximising revenue collection and  
providing passengers with a wider service. We have  
heard today how important that service is, particularly  
with the line of communication, which a number of  
hon. Members have mentioned. They can let passengers  
know information, be the first port of call and be the  
passengers' champion when needed.

I urge the Minister to address those vital issues. We  
must get the rostering right to ensure that the trains run  
on time and address the issues in this dispute. This is  
not rocket science; the dispute is simple to resolve. I  
know, as a negotiator, that the Minister just needs to sit  
down and make sure the guards are in place and can  
continue with their role. It is incumbent on him to sort  
this out. I know it is not beyond his wit, and I trust he  
will do so.

In conclusion, we have heard about the painful  
experiences of commuters. We must remember that the  
whole rail network is there as a service—a public service—  
to help passengers continue with their employment

379WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

380WH

*[Rachael Maskell]*

opportunities and their daily lives. It is absolutely right  
that focus is now brought on the way the franchises and  
relationships are not operating and that that is worked  
through, to bring the service back to customers. That is  
why the Labour party believes that public services now  
need to be a public accountability, in public ownership.  
For far too long, decisions have been made away from  
the passenger. We want to see the passenger at the heart  
of those decisions, putting safety and service needs at  
the forefront and building the structures around the  
passenger.

I have heard all the frustrations, and Labour will take  
those on board and work with passengers to make sure  
that we can provide the service needed in the future. We  
will keep the pressure on the Government, as the passengers'  
voice throughout this process.

5.12 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
(Paul Maynard):** It is a pleasure to serve under your  
chairmanship,Mr Bailey. I congratulate my hon.Friend  
the Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) on securing this  
debate and presenting her case, as she always does, with  
great vigour and force; I expect no less from her. She is  
right to hold Ministers to account for the service on her  
railway.

Passengers expect a timely, punctual and reliable  
service, and when they do not get it, they are right to  
want to understand why, and what Ministers and the  
train operators intend to do about it. This has been a  
helpful debate on what is occurring with Thameslink,  
and I am grateful to both the hon. Member for Dulwich  
and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) and my hon. Friend  
the Member for Hertsmere (Oliver Dowden) for their  
contributions. There was also a sensible contribution  
from the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for York  
Central (Rachael Maskell). We may not agree on the  
final paragraphs of her speech, but I thought that much  
of what she said made great sense.

I am aware of how important it is that we deal with  
this issue. As I said, passengers want a service that they  
can rely upon, and if they cannot, that should be a  
concern for us all. The Thameslink service is vital for  
our country, not least because our capital city depends  
upon it. Reliability of services through central London  
is critical. It is one of Europe's busiest rail routes, so it is  
right that passengers will see new stations—and better  
stations, in fact—new trains, new infrastructure and  
new systems to increase capacity, reduce crowding and  
provide better connections for passengers across London  
and the wider south-east.

A number of points have been made in the debate,  
but I want to focus first and foremost on answering the  
points made by my hon. Friend the Member for St Albans.  
I often find that these one-hour debates are neither fish  
nor fowl, and I want to give proper attention to the  
points made by the Member who secured the debate  
without ignoring the other points made.NormallyI run  
out of time in that ambition, so if I do not manage to  
respond to all the points now, I ask Members to make  
sure that I reply to them all subsequently.

The first point made by my hon. Friend the Member  
for St Albans was about the impact of the new trains.  
Of course, people want new trains. It is right to point

out that the new Thameslink trains have advanced  
technology; they are more spacious and modern by their  
very definition. We have contracted Siemens to deliver  
115 of them overall. We have 37 currently in service,  
between Bedford and Brighton, on the Wimbledon loop  
and on services in Kent. We expect all Thameslink  
services to be served by Class 700 trains by October 2017.

Train performance on the brand-new trains is improving  
bit by bit every period, but I recognise that it has not  
been good enough. I have spoken to Siemens myself to  
urge improvement. I know that it is working very closely  
with GTR. With every software improvement we see a  
significant improvement, but it is worth bearing it in  
mind that this platform is a step beyond what Siemens  
has produced before with its Desiro platform. There  
will always be slightly more challenges with such a new  
piece of rolling stock, but we are seeing significant  
improvement over time, and I fully expect to see significant  
improvement in reliability over the coming weeks.

My hon. Friend the Member for St Albans gave a  
number of examples of where her constituents were not  
getting the service they desire. I have been hearing those  
tales about this GTR network since I started in this role  
last July, and that is what has inspired me to focus on  
trying to deliver the rail ombudsman that we had in our  
manifesto as rapidly as I can. That is making good  
progress. I want to ensure that passengers can get  
binding arbitration at the end of the day where they  
cannot secure the right outcome from their appeals. We  
do not want these situations to occur—far from it—but  
where they do, I want the passenger to feel empowered.  
That is why I wanted to ensure that we had passenger  
representation on the Gibb report panel, for example—to  
ensure that their voice was being heard.

I was fascinated to hear about the Train Suffragettes  
to whom my hon. Friend referred. I would be delighted  
if she could send me more of their ideas about how the  
service could be improved, and I would be happy to  
take on board as many of them as possible.

**Oliver Dowden:** I should also highlight Thamestink,  
which is the campaign group in my constituency. I  
would be grateful if the Minister could extend the  
invitation to that group as well.

**Paul Maynard:** I always risk creating extra work for  
my private office in inviting all submissions, wherever  
they are from, but I am more than happy to receive  
them and give them my full attention.

A number of hon. Members mentioned what is referred  
to in the industry as passenger information during  
disruption. It has been a major concern of mine that  
passengers may, at the breakfast table, consult their  
mobile phone, get one piece of information that their  
train is running, beetle down to the station to get the  
train and then discover that for some reason it has been  
cancelled. There are too many sources of information  
across the industry. The Office of Rail and Road has  
two key obligations underlaw. Oneis improvingpassenger  
information during disruption. I have asked it to look  
closely at how that is working across the south-east  
quadrant as a whole, because I have concerns about  
both GTR and Southeastern ensuring that we have  
consistent information. I accept that that is a key point,  
and it is one that I am taking up.

381WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

382WH

My hon. Friend the Member for St Albans has raised  
concerns both with me and with my right hon. Friend  
the Secretary of State about the Radlett freight interchange.  
Those representations were augmented today by my  
hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Oliver Dowden).  
I genuinely recognise those concerns; that is why I want  
to ensure that the timetable is protected from the impact  
of the works. Network Rail has reassured my Department,  
just as it has reassured both my hon. Friends, that the  
work at Park Street has been planned to have minimum  
impact on passengers, as freight trains will run only  
outside peak times and overnight, but I recognise that  
the concerns remain and that there is a wish to have  
greater oversight of the detail of what is being planned.  
I suspect the best thing I can offer is to broker a meeting  
with Network Rail, with me present as well, and perhaps  
we can test some of those assumptions against what my  
officials and the Department are also aware of. That  
might be of assistance to my hon. Friend the Member  
for St Albans, so we will co-operate as best we can to try  
to find that reassurance.

My hon. Friend also mentioned overcrowding at  
St Albans station. We are extending the platform to  
accommodate 12-carriage trains as part of the Thameslink  
programme. GTR is working to deliver extended automatic  
ticket gates at platform 4, which I believe is called the  
Ridgmont entrance, by 2019. The main station building  
will also receive an enhanced retail offering, a larger  
concourse area to accommodate peak periods and  
associated platform furniture and shelter facilities to  
improve the station environment. I recognise that there  
remain capacity concerns at St Albans station. We are  
thinking through the implications of that for future rail  
control periods.

In terms of future Thameslink services and how they  
will benefit St Albans, it is a matter of improved peak  
frequency and more capacity between central London,  
St Albans and Bedford, with more peak services, new  
cross-London routes, and Thameslink services reinstated  
to serve London Bridge. I expect passengers to see more  
comfort benefits, with more than 3,000 standard-class  
seats into London St Pancras, which is 15% extra from  
today, particularly through using the 12-carriage trains.

Essentially, Thameslink is all about expanding capacity  
on a key commuter route. We are trying to deliver the  
trains and the infrastructure to enable that, with 24 trains  
an hour in the peak through the Thameslink core  
between Blackfriars and St Pancras, which is an additional  
nine trains in each direction.

Part of our focus is on making sure that we have the  
right infrastructure—not just track but signalling. My  
hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere is right to  
identify that we need to make sure that signalling and  
timetabling are robust. We have a planning board,  
chaired by Chris Gibb, of Gibb report fame, and an  
assurance panel, chaired by another industry expert,  
Chris Green, double-checking the work that is going on  
to make sure it is reliable and will deliver the outputs  
that we seek.

To date, the Thameslink programme has delivered a  
new Blackfriars station connecting both side of the  
Thames. We have seen major enhancements at Farringdon,  
platform extensions on midland main line stations to  
allow longer trains and, as I said, 37 of the new class  
700 trains. There are new maintenance depots at Three  
Bridges in Crawley and Hornsey in north London, and

many hon. Members will be familiar with the new  
London Bridge station, two thirds of the concourse of  
which has been open since August 2016.

What else can passengers expect? The rest of London  
Bridge station will be open for business in early 2018.  
The new class 700 trains will start operating on Great  
Northern routes and on services in Kent and Sussex.  
Entire new journeys, such as Cambridge to Gatwick,  
will open up new journey options and connections for  
customers, including an interchange with the Elizabeth  
line services at Farringdon, which I think will transform  
how people approach travel options within London.  
Most importantly, from 2018 there will be services every  
two to three minutes through the central London core  
between Blackfriars and St Pancras International.

I recognise concerns about performance. We have  
seen performance steadily improving since the start of  
the year. When we are able to focus on improving the  
network, rather than just on industrial relations, we can  
deliver a real improvement in performance, working  
together with the drivers. The jump in public performance  
from 62% last December to a high of 85% this year  
reinforces that point, but I recognise that we need to do  
better—85% is still not good enough. We continue to  
have an immense amount of pressure on the network.

We are also looking carefully at the future Thameslink  
timetable. Journeys will be improved with better travel  
across the network, but modern track will make journeys  
more reliable and new trains will provide additional  
capacity. GTR has been actively seeking feedback from  
any interested parties on the timetable changes to make  
sure that they best match passenger need. The second  
stage of the consultation has just closed and we are  
looking carefully at what people are saying.

As I mentioned earlier, our Thameslink industry  
readiness board, chaired by Chris Gibb, is doing important  
work. Thameslink brings many other franchises on to  
its network, and the board is looking at making sure we  
maximise the potential for all aspects of the train network.

My hon. Friend the Member for St Albans mentioned  
delay repay, as did the shadow Minister. We have brought  
“delay repay 15” specifically into GTR as the first  
franchise to trial it, because we recognise the impact  
that the disturbances across the network as a whole  
have had. I share the concern that we need to explain  
more carefully that the impact of Thameslink is not just  
felt south of London. It is often hard to envisage how  
Thameslink is a regional service. What occurs north of  
London has an impact south of London and vice versa.  
It is worth highlighting, for example, that right-time  
presentation, as we call it—in other words, the right-time  
arrival of the train at the station—is rarely higher than  
50% on services from the north of London going south  
through to Brighton. That indicates that problems in  
Brighton on trains going northwards also impact on  
punctuality and reliability, so investment in both sides  
of the central core is absolutely crucial.

We have improved delay repay, although I take on  
board the point about improving its delivery. We have to  
be careful about our terminology, as I have learned.  
Automated compensation is about improving the behind-  
the-scenes progress of individual train operating companies.  
It is about someone getting their compensation without  
doing anything to achieve it. That requires them to  
demonstrate that they have been on the train in question.  
They can either nominate their usual commuter train,

383WH

Thameslink

19 JULY 2017

Thameslink

384WH

*[Paul Maynard]*

in which case it can be automatic compensation, or,  
where they have not specified a train, they must prove  
that they were on the delayed train. There is sadly a risk  
of fraud, and we are talking about considerable sums of  
money from regular commuters, so there has to be that  
element of assurance.

I share the ambition of the hon. Member for York  
Central, which is why I have been pushing for delay  
repay to be rolled out as much as possible. Passengers  
have a right to expect it. We need to be much better at  
making people aware of it and confident about using it.  
I would rather, as my hon. Friend the Member for St  
Albans said, that there were no delays at all; then we  
would have a better service in the first place.

As I often mention, there is a £300 million investment  
in improvement across the Thameslink network. Notall  
of that is occurring south of London. Hon. Members  
may think this an issue just on the Brighton main line,  
but it is not. We are investing in additional land sheriff  
shifts to reduce trespass and railway crime across the  
entire length of the line, and there will be more use of  
predict and prevent condition-monitoring software and  
processes on the infrastructure. There will be additional  
incident response teams and embankment works at  
New Barnet. All of that is occurring north of London  
on the stretch that covers St Albans. Because of the  
point I made earlier about interaction, service delays,  
either north or south, inevitably have an impact on  
St Albans at some point.

We will continue to deliver that £300 million until  
December 2018, when we cease the current control  
period. We will need to invest further in control period 6,  
and we will be making future announcements about  
how that spending will be allocated. We are committed  
to doing what is needed to bring this stretch of track up  
to the standards required to deliver timely and punctual  
rail services.

I will try to make a bit of progress, because I recognise  
that I have not covered any of the points made by  
the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood. I am  
not sure whether the shadow Minister had time to be  
briefed on this before she arrived here, but there will be  
talks tomorrow at the Department involving GTR, ASLEF  
and, I think, the RMT—I am not sure whether that is  
precisely correct. Hopefully, that will be an opportunity  
to have the discussion the hon. Lady is aiming for.

I do not think anyone disagrees that having a second  
person on board is a bad thing. We have been able to  
have a second person on board across the network

where GTR is in operation. That is a good thing in my  
view. The issue will be the circumstances in which a  
train may depart if someone is not available. That is the  
narrow point that was in dispute in the past, and  
perhaps tomorrowwill be the chance to resolve that—we  
will have to wait and see.

The hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood  
made a number of perfectly relevant suggestions. I am  
not sure I can do them justice in two minutes, but if it  
would be helpful to her I would like her to come to see  
me and my officials to go through them in more detail. I  
am aware of schemes such as the expansion of  
Loughborough Junction and Camberwell, and she deserves  
a better response than me saying, “We will look at it.” If  
she gets in touch, I will be more than happy to meet her.  
I know the Secretary of State met the Mayor yesterday  
and had constructive discussions.

On the hon. Lady's point about resilience, we are  
already seeing greater resilience through a re-diagramming  
of services. Part of the problem is drivers joining and  
leaving a service as it passes through the GTR network.  
By simplifying the diagrams with the agreement of the  
drivers, we can make for a more resilient service by  
ensuring that that interruption is reduced.

I noted the points made by my hon. Friend the  
Member for Hertsmere. We should not overlook the  
fact that GTR was criticised in the Gibb report—as was  
the Department. We saw penalties imposed on GTR  
last week, which will go towards improving the network.  
Thisisnotjustabouttradeunions,GTRortheDepartment;  
it is about an entire ecosystem, as some have pointed  
out. I heard my hon. Friend's point about car parking,  
and I know the rail delivery group is looking at that.  
The passenger's experience begins when they decide to  
make a journey, and that includes car parking.

Vertical integration is moving according to plan. We  
have already seen some of the benefits for this franchise  
of getting Network Rail and GTR to work more closely  
together and of continuing to work with TfL on the Oyster  
zone, which should help my hon. Friend's constituents  
in particular. One highlight of the last week was the rail  
delivery group's announcement of new statistics on  
right-time arrivals at stations, which I urge all hon.  
Members to have a look at.

If there is anything I have missed, I ask Members to  
get in touch. We will keep Members informed—

5.30 pm

*Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question  
put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).*

385WH

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 386WH

Westminster Hall

*Thursday 20 July 2017*

[MR NIGEL EVANS *in the Chair*]

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

1.30 pm

**Chris Stephens** (GlasgowSouth West) (SNP): Ibeg to  
move,

That this House has considered job centres and the Department  
for Work and Pensions estate.

ItisapleasuretoseeyouintheChair, Mr Evans. This  
is a very serious issue, and I will be unashamedly  
referring to the effects that the jobcentre closures will  
have on claimants in every single constituency in the  
city of Glasgow, but before I do, I will make some  
general remarks.

The closures are, of course, part of a wider Government  
strategy to review their property estate, but it is my  
contention that very little strategic thinking is being  
done centrally. Government Departments' offices are  
closing in towns and cities, with potential job losses,  
alongside the closure of jobcentres in the same towns  
and cities across the United Kingdom. I hope the  
Minister will be able to tell us if one Department is  
considering office closures across all Government  
Departments, and whether there is a strategic overview.

I hope the Minister will finally admit not only that  
the starting point of this process was the 2015 spending  
review, which identified a 20% cut in the Department  
for Work and Pensions estate, but that that target also  
decided the endgame, as everything since has been an  
exercise in delivering those savings no matter what. It  
has been a question of identifying an outcome and  
working back from that, with a fig leaf of consultation  
and a token change not by closing six jobcentres across  
the UK, but by pushing ahead with halving the number  
of jobcentres in Glasgow, with the solitary exception of  
Castlemilk jobcentre. As we all know, Castlemilk is  
noted for its excellent transport links—not! Along with  
myhon.FriendtheMemberforGlasgowSouth(Stewart  
Malcolm McDonald), I acknowledge the reprieve but  
condemn the closure of Langside, which is a resource  
close to a major further education college. Talk about  
an opportunity lost for positive outcomes.

The suggestion that the closures will usher in an  
improved service, with fewer public access points combined  
with swingeing back-office cuts, is an insult to our  
intelligence. Ministers have had to admit that they  
expect at least 750 DWP staff to lose their jobs and have  
refused to rule out compulsory redundancies, although  
I invite the Minister to do so today. The knock-on effect  
on vulnerable users and the wider community through  
the cumulative effect of closures hitting local economies  
and businesses is hard to quantify, but one thing we can  
be sure of is that the Government have made no assessment  
of the impact of these cuts.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I congratulate  
my hon. Friend on securing this debate. I am so sorryto  
hear of the impact that these closures will have in his

constituency.Inmyconstituency,thejobcentreinBroxburn  
is going to close. The constituency has already faced  
significant economic challenges, with the closure of  
Hall's, and people now have to travel more than six  
miles to the jobcentre. Does he agree that a global view  
of communities that have had such losses is vital in this  
process?

**Chris Stephens:** I do agree. The Government really  
have to publish a map of office closures in every single  
UK Government Department. Not only has my hon.  
Friend's constituency seen the closure of Hall's, but Her  
Majesty's Revenue and Customs wants to close its office  
in Livingston, while jobcentres are being closed in the  
very same constituency. That really does not add up.

This is a calculated, savings-driven, back-of-an-envelope,  
callous exercise in studied avoidance of therealissuesat  
stake. The scale of job losses is severe because it is  
cumulative, coming as it does after years of erosion of  
DWP staff numbers. I note the careful use of semantics  
when any Minister replies to questions; they talk about  
no loss of frontline staff. However, the cuts programme  
includes large-scale back-office closures, with no clear  
commitment to no job losses, and as those of us with  
trade union experience know fine well, big budget savings  
are made on salaries rather than bricks and mortar, and  
not renewing a lease does not realise the savings that  
not paying wages and underwriting pensions does.

Before the Minister repeats the mantra that we have  
heard and memorised about Glasgow having the most  
jobcentres per head of population, may I strongly suggest  
there is a reason for that? It is not a numbers game. It is  
because historically and currently, Glasgow has the  
highest levels of deprivation in the country. The highest  
proportion of indices of multiple deprivation data zones  
in Scotland are in the city. We are talking about  
intergenerational poverty, rooted in the Scottish Office  
plan to encourage skilled workers to leave the city in the  
1960s, followed by the systematic and planned destruction  
of the industrial base of Scotland in the 1980s. That  
was combined with the explicitly political reorganisation  
of local government in 1996, which abolished Strathclyde  
region, so that the ability to fund social work and  
education services by a broader tax base was destroyed.  
We remember how the Tories have dealt with Glasgow  
over the years, and we now see once again how they  
wilfully fail to recognise the scale of deprivation and  
poverty that people in our communities struggle with  
daily.

Carntyne West and Haghill data zone, ranked No. 2  
in the list of the most deprived areas in Scotland, is  
currently within walking distance—if you are healthy—of  
Parkhead jobcentre. North Barlanark and Easterhouse  
South, ranked No. 3, is just about within walking  
distance of Easterhouse jobcentre. Both are marked for  
closure.If wetakethetimetolookatthelocationof the  
most deprived communities in Glasgow, which has the  
highest percentage of deprivation in Scotland, and then  
overlay the map of closures, a bleak picture emerges.  
The people who are the furthest from being job-ready  
and require intensive support are now being pushed  
even further to the margins. The notion that they can  
and will use online services instead can only come from  
those who have no grasp of the realities of lives where  
women struggle to afford sanitary products, never mind  
broadband and tablets. Is this digital by default, or  
exclusion by design?

387WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 388WH

*[Chris Stephens]*

The Scottish index of multiple deprivation indicators  
identifies the 10 most employment-deprived zones in  
Scotland.With Possilpark ranked fourth andWyndford  
ranked eighth, the closure of Maryhill jobcentre will do  
little to alter those statistics. Possilpark tops the list of  
zones with the poorest health indicators, and with the  
recent publicity surrounding a claimant who was forced  
to get out of her wheelchair and crawl up the steps of  
the building where her assessment was taking place, we  
can only wonder what levels of indignity will follow  
from these closures.

To know Glasgow's geography and transport links is  
to understand the problems people will experience in  
the communities with the highest levels of deprivation  
and the poorest transport links. Glasgow is like a wheel,  
with the circular subway and linear spokes of bus routes  
radiating from the city centre, but not across communities.  
The east, north and north-east of the city, where the  
majority of closures are planned, are not well served by  
public transport. The 2014 report commissioned by  
Glasgow City Council on in-work poverty, “Hard Work,  
Hard Times”, identified transport as a major barrier to  
finding and sustaining work. In the consultation response  
on some of Glasgow's jobcentres, a staggering 92% of  
respondents expressed concerns about the increase in  
travel time to attend the new jobcentres, and 79% expressed  
concern about the potential increase in travel costs.

It is clear that the industrial level of denial about the  
impact of these closures is accompanied by an expectation  
that other agencies will pick up the pieces and that, as  
per usual, local councils and third sector bodies such as  
citizens advice bureaux will carry the burden of mitigating  
these cuts. At Scottish questions yesterday, in answer to  
pointed questions about jobcentre closures, there was a  
glancing reference to “new outreach facilities”—provided  
and funded by whom, exactly?

Not only in Glasgow, but across Scotland and the  
UK, the way this cuts exercise has been conducted is  
riding roughshod over any partnership approach. Local  
community planning partnerships heard about the closures  
via the media, when many have been trying to address  
employment issues as a key outcome in their plans.  
Jobcentre Plus has been described as a claimant employment  
service rather than a public service, as those not claiming  
benefits do not receive support, and that is writ large  
in the way DWP and HMRC closures have been  
announced—I am not going to say “planned”, because  
that would imply a holistic approach with a strategic  
overview of the estate, rather than an incoherent, budget-  
driven approach.

People are rightly concerned and angry about the  
closures, and with the roll-out of the fiasco that is  
universalcredit,wecanonlyconcludethatunacceptable  
burdens are about to fall on the people who are most  
vulnerable, furthest from the job market and least digitally  
connected, and that despite the best efforts of local  
councils, the third sector and local elected Members  
and their staff, real suffering will follow as people are  
sanctioned for not attending a jobcentre miles away  
because a costly, complicated journey has replaced the  
access to support that they once had.

I look forward to other hon. Members explaining  
how the closures will affect their constituents and, of  
course, to the Minister's reply.

1.40 pm

**Hugh Gaffney** (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)  
(Lab): It is an important statement that I want to make  
on the DWP estate, because although we have always  
spoken about jobcentre closures in Glasgow and the  
surrounding areas, when I recently took up the role of  
MP for my area, I suddenly found out that 250 jobs had  
been earmarked to go from the DWP estate. Those jobs  
are concentrated in the Coatbridge area. They are also  
flexible jobs that enable working people to have a family  
life and save childcare money and other costs. With  
those 250 jobs, there are no compulsory redundancies;  
there are no redundancies, but the Government want to  
move them off the estate. They are splitting the workforce  
into three parts, with two parts going to Motherwell  
and one part to Glasgow, but people are being given  
only three years' bus fare money when it should be five  
years' bus fare money.

Leaving all that aside, the biggest problem I have is  
that the Government are taking away 250 local government  
jobs that help our community. They mean that £4,000 a  
week on average is spent in the community. If you need  
the receipts, Mr Evans, I have them, because I asked the  
staff to do this exercise for me. As I said, on average  
£4,000 is spent in our community, so not only will  
250 jobs be taken out of Coatbridge; there will also be  
an impact on our high street, which is already run-down.  
Small businesses will be affected, and there will be  
additional job losses.

In conclusion, I would like to know why the jobs are  
leaving Coatbridge. There is no need for compulsory  
redundancies and no need for the jobs to move. All we  
will be left with is another empty building and more  
empty shops.

1.42 pm

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP):  
God must be smiling on us given that you, Mr Evans,  
are in the Chair for another debate on Glasgow jobcentres.  
Just before the House rose at Christmas time, I think we  
had the last Westminster Hall debate then as well. I can  
see a pattern forming, but I am sure you are not at the  
centre of it.

I want to pick up on what my hon. Friend the  
Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens)  
said, and I congratulate him most sincerely on securing  
the debate. I will begin with the Castlemilk jobcentre,  
which the Minister wished to close. I am very thankful  
that he has now removed that jobcentre from his list of  
closures. When anyone picks a fight with Castlemilk,  
Castlemilk fights back, and it has a tendency to win.  
Let that be a lesson to the Government for future  
battles. That did not happen by accident; it happened  
because a community was united in fighting off a  
vicious attack on it. People came together from every  
part of the G45 postcode to fight the cut, and in the end  
they won.

I pay particular tribute to one constituent. Many  
people were involved, but they will forgive me for singling  
out one—my constituent Jean Devlin, who was like a  
terrier. When I was down here in Westminster, picking  
fights on their behalf, she was running off photocopies  
of petitions and standing outside the jobcentre, catching  
everypassingperson and every person going in andout,  
along with various other people, so I pay tribute to the  
role that she has played in the campaign.

389WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 390WH

However, I am left with some regret, because the  
Minister still wishes to close the Langside jobcentre. As  
my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West  
mentioned, it is not just near a college, but across the  
road from it. You could probably throw a golf ball and  
hit the college if you were to stand at the door—not  
that I would ever suggest that you would do such a  
thing, Mr Evans. The jobcentre serves the second most  
densely populated council ward in Scotland. There is a  
clear need for a jobcentre in a place such as Langside.

The third jobcentre, which was supposed to absorb  
all the closures, is the Newlands jobcentre. I still do not  
understand why it is called the Newlands jobcentre—it  
is actually in Pollokshaws, which is further away again.  
That jobcentre was supposed to absorb all the cuts that  
the Government were going to make elsewhere. I will  
have a particular focus on how they plan for that to  
happen.

I wish to press the Minister on one thing. I will be  
charitable—he knows I am a charitable man—and say  
that perhaps he could not answer the question that  
I asked him yesterday because of time constraints. I  
suspect that that will not be an issue this afternoon. He  
intends to close a multitude of jobcentres across the city  
of Glasgow. That slack has to be picked up by somebody,  
because anybody who has been to Glasgow knows that  
it will be very difficult for the remaining jobcentres to  
pick up the slack. I think I am still right in saying that  
to this day, no Minister has even bothered to visit one  
jobcentre in Glasgow that the Government wish to  
close. If the remaining jobcentres cannot pick up the  
slack, who will?

I have had discussions with Susan Aitken, who is the  
new Scottish National party leader of Glasgow City  
Council and a councillor for Langside, the ward that  
hosts the jobcentre that the Minister still wishes to  
close. The council is extremely concerned. I do not say  
that to be party political: councillors across the chamber  
in Glasgow are concerned that the work will be left to  
the Prince's Trust, the Scottish Association for Mental  
Health, Jobs & Business Glasgow and various other  
council and third sector organisations. Where will the  
money come from? I want to know about the discussions  
that the Minister has had, or will be having between  
now and when the House comes back after the summer  
recess, with the leader of Glasgow City Council, Jobs &  
Business Glasgow, SAMH and the Prince's Trust in  
Glasgow, to find out what support he can give them in  
transition and in money, because supporting people,  
particularly vulnerable people, into work costs money,  
and it is money that should be well spent.

**Martin Whitfield** (East Lothian) (Lab): This is a very  
important debate. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that  
a substantial proportion of the people who work in  
these centres have alternative working patterns to facilitate  
childcare and other things? In this cry for objective  
evidence for the closures, I wonder whether the Minister  
can disclose whether that was addressed. I am talking  
about how the individual members of staff with alternative  
working patterns will be affected by the closures.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** The hon. Gentleman  
makes an extremely important point, which has been  
adumbrated by other colleagues, particularly my hon.  
Friend the Member for Glasgow South West and the  
former Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West,

Margaret Ferrier, who was also like a terrier in this  
campaign. We rightly pay tribute to the work that she  
did to save jobcentres in her constituency.

This has been the most cack-handed project I have  
seen since I became a Member of the House. Given all  
that has happened, and given all that you and I have  
observed, Mr Evans, that is quite a statement to make.  
The information was leaked to the press. Members of  
Parliament were finding out through social media. We  
had to drag the Government kicking and screaming to  
have a consultation. They say that they have met their  
legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, but they  
have still never bothered to publish an equality impact  
assessment, and I plead with the Minister to do so.

**Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): On the lack of  
an equality impact assessment, more than a quarter of  
the jobcentres that are set to close are in London, and  
we know that a significant number of black and Asian  
and disabled people will potentially be disproportionately  
impacted by the choice to close jobcentres, so can the  
Minister please confirm when a full equality impact  
assessment will be carried out? Is the lack of one due to  
the fact that, as we know, the closures will have a  
disproportionate impact on those protected groups?

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** The hon. Lady makes  
an extremely important point. While the scale in London  
will obviously be bigger, we face the exact same issues in  
Glasgow in terms of who will be disproportionately  
affected by the cuts. I plead with the Minister to publish  
the equality impact assessment, because I would hate to  
see the Government taken to court over it, and frankly  
that is where things are headed.

The Minister can pull this back. He needs to engage  
constructively with Glasgow City Council—I am sure  
colleagues will ask for similar engagement in their local  
authority areas. He needs to start showing people that  
there is a proper plan to mitigate the impact of the  
closures, particularly on ethnic minority people, as the  
hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) said,  
on people for whom English is not their first language  
and on those who have childcare and other caring  
responsibilities, as the new hon. Member for East Lothian  
(Martin Whitfield) said. Igive the Minister the opportunity  
to show us that he is up for serious dialogue, because  
since December last year it has certainly not looked  
like it.

1.50 pm

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Mr Evans. I thank my  
hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Chris  
Stephens) for securing this debate.

In Inverclyde, we currently have two jobcentres: one  
in Greenock and another in Port Glasgow. Following  
the UK Government's consultation, it was determined  
that the Port Glasgow jobcentre would close, while the  
Greenock office would be moved to an as yet undetermined  
location. I believe that this decision is short-sighted and  
sympathise with the views of staff at the Port Glasgow  
jobcentre, who have expressed understandable concerns  
regarding the impact of this change on their clients.

The Minister should know that Inverclyde has some  
of the worst levels of social deprivation in the UK.  
Some 26% of children in Inverclyde grow up in poverty;  
one in 10 live in severe poverty; youth unemployment is

391WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 392WH

*[Ronnie Cowan]*

more than double the UK rate; and the number of  
people on jobseeker's allowance or required to find  
work on universal credit is double the rate in the UK as  
a whole.

It might be thought that such a set of circumstances  
would prompt the Government to grant additional  
support to the area. Instead, the UK Government's  
response has been to cut benefits and halve the number  
of jobcentres in my constituency. A report issued by the  
Scottish Government found that Inverclyde will experience  
one of the most significant falls in welfare spending of  
any Scottish local authority relative to the size of its  
working-age population. By 2021, this will amount to  
an overall cut of £15 million—the equivalent of £298 per  
working-age adult.

Given the challenges that Inverclyde faces, I think it  
would be appropriate for the Minister to visit my  
constituency. That is why I wrote to him on 14 June and  
extended an invitation to meet not only me, but the  
jobcentre management to discuss the impact of the  
proposed closure on my constituents. And yes, I am still  
waiting for a reply. A ministerial visit would also be an  
opportunity for the UK Government to provide some  
much-needed assurances regarding the long-term future  
of the Greenock office and the vital service that it  
offers. I can see the Minister looking quizzically at me.  
Is he questioning what I am saying?

The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds) *indicated  
dissent.*

**Ronnie Cowan:** Okay. Is the proposed closure of the  
Port Glasgow jobcentre about providing a better service  
for users? No, of course it is not. In the words of the  
Public and Commercial Services Union, the UK  
Government are “abandoning the unemployed” at a  
time when many people on lower incomes are facing  
uncertain futures with respect to their employment.

**Danielle Rowley** (Midlothian) (Lab): On the issue of  
uncertain futures, does the hon. Gentleman agree that  
the closure of jobcentres such as mine in Dalkeith will  
affect women affected by the Pensions Act 2011, dealing  
the WASPI women—Women Against State Pension  
Inequality—a double blow, which is unacceptable? Does  
he join me in wondering where those women will go to  
find the apprenticeships that Government Members  
suggest that they find?

**Ronnie Cowan:** The hon. Lady is absolutely correct. It  
is the classic double whammy that people are put into  
an impossible situation by the Government and then  
look for support from them and find that it has been  
taken away. As we all know, the apprenticeship scheme  
is just an aberration at the moment.

Unfortunately, all levels of poverty are rising. In-work  
poverty is on the rise, yet the Minister continues to  
argue that jobcentre mergers are needed to ensure that  
the welfare state

“works for those who need it and those who pay for it.”

That kind of irresponsible language detracts from the  
reality that those who need the service and those who  
pay for it are in fact the same people. Ultimately, the

whole of society benefits if poverty and inequality are  
reduced. Jobcentres are supposed to be part of the  
solution.

Aside from the £1 billion deal with the Democratic  
Unionist party, the UK Government have made the  
case over the past seven years that drastic public spending  
cuts are a financial necessity. The plan to close jobcentres  
across the UK is part of a wider plan to sell £4.5 billion-  
worth of Government land and property by 2021. While  
it is easy to cut services and demonstrate savings made  
in the short term, it is not so easy to quantify and  
predict the long-term impact of those changes.

**Hannah Bardell:** On the matter of property and  
quantifying decisions, does my hon. Friend agree that  
the decision to close an HMRC office in my Livingston  
constituency and an area of West Lothian that is  
significantly cheaper, and to move it to Edinburgh city  
centre in a record long-term contract of 20 to 25 years,  
is just sheer stupidity on the Government's part and  
clearly a waste of public money?

**Ronnie Cowan:** I absolutely agree, and could not have  
put it better myself.

The UK Government have simply not made a convincing  
case that the proposed closures will benefit clients or  
society as a whole. Jobcentre staff have contacted me to  
say that the impact of the closures on disabled people  
has not been properly assessed. The Scottish Government  
have indicated that the closures are likely to push many  
vulnerable people into crisis. Will the Minister meet me  
in Inverclyde and show that the UK Government are  
actually listening to those concerns? We are about to set  
off into recess. I assure the Minister that I will clear my  
diary and cancel my holidays, and will be there whatever  
day he wishes to come and visit Inverclyde.

**Mr Nigel Evans (in the Chair):** I am going to call  
Mr Sweeney next, but it is good to see so many new  
Members here. We will go on until 3 pm, so if you wish  
to contribute to the debate, please stand in your place  
and that will indicate to me that you wish to contribute.

1.56 pm

**Mr Paul J. Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op):  
Thank you, Mr Evans, for calling me to speak in this  
debate. I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow South  
West (Chris Stephens) for securing this debate on such  
an important matter affecting the city of Glasgow and  
all across the United Kingdom.

It is clear that the situation in Glasgow is stark and  
acute. While the UK unemployment rate is 4.8%, in  
Glasgow it is 8.5%, essentially twice the UK rate.  
Justification for the closure and rationalisation of jobcentres  
is based on the idea that jobcentre provision in Glasgow  
is higher than the average across the UK, but it is clear  
that that is necessary to deal with the long-term, intractable  
problem of structural unemployment in Glasgow. I am  
utterly incredulous that the Government feel that they  
are justified in cutting the estate in this manner or that it  
will in any way benefit or enhance the service provision.  
How on earth will this help to deal with the long-term  
problem of structural unemployment?

While we have seen the welcome reduction of  
unemployment rates in Glasgow, it has left a hard  
kernel of people who are particularly challenged in  
getting back into the jobs market. They need much

393WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 394WH

more intensive and tailored support to meet their specialist  
needs. It is absurd to suggest that we provide that by  
continuing to frustrate them by rationalising the jobcentre  
estate. Some of the areas that the hon. Gentleman  
referred to, including ones in my constituency such as  
Possilpark and Carntyne West and Haghill, have the  
highest Scottish index of multiple deprivation child  
poverty rates—up to 50% in some cases. Families are  
already challenged by severe problems in their lives, and  
to further frustrate their ability to care for themselves in  
this way is utterly appalling in a modern society.

We have seen the justification that some of the jobcentres  
in Glasgow are unfit for purpose and unable to  
accommodate additional supplementary uses. PCS has  
surveyed and assessed that, and it was found to be  
untrue. The Maryhill jobcentre is well integrated. It has  
severalroomsthatareunder-utilised,butithasanumber  
of well integrated services with Glasgow Life, Momentum,  
Shaw Trust, Homestart and Wyndford hub, including  
Possilpoint in my constituency, where the service provision  
transfers across the borders.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I thank the  
hon. Gentleman, my constituency neighbour, for giving  
way and apologise, Mr Evans, for being late: I was  
detained in the Chamber. I echo the hon. Gentleman's  
tribute to the fantastic work of Maryhill Jobcentre and  
the disappointment that it is to close. Does he share my  
concern that this might not be the end? Will he join me  
in asking the Minister to guarantee that Springburn  
jobcentre in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, to which  
Maryhill users are being redirected, will not be under  
threat, and that there will now be a clear process of  
transition, advice and support for users who have to  
make the switch from one jobcentre to another?

**Mr Sweeney:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that  
pertinent point about the potential transfer of services  
fromMaryhilltoSpringburnjobcentreinmyconstituency.  
When I reflected on the history of my constituency in  
my maiden speech last week, I noted with some dismay  
that it went from having the largest locomotive works in  
Europe to now having the largest jobcentre in Europe.  
Although that is perhaps not an asset to be particularly  
proud of, it is entirely necessary, because my constituency  
faces some of the highest structural employment rates  
in this country. He deals with similar issues in parts of  
his constituency.

Although we have heard the justification for moving  
to a so-called super-jobcentre in Springburn, we have  
also heard the announcement that critical back-office  
staff in Springburn will be cut; I understand that some  
200 redundancies are being consulted on. Although the  
Department has assured us that there will be no compulsory  
redundancies, I cannot see how practical that is, given  
that the consultation includes cuts to 280 frontline and  
desk-based staff in jobcentres in Glasgow.

Although the idea of centralising facilities may seem  
superficially attractive on a map, anyone with a cursory  
knowledgeofGlasgow'sgeographyandhowdysfunctional  
its public transport system is will be well aware that  
travelling from Maryhill to Springburn is an utterly  
arduous journey even for people of fit body like me. I  
have made the journey to Maryhill regularly because  
my Army Reserve barracks is there, and I have found  
that on average it takes 90 minutes to two hours to  
complete the journey.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** When Members  
representing Glasgow constituencies during the last  
Parliament visited senior DWP officials at the jobcentre  
in Laurieston, I jokingly asked, “Did you use Google  
Maps to work this out?”, to which they said, “Yes.”  
Does the hon. Gentleman share my dismay that they  
based their decision on Google Maps?

**Mr Sweeney:** I think it is highly likely that they did. It  
would be utterly bizarre for anyone with any knowledge  
of Glasgow geography to conclude that it is a practical  
proposition for people who live in Maryhill catchment  
to attend services in Springburn. The bus system in  
Glasgow radiates from the centre; capacity to move  
across the north of the city is highly limited. The nature  
of the public transport system in Glasgow is another  
issue.

**Chris Stephens:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that not  
only did the DWP use Google Maps, as my hon. Friend  
the Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald) said, but the information on Google Maps  
was outdated, and some bus services that it advertised  
no longer operate in our city?

**Mr Sweeney:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that  
point. In recent months, First Glasgow, the predominant  
bus operator in Glasgow, has cut a number of vital  
routes that might otherwise have facilitated those journeys.  
My mum lives in Springburn and works in Clarkston,  
and she often tells me of the arduous journeys that she  
makes across the city using First buses. Buses are regularly  
cancelled arbitrarily, or drivers change. There is no  
reliability or resilience in the public transport system;  
using it as a justification for rationalising the estate  
across Glasgow is highly risky.

Perhaps the DWP's genuine motive is cost-driven. It  
is not about facilitating improved access; it is a cost-driven  
exercise to reduce Department overheads and, in the  
process, to frustrate those trying to access services, in  
order to reduce claimant rates and benefits being paid  
to citizens in Glasgow, increasing their concomitant  
despair, dismay and psychological ill-health. The proposals  
are utterly unsound, and I urge the Minister to reconsider  
on a practical basis.

I offer a solution: collocation, which has been advocated  
by a number of agencies, including the union PCS and  
Citizens Advice. For example, as a new Member, I have  
been looking for somewhere to establish a constituency  
office, which is more easily said than done, particularly  
in Glasgow North East, where the number of retail  
units is not huge. I looked at one location in Saracen  
Street in the heart of Possilpark, one of the areas of  
highest social deprivation in the United Kingdom, never  
mind Glasgow or Scotland. I did so for a particular  
reason: I wantedto make a statement that Iwas there to  
serve the community of highest need in my constituency.

I noted that in that street alone, there is a closed-down  
citizens advice bureau, as well as a unit owned by North  
Glasgow Housing Association and leased to Jobs &  
Business Glasgow, which in turn sublets it to Skills  
Development Scotland. Full rent is paid on the unit,  
but it is occupied only two days a week; it is being  
under-utilised. It is there for the taking. Why on earth  
could the DWP not engage with the agencies to use that  
opportunity for collocation at minimal cost, sustaining

395WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 396WH

*[Mr Sweeney]*

the same footprint at a fraction of the price? If it is true  
that the idea is to re-deploy instead of reducing the  
number of jobs, surely that would be an essentially  
cost-neutral exercise that would maintain the footprint  
while ensuring provision for the people who need it  
most and dealing with the intractable problem of  
unemployment in our city.

**Chris Stephens:** The hon. Gentleman is making an  
important point about collocation. Does he agree that  
collocation should have been discussed by the DWP, the  
Scottish Government, local authorities and other  
organisations before consulting on closures?

**Mr Sweeney:** Yes, I absolutely agree. Surely the  
presumption should be in favour of maintaining the  
footprint at all costs. Any reduction in the estate should  
be considered only as a final measure once all other  
possible mitigation options have been exhausted. It is  
clear to me after even cursory engagement with trying  
to set up a constituency office that there is ample  
opportunity out there to utilise alternative measures to  
maintain the footprint by co-operating with other agencies  
occupying the same space. That would be a great and  
worthwhile measure to explore as a first instance. I urge  
the Minister to engage with all Glasgow Members and  
city councillors to broker such negotiations as a matter  
of urgency. Opportunities in Glasgow are ample, and  
we should consider them in Glasgow and across the  
United Kingdom to maintain the footprint and operate  
with efficiency by having an integrated approach to  
collocation. I am absolutely in favour of that.

The justification for reducing face-to-face engagement  
is an increasing shift to using IT services. We know that  
that is a myth. Anyone who has watched the film “I,  
Daniel Blake” will be aware that among the people who  
have to deal with and engage with such services, it is not  
the case. The DWP has failed to understand the  
fundamental reality of unemployment: there is a cyclical  
component and a structural component. Obviously, as  
the economy has recovered, the cyclical component has  
decreased, but the structural component has remained,  
particularly in Glasgow. The underlying rate of  
unemployment is still high: indeed, twice the national  
average. Those people are generally unable to access IT  
facilities easily, nor are they necessarily IT-literate. That  
is why we need to maintain face-to-face services. PCS  
consultation and research backs that up, determining  
that the most effective measure for returning people to  
the jobs market was a face-to-face account management  
offer through DWP jobcentres. We must maintain that  
level of service. An online system is not a substitute.

These are the people whom we need to support the  
most. They may be using library IT facilities, which are  
so oversubscribed in Glasgow that time limits on users  
have been introduced. People who are already unsure  
and unconfident about using IT facilities are now time-  
limited—much as you might want to time-limit me,  
Mr Evans—in utilising them. Imagine the stress associated  
with not only filling out a complex and convoluted form  
but doing so under the pressure of a ticking clock. That  
is clearly not a good situation. It would be much preferable  
if those facilities were available through a face-to-  
face consultation.

To draw my points together, it is clear that the  
consultation is a sham, driven by the preconceived  
outcome of reducing the estate. It is not about consultation  
on mitigation in any meaningful way, as the collocation  
option has clearly not been explored in any depth. I  
urge the Minister to consider that as a proactive and  
collaborative measure that could serve the interests of  
driving a more efficient use of public resources while  
maintaining a critical level of service provision to the  
communities that need it most.

The justification based on geographic proximity is  
utterly untrue. Not only do the new locations lie outside  
the 2.5-mile radius that was supposed to be used; the  
walking and travel times are much longer and more  
arduous than a cursory look at Google Maps might  
suggest.

Glasgow's situation is unique. It has a long-term  
structural unemployment problem, particularly in Glasgow  
North East and in the constituencies of other Glasgow  
Members present today. We need much more focused  
and intensive support, so it is critical to maintain the  
current footprint of jobcentres in Glasgow. It might be  
justifiable to argue that we have a greater density of  
them than other cities, but that is for a very good reason  
indeed: Glasgow has historically had a problem with  
unemployment, so it is critical we maintain our jobcentres.

I thank all hon. Members for their contributions to  
the debate. I hope the Minister will take our points on  
board and offer a meaningful and practical solution, so  
that we can maintain a great public service in Glasgow  
and ensure that we share the same objective of reducing  
and minimising unemployment in Glasgow. Let us do  
something productive to achieve that.

2.10 pm

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): Thank you,  
Mr Evans; I am grateful to have caught your eye, having  
come in slightly late. I will make just a couple of brief  
comments.

One of the consequences of the general election  
result in Scotland is that we can now demonstrate  
cross-party consensus in our concerns. *[Interruption.]*A certain degree of cross-party consensus, at least. I pay  
tribute to my new neighbour, the hon. Member for  
Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), and welcome him  
to his place.

The impact of these jobcentre closures will be felt  
very strongly across the communities of Glasgow and  
in the other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom  
that are affected. The Minister cannot say that he has  
not been warned, because we have repeatedly brought  
our concerns to Westminster Hall and to the main  
Chamber. The responses to the consultation reflected  
the disproportionate impact that the closures will have  
on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.  
They include people who really depend on the services  
that jobcentres provide to get the skills and training to  
bring them back into the labour market: people with  
disabilities, people from socially deprived backgrounds,  
and single parents—particularly single mothers, who  
we heard a lot from in the process we went through in  
Maryhill.

What we need from the Minister now is some kind of  
certainty about the next steps. When will a timetable be  
announced? What transitional arrangements will be in

397WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 398WH

place for the service users who will have to start making  
these journeys? Will they get a guarantee that if they  
miss appointments or arrive late because of the public  
transport issues that Glasgow Members have highlighted,  
they will not be subject to sanctions? That is the kind of  
certainty that the Minister urgently needs to provide,  
along with a timetable for when all this will happen.

Another key issue that has come up in the process  
and that has to be taken into account in the next steps is  
dialogue with the Scottish Government. We have repeatedly  
heard from Ministers in the Scottish Government that—  
much like Members of this House—they have been  
informed of decisions at the last minute, or even after  
those decisions have been announced to the public.  
They have not had any opportunity for discussions  
about collocation or pulling services together. I hope  
that as the estate contraction process takes place, the  
Minister will ensure full engagement with the Scottish  
Government and with the relevant local authorities.

There are broader questions about the process of  
downsizing the estate. When the consultation began, I  
heard quite a lot from Ministers that this was about  
providing the best possible service to users. When the  
results of the consultation and the final decision were  
announced, they said, “Well, actually, this was a financial  
decision about effective use of the estate, under-utilised  
buildings and so on. It was the consequence of a  
contract that was entered into under the new Labour  
Government—a public-private partnership, essentially.”  
What further efforts have this Government undertaken  
to review the contract with Trillium? What discussions  
have they had about the next time there has to be an  
estate review? I have asked written questions about that.

What about other aspects of the DWP estate—not  
least the prime property at Caxton House in central  
London, to which we were all invited for a meeting  
before the general election? First, did Ministers consider  
whether it was necessary to retain it? Secondly, what if  
Trillium decided that it wanted to keep its hands on it  
and booted everybody out? Were contingency plans  
made for that? Why not disperse some of the DWP staff  
further across the United Kingdom?

It is incredibly disappointing that we have to keep  
coming back here with these questions, but I congratulate  
my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West  
(Chris Stephens) on securing this important debate  
before the summer recess. I also congratulate the other  
Members who have participated, and I thank you again,  
Mr Evans, for allowing me to contribute at short notice.

2.15 pm

**Bill Grant** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): It is a  
pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Evans. I  
feel enticed to say a few words, because other hon.  
Members have painted a rather gloomy picture of certain  
elements of Glasgow. I am an Ayrshire chappie and I do  
not know Glasgow that well. In Ayrshire, there are  
some disappointing aspects of the modernisation of the  
DWP estate and some things that I am not entirely  
happy with. However, some elements of the rather  
gloomy and dull picture that has been painted lie with  
the nationalist Scottish Government and with the poverty  
and inequalities that they should be addressing.  
*[Interruption.]* I am sure they do lie there—I am sure  
they are devolved issues, as SNP Members would be  
quick to tell us.

There is pain along with the change. Any change  
brings pain, but this is a modernisation of the estate.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** The hon. Gentleman  
talks about modernisation—I cannot believe what I am  
hearing. This is a closure. We were never asked about  
modernisation, collocation or anything else—that has  
all come from us. The Government are proposing closures,  
nothing else.

**Bill Grant:** I beg to differ. We see the same thing in  
different ways. It is modernisation. Things change; we  
cannot stand still. There will be pain—there is always  
pain when there is change. I am absolutely certain of  
that, and I concede to some of the concerns the hon.  
Gentleman raised, but I am sure that the Minister will  
bring something forward.

There have been changes in the way people do business.  
Footfall has probably reduced to some extent because  
of online facilities, modernisation and the way we conduct  
business through social media and the internet. Things  
change, and they do not always bring pleasure. I am  
sure there will be pain. There is pain in Ayrshire—we  
are losing an office there—so I am not immune to it  
either.

As for transport, I sat on the Strathclyde partnership  
for transport for many years. The transport system in  
Glasgow is quite good, including the underground with  
its inner and outer circle, and the buses. I concede to the  
expertise of Glasgow Members—they live there and I  
do not—but I have always found the transport system  
there to be very good.

**Hugh Gaffney:** Coatbridge is outside Glasgow—it is  
rural. People depend on these jobs in rural communities  
in Coatbridge, just as they do in Ayrshire. The hon.  
Gentleman talks about travelling into Glasgow, but the  
people of Coatbridge do not want to travel anywhere.  
We want local government jobs for local people so that  
we can look after our families and local communities.  
That is the essential point, which is the same in Coatbridge  
as in Ayrshire.

**Bill Grant:** I must announce to Members gathered  
here today that my mother-in-law comes from the Whifflet  
in Coatbridge, so I know it rather well. Links into the  
city centre were never particularly difficult—and it was  
a great place to have a pint of beer, I might add.

**Chris Stephens:** The hon. Gentleman talks about the  
estate being modernised. Could he tell me what is  
modern about asking the poorest and most vulnerable  
to travel further to a jobcentre to secure work?

**Bill Grant:** My point about modernisation was to do  
with the estate, and I said that there would be pain. To  
me, the estate means the physical structure of the  
buildings—the floors, the roof, the ceilings and so on. I  
did concede that there would be pain, and I accept what  
the hon. Gentleman says, but we cannot stand still. No  
one can, no matter what sphere of business they are in  
or what service they provide.

Yes, there will be pain. I do not gloat or take any  
pleasure in the idea of somebody having to catch two  
buses and then get the train or the underground. There  
are challenges. If people are not at work, I am sure they

399WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 400WH

*[Bill Grant]*

will have considerable time to make the journey to the  
jobcentre and back, but there may be people who are  
incapacitated who find difficulties. I accept that that is  
an extreme challenge.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Is the hon. Gentleman  
in favour of the closures or against them? I am unclear.

**Bill Grant:** I am not going to answer that directly.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Of course not!

**Bill Grant:** Of course not—Iam being honest.I am in  
favour of modernisation, not standing still, and I am in  
favour of being progressive. There is a very good phrase  
used in the Scottish Parliament: “This is a progressive  
issue.”We are progressing with the DWP estate. I believe  
that that is happening throughout the United Kingdom—it  
is not confined to Glasgow—but there will be pain.

**Mr Nigel Evans (in the Chair):** We now move on to  
the wind-ups. That speech was not the wind-up, by the  
way.

2.19 pm

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): It is a  
pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Evans. It is also a  
pleasure to see my old friend from the Strathclyde fire  
board, the hon. Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock  
(Bill Grant). I can confirm that he is a bit of a wind-up  
merchant, but his comments failed to address the points  
that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South  
West (Chris Stephens) started with. The issue is the  
structural poverty and historic unemployment and  
deprivation that Glasgow and the west of Scotland still  
see as a result of the Tory legacy from the '80s and  
beyond. This Tory Government seem set on compounding  
that poverty and misery and making it worse. They are  
not looking at the communities that the cuts affect; they  
are looking only at lines on a map or on Google Maps.  
They are not looking at the Scottish index of multiple  
deprivation, as my hon. Friend mentioned. If that index  
was placed over the map, they would see that the cuts  
are falling on the poorest communities and those who  
need support the most. They deserve support the most,  
because they are the furthest away from the labour  
market.

I do not know whether the Minister has since taken it  
down, but when he had us over to his office after the  
cuts were announced, he had an enormous poster on his  
wall, right behind where he sat. It was a kind of heat  
map of the joblessness figures for the whole country,  
and Glasgow was a great big red beacon on that map.  
That is exactly where the cuts are falling and where  
support is needed the most.

My hon. Friends have mentioned the issues with the  
digital divide. They talked about how difficult it is for  
people, such as the character in “I, Daniel Blake”, who  
are pencil by default rather than digital by default. That  
is true of people in the east end of Glasgow and many  
of the poorer communities in Scotland. Citizens Advice  
Scotland did a report a few years ago called “Offline  
and left behind”, which pointed out that the majority of  
CAB clients it sees would struggle to apply for benefits  
and jobs online. That will continue to be the case,

because many of them are older workers and further  
away from the job market. The hon. Member for  
Midlothian (Danielle Rowley) mentioned the 1950s women  
affected by the state pension changes. The Government  
have made great play of trumpeting that there will be  
support for those women. Where will that support be if  
the infrastructure they rely on is taken away from their  
communities?

I have mentioned before in the Chamber that I met a  
women in my constituency outside Bridgeton jobcentre,  
which is due to close. She was in bits. She was a WASPI  
woman who was being forced back to work. She was  
continually receiving letters calling her into Bridgeton  
jobcentre. Because it was just down the street from her  
house, she was able to get her baffies on to get there, but  
she was scared going in. She was terrified. She was  
crying going in and coming back out. These are the  
kind of women who need to be able to access support  
nearby. Getting up, getting fully dressed, getting on a  
bus and travelling to the other end of the city would be  
too much for her. She would fall out of the system and  
get no support at all. That is not acceptable, and it is not  
the kind of society we want.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South  
(Stewart Malcolm McDonald) asked, who will pick up  
the slack? Who will take up the burden when the  
jobcentre has gone away? It will be services such as the  
Scottish Association for Mental Health and the Glasgow  
Association for Mental Health, which provide so much  
support to people with mental health issues that are  
preventing them from taking a job, caused by trauma  
they have experienced or issues they have had in their  
lives. Those issues are multiple and complex, and we  
ignore them at our peril.

The Government are content to let the voluntary  
sector, food banks and charities pick up where the state  
has left off and rolled back. The Tory Government are  
obsessed with dismantling the social security infrastructure  
of our nation. The things that were put in place to help  
and support people when they need it most are all being  
unravelled. That speaks to the issue with the HMRC  
offices and the DWP back offices. In a lot of cases, they  
were placed so as to facilitate economic growth in areas  
that had issues. The hon. Member for Coatbridge,  
Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney) illustrated that  
perfectly by talking about the impact on the wider  
community of the 250 jobs and £4,000 a week. I would  
not be surprised if the figure were higher. It is a small  
sample—a snapshot in time—of the people who go  
there to work and use the local sandwich shop or the  
local paper shop. They will buy things in the high street  
on their way to and from the office. That is true of every  
single jobcentre that the Government propose to close.  
Closures will have an impact on the local economy.  
Empty buildings will be sitting in communities going  
unused and becoming derelict.

**Mr Sweeney:** The hon. Lady will know that many  
communities in Glasgow have seen regeneration of their  
high streets. In particular, there are many great regeneration  
initiatives in Glasgow that aim to find new and innovative  
uses for high streets. Surely a progressive measure would  
be for the DWP to work in partnership with regeneration  
agencies in Glasgow to look at options such as collocation  
that would drive vibrancy back into high streets, drive  
economic activity, drive better job opportunities into

401WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 402WH

communities and create a virtuous cycle of economic  
growth in Glasgow and around the UK. That is surely  
what the DWP should be looking at, rather than having  
a silo mentality of cutting overheads at the expense of  
everything else. It should be looking at how it can crowd  
in growth and opportunities through other more  
entrepreneurial activity, such as collocation.

**Alison Thewliss:** I absolutely agree with the point that  
the hon. Gentleman makes. Clyde Gateway, which works  
in my constituency and across the boundary into  
Lanarkshire, is a prime example of that. It was not  
consulted. It has been the driver for economic regeneration  
in the east end of Glasgow. It has got people into work.  
It has looked at the people who are furthest away from  
the job market and got them into apprenticeships and  
real paying jobs against all the odds of ill health and  
deprivation, but it was not consulted or involved in the  
process. It was not asked about collocation. It would  
bite the Government's hand off if they wanted to move  
HMRC offices from the city centre out to the east end  
of Glasgow, because it knows the impact that would  
have on positive regeneration. It would bring in jobs  
and benefit to the wider economy. It knows that, and it  
has tried to attract organisations such as Police Scotland,  
which has come into the area. The area is starting to  
come up, because it is getting those extra, good-value  
jobs, and people are moving into the area to build their  
lives rather than just coming in and out for work. That  
is hugely important.

The Government would save money with collocation.  
As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Hannah  
Bardell) pointed out, it is much cheaper to have offices  
in Livingston than in the centre of Edinburgh and  
much cheaper to have jobs in Dalmarnock or Shawfield  
than in the city centre of Glasgow. The Government are  
wedded to the idea of shiny big offices in the city centre.  
If it is not important where the jobs are done, why  
should they be done in the most expensive office space  
that can be found? Why can they not be in local  
communities, giving benefit to the wider area? As my  
hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South said, that  
is part of the Government's cack-handed approach to  
the issue.

The Government have not looked at the data. We  
have all asked written parliamentary questions, and  
they cannot show us the data that evidences the decisions.  
It is not there. They do not know how many claimants  
of particular types go and use the jobcentres in question.  
With the transition to universal credit, it is likely that  
those jobcentres might be needed more rather than less,  
because people will need to go in and out about the  
work-related aspects of universal credit, when they are  
asked to do more work or earn more. The Government  
do not seem to be thinking about that at all.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North  
(Patrick Grady) said, we do not know any detail on  
outreach. I ask the Government to be careful about  
how it is done, because there is a huge stigma for some  
people in accessing jobcentre services. If they are going  
in and out of the building they can just about cope, but  
if the services start to be in the community centre, their  
pals might know they are going in. An officer might  
sanction someone right there in the middle of the  
canteen. Such things are really upsetting, and the  
Government need to think about how they are done,

not only for the safety, data protection and dignity of  
the people using that service, but for the safety of staff.  
The number of attacks on jobcentre staff has gone up  
as people get increasingly upset and frustrated with the  
process. The Government have a duty to those staff to  
ensure that they are safe, wherever the service is.

There is a security guard on the front door of each  
jobcentre in Glasgow. If I walk in, someone will come  
up and challenge me and say, “Who are you? Why are  
you here?”Within seconds of me walking in the door in  
Bridgeton, they were saying that. There is a reason for  
that, and the Government need to think about the  
safety of staff when they proceed. They need to be  
careful to do it in a sensitive and effective way. I suppose  
the Government would know that if they had visited  
any of the jobcentres in Glasgow or the wider area. I  
imagine a Government entourage would roll into the  
building and the jobcentre staff would know they were  
coming, unlike when I just pitch up on the doorstep, but  
the Government should consider trying that. They should  
take up the offer of my hon. Friend the Member for  
Inverclyde (Ronnie Cowan) to visit the jobcentres in  
Inverclyde, or any jobcentre at all. They could understand  
the geography and see what it is like for clients to go  
from one place to another on two buses. Rather than  
just sitting in an office using Google Maps, they should  
do the journey themselves.

We have invited the Minister before to come on  
journeys with us around Glasgow. As part of its campaign,  
the *Evening Times* in Glasgow did case studies and went  
out on journeys to and from all the different jobcentres.  
It has done great campaigning work on the issue, and it  
knows the city well—certainly a good deal better than  
Ministers.

**Mr Sweeney:** There are a couple of relevant points  
about the need to have a security guard on the door,  
which reflects a number of problems with the current  
provision. There is the protection and morale of staff,  
but there is also the morale and self-esteem of the people  
who use the service. It is a measure of how the service  
conducts itself and how the interface with the service  
feels. People who already have anxiety issues, low self-esteem  
and problems with engaging are being introduced to  
this kind of Kafkaesque nightmare, where they feel  
intimidated and are effectively being negatively influenced  
to dissociate themselves from using the service.

**Alison Thewliss:** I agree that it seems to be part of a  
wider plan to stop people using the services in the first  
place and to get people away from going there and  
seeking support.

I cannot speak for the rest of the country, but I will  
speak for Glasgow. What is good about jobcentres in  
Glasgow is that Bridgeton, Parkhead and Easterhouse  
all have citizens advice bureaux round the corner, very  
close to people. If someone finds themselves sanctioned  
or is stressed or worried, or needs extra support, that  
support is literally around the corner. They can cross  
the road to get there, and that help and support will be  
there. I know from speaking to staff at citizens advice  
centres in Glasgow that that happens regularly; they are  
there to provide that service. At Shettleston, which will  
replace Bridgeton, Parkhead and Easterhouse, there is  
no citizens advice bureau across the road. I wonder why  
that is.

403WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 404WH

*[Alison Thewliss]*

In Possil, as was mentioned, there are other services  
as well. In Langside, there is a college across the road,  
which is exactly where we would want something that  
can encourage people to up their qualifications and  
seek new opportunities.

There are opportunities for collocation that we know  
the Government have not even explored or looked at. I  
understand that they offered something to the Scottish  
Government with no options. Rather than engaging  
properly and thoroughly, they said, “This is what we are  
thinking of doing—and we are doing it.” As my hon.  
Friend the Member for Glasgow South West said, they  
did that rather than looking at the whole estate and  
what is the best type of service for people—what works  
and actually improves things. In all the discussion, there  
has been nothing about which jobcentres are effective  
and which are not. Where do things work well for  
people and where do they not, and how can we improve  
that? It is just all about cuts, not about people.

**Bill Grant:** I come back to my theme of modernisation.  
*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Nigel Evans (in the Chair):** Order.

**Bill Grant:** I visited the Ayr jobcentre a couple of  
weeks ago, as I did the one in Cumnock. Cumnock is a  
deprived area and there are challenges there. On my  
modernisation theme, I recall a visit as far back as 2005  
and 2006, when I retired from the fire service and went  
to the jobcentre in Ayr. It was a very uninviting, dark  
and intimidating place. The staff were behind screens  
for their protection. It was not very welcoming.

I say the word “modernisation” again, because when  
I went to the Ayr jobcentre just a couple of weeks ago, it  
was a very warm and welcoming place. The staff 's  
morale was high and they were enthused to tell me of  
the good work they were doing. Somebody will keep me  
right, but I thought the term was “job coaches” for  
those employed to encourage people into work. They  
were proud of the work that they had done through the  
modernisation of the premises. I found the staff's morale  
high, though they are better judges of that. In some  
cases, modernisation works. I found it warm and welcoming  
there, whereas more than a decade ago it was a terrible  
place to visit.

**Alison Thewliss:** Modernisation is fine, but that is  
very different from shutting it, which is what is happening  
in this situation. These jobcentres are not being  
modernised—they are being removed and closed; they  
are gone. Modernisation is not what this debate is  
about.

I appreciate that time is tight and I have gone on for a  
wee while now. My hon. Friends the Members for  
Glasgow North and for Glasgow South and the hon.  
Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) powerfully  
raised the need for an equality impact assessment. The  
Government said that they would provide an equality  
impact assessment of each jobcentre after the event, not  
before deciding on the closures. We have not seen those  
as yet.

**Hugh Gaffney** *rose—*

**Mr Nigel Evans (in the Chair):** Order. Just before this  
intervention, I would give a gentle reminder that we are  
now under some time limits, in order to give equal time  
to the Labour Front-Bench spokesperson, and Members  
will also want to hear what the Minister has to say. Are  
you taking an intervention now?

**Alison Thewliss:** Yes; I am just about done.

**Hugh Gaffney:** Has the Minister watched “I, Daniel  
Blake”? Let us be modern and look at the world. Ken  
Loach made a very good film, so let us look at “I,  
Daniel Blake” and have a reality check on the whole  
DWP estate.

**Alison Thewliss:** The hon. Gentleman will find that  
Ministers will never say whether they have watched it.  
They probably ought to. I would be happy to put on a  
movie night if that would help.

We need to see the data and to know what happens  
next. We need to know what happens in the transition  
period and what the alternative services are, and whether  
there are going to be outreach services. What I really  
want more than anything else is for the people in our  
constituencies in Glasgow and right across the country,  
wherever they are, to have a no-sanction guarantee, at  
the very least for an interim period until the new  
arrangement settles in. If one person gets sanctioned  
because their bus does not turn up, that is an absolute  
scandal that falls on this Government. I will raise any  
constituency case I get of that kind with the Minister on  
the Floor of the House; he will know all about it.

2.35 pm

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): It is an  
honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Evans. I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow South West  
(Chris Stephens) on securing what is and remains a  
really important debate—although we have had it several  
times already. He spoke powerfully of the intergenerational  
poverty and deprivation in his constituency. That was a  
theme picked up by the hon. Members for Inverclyde  
(Ronnie Cowan) and for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady),  
and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North  
East (Mr Sweeney), who spoke of the impact of the  
closures on some of the poorest in the UK.

There was also a strong contribution from my hon.  
Friend the Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill  
(Hugh Gaffney), who talked about the impact that the  
250 job losses will have on the local economy in his  
constituency. Members also spoke of the disproportionate  
impacts on certain groups in society—most notably my  
hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha De  
Cordova), on black and Asian people, and my hon.  
Friend the Member for Midlothian (Danielle Rowley),  
on WASPI women.

From the Government Benches, the hon. Member for  
Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant) said that there  
will be pain and that for some people there will be  
extreme challenges. I ask the Minister to reflect on that.

As we know, the Government have recently confirmed  
plans to close around one in 10 jobcentres in the UK by  
March 2018. Public consultations were held on just  
30 of the 78 jobcentre closures proposed in January, and  
only 16 have been reprieved, with three additional closures

405WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 406WH

now confirmed. We understand that 590 jobcentres will  
be retained, 109 will be closed, and 50 collocations will  
go ahead. The future of eight sites is still to be negotiated.  
Yet the Department for Work and Pensions has yet to  
provide details of when each office closure is to take  
place, even though some could be as early as this summer.  
Will the Minister tell us when the first centres are  
scheduled to close, and which ones they are? People have  
a right to know. Will he publish the current closure dates  
planned for each office, so that people can have as much  
information as possible to make provision as they need  
to for the change in circumstances?

Jobcentres provide really important services in our  
communities, offering services that are designed to support  
people should they be unfortunate enough to lose their  
jobs or become ill or disabled, as well as for those who  
have been disabled throughout their lives. It is often said  
that how a society treats its most vulnerable is a mark of  
its civilisation. Our social security system is precious  
and should be there for people in their time of need.  
However, it appears that the Government are eroding  
our social security system and failing to pay heed to the  
needs of individuals and communities, at a time when  
we face the uncertainties of Brexit, increased job insecurity  
with 1 million people on zero-hours contracts, a crisis in  
low pay and the Government's introduction of in-work  
conditionality—sanctions for working people, as it is  
also known.

It is increasingly clear that the impact of the closures  
on claimants will be considerable and the effect will be  
most acutely felt by the most vulnerable in our society,  
such as the chronically sick, the disabled and those with  
caring responsibilities, along with those with poor or no  
IT skills. Where, then, are the equality impact assessments  
for the closures? We have asked for them, but they are  
still yet to be seen. The Government are disregarding  
the needs of communities at the very time when the  
world of work is changing rapidly. The Government are  
yet to publish the equality analysis for the closures. Can  
the Minister give an exact date for when the full equality  
analysis will be published?

The Secretary of State said it is reasonable to ask  
claimants to travel further to another jobcentre as that  
is what people in work have to do every day, but he does  
not take into account the fact that those people have  
wages to pay their travel fares. People claiming social  
security are more likely to have a health problem or  
disability. They are more likely to struggle to travel  
longer distances, and as a result are at greater risk of  
being sanctioned for being late. People with children  
may also find it difficult to travel longer distances. What  
assessment has the Department made of the impact of  
the closures on claimants' travel times, and of the  
associated costs? Can the Government specify whether  
the travel time includes those who cannot afford public  
transport and have to walk?

**Marsha De Cordova:** On the issue of the closures, it  
would be helpful if the Minister could talk about travel  
times and set out what mechanisms will be in place to  
support those with mobility issues or other disabilities,  
who will have to travel further. What adjustments will  
be made for those protected groups?

**Margaret Greenwood:** My hon. Friend makes a really  
good point, and it is important that the Minister responds  
to it.

What guidance does the Department intend to give  
staff on sanctioning people who miss an appointment  
because they have to travel further? We need to be clear  
about what sanctioning can mean to people. A first sanction  
means no benefits for four weeks. A second sanction  
means no benefits for three months. A third sanction means  
no benefits for up to three years. The system risks  
forcing people into destitution, crime or suicide, so this  
is a really important issue.

Let us consider the roll-out of the full service of  
universal credit. The DWP is reducing its estate at the  
same time as it is speeding up roll-out of the full service  
of UC. Over the past two years, the full service of  
universal credit has been rolled out to five new areas  
each month. This month, it has been extended to 30, and  
there are plans for it to be accelerated in October to  
55 new areas per month. If the DWP feels able to  
announce such far-reaching plans to close jobcentres, it  
must surely have a clear idea of what the impact will be  
on work coaches, who are at the centre of its plans for  
employment support, but the Minister's answer to a  
written question I submitted asking for the DWP's  
assessment of the optimal number of universal credit  
claimants in a work coach's caseload was vague to say  
the least. Will the Minister give us a clearer response  
today? What is his Department's assessment of the  
optimal number of universal credit claimants a work  
coach can deal with, for both the live service and the full  
service? Or is his Department forging ahead with plans  
to close jobcentres without a clear idea of the number  
of staff needed?

The closure of jobcentres and the migration to online  
applications will make it harder for many people to  
claim social security. Many people do not have access to  
computers or mobiles, are unable to carry out transactions,  
or are not able to use the internet at all. A 2015 study by  
Citizens Advice Scotland found that 59% of respondents  
were unable to make an application for benefits online  
without help, and 30% of respondents were not able to  
apply for a benefit online at all. In Glasgow's most  
deprived areas, almost half of respondents had never  
used the internet. More than half of clients did not have  
a computer or a device they could use to access the  
internet, and more than 40% of survey respondents  
could not use a computer at all. The Minister's response,  
when questioned on claimants' access to IT, has been to  
say that jobcentres provide access to PCs. If jobcentres  
are closing in large numbers, surely there will be less  
access to PCs for those who need to use them.

It is becoming clearer that the full digital service  
roll-out is experiencing major problems. Claimants are  
forced to spend increasingly long periods on the phone  
to try to resolve issues relating to their claims. A recent  
Citizens Advice report suggests that sometimes the only  
way to resolve a problem is to go to a jobcentre directly.  
The report calls for a comprehensive support package  
to be put in place, offering face-to-face help with all  
aspects of making and managing a universal credit  
claim. Will the DWP listen to Citizens Advice's call for  
such a package? What is the DWP's assessment of the  
effectiveness with which the full digital service is being  
rolled out? The process is called “test and learn”. Can  
the Minister please tell us what has been learned so far?

Let me turn to back-of-house offices. Front-facing  
jobcentres are not the only service the DWP is cutting.  
All but two back-of-house offices face closure, and staff

407WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 408WH

*[Margaret Greenwood]*

are to be concentrated in a small number of hubs. That  
will have serious implications for staff, who will be  
forced to travel further or move. For some people, that  
will be practically impossible. Can the Minister tell us  
how many people will be made redundant, first, from  
the planned jobcentre closures, and secondly, from the  
closure of back-of-house offices?

Let me turn to the health and safety impact. The  
transfer of staff and claimants from jobcentres that are  
closing also raises health and safety issues. The closures  
will put more pressure on overstretched staff. The Minister  
said that work coaches are the central customer-facing  
role, but Jobcentre Plus staff dealing with phone inquiries  
about claims are also frontline staff. It can be extremely  
stressful to answer calls from people who are frustrated  
about a problem with their claim or delays in processing  
it. The Public and Commercial Services Union reports  
that staff are already being taken away from processing  
claims to answer phone lines, which leads to a vicious  
cycle: claimants are more likely to phone to ask what is  
happening to their claim because it has not been processed  
due to the delays. Apparently, among staff, it is known  
as the “cycle of hell”—a circle of inefficiency and stress,  
which they are struggling to getoutof. Will the Minister  
tell us what steps he is taking to ensure the health and  
wellbeing of staff in DWP offices?

The Secretary of State said on 6 July that the DWP is  
actively recruiting. That is welcome, but I would be  
grateful if the Minister could share with us the DWP's  
current assessment of Jobcentre Plus's performance on  
staff retention. Will the DWP publish statistics on the  
turnover of Jobcentre Plus and back-of-house office  
staff?

[MIKE GAPES *in the Chair*]

In the debate on 6 July, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Lewisham, Deptford (Vicky Foxcroft) rightly raised  
the issue of the safety of young people who travel from  
different parts of south London, in the context of  
increasing youth violence. PCS raised similar concerns  
with me in relation to other major cities. Problems are  
likely to arise when services are merged in one office in  
an area with a gang culture. That serious issue is likely  
to affect staff and claimants, so it is important that the  
DWP listens to and acts upon the concerns of staff in  
such cases. Will the Minister give an assurance that he  
will do that? What support is DWP offering staff to  
ensure they maintain their emotional and physical wellbeing  
at work?

It is important that there is sufficient room space  
available in the remaining jobcentres so claimants who  
have to disclose personal information can do so in  
privacy. Has the DWP carried out a health and safety  
assessment of the impact of the planned closures? If  
not, why not? If it has, will it publish it?

My concern is that acceleration of the roll-out of  
the full digital services of universal credit, together with  
the programme of the rapid closure of jobcentres, will  
put intolerable pressure on staff and create chaos  
for claimants—especially the most vulnerable. The  
Government's answer to any criticism of cuts to social  
security is that work is the best route out of poverty.  
Why, then, are they closing jobcentres on such a scale,  
when they offer services that are specifically designed to  
help people find employment?

2.47 pm

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds):** It is a  
delight to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gapes. I  
congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow South West  
(Chris Stephens) on securing the debate. He and others  
will be aware that this subject has already been debated  
extensively in Parliament. There has been an Opposition  
day debate, a Westminster Hall debate, an Adjournment  
debate and a Back-Bench business debate. There was  
another Westminster Hall debate yesterday, specifically  
on south Wales. The issue has been raised at DWP  
questions and Scotland Office questions. There have  
been two urgent questions and a substantial body of  
written questions.

Today's debate has been wide-ranging. We heard a  
full exposition from the hon. Member for Glasgow  
Central (Alison Thewliss) and a very interesting speech  
from the hon. Member for Wirral West (Margaret  
Greenwood). In the time left, I will do my best to cover  
as many of the points that have been raised as possible.

The Government are committed to maintaining our  
record of protecting the most vulnerable while supporting  
everyone to fulfil their potential and play their full part  
in society. That includes reforming the welfare system  
by making work pay, supporting those unable to work  
and examining our assets to ensure that we are deploying  
resources effectively. On 31 March 2018, the DWP's  
20-year private finance initiative contract with Telereal  
Trillium, which covers the majority of the DWP's current  
property portfolio of some 900 sites, comes to an end.  
That date provides an opportunity—indeed, an imperative  
—to review which office locations we need and how our  
estate is to be managed in the future. We have sought to  
do that in a way that delivers better value for the  
taxpayer and makes best use of the space available,  
while continuing to deliver vital support to claimants  
and pursuing our reform agenda.

**Margaret Greenwood:** Will the Minister give way?

**Damian Hinds:** I am sorry, I will not. The hon. Lady  
will have to forgive me, but I want to answer as many  
questions as possible.

To give some context, the DWP occupies about  
1.5 million square metres of office space, but the way it  
operates is significantly different from 20 years ago,  
meaning that at least 20% of that space is under-occupied.  
The falling claimant count and the increased use of  
online services in recent years mean that 20% of the  
money the Department spends on rent goes towards  
space we are not using. By paying only for the space we  
need and the services required to operate from it, we  
anticipate saving £140 million per year over the next  
10 years. To be clear, this is not about reducing services—the  
hon. Member for Wirral West alluded to that—but  
about taking the opportunity to stop spending taxpayers'  
money on empty space and instead spend more to  
support those in need.

The labour market is in its strongest position for  
some years: the employment rate is 74.8%, the joint  
highest figure on record, and since 2010 unemployment  
has reduced by 913,000 and the overall number of  
people claiming the main out-of-work benefits has fallen  
by more than 1.1 million. In Glasgow over the past four  
years,theclaimantcounthascomedownfrom27,890to

409WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

Jobcentres and the DWP Estate 410WH

16,800. The DWP estate is bigger than it needs to be, is  
not flexible enough to deal with the needs of the  
Department's customers now and in the future and, in  
some instances, is of poor quality, preventing improvements  
such as digital innovation and more interactive ways of  
working with customers.

The Department is not transforming its estate in  
isolation.In June 2013, the Government published their  
first overall estate strategy, which was expanded in  
October 2014. The strategy aims to ensure that all  
Departments are working towards an effective and efficient  
Government estate that provides value for money to the  
taxpayer, delivers better, more integrated public services  
and acts as an enabler of growth. In January this year,  
we announced proposals to rationalise the DWP estate.  
The proposals encompassed most of our Jobcentre Plus  
offices, processing centres and head office buildings.  
Our announcements on 5 July finalised those plans for  
the majority of sites.

In our processing centres, the changes move towards  
creating larger, modern, digitally enabled centres, with  
teams working on several areas coming together to  
deliver a joined-up, efficient service to our customers.  
The focus is on creating an estate with a much improved  
working environment, with more opportunities for our  
staff to develop, learn new skills and progress.

Significant investment starting in 2018 will include  
the opening of a new processing centre in Glasgow,  
which will allow us to bring together colleagues from  
smaller, older sites across the area into a new property  
fitted out to create an efficient, effective working  
environment that allows the DWP to align more closely  
with other Departments working in the area. With the  
existing large processing site in Northgate, that will  
result in a DWP presence of more than 2,000 staff in  
Glasgow. In total in Scotland, we will keep a substantial  
processing presence, with large sites in locations such as  
Falkirk and Kilmarnock expanding to bring further  
jobs into those areas.

That investment will continue with a new purpose-built  
site in the Treforest area to the north of Cardiff in south  
Wales, which will bring together colleagues from smaller,  
older sites across the region into a new building and  
provide about 1,600 jobs in one of the most deprived  
areas in the UK. We are also working on similar large  
processing sites in Bristol, Birmingham and Hastings.  
Together with the changes to how we work in some of  
our remaining properties, that will create a processing  
estate that will be able to support the Department well  
into the future, while remaining flexible enough to deal  
with changing needs over the coming years.

The changes in the jobcentre network focus on three  
things: first, moving some jobcentres to shared Government  
premises to allow for better, more efficient use of space  
and a more co-ordinated service; secondly, moving some  
jobcentres to new buildings because the quality of the  
existing property is not up to scratch or is unable to  
meet the needs of our customers now and in the future;  
and thirdly, merging smaller and underused jobcentres  
to create larger operations that offer a better, more  
joined-up service to our customers. The changes include  
around 40 new opportunities to collocate jobcentre  
services into local authority or community premises,  
which will result in about 80 collocations in total.

In Scotland, we have 95 jobcentres, which is more  
jobcentres per head of population than in England. The  
changes will result in 11 jobcentres merging into nearby

offices, three jobcentres moving into shared offices with  
local authorities and councils, and one jobcentre moving  
into an improved building in the same town. The resulting  
85 jobcentres across the country still leaves Scotland  
with significantly more offices per head of population  
than England.

In Glasgow, we have 17 jobcentres, which the hon.  
Member for Glasgow South West acknowledged in his  
opening speech was more per head of population than  
in any other major city in Great Britain. Even with the  
reduction to 11 jobcentres, Glasgow will continue to  
have more per head of population than other cities. We  
consulted on three moves in Glasgow—Maryhill, Castlemilk  
and Bridgeton—and held a further consultation on  
Broxburn. The changes will enable the Department to  
offer a more efficient service while delivering value for  
the taxpayer.

The changes have been developed working closely  
with local leaders, using their local knowledge of the  
area, travel network, customers and community needs.  
Distance and journey times were calculated using a  
variety of methods to ensure accuracy in our planning,  
including online tools and timetables, as well as information  
collected on local public transport routes. Most importantly,  
that was all used to inform discussions with local staff,  
with their experience and knowledge of their areas.

Any change with an impact on DWP employees has  
involved consultation with them and their trade unions.  
In most cases, staff consultation began with an  
announcement back in January, followed by three to  
five weeks of discussion when we considered the impact  
of any changes on their offices. We have consulted the  
public on any jobcentre mergers that may mean customers  
will have to travel a little further. There is no statutory  
requirement for such consultation, but we were committed  
to making the decisions in consultation and have conducted  
public consultations on all proposed closures of jobcentres  
that fall outside the ministerial criteria.

**Chris Stephens:** Will the Minister give way?

**Damian Hinds:** I was trying to leave the hon. Gentleman  
a minute at the end, but he may go ahead.

**Chris Stephens:** The Minister has outlined the  
Government strategy. May I ask him a simple question?  
Is he saying that more jobcentre closures are on the  
cards?In other words, is the Department planning more  
closures?

**Damian Hinds:** I am fairly sure that I was talking not  
about that, but about the consultation criteria. At the  
end of the process, we will have a settled estate, which  
will put us in a better position to share services and so  
on with other bodies.

I will skip over some of my material and respond  
directly to some of the questions that came up in the  
debate. The hon. Member for Wirral West asked about  
concerns about travel times and travel costs. I reassure  
Members that claimants can be reimbursed for any  
travel to jobcentres that is more frequent than fortnightly.  
For those on JSA for more than 13 weeks and, in some  
circumstances, from the very first day on other benefits,  
it is possible to apply for a Jobcentre Plus travel discount  
card, which is available for different local transport  
companies. Of course, anyone on employment and support

411WH Jobcentres and the DWP Estate

20 JULY 2017

412WH

*[Damian Hinds]*

allowance is not asked to attend the jobcentre regularly.  
The existing outreach services and the additional ones  
that we will put in place as a result of the changes will  
give us more presence in local areas.

On sanctions, the point is that we ask people to make  
reasonable efforts to get to appointments and other  
things they have committed to as part of their job  
search. There will be a transition time as people get  
used to different arrangements, but the requirement for  
people to make reasonable efforts will always remain.

On access to online facilities, DWP always has an  
alternative to online, but in this day and age it is also  
true that to look for work and to be in work, it is  
increasingly essential to have some IT skills. We therefore  
think it is important to help people with that, which is  
one of the reasons why we provide IT equipment in  
jobcentrelobbiesandhavepeoplewho can help claimants  
with it.

Thehon.MemberforGlasgowSouth(StewartMalcolm  
McDonald) asked whether the other jobcentres in Glasgow  
have the capacity to take in the extra operations. The  
answer is that they do—that is the entire basis of our  
plans. We will put outreach in place in those locations  
where we had a public consultation because the distances  
travelled would be a little further.

We want to minimise all risk of job losses. We have  
not yet completed all the conversations with staff, and  
we are continuing to have those one-to-ones. The DWP  
has a good record over many years of retaining staff.  
We will seek to facilitate that as much as possible.

Some of the questions were about working with the  
Scottish Government. We are keen to do so, and we  
look forward to more such opportunities in future. I  
was also asked about the equality impact assessment,  
and we have built in consideration of the impact on  
people with protected characteristics through all stages  
of the estates project process. We will continue to do so,  
thus fulfilling our duty under the Equalities Act 2010.

**Mike Gapes (in the Chair):** You have 10 seconds,  
Mr Stephens.

2.59 pm

**Chris Stephens:** I will just say this: taking away places  
that give people a safety net is not modernisation, but a  
recalling of Victorian values.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6))*.

Combat Compensation

3pm

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): I beg  
to move,

That this House has considered Government proposals for  
better combat compensation.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship,  
Mr Gapes, in the last Westminster Hall debate before  
the recess. I refuse to call it the graveyard shift—this is  
an extraordinarily important debate. I welcome the  
Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon.  
Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), to his  
seat. May I formally put on the record the whole  
House's gratitude to him for his work, particularly  
during the terrorist incident, when he administered  
CPR to PC Keith Palmer? He is a real hero, who has  
served in uniform and stepped up to the mark when his  
country needed him.

This debate addresses concerns arising from the “Better  
combat compensation” consultation, which ran until  
23 February 2017 and on which the Government have  
yet to publish their conclusions. According to the  
Government, an enhanced compensation scheme will  
address the

“urgent need to reform the current system for dealing with  
compensation claims brought before the Courts and provide  
clarity in law on issues of negligence which may contribute to  
deaths and injuries suffered by members of our Armed Forces in  
combat.”

Linked to that scheme, the Government propose to  
enshrine in legislation an extension to combat immunity,  
so that it not only applies to deaths or injuries that  
occur in the course of combat but covers all military  
operations.

The Secretary of State for Defence has stated that  
those proposals arise from three main concerns: that  
service personnel and ex-service personnel who are  
injured in combat can be drawn into long and frustrating  
legal cases; that the legal costs of such cases borne by  
the taxpayer often far outstrip the damages awarded;  
and that judges are required to second-guess military  
decisions using criteria appropriate in civilian life.

In essence, through its “Better combat compensation”  
proposals, the Ministry of Defence plans to scrap the  
legal duty of care that it owes to service personnel. That  
duty of care has been in force since 1987, when Parliament  
repealed section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947  
to provide protection for those who bravely serve their  
country. I find it hard to believe that the Minister  
believes that it is both legally and morally right that the  
MOD should be allowed to legislate its way out of that  
duty of care.

I will first address the concern that judges are required  
tosecond-guessmilitarydecisionsusingcriteriaappropriate  
in civilian life. The courts already recognise the difference  
between cases involving military decisions made by  
armed forces personnel in combat and civilian cases  
where the duty of care applies. The duty of care is not  
exclusive; it applies to all walks of life. That is reflected  
by the fact that not a single court decision has second-  
guessed a military decision made in a battlefield situation.

The right of access to the courts is a long-established  
common law right that is now enshrined in article 6 of  
the European convention on human rights. Any exclusion

413WH

Combat Compensation

20 JULY 2017

Combat Compensation

414WH

of that right would require primary legislation, which  
would need to be judged compatible with the convention.  
Does the Minister know whether such legislation would  
be judged compatible? If it would, when do the Government  
propose to bring forward such legislation? There was no  
mention of it in the Queen's Speech.

Extending combat immunity could be a slippery slope.  
If the MOD, as an employer, can legislate its way out of  
a duty of care to our armed forces, where will that stop?  
Will other employers, such as the fire service or the  
police service, be next? Where will it end? As a Government  
Department, the MOD already enjoys Crown privilege,  
which means that, although health and safety legislation  
applies to it, it is not subject to criminal enforcement  
action in the courts. Instead, such action is mirrored by  
administrative arrangements, which ultimately lead to a  
Crown censure instead of prosecution.

Introducing a smokescreen of combat immunity over  
all military operations, as the Government propose,  
would be a huge step backwards. Combat immunity,  
which is currently interpreted by the courts, is there to  
protect military operations when thinking is impaired  
in the heat of battle. It does not, and should not, apply  
to procurement decisions made back at Whitehall when  
equipment that is procured for our troops turns out to  
be faulty or unsuitable.

The MOD has already tried and failed to extend the  
scope of combat immunity in the courts. The Supreme  
Court ruled in a landmark case that the Government  
are under a legal obligation to fulfil their duty of care  
and to ensure that British soldiers are sent to fight with  
adequate equipment and training. In that case, our  
troops were travelling in the lightly armoured Snatch  
Land Rover, the vulnerability of which had led some  
soldiers to call it the “mobile coffin”. The Chilcot  
report eventually found that the Snatch Land Rover  
was at the end of its planned life in service and that an  
alternative should have been found.

That case defined the legal obligations that the  
Government owe to soldiers who are killed or injured  
on active service abroad. Why is the MOD now attempting  
to ignore the will of the highest court in the land?  
Under the system of blanket immunity that the MOD  
proposes, those facts would never have come to light,  
there would have been no pressure to make changes and  
no lessons would have been learned.

That brings me to the second concern put forward by  
the Secretary of State: that legal costs outstrip the  
compensation awarded. That assumes that people have  
a purely financial motive for taking cases through the  
courts, but their motivation is often more complex.  
Service personnel and their families do not simply seek  
financial recompense; they often seek justice. They seek  
to protect others from suffering the same fate as them  
or their loved ones. They want to shine a light on their  
case and ensure public scrutiny so that it does not  
happen again. They want questions answered.

Extending the scope of combat immunity would be  
discriminatory to armed forces personnel and their  
families, and would breach the armed forces covenant.  
The covenant's two principles are that,

“the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared  
to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial  
services; and that special consideration is appropriate in some  
cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the  
injured or the bereaved.”

The covenant is a pledge that together we acknowledge  
and understand that those who serve or have served in  
the armed forces, and their families, should be treated  
with fairness and respect in the communities, economy  
and society that they have served with their lives.

This is not how we in this country should respect  
those who risk their lives to protect our way of life. Why  
should a decision about equipment or training made at  
a desk in Whitehall not be subject to the same scrutiny  
as similar decisions made by other employers? In April  
last year the Defence Committee published its report,  
“Beyond endurance? Military exercises and the duty of  
care”, which called for the MOD to be subject to  
sanctions under the Corporate Manslaughter and  
Corporate Homicide Act 2007, without exemption. The  
inquiry was called after three Army reservists died after  
taking part in SAS selection exercises in the Brecon  
Beacons. They were three of 135 armed forces personnel  
who lost their lives while on training and exercises  
between 1 January 2000 and 20 February 2016: a statistic  
to make us sit up and think.

The inquiry found that it was wrong for the MOD  
and armed forces to have exemptions under the Corporate  
Manslaughter and Homicide Act in situations where  
they have been penalised by Crown censure for serious  
failings in hazardous training and selection events. The  
Government, however, rejected the Committee's modest  
proposals to reform the military exemptions in the  
Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act. Why is the  
MOD so reluctant to accept responsibility for its actions?  
Do our brave men and women, who put themselves on  
the front line to protect our country, not deserve better?

I now turn specifically to the compensation awards  
under the new enhanced scheme. Before doing so, it is  
important to point out a flaw in the current system that  
takes no account of those who have suffered brain  
damage as a result of their injuries and lack capacity to  
make decisions or control large amounts of money. The  
MOD simply pays more than half a million pounds into  
a soldier's bank account with no checks currently on  
capacity. They are simply left to get on with it. Lawyers  
instructed in such cases are under a duty to assess  
mental capacity and are negligent if they fail to do so.  
That protects vulnerable claimants. No such checks and  
balances exist for military service personnel, so I ask the  
Minister to address that urgently.

The MOD's enhanced pension scheme should not be  
reviewed as an issue linked to the extension of combat  
immunity as the two issues are independent of each  
other. The Government say that individuals or their  
families will be awarded better compensation for injury  
or death in combat and will not require legal representation.  
Straightforward cases will be suitable for the compensation  
scheme, but using the scheme should be optional, with  
the decision taken to do so by armed forces personnel  
or their family. The option to go through the courts and  
the subsequent public scrutiny must remain open. Many  
cases will inevitably be very complex with a need for  
multiple experts to help to assess the extent of injuries  
and losses.

Service personnel are often vulnerable and traumatised,  
and some will have catastrophic injuries. In my constituency  
I have the South Manchester amputation unit, which I  
visit regularly and I have seen the extent of many of the  
injuries. Improvements in medical expertise mean that  
those who suffer battlefield injuries have extended life

415WH

Combat Compensation

20 JULY 2017

Combat Compensation

416WH

*[Mike Kane]*

expectancy. The complex nature of the injuries, including  
the cost of adapted housing, equipment and rehabilitation  
to last a lifetime, has always been determined by experts  
and the courts, with independent legal advice available.  
The MOD now proposes to take those calculations  
away from the courts and instead handle them itself.  
Further,itexpectsinjured andvulnerablemilitarypersonnel  
to be able to assess themselves whether the correct  
amounts have been awarded. Does the Minister really  
expect vulnerable and injured service personnel and  
their families to navigate the process without legal  
representation? If the MOD is serious about full  
compensation, servicemen and women must have recourse  
to legal representation to help prepare the evidence for  
the courts to adjudicate.

However, the proposal will allow the MOD to create  
a situation in which it serves not only as gatekeeper, but  
as both judge and jury. The fact that the MOD itself  
should decide whether a claim against it is valid creates  
a clear conflict of interest. As a result, it is unlikely that  
armed forces personnel and their families will have  
confidence in the system or its impartiality.

In summary, the Government need to look again at  
the enhanced compensation scheme and the proposal to  
extend the definition of combat immunity. As it stands,  
soldiers will be shut out of justice, and military equipment  
failures will be swept under the carpet rather than  
receiving public scrutiny through the court system. I  
repeat my questions to the Minister: does he legally and  
morally believe that the MOD should be allowed to  
legislate its way out of its duty of care to our soldiers as  
set out in the armed forces covenant and in law? If the  
Minister proposes to extend combat immunity, when  
does he propose to put the primary legislation before  
Parliament?

The Government have stated that there is an urgent  
need to reform the current system for dealing with  
compensation claims. When, therefore, can we expect  
the conclusions of their urgent consultation? I am sure  
we can all agree in this place that any process of  
compensation for armed service personnel needs to be  
transparent, and that everybody needs to be accountable.  
The enhanced compensation scheme and proposed  
extension of combat immunity fails to deliver either.  
Our armed forces deserve better.

3.15 pm

**Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): It  
is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gapes.  
I congratulate the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and  
SaleEast(MikeKane)onsecuringthisimportantdebate  
this afternoon.

The hon. Gentleman made a cogent, reasoned and  
passionatespeechaboutcombatcompensation,thechanges  
that are likely to be made, and the suffering that service  
personnel and their families are likely to experience as a  
result of the Government's proposed changes. I agree  
with what he has said. I find it strange that, as he says,  
the MOD will end up being gatekeeper, judge and jury,  
especially in compensation claims, and that there has  
been no real attempt by the Government so far to say  
when, how and if they are going to do away with their  
legal duty of care towards service personnel. We all owe

them so much. As has already been said, much has  
come to light because of the fact that combat immunity  
was not quite so widely drawn.

If the Scottish Government's Minister for veterans  
was involved in this matter, he would be seriously concerned.  
So many service personnel who have been affected by  
what has happened to them, and of course to their  
families, might not now be able to get unbiased and free  
accessto compensation. That is really dangerous, especially  
for those who suffer mental health problems as a result  
of their service. As we know, sometimes such problems  
do not occur until many years after service has ended.

The Scottish Government urge the UK Government  
to publish a response to the latest quinquennial review  
as soon as possible and to address directly the review's  
recommendations. In particular, we urge the Government  
to increase the maximum tariffs for mental health and  
to improve communication, particularly for veterans  
who may experience late onset symptoms.

The Scottish Government welcome the launch of the  
“Defence people mental health and wellbeing strategy”  
as a positive step forward, but maintain that there is still  
much more that could be done. For example, if people  
receive compensation as a result of their service, that  
should not be allowed to affect any other benefits that  
they get. It is vital that we treat our veterans with the  
utmost dignity and respect and allow them free, fair and  
equitable access.

The Government must not try to do in private what  
has recently been done in public, because that has  
forced the MOD to look at its procedures and at how it  
carries out its procurement and training methodologies.  
Service personnel need the utmost respect from the  
Government and the best possible compensation when  
things that the MOD is responsible for go wrong.

3.19 pm

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): It is a pleasure to  
serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gapes. To be honest,  
I was not best pleased when I realised that I had to  
come to this sitting of Westminster Hall, right at the  
end of a parliamentary term, but when I realised what  
issue was to be considered, my attitude soon changed.  
We owe a great deal of gratitude to my hon. Friend the  
Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike Kane)  
for bringing this extremely important issue forward and  
securing the debate.

All of us here today would agree that we want the  
best and most appropriate compensation for all those  
who deserve compensation, whether they are soldiers or  
other members of the armed forces who have been hurt,  
or members of their families. We want justice for everyone,  
and we want it to be done as quickly and expeditiously  
as possible. I expect we are all concerned about the  
lengthy delays in some court cases, because we want  
justice to be achieved as quickly as possible.

I have two profound concerns about the proposals  
that the Government sent out for consultation. The  
consultation period has concluded and I shall be interested  
to hear what they intend to do in the light of the  
responses—whether they intend to legislate, and what  
form that legislation will take.

My first concern is quite fundamental, and it is about  
combat liability. Who exactly would be entitled to put  
forward a claim for compensation? The consultation  
paper suggested a new definition of liability:

417WH

Combat Compensation

20 JULY 2017

Combat Compensation

418WH

“We believe that the test should be whether the harm—injury  
or death—occurred in the course of a UK military operation as a  
result of direct or indirect hostile enemy action, or as the direct result  
of misdirected targeting by friendly forces, or as the direct result  
of action taken to avoid hostile enemy action. If it did, it should  
be regarded as occurring in combat.”

That might on the face of it seem to be a straightforward,  
common-sense definition of combat, but its implications  
are truly profound, and it flies in the face of the practice  
and legal precedent established in this country since at  
least the end of the second world war. The suggested  
definition would mean that the Ministry of Defence  
could not be held accountable for decisions made far  
from combat, including those concerning training,  
procurement and the suitability of future combat equipment  
in the light of known operational issues. All those issues  
would be excluded under the proposal.

The practical implications of that are huge. An example  
that has already been quoted is the case brought with  
regard to Snatch Land Rovers. It was a long legal case,  
pursued against the Ministry of Defence by the families  
of soldiers who lost their lives in those inadequate  
vehicles in Iraq. In the end, it was successful in securing  
compensation and, more importantly, in gaining public  
recognition of the fact that the vehicles were inadequate.  
They were replaced with better, more sustainable vehicles  
that provided better protection for soldiers, but there  
were also lessons that had to be learned. The deficiencies  
of the Snatch vehicles were identified previously in  
Northern Ireland but, for reasons best known to civil  
servants and politicians at the time, action was not  
taken to replace them with appropriate vehicles. Those  
issues came to light clearly in the court case, which was  
long and protracted but extremely thorough. Of course,  
reference was made to all that in the Chilcot report,  
which I think should be considered alongside the  
Government proposal.

My second concern is that the proposal flies in the  
face of established legal practice based on common law,  
because it would take away people's legal rights. It sets  
out, essentially, an in-house Ministry of Defence system,  
under which people would not have their legal rights or  
legal representation, but would accept what was decided  
by the Ministry. Admittedly, there would be an independent  
opinion about the entitlement.

I consider the proposal to be extremely worrying, and  
although I am a lay person, I am not the only one  
saying that. Lawyers with enormous experience are also  
concerned about it. The president of the Law Society  
said:

“This means cases would not be heard by an independent  
judge, facts would not be independently investigated, responsibility  
would not be established and a state institution, if liable, would  
not be held to account.

Soldiers and their families must not be shut out of our justice  
system.”

That, in a nutshell, is my second reservation.

In the light of those points, I hope that the Government  
will have second thoughts and listen to the Law Society  
and the many other people who have made representations.  
I also hope that the Government will uphold the consensus  
that was accepted by all parties on the armed forces  
covenant and take it forward, both in its detail and in its  
spirit, and that they will continue to have the principle  
of the duty of care for all armed forces personnel  
foremost in their mind whenever they consider bringing

forward proposals. With those few words about my  
strong reservations, I thank my hon. Friend the Member  
for Wythenshawe and Sale East for securing the debate  
and look forward to hearing the Government response.

3.27 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence  
(Mr Tobias Ellwood):** I welcome this debate, secured by  
the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike  
Kane). He said that it was the graveyard shift: it is the  
last day of term, and I am already on my feet to respond  
to a debate that could have lasted an hour and a half.  
However, the subject is important, and I am grateful for  
this opportunity to respond as I begin my work in my  
present portfolio.

The hon. Gentleman made some very kind initial  
comments about what happened in the Westminster  
bridge attack. As this is the last sitting day before the  
recess, I think we are all reflecting on what has been a  
dramatic and difficult year for Britain, with the terrorist  
attacks and the Grenfell Tower fire. I feel humbled by  
the hon. Gentleman's comments. It was a difficult day  
for me, and not a day goes by when I do not think about  
PC Keith Palmer. The toughest part of the day for me  
after that was going home and finding my eight-year-old  
boy at the top of the stairs, unable to sleep and wanting  
explanations of what had happened that day. All I  
could offer was that there are occasionally very bad  
people who do very bad things, but that there are always  
very good people who, even more, do good things. That  
day I was one of a number of people trying to do a  
good thing.

A lot of detail has arisen in the debate, and many  
questions have been asked. I shall do my best to answer  
the questions, but if I miss any details I shall, if I may,  
do as I customarily do and write to hon. Members. I do  
not have the excuse of not having enough time to  
answer; it is just that the portfolio is new to me, and I  
will say frankly that the issue is complex. However, as a  
former regular soldier and as a reservist—something  
that I should declare—I have a personal interest in  
making sure that when we send our brave soldiers,  
sailors and air personnel into harm's way, we give them  
the equipment that they require.

I am grateful for the opportunity to elaborate on the  
Government's proposals for better compensation. Before  
I turn to the details, it is worth saying something about  
the consultation paper, but also, in view of what has  
been said, rehearsing the rationale for the steps proposed  
for the consultation paper itself. There could hardly be  
a more important responsibility for the Ministry of  
Defence than ensuring that our arrangements for providing  
financial compensation to people who are injured while  
fighting for their country, and the families of those who  
are killed in so doing, are not only fair but generous. We  
owe them nothing less.

There are currently two routes by which service personnel  
or their families may be paid compensation for deaths  
or injuries suffered in that way. Virtually any injury,  
whether fatal or not, that is sustained by a member of  
the armed forces as a result of service will attract a  
payment under the armed forces compensation scheme.  
The scheme applies to deaths and injuries sustained  
both in combat and in situations such as training, and  
whether or not the Ministry of Defence was at fault in

419WH

Combat Compensation

20 JULY 2017

Combat Compensation

420WH

*[Mr Tobias Ellwood]*any way in the incident concerned. In a relatively small  
number of cases, a second route to seeking compensation  
would involve suing the Ministry of Defence for negligence  
in the law courts. That is because, were a court to find  
that there was negligence, it would award compensation  
that would be expected to be higher than that under the  
armed forces compensation scheme. In practice, the  
MOD would normally settle a case if it believed that it  
had been totally or partially to blame. It is fair to say  
that few cases actually go all the way to trial.

In the main, the MOD has no difficulty with the  
current approach, and we are not proposing any change  
whatsoever in cases that do not relate to combat. That  
distinction is important; I do not think the hon. Member  
for Wythenshawe and Sale East made the distinction in  
his opening remarks between cases that are in combat  
and those that are not. If people believe that they have a  
case, they may sue the MOD, and the Department will  
normally settle the case if it believes that it was indeed  
totally or partially to blame.

The real problem with the court route is when it  
comes to combat. Combat is inherently dangerous—we  
are sending people into harm's way to use organised  
violence. That was why the courts developed a doctrine  
known as combat immunity, which means that the  
Government cannot be sued for negligence when a  
person is injured or killed as a result of being sent into  
combat. The Ministry of Defence will continue to do  
everything practicable to minimise casualties among  
members of Britain's armed forces when they are called  
on to fight, but armed hostilities cannot be treated in  
the same way as training incidents or accidents in civilian  
life. I hope hon. Members understand and recognise  
that distinction, which I think is agreed across all parties.

**Mike Kane:** The Minister will know that the armed  
forces compensation scheme is limited in scope and does  
not take into account the rehabilitation costs of members  
of the armed forces who have been injured. We need to  
keep the court system so that they can get full compensation  
for the lifetime's worth of injuries that they have to face.

**Mr Ellwood:** If I may, I will come on to that in  
a second. Given that I have some time, it is worth saying  
that I have just been at a two-day conference with  
Veterans' Ministers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand  
and the United States, where we discussed that very  
thing: what support, compensation and packages of  
measures are available and in place while people are in  
the service, going through the transition, and once they  
are veterans. I think that is the point the hon. Gentleman  
is alluding to, and I will come to that shortly.

The challenge we face is that the scope of the doctrine  
of combat immunity is complex and unclear. That has  
resulted in some exceptionally protracted claims alleging  
that the MOD should not have used certain kinds of  
equipment or transport or should have trained people  
in a different way. The strong view of the Government is  
that decisions about such challenging and sensitive matters  
should be taken by military commanders with the  
appropriate expertise, and not—with all respect—by  
the courts.

Indeed, one of the minority judges in the Supreme  
Court case I mentioned rightly warned that the decision  
could lead to “the judicialisation of war”. The result

has been a number of long-running cases in which the  
MOD has been forced to defend its military preparations  
in the lead-up to combat. Such cases have risked the  
exposure of sensitive material, which could be useful to  
our enemies and adversaries. They have also cost large  
amounts of taxpayers' money, which could have been  
spent in better ways. We believe the cases have been  
highly stressful for the litigants and created much  
uncertainty for the conduct of future hostilities.

What we cannot have is cases where commanders in a  
war might be concerned about the manner in which  
they make decisions for fear of litigation or lawsuits  
when they come home. Military commanders may come  
to feel that they will be second-guessed back in Britain  
by lawyers intent on mounting negligence cases. That  
could have a chilling effect on decision making and  
affect our ability to fight and complete actions. Against  
that background, the proposals we put forward in our  
consultation paper offered a solution, which we believe  
will generously meet the needs of any service casualties  
in future conflicts and their families but also benefit the  
operational effectiveness of the armed forces.

**Mike Kane:** As I said in my speech, it was my  
understanding that no court decision has ever second-  
guessed a military decision in the theatre.

**Mr Ellwood:** I will confirm that is the case. What I am  
saying is that we would not want any officer, commander  
or non-commissioned officer to be concerned about  
such a consideration. However, I hear what the hon.  
Gentleman says.

We have suggested that in future, whenever a member  
of the armed forces is killed or injured in combat,  
compensation will be paid at the rate a court would  
have been likely to award if it had found the MOD to  
have been negligent, regardless of whether it has indeed  
been negligent. The amount will be assessed independently  
—that was a concern the hon. Gentleman had—by an  
experienced, qualified lawyer. For the claimant, that  
will mean that there will be no need to spend years  
engaged in complex legal battles, with no certainty of  
success, seeking to prove that the MOD has been negligent  
in law.

**Wayne David:** Rather than excluding claimants in  
their best interests, would it not be better for there to be  
a choice on whether to pursue the case through the  
route suggested, with the MOD, or to take independent  
legal advice?

**Mr Ellwood:** One of the purposes of the consultation  
is to simplify the system. We need a robust system that  
everybody is able to follow and that is clearcut for both  
sides.

For the Government, the new system will mean increased  
expenditure on compensation for death or injury sustained  
in the most challenging conditions. They will be paying  
higher sums in cases in which the MOD has not been  
negligent, but that will be offset to a large extent by a  
reduction in the costs of litigation. The Government  
would prefer to spend taxpayers' money directly on  
compensation for the armed forces rather than on legal  
fees. I think everyone would agree with that.

421WH

Combat Compensation

20 JULY 2017

Combat Compensation

422WH

**Mike Kane:** I have two points on that. First, to whom  
would the lawyer be accountable and who would employ  
them? Secondly, if the MOD had admitted its negligence  
and settled the Snatch Land Rover vehicle case, it would  
not have run up so much expenditure on the legal case.

**Mr Ellwood:** It is because of such cases that we are  
now having to provide this compensation. The hon.  
Gentleman is right to say that no court has ever second-  
guessed a military decision, but the Supreme Court's  
judgment opened up the prospect of precisely what is  
happening and what might happen in future cases.

The corollary to the proposal is that any cases covered  
by the new, more generous compensation rules can no  
longer be heard by the courts. That will mean that  
complex issues of military planning will be decided  
upon by members of our armed forces with the appropriate  
experience and not by the courts themselves, as the  
Government believe is right and proper. The Government  
therefore believe that our proposals will benefit members  
of our armed forces involved in future conflicts, their  
families and the country as a whole, and we launched  
our consultation paper on that basis last autumn. At  
the same time as publishing the proposals for future  
cases, we offered to settle the current cases to which I  
referred. I am pleased that a number of those offers  
were accepted.

There were more than 500 responses to the consultation,  
and it is fair to say that the majority were broadly  
positive. However, respondents made a number of points  
that the Government are considering, and in some cases  
looking at very carefully indeed. For example, some  
suggested that claimants should be able to choose between  
the new scheme and the traditional court route. However,  
as I said earlier, that would be difficult for the Government  
to accept, because it would perpetuate legal uncertainty  
and the problem of the judicialisation of war. Some  
expressed concern about the independence of the assessors,  
and we are considering how best to demonstrate that  
they will indeed be totally independent in making their  
decisions. Some wanted assurance that mental injuries  
suffered in combat, particularly post-traumatic stress  
disorder, would be covered as generously as physical  
injuries. The Government completely agree with that  
point of view.

**Mike Kane:** Part of the nub of the matter is how  
those independent assessors will be independent if they  
are appointed by the Ministry of Defence. Do we not  
already have an independent assessor system in judges?

**Mr Ellwood:** I think there has to be some faith given  
to the fact that, when we make those appointments, we  
choose based on independence. I will look at that process  
and confirm that. I think we are getting into the weeds a  
little bit by talking about the confirmation of the  
independence of those who will make the decisions.

Finally, some suggested that, by removing such combat  
cases from the courts, an opportunity to prevent any  
recurrence would be lost. The Government disagree  
with that argument, because the adversarial nature of  
litigation makes it an unsatisfactory way of learning  
lessons. I think we would all agree with that. When a  
member of the UK armed forces has been killed in  
combat, a full inquest will always be held. When there  
has been a non-fatal injury of any significance, there

will be a service inquiry. I believe that those non-adversarial  
inquiries will get to the heart of what happened far  
more quickly than any civil litigation.

The consultation confirmed the Government's view  
that our proposals are fair and just, both for the taxpayer  
and for those who are killed or injured in combat and  
their loved ones. However, I must make it clear that we  
were disappointed that the Labour party's manifesto  
expressed itself against the proposal, which, in the  
current political circumstances, is a matter of some  
significance.

**Wayne David:** Will the Minister take an intervention  
on that point?

**Mr Ellwood:** Yes, if the hon. Gentleman will be  
helpful and say that he might be reconsidering.

**Mike Gapes (in the Chair):** Order. I do not think that  
interventions necessarily have to be helpful.

**Wayne David:** I am so pleased you said that, Mr Gapes.  
I was not going to introduce party politics into the  
debate, but as the Minister has done so, I want to make  
it absolutely clear that the Opposition want fairness and  
transparency, but that we also recognise that we live in a  
parliamentary democracy in which the rule of law is a  
cornerstone. I understand the operational necessities of  
conflict, but it is important that we always bear that in  
mind.

**Mr Ellwood:** I think it is probably too late to amend  
the armed forces Bill, which is passing through the  
House of Lords as we speak, but maybe if the hon.  
Gentleman and I have a quiet coffee, we will find there  
is some compromise to be had. I hope he would agree  
that the thrust of the consultation and the Government's  
proposals make sense, but I am happy to discuss them  
with him in more detail if he is minded to do so. We  
certainly believe that the arguments for making these  
changes are compelling, and we will announce how we  
intend to proceed as soon as possible. Of course, we can  
do that even earlier if Labour Members are inclined to  
support the proposals.

3.44 pm

**Mike Kane:** There is a scientific law known as Graham's  
law, which says that gaseous material expands to fill the  
room. In the graveyard shift, with four contributions,  
we have gone on for quite some time and explored these  
very important issues in great detail. We are beginning  
to get some more clarity about the Government's thinking.

I thank the hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw  
(Marion Fellows). We often spar in this place over  
education issues, and it is rare that we agree on so many  
things, but I thought she spoke extraordinarily eloquently.  
She highlighted the issue of veterans with mental health  
issues. My concern is that the compensation scheme  
currently pays out but does not look at the long-term  
health implications for people who need adaptations,  
equipment and generally help to live. She rightly said  
that we look for the best possible compensation package.

My Front-Bench colleague, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Caerphilly (Wayne David), always speaks so eloquently.  
He talked about having the best and most appropriate  
possible compensation for armed services personnel

423WH

Combat Compensation

20 JULY 2017

Combat Compensation

424WH

*[Mike Kane]*

and their families. He particularly highlighted issues  
around liability and said that fairness and transparency  
should be at the heart of the system.

The Minister gave his own extraordinary personal  
testimony in the light of the death of Keith Palmer.  
That will stay with him for the rest of his life. I wish him  
the best, along with his family and children, who he  
mentioned and who will grow up with that incident. He  
is in my thoughts and prayers.

The Minister promised to write to me on some of the  
finer details. Is it correct that primary legislation will be  
needed to introduce this system? When are the Government  
thinking of introducing that? I am glad that he praised  
the Labour manifesto; that was very courteous of him.

At the moment, there is a point of division between  
us. It would be great if the Front-Bench teams could go  
for coffee at some stage and reach some unanimity, but  
currently we stand divided, and we will have to see how  
this plays out in the weeks and months ahead. I am  
grateful to the Minister for his courteous and reflective  
response, to the other Members who have contributed  
and, as ever, to you for your chairmanship, Mr Gapes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Government proposals for  
better combat compensation.

3.48 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

1WS

Written Statements

10 JULY 2017

Written Statements

2WS

Written Statements

*Monday 10 July 2017*

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL  
STRATEGY**

Environmental Council: June

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy  
and Industrial Strategy (Claire Perry):** I attended the  
EU Environment Council in Luxembourg on 19 June  
along with the Under-Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member  
for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey).

I wish to update the House on the matters discussed.  
*The Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) and Land Use,  
Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation (LULUCF)*

The Maltese presidency introduced an exchange of  
views on these two regulations which, alongside the EU  
emissions trading system, will implement the EU's 2030  
emissions reduction target under the Paris agreement.  
On the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR), views were  
sought on the idea of a safety reserve put forward by  
the presidency to address concerns from some member  
states on the starting point for the 2021-2030 emissions  
trajectory. On the Land Use, Land Use Change and  
Forestry (LULUCF) regulation, views were sought on  
how to account for forest reference levels. Member state  
views remain divided on the best way to balance fairness,  
environmental integrity and cost efficiency across the  
dossiers. However, delegations reiterated the importance  
of making progress in order to reach agreement at  
October's Environment Council. This in turn would  
help reinforce EU climate leadership ahead of the next  
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change  
Conference of the parties in November.

On both dossiers, the UK spoke in support of the  
Commission's original proposals, highlighting the  
importance of environmental integrity and appropriate  
flexibility, but recognised the concerns of other member  
states and indicated a willingness to work constructively  
with others to reach an agreement. On the ESR, the UK  
noted some concerns with the current design of the  
proposed safety reserve, but was open to it in principle.  
On LULUCF, we spoke alongside several other member  
states in expressing a preference for forest reference  
levels to be based on historic policies, to help ensure  
biomass emissions are fully reflected in LULUCF  
accounting.

*US decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement*

Environment Ministers debated the United States'  
announcement of its intention to withdraw from the  
Paris agreement, noting that the Foreign Affairs Council  
(FAC) had adopted Council conclusions on the same  
subject earlier in the day. There was full support of the  
FAC position, with many member states, including the  
UK expressing deep regret at the US decision and  
reaffirming that the Paris agreement cannot be renegotiated.  
While underscoring that the Paris agreement was irreversible,  
the UK also noted that the EU should leave the door  
open for the US to review its decision.

The Netherlands called on member states to provide  
funding to make up the shortfall in funding to the  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)  
and the UK, along with other member states, responded  
positively towards this suggestion.

*EU Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy*

Council adopted Council conclusions on the Action  
Plan, which seeks to improve the practical implementation  
of the habitats and birds directive and boost their  
contribution towards reaching the EU's biodiversity  
targets for 2020.

*AOB items*

*AOB—waste package—state of play*

The presidency updated Council on the waste (circular  
economy) package. Many member states, UK included,  
noted that further discussion on the file would be welcome,  
particularly on the achievability of targets across all  
member states. The UK highlighted the variance of  
current municipal recycling rates across England, the  
challenge faced in urban areas and recognised the success  
in Wales.

*AOB—urban adaptation plans for cities with more than  
100,000 inhabitants in Poland—Information*

The Polish delegation presented information on the  
climate implications of their urban adaptation plans.  
*AOB—Member state ratification of the Kigali amendment  
to the Montreal protocol—information*

The Commission presented information on the Kigali  
amendment to the Montreal protocol.

*AOB—Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conferences of  
the Parties—information*

The presidency and the Commission together updated  
the Council on the outcomes of the international meeting  
on the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.  
*AOB—Role of women in mountain regions—information*

The Austrian delegation presented information on  
the role of women in mountain regions.

*AOB—UN oceans conference—information*

The Swedish delegation presented information on the  
outcome of the UN oceans conference.

*AOB—11th Nano-authorities dialogue—information*

The Luxembourg, Austrian and German delegations  
together presented information on the recommendations  
adopted at the 11th Nano-authorities dialogue.  
*AOB—Estonian presidency work programme—information*

The incoming Estonian presidency set out the Council  
work programme for the next six months.

[HCWS33]

**EDUCATION**

Teacher Update

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening):**The 27th report of the School Teachers' Review Body  
(STRB) is being published today. Its recommendations  
cover the remit that I issued in October 2016. The  
report contains recommendations on the pay award for  
teachers that is due to be implemented from September  
2017, which are consistent with the Government's 1% public

3WS

Written Statements

10 JULY 2017

Written Statements

4WS

sector pay policy. Copies of the STRB's 27th report are  
available in the Vote Office, the Printed Paper Office  
and the Libraries of the House, and online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The STRB has recommended an uplift of 1 % to the  
minima and maxima of all pay ranges and allowances  
in the national pay framework, other than the minimum  
and maximum of the main pay range, to which they  
have recommended a 2% uplift. Following previous  
reforms, schools already have significant flexibility, within  
the pay ranges, to set pay for individual teachers, taking  
account of performance and retention. Nevertheless,  
those at the bottom of the main pay scale will receive an  
automatic 2% increase, a small proportion of teachers.  
As such it is consistent with the Government's public  
sector 1 % pay policy.

A full list of the recommendations is attached as an  
annex.

My officials will write to all of the statutory consultees  
of the STRB to invite them to contribute to a consultation  
on my acceptance of these recommendations and on a  
revised “School Teachers' Pay and Conditions” document  
and pay order. The consultation will last for three  
weeks.

I am grateful to the STRB for these recommendations  
and, subject to the views of consultees, I intend to  
accept all the key recommendations.

My detailed response contains further information  
on these matters.

Attachments can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-statements/written-  
statement/Commons/2017-07-10/HCWS34/.

[HCWS34]

5WS

Written Statements

11 JULY 2017

Written Statements

6WS

Written Statements

*Tuesday 11 July 2017*

**CABINET OFFICE**

Members' Correspondence

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** I am today publishing  
a report on the performance of Departments and Agencies  
on handling correspondence from Members and Peers  
during the calendar year 2016. Details are set out in the  
attachment below. Correspondence statistics for 2015  
can be found on 21 July 2016, Volume 613 (HCWS118).

Departmental figures are based on substantive replies  
unless otherwise indicated. The footnotes to the table  
provide general background information on how the  
figures have been compiled.

Attachments can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-statements/written-  
statement/Commons/2017-07-11/HCWS35/  
Correspondence Table 2016 (Correspondence Table  
2016.doc)

[HCWS35]

**TREASURY**

ECOFIN: 11 July 2017

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**A meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council  
(ECOFIN) will be held in Brussels on 11 July 2017. The  
UK will be represented by Sir Tim Barrow, Permanent  
Representative of the United Kingdom to the European  
Union. European Finance Ministers will discuss the  
following items:  
*Early morning session*

The Eurogroup President will brief Ministers on the  
outcomes of the 10 July meeting of the Eurogroup, and  
Ministers will discuss the current economic situation.  
*Current financial service legislative proposals*

The Council presidency will provide an update on  
current legislative proposals in the field of financial  
services.

*Mandatory disclosure rules*

The Commission will give a presentation on the proposal  
for a Council directive amending directive regarding the  
mandatory automatic exchange of information in the  
field of taxation in relation to reportable cross-border  
arrangements.

*Presentation of the work programme of the Estonian  
presidency*

The new Estonian presidency of the Council of the  
European Union will present its work programme for  
the next six-month period. The Council will exchange  
views on the work programme.

*Commission mid-term review of the capital markets union  
action plan*

The Council will be asked to endorse Council conclusions  
on the mid-term review of the capital markets union  
action plan.

*Non-performing loans*

ECOFIN will hold an exchange of views on policy  
responses to the non-performing loans situation. The  
Council will also be asked to endorse Council conclusions.

[HCWS36]

**DEFENCE**

Chemical Weapons Convention

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mark  
Lancaster):** My right hon. Friend the Minister of State  
in the House of Lords (The Earl Howe) has made the  
following written statement:

The Defence Minister for the House of Lords, Lord Howe:  
The UK's chemical protection programme is designed to protect  
against the use of chemical weapons. Such a programme is  
permitted by the chemical weapons convention, with which the  
United Kingdom are fully compliant. Under the terms of the  
convention, we are required to provide information annually to  
the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In  
accordance with the Government's commitment to openness, I  
am placing a copy of the summary that has been provided to the  
Organisation outlining the UK's chemical protection programme  
in 2016 in the Library of the House.

[HCWS37]

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

Northern Ireland Finances

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James  
Brokenshire):** In my statement to the House on 3 July, I  
made it clear that the UK Government will always  
uphold their ultimate responsibilities for political stability  
and good governance in Northern Ireland. With that  
in mind, I have been keeping under review the financial  
situation in Northern Ireland absent an Executive. Having  
reflected on the situation, and following further advice  
from the head of the Northern Ireland civil service, I  
have concluded that it will be necessary for me to  
provide additional clarity ahead of the summer recess  
to support Northern Ireland permanent secretaries in  
addressing financial pressures and maintaining public  
services. Following the public holidays in Northern  
Ireland this week, I therefore, intend to lay a further  
written statement before the House next week with  
adjusted indicative budget positions and departmental  
allocations. This will take account of the Barnett  
consequentials arising from the spring Budget, and  
funding as may be available from budget transfers and  
updated forecasts.

[HCWS38]

7WS

Written Statements

12 JULY 2017

Written Statements

8WS

Written Statements

*Wednesday 12 July 2017*

**TREASURY**

NHS Technology

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health  
(Jackie Doyle-Price):** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary  
Under-Secretary of State for Health (Lord O'Shaughnessy)  
has made the following written statement in the House  
of Lords:

I am today publishing the Government response to the public  
consultation on the National Data Guardian for Health and  
Care's (NDG) and Care Quality Commission's (CQC) data security  
reviews. A copy of the response is available at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-data-  
security-standards-for-health-and-social-care](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-data-security-standards-for-health-and-social-care)

Boosting cyber resilience, improving the response to data and  
cyber incidents and providing clarity on the handling of personal  
data remain an urgent priority for the health and care sector.

Following consultation which closed on 7 July 2016, the  
Government accept the recommendations from the two independent  
data security reviews published in 2016.

Through the consultation, we heard broad support for Dame  
Fiona Caldicott's recommended data security standards and opt-out  
model, alongside a clear message that we need to carefully think  
through and approach all elements of implementation. Other key  
themes in the responses to the consultation related to the need to  
build public trust through providing clarity and communicating  
clearly with the public and professionals.

The global WannaCry ransomware attack in May 2017, which  
affected many other countries' services as well as our own health  
and care system, has reaffirmed the potential for data and cyber  
incidents to impact directly on patient care, as well as the need for  
our health and care system to act decisively to minimise the  
impact on essential frontline services.

The Government response includes wide-ranging plans to  
strengthen organisations across the NHS and social care against  
the threat of global cyber-attacks.

The immediate and longer-term actions are centred on ensuring  
local organisations are implementing the 10 data security standards  
proposed in the NDG review, supported by the national cyber  
support services provided by NHS Digital, backed up by clear  
contractual obligations, and by assurance and regulatory action.

Investment in data and cyber security will be boosted above  
£50 million and will include a new £21 million capital fund which  
will increase the cyber resilience of major trauma sites.

NHS Digital is already supporting local organisations by  
broadcasting alerts about cyber threats, providing a hotline for  
dealing with incidents, sharing best practice across the health and  
care system and carrying out on-site assessments to mitigate  
against cyber-attacks.

The NHS contract now requires NHS organisations to implement  
and adopt data security standards as recommended by the independent  
NDG for Health and Care.

Chief executives will also be held to account for standards that  
are being implemented and maintained and this will be assessed  
during inspections by the Care Quality Commission from September  
this year.

The Government's response also includes steps to give patients  
and the public more access to, and control over, their personal  
data while building confidence in the importance of secure data  
to provide better individual care and treatment, as well as supporting  
research and planning across the health system.

As the chief medical officer's recent report on genomics showed,  
better use of data and technology has the power to improve  
health outcomes, deliver better patient experience, transform the  
quality of care patients receive and support improvements across  
the health and social care system—now and in the future. Staff  
and patients will benefit from reduced bureaucracy, freeing up  
more time for patient care, and leading to more accurate diagnoses  
and more personalised treatment.

I want to thank Dame Fiona Caldicott, her team and the Care  
Quality Commission for their important and considered reviews  
and recommendations, which can be found at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-data-  
security-consent-and-opt-outs](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-data-security-consent-and-opt-outs)  
[http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/safe-data-safe-  
care](http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/safe-data-safe-care)

Attachments can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-statements/written-  
statement/Commons/2017-07-12/HCWS40/

[HCWS40]

**HOME DEPARTMENT**

Extremism

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department  
(Amber Rudd):** I am today announcing the main findings  
of the Home Office's internal review into the nature,  
scale and origin of the funding of Islamist extremist  
activity in the UK, including any overseas sources. The  
review was commissioned by the former Prime Minister,  
David Cameron, on 30 November 2015. It gives us the  
best picture we have ever had of how extremists operating  
in the UK sustain their activities. The review did not  
include either the funding of terrorism, which is a better  
understood area, or the funding of extremism overseas  
from UK sources.

Having taken advice, I have decided against publishing  
the classified report produced during the review in full.  
This is because of the volume of personal information  
it contains and for national security reasons. We will be  
inviting Privy Counsellors from the Opposition parties  
to the Home Office to have access to classified report on  
Privy Council terms.

The main finding of the review is as follows:

The most common source of support for Islamist extremist  
organisations in the UK is from small, anonymous public  
donations, with the majority of these donations most likely  
coming from UK-based individuals. In some cases these  
organisations receive hundreds of thousands of pounds a  
year. This is the main source of their income. Those giving  
may not know or support the organisations' full agenda.

The review also made the following findings:

Some Islamic organisations of extremist concern portray  
themselves as charities to increase their credibility and to  
take advantage of Islam's emphasis on charity. Some are  
purposefully vague about their activities and their charitable  
status.

Regulation can be effective in improving transparency. There  
is some evidence of organisations of extremist concern seeking  
to avoid regulatory oversight.

For a small number of organisations with which there are  
extremism concerns, overseas funding is a significant source  
of income. However, for the vast majority of extremist  
groups in the UK, overseas funding is not a significant  
source.

9WS

Written Statements

12 JULY 2017

Written Statements

10WS

Overseas support has allowed individuals to study at institutions  
that teach deeply conservative forms of Islam and provide  
highly socially conservative literature and preachers to the  
UK's Islamic institutions. Some of these individuals have  
since become of extremist concern.

Fundamentally, no single measure will tackle all the  
issues of concern raised in the review. A comprehensive  
approach focused particularly on domestic sources of  
support for all forms of extremism is needed. The  
Government have looked carefully at the review's findings  
and will build on existing work by:

Continuing to deliver public awareness campaigns to encourage  
people to understand the full aims of the organisations that  
they give to, reducing the amount of funding organisations  
of extremist concern are able to raise from the public in  
the UK.

Raising awareness across the financial services sector  
and grant making trusts and foundations of extremism

concerns. These organisations have an interest in ensuring  
they are not inadvertently supporting extremist individuals  
or organisations.

Reducing the ability of organisations of extremist concern  
to avoid official scrutiny by increasing the proportion of  
organisations subject to regulatory oversight. We are  
strengthening our work with the Charity Commission, which  
includes addressing the abuse of charities for terrorist or  
extremist purposes as one of its strategic priorities.

The Charity Commission will be introducing a requirement  
on charities to declare overseas funding sources. The Commission  
has been discussing this issue with charities over recent  
months.

Directly raising issues of concern, supported by evidence,  
with specific countries as part of our wider international  
engagement on countering extremism and violent extremism.

[HCWS39]

11WS

Written Statements

13 JULY 2017

Written Statements

12WS

Written Statements

*Thursday 13 July 2017*

**TREASURY**

**Finance Bill**

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):**The Finance Bill introduced in March 2017 provided  
for a number of changes to tax legislation that were  
withdrawn from the Bill after the calling of the general  
election. The then Financial Secretary to the Treasury  
confirmed at the point they were withdrawn that there  
was no policy change and that these provisions would  
be legislated for at the first opportunity in the new  
Parliament.

The Government confirm that intention. They expect  
to introduce a Finance Bill as soon as possible after the  
summer recess containing the withdrawn provisions.  
Where policies have been announced as applying from  
the start of the 2017-18 tax year or other point before  
the introduction of the forthcoming Finance Bill, there  
is no change of policy and these dates of application  
will be retained. Those affected by the provisions should  
continue to assume that they will apply as originally  
announced.

The Finance Bill to be introduced will legislate for  
policies that have already been announced. In the case  
of some provisions that will apply from a time before  
the Bill is introduced, technical adjustments and additions  
to the versions contained in the March Bill will be made  
on introduction to ensure that they function as intended.  
To maximise certainty about the exact provisions that  
will apply, the Government are today publishing updated  
draft provisions.

The Finance Bill will include legislation for the Making  
Tax Digital (MTD) programme. Having listened carefully  
to the concerns raised by the Treasury Committee,  
parliamentarians and stakeholders, the Government are  
announcing policy changes that will be reflected in the  
legislation to be introduced. Businesses will not be  
mandated to use the MTD system until April 2019 and  
then only to meet VAT obligations. This will apply to  
businesses with turnover above the VAT threshold.  
Businesses with turnover below the VAT threshold will  
not be required to use the system but can choose to do  
so. Businesses will also be able to opt in for other taxes,  
benefiting from a streamlined, digital experience.

The Government will not widen the scope of MTD  
beyond VAT before the system has been shown to work  
well, and not before April 2020 at the earliest. This will  
ensure that there is time to test the system fully and for  
digital record keeping to become more widespread.

[HCWS47]

**Fiscal Risks Report**

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has today  
published its first fiscal risks report (FRR). The report  
highlights that although the Government have made  
significant progress in reducing the deficit, debt remains  
high leaving the economy and public finances vulnerable

in the event of shocks. The FRR fulfils the OBR's legal  
obligation to publish a statement setting out the main risks  
to the public finances at least once every two years. It  
was laid before Parliament earlier today and copies are  
available in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office.

The Government welcome this first FRR which keeps  
the UK at the frontier of fiscal practice worldwide. The  
establishment of the OBR has ensured that policy is  
made on an unbiased view of future prospects, improving  
confidence in the fiscal forecasts, and the publication of  
this report represents a significant further step taken by  
this Government to enhance fiscal transparency and  
management. This Government's commitment to fiscal  
openness was recognised by the IMF in its 2016 fiscal  
transparency evaluation which found the UK to be “at  
the forefront of fiscal reporting practices worldwide”.  
The publication of the FRR today addresses one of the  
recommendations of that evaluation as well as the findings  
of recent NAO reports on risks to the public finances.  
The Government will respond formally to the FRR  
within the next year, as required under the Charter for  
Budget Responsibility.

Over the past seven years, the Government have  
taken important steps to reduce the UK's exposure to  
fiscal risks. The 2008 crisis was a dramatic illustration  
of the danger of ignoring potential threats to the public  
finances. Since 2010, the Government have reduced the  
country's exposure to fiscal risks through cutting the  
deficit by three-quarters from its post-war high of 9.9% of  
GDP, while protecting public services and delivering  
improved outcomes across health, education and policing  
and overseen record levels of employment, with over  
2.9 million more people into work. The Government  
have also delivered far reaching reforms to financial  
supervision which has significantly reduced the likelihood  
and impact of financial instability. Today, the Government  
are announcing a new approval regime for Government  
guarantees and other contingent liabilities representing  
a further enhancement to the UK's public expenditure  
control framework which the IMF and other international  
commentators recognise as being one of the strongest  
in the world.

Despite this progress, the OBR's report shows that  
the UK's fiscal position remains vulnerable. The legacy  
of the great recession remains, with debt forecast to  
peak this year at almost 90% of GDP—its highest level  
in 50 years. The unprecedented deficit that the Government  
inherited in 2010, which the Government have been  
cutting since 2010, and which saw us spend £4 for every  
£3 we raised in tax, is the cause of the rapid increase in  
debt. This report examines a broad spectrum of risks,  
and illustrates the potential impact on the public finances  
of a number of these risks materialising at the same  
time through an innovative “fiscal stress test”. Failing  
to have a credible plan to get the debt down would  
expose the UK to greater risk, which could have devastating  
consequences for our public services in the event of a  
new shock. The report also highlights risks from an  
ageing society and the erosion of tax bases.

That is why the Government remain determined to  
learn the lessons of the past and bolster the UK's fiscal  
resilience. The Government's fiscal rules are designed to  
guide the public finances back to balance at a pace  
sensitive to the needs of the economy. The structural  
deficit must be below 2% of GDP and debt must be  
falling as a share of GDP by 2020-21. The OBR forecasts

13WS

Written Statements

13 JULY 2017

Written Statements

14WS

that the Government are on track to meet both of their  
fiscal targets and that debt will start falling as a share of  
GDP before the end of the decade. It is vitally important  
that we continue with our plan to get the debt to GDP  
ratio down to improve our resilience and address the  
risks highlighted by the report.

The Government are also working to ensure fiscal  
sustainability over the long term. The Government are  
taking important steps to enhance the UK's long-run  
productivity. Since 2010 there has been over a quarter  
of a trillion pounds of public and private investment in  
infrastructure. Looking ahead, the Government are  
investing more in economic infrastructure, innovation  
and housing through the £23 billion national productivity  
investment fund by 2021-22. They are also transforming  
technical education for 16 to 19-year-olds through the  
introduction of T-levels, increasing by over 50% the  
number of hours of training, and including a high-quality  
three-month work placement for every student, giving  
young people the technical skills they need to succeed in  
the world of work, and businesses the edge they need to  
compete in the global economy. Stronger growth through  
raising productivity is the only sustainable way to deliver  
economic resilience, higher real wages and increased  
living standards in the long run.

[HCWS46]

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** Agriculture and Fisheries Council will take  
place on 17 and 18 July in Brussels.

As the provisional agenda stands, the primary focus  
for fisheries will be a presentation by the Commission  
on the state of play of the common fisheries policy and  
consultation on the fishing opportunities for 2018.

On agriculture, there will be a debrief on the outcome  
of the recent trilogue discussions concerning the proposal  
for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the  
Council on organic production and labelling of organic  
products.

The Council will also exchange views on modernising  
and simplifying the common agricultural policy,  
implementation of the May 2015 Council conclusions,  
trade-related agricultural issues and wine labelling.

The Estonian presidency, whose presidency term  
commenced on 1 July, will present their six-month work  
programme to the Council.

There are currently 11 items scheduled under any other  
business:

A European One Health Action Plan against antimicrobial  
resistance (tabled by the Commission).

African swine fever: state of play (tabled by the Commission).  
Symposium on the future of food in the EU (Brussels,  
27 June 2017) (tabled by the Maltese, Slovak and Netherlands  
delegations).

The consequences of the mandatory food origin labelling on  
the internal market (tabled by the Belgian delegation).

Meeting on dual quality of foodstuffs (Bratislava, 30 May 2017)  
(tabled by the Slovak delegation).

Dual quality of foodstuffs—presentation of the latest study  
(tabled by the Czech delegation).

Meeting of the Ministers of agriculture of the Visegrad  
Group countries and Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia (Nadarzyn  
near Warsaw, 2 June 2017) (tabled by the Polish delegation).  
Trade practices applied by third countries vis-a-vis  
EU-responsible EU member states (tabled by the Czech  
delegation).

International ministerial conference on “GMO free agriculture:  
a chance for rural development in Central and South Eastern  
Europe” (Vienna, 9-10 May 2017) (tabled by the Austrian  
delegation).

AU-EU agriculture ministerial conference on “Making  
Sustainable Agriculture a Future for Youth in Africa” (Rome,  
2 July 2017) (tabled by the Commission).

Drought in Portugal (tabled by the Portuguese delegation).

Until exit negotiations are concluded, the UK remains  
a full member of the European Union and all the rights  
and obligations of EU membership remain in force.  
The outcome of these negotiations will determine what  
arrangements apply in relation to EU legislation in future  
once the UK has left the EU.

[HCWS42]

United Nations Ocean Conference

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Therese Coffey):** I would like  
to update the House on the recent United Nations  
ocean conference, held in New York from 5-9June.  
Although I was unable to attend due to the pre-election  
period Defra's deputy director for marine policy led the  
United Kingdom delegation. I wish to convey to the  
House the global importance of the conference and  
summarise its key outcomes.

The UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development,  
commonly referred to as SDGs or the UN 2030 agenda,  
areacollectionof 17 goals that set the global environment  
and development agenda from 2016 to 2030. They cut  
across all areas of Government, from ending poverty  
and achieving gender equality through to tackling climate  
change and using resources sustainably.

Theconferencewasanattempttogalvaniseinternational  
action on the implementation of SDG 14: Conserve  
and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources  
for sustainable development. This SDG tackles a range  
of marine issues such as marine pollution and ocean  
acidification.

It produced two major outcomes: a call for action  
andaregistryof over 1300 voluntary commitments made  
bytheglobalcommunityto support the implementation  
of SDG14.

I am pleased to report that, through our statement to  
the conference, the UK Government were able to  
demonstrate our continued support for the SDG process.  
We recognise the delivery of SDG 14 has a particular  
significance for small island developing states and least  
developed countries and that we would continue to  
supporttheCommonwealthmarineeconomiesprogramme,  
in developing sustainable ocean economies, alleviating  
poverty, and mitigating the effects of climate change  
and environmental threats.

The UK Government statement noted that climate  
change and ocean acidification continue to be significant  
threatstothelongtermhealthof ouroceans.Wehighlighted  
the major role the UK played in securing the Paris  
Agreement and reiterated our commitment to its  
implementation.

15WS

Written Statements

13 JULY 2017

Written Statements

16WS

I am also pleased to report that, recognising the need  
to take action on pollution from land-based sources,  
including the increasing amount of plastics and micro-  
plastics, the UK was able to sign up to the UN environment  
clean seas campaign.

The expertise of our marine science industry was  
demonstrated through the successful ocean acidification  
event led by the UK.

The UK also made four voluntary commitments to  
support the implementation of SDG14, highlighting  
our work on marine protected areas, including in the  
overseas territories; marine science; marine litter and  
the Commonwealth marine economies programme. These  
can be viewed on the conference website at:

<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>

The call for action was agreed by consensus at the  
conference although the United States dissociated itself  
from the language on the WTO and recalled the US  
administration position on the Paris Agreement. The  
call highlights particular action to be taken on a number  
of issues including: the need to increase scientific knowledge,  
prevention of pollution, in particular from plastics;  
delivering sustainable fisheries and improving access to  
market for small scale artisanal fisheries in developing  
countries; concluding negotiations in the World Trade  
Organisation (WTO) on fishery subsidies; and encouraging  
active engagement in the discussions on the development  
of an international legally binding instrument on the  
conservation and sustainable use of marine biological  
diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The call  
for action is available at:

<https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction>

[HCWS44]

**EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

EU Exit: July Negotiating Round

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union  
(Mr David Davis):** Next week the UK's negotiating  
team will travel to Brussels for the second round of  
talks, continuing our journey towards a new, deep and  
special partnership between the UK and the EU.

Today, in advance of those discussions, I am publishing  
three position papers that the UK negotiating team will  
discuss with our EU counterparts next week.  
*Ongoing Union judicial and administrative proceedings*

The UK's departure from the EU will end the jurisdiction  
of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)  
in the UK. However, there will be cases before the CJEU  
that involve the UK as a party on the day of the UK's  
withdrawal, which by definition relate to the period  
when the UK was a member of the EU. These will need  
to be resolved satisfactorily as part of a smooth and  
orderly exit. A similar issue arises for EU administrative  
procedures involving the UK.  
*Nuclear safeguards and materials*

The UK will withdraw from EURATOM when it  
leaves the EU. However, the UK and the EU have a  
strong mutual interest in continuing to co-operate on  
civil nuclear matters, harnessing shared expertise and  
maximising shared interests, for instance in nuclear  
research and development. As part of our orderly

withdrawal and to provide certainty to industry, it is  
therefore important the negotiating teams work through  
issues relating to nuclear materials and non-proliferation  
(safeguards).

*Privileges and immunities*

The UK recognises the need for certain privileges and  
immunities to apply for a limited period after exit, in  
order to allow the EU a reasonable time in which to  
wind up its current operations in the UK. Looking  
ahead to the deep and special partnership, the UK  
wants to put in place a legally acceptable framework of  
privileges and immunities that allows for the smooth  
conduct of relations between the UK and the EU.

In addition to discussing these and other technical  
withdrawal issues next week, the two negotiating teams  
will also focus on citizens' rights, the question of a  
financial settlement, and Northern Ireland and Ireland.

On citizens' rights, the Government's priority remains  
providing certainty as soon as possible to EU citizens  
living in the UK, and UK nationals in the EU. To that  
end, we will use next week's round to review the technical  
elements of the EU and UK proposals, identifying areas  
of alignment and those where further work is required  
by both parties.

On the financial settlement, as set out in the Prime  
Minister's letter to President Tusk, the Government  
have been clear that we will work with the EU to  
determine a fair settlement of the UK's rights and  
obligations as a departing member state, in accordance  
with the law and in the spirit of our continuing partnership.  
The Government recognise that the UK has obligations  
to the EU, and the EU obligations to the UK, that will  
survive the UK's withdrawal—and that these need to be  
resolved.

Finally, in June, I agreed with Michel Barnier to  
establish a dialogue on Northern Ireland and Ireland,  
which in recognition of its importance is led by the UK  
and EU co-ordinators. Both parties are committed to  
the Belfast agreement, avoiding a return to a hard  
border, ensuring that nothing is done that jeopardises  
the peace process, and preserving the common travel  
area and associated arrangements. Our focus next week  
will be on discussing how to ensure the preservation of  
the common travel area, and to restate our shared  
commitment to the Belfast agreement.

The position papers published today are available on  
the Government website, and I have arranged for copies  
to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The  
Government will publish further position papers on  
other issues in due course, providing more information  
to business and individuals, and informing our negotiations  
with the EU. In addition, the Government will publish  
technical notes shared with the EU, and may agree  
joint publications with the EU as part of the ongoing  
negotiations.

[HCWS43]

**HEALTH**

**Ambulance Response Programme**

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):**I am today announcing the publication of the University  
of Sheffield report on the ambulance response programme  
and subsequent recommendations by Sir Bruce Keogh,  
NHS England's national medical director. The report

17WS

Written Statements

13 JULY 2017

Written Statements

18WS

evaluates a series of pilots that I announced to the House  
in my written statement of 6 January 2015, intended to  
support ambulance services in England to maintain and  
improve clinical outcomes for patients in the face of  
unprecedented increases in demand. Copies of the report  
and Sir Bruce's recommendations are attached.

Based on the extensive evidence base detailed in the  
report, NHS England is proposing a new framework of  
ambulance performance standards and related operational  
changes that are focused on patients' clinical needs and  
will help the service to operate more efficiently. In particular:  
enabling ambulances to dispatch resources much more clearly  
based on the clinical needs of patients ensuring the consistent  
delivery of very rapid responses to those who genuinely need  
them, through putting in place a four tier response time  
based on the clinical needs of patients;

introducing specific standards for stroke and heart attack,  
aimed at ensuring patients start the right treatment in hospital  
as quickly as possible;

improving performance management of “tail” waits by  
introducing mean and 90th centile measures; and,  
achieving greater consistency and transparency for less urgent  
calls by bringing all response standards into a consistent  
national framework.

These ambulance response times are more stringent  
than anywhere else in the UK. Moreover, evidence from  
the pilots suggest that these changes will be beneficial  
for rural populations, narrowing the gap which currently  
exists in the time it takes for an ambulance resource to  
transport patients to hospital.

In my statement in January 2015 I said I would apply  
the following three tests before extending the ambulance  
response programme:

there is clear clinical consensus that the proposed change  
will be beneficial to patient outcomes as a whole, and will act  
to reduce overall clinical risk in the system;

there is evidence from the analysis of existing data and  
piloting that the proposed change will have the intended  
benefits, and is safe for patients; and,

there is an associated increase in operational efficiency. The  
aim is to reduce the average number of vehicles allocated to  
each 999 call and the ambulance utilisation rate.

I have accepted Sir Bruce's advice that these tests have  
been met. I am authorising NHS England to implement  
the ambulance response programme recommendations  
in all ambulance services in England so that patients  
across the country will benefit from the improvements  
seen in the pilot ambulance services.

1. Report on Ambulance Response Programme  
(ARPReport\_Final.pdf)

2. Letter with Sir Bruce Keogh's recommendations  
(13.7.17 Jeremy Hunt - Ambulance Response Programme  
letter.pdf)

The above documents can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-statements/written-  
statement/Commons/2017-07-13/HCWS45/ .

[HCWS45]

TRANSPORT

Aviation Update

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**In October 2016, the Government selected a new north-west  
runway at Heathrow as its preferred scheme for delivering  
new airport capacity in the south-east.

In February a consultation on a draft airports national  
policy statement was launched, which set out the reasons  
for this preference, along with the mitigation and compensation  
measures the Government expect the promoter to put in  
place if planning permission is to be granted.

The consultation closed on 25 May and the work to  
analyse the over 70,000 responses is progressing well. I  
would like to thank all of those who contributed their  
views.

The Government are fully committed to realising the  
benefits that a new northwest runway at Heathrow  
would bring, in terms of economic growth, boosting  
jobs and skills, strengthening domestic links and critically,  
increasing and developing our international connectivity  
as we prepare to leave the European Union.

The timing of the election, in particular the need to  
re-start a Select Committee inquiry into the draft airports  
NPS means we now expect to lay any final NPS in  
Parliament in the first half of 2018, for a vote in the  
House of Commons.

I will provide a further update to the House after the  
summer recess on our next steps following analysis of  
the consultation responses.

Today I am also publishing a response to the consultation  
held earlier this year on a new night flight regime for  
Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. I am fully aware that  
noise is a major concern for those living near these  
airports, and that night noise is widely regarded as the  
most disturbing impact of aviation. While advances in  
new technology mean that aircraft are generally getting  
quieter, the limits governing night noise at these airports  
has not kept pace with these developments.

The new rules we are publishing today will encourage  
the use of quieter aircraft at all three airports by reducing  
the amount of noise these airports are legally allowed  
to make, and will give local residents a five year guarantee  
about the level of noise that they will be exposed to.  
This decision strikes a balance between managing the  
impacts on local communities by locking in the benefits  
offered by recent technological developments, with the  
economic benefits of night flights.

This decision should be seen as a signal that the  
Government take this issue very seriously, which is why  
we expect a ban on scheduled night flights of 6.5 hours  
at an expanded Heathrow. We will also explore whether  
there is more we can do, including considering further  
legislation to incentivise the industry more generally to  
invest in the quietest aircraft and operate them in the  
quietest way.

Strong international links are critical to the future  
prosperity of our country, with a world-class hub airport  
and thriving aviation sector central to this. We are  
committed to realising the economic and social benefits  
aviation has to offer, while taking seriously the need to  
balance this with managing the local and environmental  
impacts of aviation.

[HCWS41]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Pensions

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr David  
Gauke):** In February this year, the Department for  
Work and Pensions published a Green Paper looking at

19WS

Written Statements

13 JULY 2017

Written Statements

20WS

what more needs to be done to ensure consumer confidence  
and secure the future of defined benefit (final salary)  
pensions schemes.

Building on this Green Paper, the Department intends  
to publish a White Paper later this year which will set  
out proposed next steps on what reform is needed to  
support the sector. It will address the commitments in  
the Government's manifesto in relation to the regulation  
and rules governing defined benefit private pensions.  
The paper will also consider innovative delivery structures,  
such as consolidation and measures to drive efficiency  
within the sector.

While the sector is broadly working as intended, the  
White Paper will consider the need to evolve and adapt  
the regulatory regime to improve security for members.

With more than £1.5 trillion invested in these schemes,  
people need to have confidence that they are resilient  
and robustly regulated.

The Government wish to ensure that the defined  
benefit pensions system continues to balance the needs  
of consumers, the schemes themselves and business for  
the future.

Throughout the Green Paper process the Department  
has worked closely with a range of external stakeholders  
to develop sensible policy proposals. We are grateful to  
those who have contributed to the consultation and it is  
our strong intention that this collaboration should continue  
throughout the White Paper process.

[HCWS48]

21WS

Written Statements

17 JULY 2017

Written Statements

22WS

Written Statements

*Monday 17 July 2017*

**CABINET OFFICE**

**Electoral Commission Report on May 2016 Polls:  
Government Response**

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris  
Skidmore):** The Government are today publishing their  
responses to the Electoral Commission's reports on the  
administration of the Mayor of London and London  
Assembly elections and the Police and Crime Commissioner  
(PCC) elections for 2016.

We have combined our response to the report on the  
London elections with the recommendations made in  
the reports of the Association of Electoral Administrators  
(AEA) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) where  
they are relevant to those polls.

Similarly, our response to the report on the PCC  
elections also incorporates relevant recommendations  
by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the  
AEA. In addition, we have provided an annex of responses  
to additional AEA recommendations from their 2016  
report that are not relevant to these polls.

Where recommendations by the Electoral Commission  
in its two reports are identical, they have been addressed  
in our response to the PCC election.

We are grateful for the recommendations produced  
by all these organisations and thank them for their  
work. These reports aid the Government in monitoring  
the effectiveness of electoral legislation; and help us to  
make improvements and identify future policy challenges  
and possible resolutions.

The Government will continue to work with these  
organisations, as well as electoral administrators and  
other partners, to improve our electoral system and  
ensure the effective running of elections. We will take  
these recommendations into account in implementing  
the recommendations of Sir Eric Pickles' review of  
electoral fraud published last year.

Copies of these Government responses will be placed  
in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS50]

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**

**Digital Economy Act Commencement**

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** In April  
this year, Her Majesty the Queen gave Royal Assent to  
the Digital Economy Act 2017. The Act introduced  
measures to help consumers access broadband, build  
digital infrastructure, protect children from online  
pornography and enable better public services using  
digital technologies.

A number of important provisions in the Act  
have already come into force. These include powers on  
broadband USO, switching, automatic compensation  
and information powers to help consumers accessing  
electronic communications services, protection for citizens  
from nuisance calls and others.

I can today inform the House that the Government  
have made the first commencement regulations to bring  
into force a considerable number of other sections of  
the Act.

We have taken steps to implement the new age verification  
requirement for online pornography as part of our  
continuing work to make the internet safer. The new  
scheme is complex and will not be fully in place until  
April 2018, but today we are bringing into force powers  
to designate the regulator and powers to allow guidance  
to be issued.

We are also bringing into force measures to improve  
digital connectivity across the UK, starting the  
implementation of the new electronic communications  
code to assist operators to develop new infrastructure,  
putting in place planning reforms and giving powers to  
allow Ofcom to make better use of radio spectrum to  
improve mobile connectivity.

We have also started the process of implementing the  
measures in the Act that allow the Government to make  
better use of data. Powers to allow HMRC to share  
non-identifying information in the public interest will  
come into force and help deliver more effective and  
efficient public services. We will also bring into force the  
information sharing arrangement with the Employers'  
Liability Tracing Office to help those who have suffered  
personal injury as a result of employment to trace  
liability insurance policies. New provisions to enable  
public authorities to share information with the UK  
Statistics Authority will also commence.

Finally, to help consumers better manage their bills,  
we will commence powers to require mobile operators  
to offer bill limits to all their customers. To allow  
operators time to adapt their systems and processes, I  
am today announcing that the requirement will come  
into force from October 2018.

Commencing these provisions marks another significant  
milestone towards implementing the Digital Economy  
Act 2017 and delivering our digital strategy.

[HCWS51]

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

National Security Arrangements: Northern Ireland

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James  
Brokenshire):** This is a summary of the main findings  
from the report by His Honour Brian Barker QC, the  
Independent Reviewer of National Security Arrangements  
in Northern Ireland, covering the period from June  
2016 to 31 December 2016. His Honour Brian Barker  
concludes:

“I was appointed by the Secretary of State in May  
2016. I have spent time obtaining an overview of institutions,  
personalities and problems. I have been fully briefed on  
the security situation. I received presentations from  
MI5 on the practical effect of co-operation and exchange  
of intelligence. My visits to various PSNI establishments  
and to MI5 left an impression of deep commitment and  
professionalism. Strong cross-border links continue with  
An Garda Siochana, resulting in effective co-operation  
and impressive disruption.

23WS

Written Statements

17 JULY 2017

Written Statements

24WS

The aim of a more stable society, where the effect of  
local terrorism has a decreasing impact, seemed to have  
made some progress through 2016 despite a picture of  
continuing terrorist threat. It is clear, however, that  
police and prison officers face high risks both on and  
off duty. The context in which national security activities  
areperformedhavebeendescribedinthepastaschallenging,  
and continue to be so.

In preparing this report I have considered the current  
threat level, and what I have learned of events of a  
terrorist nature during the year. The number of shooting  
incidents related to the security situation for the 12 month  
period was 49, almost identical to that in 2015, while  
the number of bombing incidents, 27, was exactly half  
that recorded in 2015. There were six security/paramilitary  
related deaths in the period to December 31 2016. This  
was three times the number of the previous year.

The overall threat is real and enduring and broadly  
unchanged despite each recognisable group being somewhat  
disrupted and there being some relaxation of attitude in  
some communities. The exchange of intelligence and  
the evident co-operation between authorities continues  
to make inroads. As in recent years there have been  
successes and considerable effort devoted to containing  
and disrupting dissident groups. Nevertheless, planning  
and targeting continues and attacks occur. The threat  
from those released from custodial sentences and those  
given bail continue to present a challenge.

Dissident republican groupings remain interested and  
involved in criminality, organised crime, and money  
laundering. They express political purpose, either with  
conviction or because it is necessary so as to obscure  
criminality. Loyalist paramilitaries claim political allegiance,  
although the motivation of many is crime and control  
through intimidation and violence.

Throughout 2016 I met a range of stakeholders.  
Representatives of the Northern Ireland Policing Board  
(NIPB), the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland  
(PONI) and the Committee on Administration of Justice  
(CAJ) raised concerns about the use, control and reporting  
of covert human intelligence sources (“CHIS”) and  
whether, for example, any CHIS were working without  
PSNI knowledge. This area that has been reviewed in  
the past and I will review it in the coming year in light of  
the new Investigatory Powers Act 2016.

My meeting with the NIPB's Independent Human  
Rights Advisor, Alyson Kilpatrick, fortified my predecessor's  
high regard for her, and the important role she plays.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Barra McGrory  
QC, briefed me on some operational problems inherent  
in the prosecution of alleged terrorists. The deficiencies  
in the administration of criminal justice and the limited  
progress in case management are all too obvious.  
Applications for disclosure in major terrorism trials and  
the need for appropriate balance, continue to present  
problems. Tightening the criminal justice system by  
streamlining criminal justice processes and faster committal  
proceedings would increase public confidence.

A topic raised by several politicians was the extent of  
the activities, as well as the remit, of the National Crime  
Agency (NCA). The NCA's Head of Investigations  
informed me NCA officers in Northern Ireland can  
only exercise constabulary powers or undertake covert  
investigatory activity with the agreement of the Chief  
Constable. The PSNI are sighted on all operational

activity. The NCA has no national security function,  
but is concerned with serious crime, for example child  
exploitation and drug smuggling, including crime carried  
out by paramilitary groups. In this regard it has a good  
working relationship with MI5.1 am satisfied these  
statutory provisions are adhered to.

Progress on “the past” is still at an early stage while  
expectations for the proper and balanced understanding  
of the history in relation to the legacy inquests remain  
high. Funding is a continuing issue.

The Assistant Chief Constable responsible for policing  
the marching season reported an overall sense of reduced  
tension compared to the previous year and the 12 July  
parades passed off without serious incident. I was  
encouraged by the dismantling in early October of the  
Twaddell Avenue protest camp, which had been established  
and ongoing since 2013.

I was impressed by the standards and commitment of  
senior members of MI5 and the PSNI who provided  
unstinting time and access. My thanks are also due to  
the NIO for its support.

I have measured performance in 2016 against the five  
key principles identified in relation to national security  
in Annex E to the St Andrews Agreement of October  
2006. My conclusions in relation to Annex E can be  
viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/>  
publications/written-questions-answers-statements/  
written-statements/Commons/2017-07-17/HCWS54/.”  
[HCWS54]

**TRANSPORT**

HS2 Update

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**I would like to update the House on the progress of  
High Speed Two.

Phase One of the railway—from London to West  
Midlands—is progressing well. In February, Parliament  
granted powers to construct the route from London to  
Birmingham, including new stations at London Euston,  
Old Oak Common, Birmingham Curzon Street and  
Birmingham Interchange, near Solihull. As a result,  
enabling works on the route, contracts for which were  
awarded last November, have now started.

In March last year, the tender shortlist for Phase One  
of the main civil engineering works contracts, comprising  
bridges, tunnels, embankments and viaducts, was released.  
These are the biggest HS2 contracts to date. In a clear  
signal of how work is progressing, this morning I am  
pleased to announce the decision to award Stage 1 of  
these contracts, comprising design and construction  
preparation works, to the joint ventures set out below.  
Contracts are expected to be signed after completion of  
the mandatory standstill period. The joint ventures are  
as follows:  
*Area South*

S1—Euston Tunnels and Approaches—SCS JV (Skanska  
Construction UK Limited, Costain Limited, STRABAG AG)

S2—Northolt Tunnels—SCS JV (Skanska Construction UK  
Limited, Costain Limited, STRABAG AG)

*Area Central*

C1—Chiltern Tunnels and Colne Valley Viaduct—Align JV  
(Bouygues Travaux Publics, VolkerFitzpatrick, Sir Robert McAlpine)

25WS

Written Statements

17 JULY 2017

Written Statements

26WS

C2—North Portal Chiltern Tunnels to Brackley—CEK JV  
(Carillion Construction Limited, Eiffage Genie Civil SA, Kier  
Infrastructure and Overseas Limited)

C3—Brackley to South Portal of Long Itchington Wood Green  
Tunnel—CEK JV (Carillion Construction Limited, Eiffage Genie  
Civil SA, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Limited)  
*Area North*

N1—Long Itchington Wood Green Tunnel to Delta Junction  
and Birmingham Spur—BBV JV (Balfour Beatty Group Ltd,  
VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK  
Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement)

N2—Delta Junction to WCML Tie-In - BBV JV (Balfour  
Beatty Group Ltd, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI  
Construction UK Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement)

The expected total value of these contracts including  
both Stage 1 and Stage 2 (the full construction phase) is  
currently estimated to be worth around £6.6 billion.  
Stage 2 will commence in 2019 and, along with Stage 1,  
is expected to support 16,000 jobs across the country. In  
addition, they are expected to generate 7,000 contract  
opportunities in the supply chain, of which around  
60% are expected to go to SMEs.

HS2 stations at Euston, Old Oak Common and in  
Birmingham will be central to HS2 and the work needed  
to develop designs is also well underway. Last week,  
both the Invitations to Tender (ITTs) for the station  
design services contracts for all four Phase 1 stations  
and the Invitation to Participate in Dialogue (ITPD) for  
a Euston master development partner were released to  
shortlisted bidders. These are significant milestones.  
They show how progress is continuing at pace in order  
to deliver stations that will be embraced by the local  
communities, drive economic growth and provide seamless  
journeys for passengers.

We are also making good progress on the rest of the  
route. Later today, I will be introducing a Bill to Parliament  
seeking the necessary powers to construct Phase 2a of  
HS2, from West Midlands to Crewe. Phase 2a will bring  
HS2 within reach of all the cities in the North that have  
existing rail connections to Crewe. I will also be updating  
the House on other developments along the Phase 2  
route including decisions on the 2b route from Crewe to  
Manchester and West Midlands to Leeds.

The progress we are making with HS2 is clear evidence  
that the Government are delivering on their commitments  
and are getting on with building the infrastructure  
needed to build a stronger, fairer, more prosperous  
Britain.

[HCWS49]

**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

**Foreign Affairs Council: 17 July 2017**

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State  
for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will attend the  
Foreign Affairs Council on 17 July. The Foreign Affairs  
Council will be chaired by the High Representative of  
the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security  
Policy, Federica Mogherini. The meeting will be held in  
Brussels.

*Foreign Affairs Council*

The agenda for the July Foreign Affairs Council  
(FAC) is expected to include the EU global strategy,  
Libya and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea  
(DPRK).

*EU global strategy*

EU Foreign Ministers will discuss the second year  
priorities for the European global strategy. The UK  
remains committed to European security and will engage  
constructively in these discussions, including ensuring  
complementarity with NATO.

*Libya*

The appointment of a new UN Special Representative  
of the Security General (SRSG) makes it a timely  
moment for a stocktake on Libya. Discussion will focus  
on the latest developments in the Libya political process.  
The UK aims to build support for the Libyan political  
solution based on amending the Libyan political agreement  
to be more inclusive, and to create momentum around  
the appointment of the new SRSG Ghassan Salame.  
*DPRK*

Discussions will cover the importance of a united  
international response to the launch of a inter-continental  
ballistic missile (ICBM) by the DPRK on 4 July. We  
expect this will focus on the need for the EU to use its  
collective weight to pressure China to exert further their  
unique influence on DPRK. The UK will use the discussion  
to make clear the EU has an important role to play on  
this issue through increased sanctions on the DPRK.

[HCWS52]

Foreign Affairs Council: 19 June 2017

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State  
for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the  
Foreign Affairs Council on 19 June. The Foreign Affairs  
Council was chaired by the High Representative of the  
European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,  
Federica Mogherini. The meeting was held in Luxembourg.  
*Foreign Affairs Council*

The meeting covered discussions on the EU global  
strategy, EU-NATO, counter-terrorism, migration, Iraq  
and the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting.  
*EU global strategy*

The Council had a discussion on the implementation  
on the EU global strategy. Foreign Ministers welcomed  
the report and highlighted the important work achieved  
over the year.

*EU-NATO co-operation*

Foreign Ministers discussed EU-NATO co-operation  
with NATO Deputy Secretary-General Rose Gottemoeller.  
The discussion was based on a joint progress report by  
the EU High Representative and the Secretary General  
of NATO. The Council adopted conclusions on the  
report, welcoming progress in the implementation of  
the common set of proposals and calling for further  
steps in the same direction. Foreign Ministers agreed to  
support more work, including on counter-terrorism,  
cyber security, hybrid threats and strategic communications.  
*Counter-terrorism*

The discussion began with condolences for the recent  
attacks in London, Manchester and Mali. Foreign Ministers  
debated the external aspects of counter-terrorism, a  
timely discussion in view of the recent attacks in the EU  
and beyond. They underlined that counter-terrorism is  
the highest security priority for the EU. The Council

27WS

Written Statements

17 JULY 2017

Written Statements

28WS

adopted conclusions on counter-terrorism. The UK set  
out four areas to confront: risk of radicalisation in  
domestic communities; external conflicts in Iraq, Syria,  
and Libya attracting foreign fighters; overseas financing  
of extremist groups; and online radicalisation.  
*Migration*

Foreign Ministers discussed the external aspects of  
migration in preparation for the European Council  
of 22-23 June. They took stock of the progress made on  
the partnership framework. They discussed pressure on  
transit and origin countries, and the impact of EU  
efforts in the Mediterranean.

*Iraq*

The Council discussed Iraq, focusing on the latest  
developments, in particular in Mosul and Nineveh province,  
and on the future stabilisation of the country. The  
Council adopted conclusions.

*Gulf crisis*

Foreign Ministers discussed the current crisis in the  
Gulf region. They urged de-escalation of the crisis  
through dialogue and negotiation, and welcomed the  
mediation efforts of Kuwait. Ministers agreed on the  
importance of being seen to be impartial in the dispute.  
The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs shared the UK's analysis on the situation in  
the Gulf.

*Eastern Partnership ministerial*

Ministers discussed anti-corruption, strategic  
communication, rule of law, and human rights reform  
in Eastern Partnership countries. They welcomed the  
progress made on all of these issues and stressed their  
continued importance.

Ministers agreed a number of measures without  
discussion:

The Council adopted conclusions on climate change following  
the United States Administration's decision to leave the  
Paris Agreement.

The Council adopted conclusions on a framework for a joint  
EU diplomatic response to malicious cyber activities (“cyber  
diplomacy toolbox”).

The Council adopted conclusions on a renewed impetus for  
the Africa-EU partnership.

The Council adopted conclusions on Mali and the Sahel.

The Council adopted conclusions on the EU strategy for  
Central Asia.

The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the Court of  
Auditors' special report on “EU assistance to Tunisia”.

The Council adopted conclusions on EU engagement with  
civil society.

The Council extended the restrictive measures in response to  
the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia  
until 23 June 2018.

The Council extended the restrictive measures on sanctions  
on Guinea-Bissau for a further 12 months.

Member states participating in the European Defence Agency  
(EDA) adopted a declaration reaffirming their commitment  
to strengthen European defence co-operation by improving  
security of supply.

The Council endorsed a Joint Declaration between the EU,  
Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy,  
Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain, the UK and Vietnam on  
reinforced co-operation in the field of sustainable energy.

[HCWS53]

29WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

30WS

Written Statements

*Tuesday 18 July 2017*

**CABINET OFFICE**

Senior Salaries Review Body Recommendations

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** The 39th report of the  
Senior Salaries Review Body is being published today.  
This makes recommendations about the pay of the  
senior civil service, senior military officers, the judiciary,  
and executive and senior managers in the Department  
of Health's Arm's Length Bodies.

The Government greatly value the important work  
that public servants do in delivering essential public  
services. We understand the need to ensure that we are  
able to recruit, retain and motivate staff with the right  
skills and experience. However, there is a trade-off  
between pay and jobs in many public services, and pay  
restraint is one of the many difficult choices the Government  
have had to make to help put the UK's public finances  
back on track. Senior public sector workers, like everyone  
else, will have to continue to play their part to ensure we  
deliver job security for working people across the country.  
This will help us to strike the right balance between  
protecting people's jobs, being fair to public sector  
workers and being fair to those who pay for it.

*Senior Military Officers*

The Government have accepted the recommendation  
of a 1% increase to senior military salaries with effect  
from 1 April 2017. The Government have also accepted  
the recommendation that there is no change to the  
current pay differentials for senior medical and dental  
officers.

*Judiciary*

The Government accept the review body's  
recommendation of a 1% salary increase for the Judiciary.  
*Senior Civil Service*

The Government accept the recommendation on  
developing innovative pay and workforce proposals.  
The Government support the development of workforce  
strategies and supporting reward objectives within public  
sector pay policy. The Government agree that there is a  
need to target resources to address any specific recruitment  
and retention issues that arise and that there should be  
a greater focus on the total reward package. This will  
ensure the right balance between ongoing pay restraint  
and the need to attract and retain people of the right  
calibre.

The Government accept the recommendation on using  
the 1% award in full. Workforce groups will implement  
the average 1% award in full unless there is a strong  
rationale to do otherwise.

In line with the SSRB recommendation, the Government  
will keep under review the evidence for making pension  
packages more flexible, alongside the fiscal implications.

The Government accept the recommendation to conduct  
a review of the Senior Civil Service pay framework. The  
Government invite the Senior Salaries Review Body to

contribute towards the review of the Senior Civil Service  
pay framework that the Cabinet Office is currently  
undertaking. The Cabinet Office would welcome any  
expertise that the Senior Salaries Review Body can  
provide on this review over the coming months. The  
intention is that the outcome of this review will underpin  
fully considered proposals for a more strategic approach  
to Senior Civil Service pay in the Government's evidence  
to the SSRB, with the potential that some recommendations  
could be implemented from April 2018.

*Executive and senior managers in the Department of  
Health's Arm's Length Bodies*

The Government accept the recommendation that  
the 1% available for basic increases this year is used in  
full for executive and senior managers in the Department  
of Health's Arm's Length Bodies, unless there is a  
strong and explicit rationale to do otherwise.

The Government accept the Senior Salaries Review  
Body's recommendation that Arm's Length Bodies use  
the whole available budget for non-consolidated awards  
for the top 25% performers and that any individual  
Arm's Length Bodies who decide not to use their full  
allocation must make a formal case to the Department  
of Health Remuneration Committee explaining the  
rationale for their decision.

The Government accept the SSRB's recommendation  
to develop a coherent proposition on how best to set the  
pay of executive and senior managers in the Department  
of Health's Arm's length Bodies in the future and agrees  
with the recommendation that executive and senior  
managers are removed from the Senior Salaries Review  
Body remit while a scoping exercise is undertaken to  
consider the inclusion of very senior managers in the  
wider NHS.

The Government accept the Senior Salaries Review  
Body's recommendation to give active consideration to  
developing innovative pay and workforce proposals that  
are focused on maximising outcomes for lowest cost  
rather than limiting basic pay increases across the board  
and will consider proposals within public sector pay  
policy.

The Government accept the recommendation to closely  
examine the options for making pension packages more  
flexible where there is a compelling case to do so.

Copies have been laid in the Vote Office, the Printed  
Paper Office and the Libraries of both Houses. We are  
grateful to the chairman and members of the Review  
Body for their work on this year's report.

[HCWS57]

**TREASURY**

Childcare Services Roll-out

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**We know the cost of childcare is an important issue for  
working families—that is why we have made childcare  
more affordable, given parents more choice and raised  
standards of provision, supporting parents into work  
and helping them with the costs they face.

In total, the Government will provide over £6 billion  
of funding per annum in childcare support by 2019-20  
to working families and those on low incomes. For parents

31WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

32WS

across the UK, tax-free childcare will cut childcare  
costs by up to £2,000 per year for each child under  
12 years old, or £4,000 per year for disabled children  
under 17 years old.

We introduced the childcare service on 21 April 2017  
by accepting applications from parents of children under  
four years old (born on or after 1 September 2013). On  
14 July the Government extended the service to a cohort  
of parents with children born on or after 1 April 2013  
to ensure that these parents can access the 30 hours  
offer for their four year old child before the start of the  
school term in September. This enables even more families  
to benefit from the Government's childcare offer and  
helps busy families with children under five who want  
to claim a 30 hours free childcare place for September.

The Childcare Choices website brings together all the  
Government's childcare schemes in one place for the  
first time, and eligible parents can apply for tax-free  
childcare and 30 hours free childcare through a single  
and simple application.

They can apply for all their children at the same time  
once their youngest child qualifies, saving time and  
avoiding the need to provide the same information  
twice. All eligible parents will be able to apply for  
tax-free childcare by the end of 2017.

Parents can apply via the childcare service for  
both 30 hours' free childcare and tax-free childcare.  
The application is straightforward and can be  
accessed via the childcare choices website at: https://  
[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/).

To date, over 150,000 parents have successfully applied  
to the service and over 45,000 childcare providers have  
signed up.

[HCWS68]

ECOFIN

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):**A meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council  
(ECOFIN) was held in Brussels on 11 July 2017. The  
UK was represented by Sir Tim Barrow (Permanent  
Representative of the United Kingdom to the European  
Union). European Finance Ministers discussed the  
following items:

*Early morning session*

The Eurogroup President briefed Ministers on the  
outcomes of the 10 July meeting of the Eurogroup, and  
Ministers discussed the current economic situation.  
*Current financial service legislative proposals*

The Council presidency provided an update on current  
legislative proposals in the field of financial services.  
*Mandatory disclosure rules*

The Commission gave a presentation on the proposal  
for a Council directive amending directive regarding the  
mandatory automatic exchange of information in the  
field of taxation in relation to reportable cross-border  
arrangements.

*Presentation of the work programme of the Estonian  
presidency*

The new Estonian presidency of the Council of the  
European Union presented their work programme for  
the next six months period.

*Commission mid-term review of the capital markets union  
action plan*

The Council endorsed Council conclusions on the  
mid-term review of the capital markets union action  
plan.

*Non-performing loans*

ECOFIN held an exchange of views on policy responses  
to the non-performing loans situation and endorsed  
Council conclusions.

[HCWS66]

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Building Safety

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** I would like to update the  
House on progress with the identification and combustibility  
testing of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding  
on high-rise buildings. To date, 259 residential buildings  
over 18 metres have had samples tested by the Building  
Research Establishment (BRE), tested by proxy (e.g. are  
known to be of identical cladding) or have taken their  
cladding down. None of those tested have passed the  
limited combustibility test. On the advice of the independent  
Expert Advisory Panel on Building Safety, the BRE are  
now undertaking system testing that will help establish  
how different types of ACM panels in combination  
with different types of insulation behave in a fire.

The figure of 259 includes other residential buildings  
(such as those in the private sector) but today, I would  
like to update in particular on those owned by local  
authorities and housing associations.

It is vital to support building owners in ensuring the  
safety of their residents. This is why the Government,  
on the advice of the independent Expert Advisory  
Panel on Building Safety, have offered free of charge  
testing by the BRE for all residential buildings above  
18 metres in height. Local authorities and housing  
associations were asked to identify residential blocks  
with ACM cladding and then to submit samples of that  
cladding material for testing.

Local authorities and housing associations initially  
told us that around 530 towers were thought to have  
similar cladding to that seen at Grenfell. They have  
subsequently been physically inspecting the wall materials  
present on their buildings, and have collected further  
information which suggests that the actual number of  
towers that have ACM is much lower. Based on the  
most recent information we have received, we now think  
that no more than 240 local authority and housing  
association towers have ACM cladding and so need to  
be tested.

Aggregating information provided by local authorities,  
indicates that 46 towers across 16 local authorities have  
ACM cladding. Of these, 42 have been directly tested  
through BRE and the other four are from identical  
towers. This means all 46 local authority owned towers  
with ACM cladding have now had their core material  
tested for combustibility. All samples have failed the  
limited combustibility test.

33WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

34WS

Based on the latest information provided by housing  
associations, up to 194 towers across 50 housing associations  
have ACM cladding. Of these, 142 have been tested  
through BRE, through proxy tests or have taken cladding  
down. We have been told that 12 towers have sent, or  
will send, their samples to BRE for testing this week.  
There are 40 towers owned by housing associations who  
have not confirmed whether ACM cladding is present  
nor sent ACM samples for testing.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total  ACM towers | Total tested by BRE, by proxy test or with cladding removed | Sent for testing this week | Local authorities or housing associations still to confirm whether ACM cladding is present |
| Local | 46 | 46 | 0 | 0 |
| authority  (16 LAs) | Max |  |  |  |
| Housing association | 194 | 142 | 12 | 40 |
| (50 HAs) | Max |  |  |  |
| Total | 240 | 188 | 12 | 40 |

Some of these housing associations say that they are  
still investigating the cladding on their towers. Five  
weeks is too long to still be investigating. We expect  
these investigations to be complete and relevant samples  
sent for testing immediately. There is no excuse for any  
housing association not to have completed its investigation  
of cladding materials.

To ensure we have a complete picture, we strongly  
encourage all building owners to provide data where it  
is currently incomplete or needs updating. Together  
with the Local Government Association and National  
Housing Federation we are urgently following up to  
obtain full information.

[HCWS69]

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government (Sajid Javid):** On 26 February 2015, the  
then Secretary of State for Communities and Local  
Government and the then Secretary of State for Education  
exercised their intervention powers as Rotherham  
Metropolitan Borough Council was failing to comply  
with its best value duty. They made this decision having  
considered the report of the inspection by Dame Louise  
Casey CB and advice note from Sir Michael Wilshaw  
(then Her Majesty's chief inspector of education, children's  
services and skills). Due to the extent and the gravity of  
the failings in the council, the then Secretaries of State  
decided that the intervention should be broad and wide  
ranging. They directed that commissioners should exercise  
all executive functions of the authority, as well as some  
non-executive ones, including licensing, until the council  
could exercise them in compliance with its best value  
duty. A team of commissioners was appointed to exercise  
these functions.

On the basis of robust evidence of sustainable  
improvements and confidence that the council was able  
to exercise certain functions in compliance with the best

value duty, functions have been returned to the council  
on three separate occasions—11 February 2016,  
13 December 2016 and 21 March 2017. I am pleased  
now to be able to report on further progress made.

In her 18 May 2017 progress report, lead commissioner  
Mary Ney provided robust evidence to support her  
recommendation for performance management, human  
resources (HR), community safety, asset management  
and waste collection to be returned to the council. She  
proposed that the council would be required to follow  
any written recommendations made by the commissioners  
in relation to any Cabinet decision on services related to  
domestic abuse services and HR appeals. The latter is  
time limited. In all other areas, the council must have  
regard to any formal advice provided to them by the  
relevant commissioner, and if the formal advice is not  
followed, written reasons must be provided.

Today, my officials have written to the council to say  
that I am now “minded to” return these service areas to  
the council but will seek representations before making  
a final decision. I am placing a copy of the documents  
associated with these announcements in the Library of  
the House and on my Department's website.

[HCWS67]

**DEFENCE**

Armed Forces Pay Review Body Report

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**The supplement to the 2017 report of the Armed Forces'  
Pay Review Body (AFPRB) making recommendations  
on the pay of Service Medical and Dental Officers has  
been published today. I wish to express my thanks to the  
Chairman and members of the review body for their  
report.

The AFPRB's recommendations are accepted in full  
with implementation effective from 1 April 2017. Copies  
of the AFPRB supplementary report are available in  
the Vote Office.

[HCWS55]

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** The Education,  
Youth, Culture and Sport Council took place in Brussels  
on 22 and 23 May 2017. A separate written statement is  
being tabled by the Department for Education concerning  
the Education Council. The Minister for Digital represented  
the UK at the culture section of Council and Katrina  
Williams, the UK Deputy Permanent Representative to  
the EU, represented the UK at the youth and the sport  
sections of the Council. As is procedure, this statement  
sets out a record of that meeting.

*Youth*

There were two items adopted at the Youth Council.  
The first pertained to draft conclusions on the role of  
youth work, which the UK supported, and the second  
which pertained to EU youth strategy, which again the

35WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

36WS

UK supported. In addition there was a resolution on  
the structured dialogue with young people, which the  
UK adopted. Furthermore, the Commission pointed to  
the publication on 30 May of the proposed European  
Solidarity Corps regulation (a priority of President  
Juncker) which is designed to broaden the narrow focus  
of helping young people find employment through volunteer  
placements. In the policy debate on building Europe's  
future, Ministers highlighted the need to deepen involvement  
of young people through effective dialogue and via  
long-term commitment to funding Erasmus Plus. Finally,  
there was information from the incoming Estonian  
presidency, which stated that it would focus its work  
programme on “smart youth work” via digital means.

*Culture*

The Council held a minute's silence to commemorate  
the victims of the Manchester bombing, with all Ministers  
expressing their condolences to the UK, and many  
noting that the attack had taken place at a cultural  
event.

The main item at the Council was the audiovisual  
media services directive. The presidency explained why  
it believed its compromise text to be well balanced and  
it was made clear that a general approach would be  
sought at this Council. The UK was firm that the  
weakening of the country of origin principle remained  
the main outstanding concern. There was an initial  
attempt to find a qualified majority with which to  
support the file, however this failed. As a result, amendments  
were made to the text on the issues of scope and  
jurisdiction criteria, and a general approach was agreed,  
without the support of the UK. This matter will now  
proceed to trilogue.

In addition, the draft Council conclusions on an EU  
strategic approach to international cultural relations  
was also adopted, with the agreement of the UK.

*Sport*

The Council adopted two conclusions, one regarding  
Council conclusions on sport as a platform for social  
inclusion through volunteering, and the other regarding  
the EU work plan for sport. The UK agreed with the  
adoption of both sets of conclusions. In addition, there  
was feedback from the World Anti-Doping Agency  
meeting in Montreal and France presented on their  
candidacy to host the 2024 Olympic games. There was  
also a discussion on social inclusion in sport with a  
presentation from the Premier League. The UK underlined  
its work to promote inclusion through social media  
campaigns and major events such as the Paralympics.

[HCWS61]

Telecommunications Council

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** The EU  
Council of Ministers' Telecommunications Council took  
place in Luxembourg on 9 June 2017. Due to the timing  
of the general election, the UK's Deputy Permanent  
Representative to the EU, Katrina Williams, represented  
the UK at this Council. As is procedure, this statement  
sets out a formal record of that meeting.

The first item was a progress report and policy debate  
on the following two legislative instruments:

Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the  
Council establishing the European Electronic Communications  
Code (Recast); and

Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of  
the Council establishing the Body of European Regulators for  
Electronic Communications.

The Council adopted a general approach on the  
regulation on cross-border parcel delivery services. There  
was a qualified majority in favour.

The last main agenda item was the ePrivacy regulation,  
on which there was a progress report. There was no  
substantive debate on this item.

These items were followed by information points on:  
the roaming regulation; internet connectivity in local  
communities (known as ‘WiFi4EU'); the Digital Single  
Market Strategy; cybersecurity; and the Commission's  
EU Digital progress report.

Finally, the Estonian delegation informed the Council  
of its priorities for the Estonian presidency, beginning  
on 1 July 2017.

[HCWS63]

**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

International Criminal Justice: Support and Funding

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** Monday 17 July marked the  
Day of International Criminal Justice. This is an  
opportunity to restate the UK's strong commitment to  
the principles of international justice and to reflect on  
our political and financial support to international  
justice, including through our support for the International  
Criminal Court (ICC) and international tribunals.

International criminal justice promotes the rule of  
law and is underpinned by the principle that there  
should be no impunity for the most serious crimes of  
international concern such as war crimes, crimes against  
humanity and genocide. Over the past year, we have  
continued to voice our support for these values and  
taken action to put them into practice.

In 2016, we demonstrated the UK's commitment to  
international justice by contributing £8.1 million to the  
ICC: £1.1 million to the International Criminal Tribunal  
for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); £400,000 to the  
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR);  
and £770,000 to the International Residual Mechanism  
for Criminal Tribunals (MICT). The UK also contributed  
£1 million in voluntary funding to the Special Tribunal  
for Lebanon (STL), and smaller amounts to the  
Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia  
(ECCC) and the Residual Special Court for Sierra  
Leone (RSCSL). The UK is delivering practical support  
for the RSCSL with former Liberian president Charles  
Taylor serving his sentence for war crimes in a British  
prison. In December, the UK co-sponsored a UN resolution  
to establish the International, Impartial and Independent  
Mechanism (IIIM) to investigate crimes in Syria and  
has contributed £200,000 towards its start-up costs. In  
September 2016, at the UN General Assembly, the  
Foreign Secretary, alongside the Foreign Ministers of  
Iraq and Belgium, launched a campaign to bring Daesh  
to justice. This is a critical and global effort to ensure  
Daesh is held accountable for its crimes.

37WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

38WS

Our support is designed to enable the fight against  
impunity and prosecute those responsible forperpetrating  
genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The  
UK believes that achieving justice for victims should be  
at the heart of the international community's response  
to mass atrocity violence. To this end, the UK contributed  
£150,000 to the ICC's trust fund for victims, which  
provides physical and psychological rehabilitation, material  
support and reparations to victims and their families.

Atthe ICC, by the endof 2016, therewere10situations  
under investigation: Uganda, Democratic Republic of  
Congo, Darfur, Central African Republic I, Kenya,  
Cote d'lvoire, Libya, Central African Republic II, Mali  
and Georgia. In addition, there were 10 preliminary  
examinations: Afghanistan, Colombia, Nigeria, Guinea,  
Iraq, Burundi, Ukraine, Gabon, the Occupied Palestinian  
Territories, and registered vessels of Comoros, Greece  
and Cambodia. In 2016, the Court saw its first convictions  
on the basis of “command responsibility”for the crime  
of rape, intentionally attacking historic and religious  
monuments, and for witness and evidence tampering.  
The Court also made its first substantive award of  
individualandcollectivereparationstocompensatevictims  
of the DRC war criminal, Germain Katanga.

At the ICTY, the UN's first war crimes tribunal  
prepares to close its doors at the end of the year. Before  
closing, the tribunal is expected to deliver key verdicts  
in the trial of Ratko Mladic, former army commander  
of the Republika Sprska and in the appeal by six senior  
Croat military and police officers against their convictions.  
Like Radovan Karadzic who was sentenced to 40 years'  
imprisonment in March 2016, Mladic faces charges of  
genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

When the work of the ICTR ended in 2015, the  
Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT)  
took on its remaining functions, ensuring a smooth  
transition. The MICT will also take on the residual  
work of the ICTY, including its legacy, at its closure by  
the end of 2017.

This is the fifth annual update to Parliament on the  
FCO's work to support international justice.

[HCWS59]

British Council Annual Report

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):**Copies of theBritishCouncil'sannualreportandaccounts  
for the 2016-17 financial year have been placed in the  
Libraries of both Houses. The report can also be found  
at the British Council's website at: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org).

During the period the British Council received  
£158.3 million Grant-in-Aid from the Foreign and  
Commonwealth Office.

[HCWS58]

**HEALTH**

Annual Assessment of NHS England

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):**Today,IamlayingbeforeParliamentmyannualassessment  
of the NHS Commissioning Board (known as NHS  
England) for 2016-17. A copy is available as an online

attachment.ThisdrawsonandrespondstoNHSEngland's  
annual report and accounts 2016-17, which were laid  
earlier today (HC101).

The Government's mandate to NHS England sets  
out the steps that we expect it to take to help deliver our  
shared vision for the safest, most compassionate, highest  
quality health system in the world. We recognise that  
this can only be achieved through the outstanding  
contribution that the 1.3 million NHS staff across the  
country make each and every day in delivering care and  
support for patients, and I would like to pay tribute to  
their diligence, professionalism and expertise.

NHS England's annual report sets out the progress  
made in delivering the mandate. It describes an organisation  
that continues to ensure that high-quality care is delivered  
in the face of rising public demand and cost pressures  
across the system, and emphasises the need to deliver  
the next steps on the five year forward view to address  
these challenges. The Government support the NHS's  
plan, including the development of clinically led and  
locally supported sustainability and transformation  
partnerships.

My annual assessment welcomes the good progress  
that has been made in challenging circumstances, while  
recognising that there remains a great deal more to do,  
particularly to improve quality, access and safety while  
maintaining financial sustainability for the future.

NHS England's core aim is to deliver excellence in  
access and outcomes for patients and, this year, substantial  
advances have been made across a number of areas,  
including mental health, maternity care and diabetes  
prevention. NHS England has also made a significant  
contribution to overall financial balance in the NHS.

However, continued growth in demand has put pressure  
on services and the NHS is not meeting core patient  
access standards. This remains a key priority and, to  
help address this, in 2017-18 NHS England will need to  
better manage demand, including by working with local  
government to ensure patients are transferred to more  
appropriate care when they are fit to leave hospital. To  
support this, the Government have provided an extra  
£2 billion for local authority-funded adult social care  
over the next three years, with £1 billion available in  
2017-18.

Myassessmentsetsout the Government's expectation  
that the NHS will make further progress in the year  
ahead on achieving parity of esteem for mental health.  
Continuing the constructive joint working with NHS  
Improvement and Health Education England to better  
manage the challenges the NHS experiences over winter,  
as well as continuing progress to retain and increase the  
workforce, will be key. We will also look to NHS England,  
working with NHS Improvement, to deliver a balanced  
NHS budget.

We will continue to work closely with NHS England  
to address the significant challenges ahead and provide  
a sustainable and efficient health service with quality,  
transparency and safety at its heart.

Copies of my annual assessment and NHS England's  
annual report will be available from the Vote Office and  
Printed Paper Office.

Attachmentscanbeviewedonlineat:<http://www.parliament>.  
uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-  
statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-07-18/  
HCWS64/

[HCWS64]

39WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

40WS

Towards a Smokefree Generation—A Tobacco Control  
Plan for England

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health  
(Steve Brine):** The Government have today published  
the Tobacco Control Plan for England, with a vision to  
create a smoke free generation. A copy is attached.

The 2017-2022 Tobacco Control Plan for England  
sets the overarching strategic direction for tobacco policy.  
The last tobacco control plan ran from 2011-2015. All  
the ambitions set in the previous plan were exceeded,  
during a period when the Government successfully  
introduced a significant amount of legislation, including  
standardised packaging of tobacco products and a ban  
on smoking in a car when a young person is present.

The new plan does not introduce new legislation.  
Instead, it shifts emphasis from action at the national  
level such as legislation to focused, local action, supporting  
smokers, particularly in disadvantaged groups, to quit.

The plan lays down bold ambitions for reducing  
smoking prevalence in England, en route towards creating  
a smoke free generation. These are:

Reduce the prevalence of 15 year olds who regularly smoke  
from 8% to 3% or less by the end of 2022.

Reduce smoking prevalence among adults in England from  
15.5% to 12% or less by the end of 2022

Reduce the inequality gap in smoking prevalence between  
those in routine and manual occupations and the general population  
by the end of 2022.

Reduce the prevalence of smoking in pregnancy from 10.5% to  
6% or less by the end of 2022.

Attachments can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-satements/written-  
statement/Commons/2017-07-18/HCWS56.

[HCWS56]

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**

Independent Monitor Annual Report

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the  
Home Department (Sarah Newton):** The 2015 Annual  
report from the Independent Monitor is being published  
today at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). A copy of the report will also be  
placed in the House Library.

[HCWS62]

**HOME DEPARTMENT**

Justice and Home Affairs post-Council Statement

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department  
(Amber Rudd):** The first meeting of EU Interior and  
Justice Ministers during the Estonian presidency took  
place on 6 and 7 July in Tallinn. I represented the UK  
for interior day and the Lord Chancellor and Secretary  
of State for Justice represented the UK for justice day.

Interior day began with a discussion on migration  
through the central Mediterranean following the joint  
French/German/Italian/Commission declaration on 3 July

and subsequent publication of the “Action Plan on  
measures to support Italy, reduce pressure along the  
Central Mediterranean route and increase solidarity”.  
The UK agrees work must continue on strengthening  
the EU's external borders and I joined other Ministers  
in expressing support for Italian efforts and for the  
measures proposed in the action plan.

Ministers then discussed possible developments in  
EU returns policy. I stressed the UK's commitment to  
working with the EU and member states in this area  
and expressed support for the proposals, presented by  
the presidency, to focus efforts on linking asylum and  
returns processes, improving the processes for unfounded  
asylum claims, and ensuring quick returns following  
quick decisions.

Over lunch, Ministers discussed ways of safeguarding  
the EU's internal security through co-operation with  
neighbours. The focus was on how to co-ordinate EU  
and member state activities in helping Ukraine to fight  
serious and organised crime, improve integrated border  
management, and counter hybrid threats in order to  
mitigate possible negative impacts of the security situation  
in Ukraine on the EU's internal security. The UK  
recognises the concerns arising from Russia's action in  
Ukraine and I endorsed proposals to step up action to  
tackle the threat, noting the conference being held in  
London on 6 July to galvanise international support for  
Ukraine's reform process.

Interior day ended with a discussion on next steps on  
data sharing and interoperability of EU information  
systems, following the final report of a high-level expert  
group on data sharing, June JHA Council conclusions  
on this issue, and the latest security union update from  
the Commission. The Government support the aim of  
increasing interoperability of IT systems and ensuring  
better use of existing data. Member states agreed that  
interoperability should ultimately increase protection of  
data, not lessen it, but that clear rules on purpose,  
access and use were required.

Justice day began with an item on data retention.  
Ministers explored the implications of the Court of  
Justice of the European Union judgment in the TELE2/  
Watson case from December 2016, and the circumstances  
in which member states would still be able to require the  
retention of communications data. The Government  
have played a leading role in official-level discussions on  
the effects of the judgment. The Justice Secretary led  
support from Ministers for the continuation of these  
discussions as a way of carrying out a comprehensive  
assessment of different options for data retention. The  
presidency concluded that work will continue in the  
Friends of the Presidency group on all possible options.

On sale of goods, the presidency posed three questions:  
whether the rules on offline sales should be aligned with  
those for online; whether the digital content rules agreed  
under the Maltese presidency were a suitable model;  
and how to deal with “smart goods” with embedded  
digital content. The Justice Secretary said that alignment  
of rules is desirable for business, except in cases where  
there would be increased costs and in areas where it  
would lead to decreased consumer protection in the UK  
legal system. The Justice Secretary also noted that  
fragmentation of rules for “smart goods” is undesirable  
and an evidence-based approach is necessary given the  
novelty of the area. The presidency noted the apparent

41WS

Written Statements

18 JULY 2017

Written Statements

42WS

agreement of EU Ministers to align the rules on off-  
and online sales, and to do so along the lines of the  
digital content agreement. The Commission said that,  
in the interests of speed, it would not issue a new  
proposal to extend the scope of the measure. Rather, it  
would accept the changes to that end proposed by the  
Parliament and Council.

There was a discussion on e-justice over lunch. The  
Justice Secretary expressed the UK's support for the  
proposal to entrust the management of e-codex—which  
allows judicial systems to “talk” to each other online—to  
EU-LISA, the agency which manages other large-scale  
JHA IT systems (such as SIS II), so long as EU-LISA  
would not be over-burdened and unable to focus on its  
existing workload. Robust cyber-security would also be  
necessary. EU Ministers spoke broadly in favour of the  
proposal, but the Commission will not propose a legal  
instrument yet.

The meeting finished with an exchange of views from  
member states on the question of whether the instrument  
on mutual recognition of freezing and confiscation  
orders should be a regulation or a directive. The UK  
has opted in to this proposal and is committed to

working with other member states and EU agencies in  
identifying and recovering criminal assets. The Government  
are neutral on the question of the choice of instrument,  
but have no objection in principle to a regulation, as  
long as that regulation does not adversely impact on  
domestic processes for issuing such orders. Other member  
states remain split. The Justice Secretary, supported by  
other member states, also noted specific concerns about  
a proposed new type of asset-freezing order.

[HCWS60]

R v. Mouncher and Others

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department  
(Amber Rudd):** Richard Horwell QC has submitted to  
me the report of his investigation into the collapse of  
theRv‘Mouncher and others' 2011 trial (HC 292). I  
have today laid the report before the House and copies  
are available from the Vote Office and at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

[HCWS65]

43WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

44WS

Written Statements

*Wednesday 19 July 2017*

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL  
STRATEGY**

Contingent Liability: Microgeneration  
Certification Scheme

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy  
and Industrial Strategy (Claire Perry):** The microgeneration  
certification scheme (MCS) is a scheme that certifies  
products and installers of renewable technologies to  
provide assurance to consumers about the quality and  
standard of their installation.

My Department is going through the process of  
transferring the assets comprising the MCS to the MCS  
charitable foundation, as part of establishing the MCS  
as independent of Government. This will help contribute  
to a renewable technology market that is sustainable in  
the long term, and will limit the Government's liabilities  
in relation to the scheme.

The operation of the MCS brings with it an existing  
contingent liability which has been previously covered  
under the annually disclosed overarching BEIS contingent  
liability for potential liabilities relating to claims from  
suppliers and third parties.

In relation to this, I wish to inform Parliament of a  
departmental minute which will be presented to Parliament  
today, giving notice of the Department retaining this  
contingent liability for which we would issue indemnity  
provisions to the MCS charitable foundation and the  
MCS service company. This contingent liability relates  
to the risk of potential complaints from affected parties  
regarding events which occurred during the period prior  
to the transfer, when BEIS held a position of responsibility  
for the MCS.

We believe it is appropriate to retain this existing  
contingent liability, even as we transfer the assets to the  
MCS charitable foundation. By offering this indemnity  
and enabling the transfer to proceed, the Department  
benefits from ceasing to take on further liabilities from  
the point of transfer onwards. The indemnity would be  
uncapped and last for a period of six years from the  
date of transfer.

We believe that the risk of any successful claim is low  
in relation to this contingent liability.

[HCWS82]

Product Recalls and Safety: Working Group

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James):** Iam  
today placing in the Libraries of both Houses, the  
report of the Working Group on Product Recalls and  
Safety.

The report is a culmination of longer term, ongoing  
work on product safety and recalls. An independent  
review of the recall system was undertaken by Lynn  
Faulds Wood in 2015, with her review published in  
February 2016.

The Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety  
was established in October 2016 to build on the initial  
work by industry to implement the review. The Working  
Group was tasked with providing options to support a  
tangible improvement in the safety of white goods and  
the recalls system, working to a clearly defined timetable.

The Working Group is chaired by Neil Gibbins,  
former Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Devon and Somerset  
and Chief Executive of the Institution of Fire Engineers.  
Its membership brings together product safety experts,  
the fire service and trading standards professionals to  
ensure that we utilise expertise in the relevant fields to  
identify necessary improvements to the system of product  
recalls and safety.

*Key recommendations include:*

a need for centralised technical and scientific resource capability  
to support decision making and co-ordination of activity of  
Local Authorities and the businesses that they regulate;

a detailed code of practice should be developed with input from  
all relevant stakeholders; this should be informed by behavioural  
insights research. This should set out expected good practice with  
regard to product safety corrective actions (including recalls);  
full consideration should be given to establishing central capacity  
to co-ordinate product safety corrective actions at a central level;  
systematic and sustainable ways to capture and share data and  
intelligence should be established and agreed by relevant parties—this  
should make use of existing systems used by trading standards  
and the fire service;

manufacturers and retailers should continue to work together and  
through standards-setting bodies to develop technological solutions  
to product marking and identification;

Primary authority provides a key mechanism for ensuring that  
businesses, local authority and BEIS expertise is shared to ensure  
the protection of consumers; and

the registration of appliances and other consumer goods with  
manufacturers by consumers should be encouraged to make  
corrective actions (including recalls) more effective.

Significant progress has already been made by the  
Working Group, supported by my officials at the  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy,  
in relation to the development of a code of practice on  
corrective action and product recalls, and a public  
consultation will be published shortly. Further work to  
promote the registration of appliances, understand  
consumer responses to safety information and recall  
communications is set out in the report as an important  
step towards a strengthened product safety framework.

We are also keen to see continued progress on work  
to promote the registration of appliances and understand  
consumer responses to safety information and recall  
communications. My Department has supported the  
behavioural insights work, which underpins the  
understanding of consumer behaviour. We have also  
enhanced the product recalls webpages on gov.uk to  
make it easier to access information about white goods  
subject to a recall on grounds of a fire safety risk and  
made links to the Register My Appliance website.

The Working Group recognised the important role  
that primary authority partnerships can play in achieving  
better safety outcomes. My Department continues to  
champion and push forward the scheme. The legislative  
changes which we are bringing into effect in October  
will extend and simplify the scheme so that as many  
businesses as possible can access its benefits.

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, I asked  
the Working Group to consider whether there was any  
further work or recommendations for their report. The  
Working Group have completed that review and concluded

45WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

46WS

that the original report remains valid and relevant. I  
publish that report today, with copies of the documents  
placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS74]

**CABINET OFFICE**

Conflict Stability and Security Fund

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** I wish to update the  
House on how the Government have been supporting  
our national security interests through conflict prevention,  
peace building, stabilisation, peacekeeping and conflict  
resolution using the Conflict Stability and Security  
Fund (CSSF).

Details of the programmes funded by the CSSF and  
its impact so far are in the first annual report, a copy of  
which will be placed in the Library of the House. The  
publication of this first report reflects the Government's  
commitment to transparency in the delivery of official  
development assistance. We will be updating gov.uk  
pages with more information on the CSSF and individual  
programmes.

The CSSF replaced the Conflict Pool in April 2015,  
as part of a new, more strategic approach to enhancing  
the delivery of our national security interests directed  
by the National Security Council (NSC).

As announced in the 2015 Strategic Defence and  
Security Review (SDSR), CSSF funding has continued  
to increase and will be £1.162 billion in 2017-18. The  
CSSF is now one of the world's largest mechanisms for  
addressing conflict and instability. Its programmes deliver  
against more than 40 cross-Government strategies set  
by the National Security Council (NSC). These help to  
secure the UK, promote peace and stability overseas  
and contribute directly to SDSR objectives.

Parliamentary accountability for taxpayers' money  
spent via the CSSF is provided primarily through the  
Joint Committee for the National Security Strategy  
(JCNSS). The JCNSS concluded its first inquiry into  
the CSSF in February. We have responded to the inquiry  
report and are taking forward many of their  
recommendations. Further announcements on governance  
will be made in due course.

Meeting both our legal and policy gender commitments  
is central to the delivery of the CSSF. Last year the  
CSSF spent £214.5 million on programmes which addressed  
gender equality. For example the CSSF in the Democratic  
Republic of Congo supported the provision of free  
legal assistance to 269 victims of international war  
crimes, of which 179 were women, mostly victims of  
sexual violence.

In addition to supporting peace building activity,  
CSSF funding is strengthening the multilateral system,  
supporting the UN and other international organisations  
to develop more effective multilateral responses to instability.  
The CSSF funds our contributions (known as assessed  
costs) to the UN peacekeeping budget. We are the sixth  
biggest contributor, spending over £300 million in 2016-17.  
In addition, we have been using CSSF funds to help  
reform the UN and UN peacekeeping, co-ordinating

outreach to member states to secure pledges of personnel  
for peace operations and to assist with the transition  
from pledges to deployments. In 2016-17 the CSSF  
provided a further £15 million to fund the doubling of  
the UK's troop contribution to peacekeeping through  
two new deployments: 70 UK military personnel to  
support UNSOS in Somalia, which provides essential  
logistical support for the African Union Mission  
(AMISOM) that is combating the terrorist organisation  
Al Shabaab; and 370 UK military personnel to provide  
engineering and medical support to the UN Mission in  
South Sudan (UNMISS).

To address some of the JCNSS recommendations for  
the CSSF a rapid review is being undertaken of Cross-  
Whitehall Fund governance and structures.

*Conflict Stability and Security Fund resources, FY 17-18*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CSSF | 2017-18  (millions) |
| Peacekeeping and Multilateral | 391.7 |
| Regional/Country Strategies | 606.3 |
| Security and Defence | 150 |
| Delivery support, including the Stabilisation Unit and National School of Government | 14.5 |
| **Total** | 1162.5 |

[HCWS76]

**EDUCATION**

School Curriculum

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** In  
order to ensure our education system drives social  
mobility, it is imperative that the vast majority of pupils—  
whatever their background—have the opportunity to  
study the suite of academic subjects that make up the  
EBacc. These subjects—English, maths, science, history  
or geography, and a language—are the core of a rounded  
and well balanced education that should be the entitlement  
of the vast majority of pupils. According to the Russell  
Group, studying these subjects at A-level opens more  
doors to more degrees.

A recent study found that pupils in a set of 300 schools  
that increased their EBacc entry, from 8% to 48%, were  
more likely to achieve good English and maths GCSEs,  
more likely to take an A-level, or an equivalent level 3  
qualification, and more likely to stay in post-16 education.

Since 2010, we have increased the opportunity for  
pupils to study this combination of GCSEs, with 40%  
of pupils now being entered for this combination of  
subjects at GCSE, up from 22% in 2010. However, there  
are still too few pupils studying these subjects, with  
pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately  
less likely to be studying these subjects.

Research suggests that lower participation from  
disadvantaged pupils in these core academic subjects  
can negatively affect social mobility. Yet overall,  
disadvantaged pupils remain half as likely to be entered  
for the EBacc subjects as their non-disadvantaged peers,  
and the gap in EBacc subject entry persists even among  
the most academically able disadvantaged pupils.

47WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

48WS

There is no doubt that studying the EBacc subjects  
up to the age of 16 is right for the vast majority of  
pupils. As a Government we are committed to unlocking  
the potential of all pupils regardless of their background  
and this is why, as set out in our manifesto, we would  
like to see 90% of year 10 pupils starting to study  
GCSEs in the EBacc combination of subjects by 2025.

Through our consultation on implementing the EBacc,  
we sought to understand the barriers schools face in  
increasing EBacc entry. Having carefully considered the  
consultation responses, it is my view that we need an  
approach that is both pragmatic, stretching, and one  
that takes into account the challenge involved in meeting  
this ambition.

While some schools are already responding to this  
challenge by significantly increasing the number of pupils  
studying the EBacc suite of GCSEs, some schools have  
more to do to reach our ambition. It will take time to  
build the right capacity across the whole school system  
and ensure that schools have access to high quality staff  
in EBacc subjects, so that all pupils have the best chance  
of success in their studies.

Taking this all into account it is our ambition that  
75% of year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools  
will start to study GCSEs in the EBacc combination of  
subjects by September 2022. This will mark an important  
milestone in driving towards the Government's ambition  
that the vast majority of pupils—irrespective of  
background—have access to this core academic suite of  
GCSEs, which is central to a broad and balanced  
curriculum.

The Government response being published today  
considers and responds to the issues raised in consultation  
responses, and outlines the steps we will take to support  
schools to deliver the EBacc subjects to the vast majority  
of pupils.

Copies of the Government's response document will  
be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS73]

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

Animal Health

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George  
Eustice):** Today I am updating the House on the  
implementation of the Government's 25-year strategy  
to eradicate bovine TB (bTB) in England.

The Government's comprehensive bTB strategy includes  
one of the most rigorous cattle surveillance programmes  
in the world, strong movement controls, a focus on  
good biosecurity, and badger control where TB is rife.

We are making good progress. The Government have  
this week applied for official TB-free status for the low  
risk area of the England—more than half the country—two  
years ahead of schedule, which will bring trade benefits  
for farmers in these areas.

Further measures I am outlining today will help us  
eradicate the disease from the rest of England more  
quickly and more effectively.

A consultation begins today on proposals to catch  
disease in herds as early as possible, by introducing a  
simpler, more risk-based TB testing regime in the high  
risk area with six-monthly routine surveillance tests.  
Lower risk herds where owners can demonstrate good  
biosecurity will be subject to less frequent testing. We  
are proposing some adjustments to the compensation  
system to improve incentives for farmers to reduce  
disease risks on their farms. Also included is a proposal  
to allow farmers to retain in-calf TB test positive cattle  
for up to 60 days, subject to biosecurity controls.

I can also confirm that we are now confident that  
supplies of BCG vaccine are sufficient to allow us to  
resume the badger edge vaccination scheme. This will  
help protect healthy badgers and stop disease spreading  
to new parts of the country. Private groups intending to  
run vaccination schemes will be able to apply for grants  
later this year for projects to run next summer.

We are also publishing responses to a consultation on  
supplementary badger control, and its licensing guidance,  
outlining plans to make sure disease control benefits in  
areas that have completed intensive culling are maintained  
while the disease is still present in England.

We are determined to implement all available measures  
necessary to eradicate this devastating disease as quickly  
as possible to create resilient and successful dairy and  
beef industries.

Copies of the cattle controls consultation and the  
badger control summary of consultation responses have  
been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS75]

**EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

EU Opt-in Decision: Civil Justice Co-operation  
Regulations

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting  
the European Union (Mr Steve Baker):** My right hon.  
Friend Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE, Minister of  
State for Exiting the European Union, has made the  
following statement:

On 9 June 2017, the Government opted in to a proposal  
to change the updating mechanism of three civil judicial  
co-operation regulations from the comitology procedure to  
the post-Lisbon treaty delegated and implementing Act  
procedure. These are technical adjustments that are part of a  
wider effort to modernise legislation, which the UK supports.

The relevant regulations are the 2001 regulation on taking  
evidence in other member states to allow for a court in one  
member state to request to take evidence to another; the  
2004 regulation that created that European enforcement  
order; and the 2007 regulation on service of documents to  
allow the service of judicial documents from one member  
state to another.

The Government submitted the explanatory memorandum  
on the Commission alignment proposals (COM(2016) 798  
and COM(2016) 799) on 13 February 2017. The substance  
and effect of these three regulations will not change, but  
become subject to the same updating procedures as apply to  
other, post-Lisbon regulations (a committee composed of  
representatives from all EU countries providing a formal  
opinion, usually in the form of a vote, on the Commission's  
proposed measures). The underlying treaty base (now article 81  
TFEU) and the relevant regulations were subject to the  
UK's justice and home affairs opt-in.

49WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

50WS

These technical changes protect the UK's position in  
relation to three important procedural instruments in the  
area of civil judicial co-operation and demonstrate the UK's  
commitment to abiding by its rights and obligations until  
exit negotiations are concluded.

[HCWS83]

**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Services

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** FCO Services operates as a  
trading fund of the FCO. Pursuant to section 4(6) of  
the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 (as amended  
by the Government Trading Act 1990), I hereby lay  
copies of FCO Services' Annual Report and Accounts  
2016-2017 before the House.

The report has been endorsed by the FCO Services Board and  
the FCO Services Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (on  
which sits the lead National Audit Office auditor and the head of  
FCO Internal Audit). It has also been examined by the FCO  
Partnership Board.

On 3 July 2017, the Comptroller and Auditor General formally  
signed off the report and accounts.

For the reasons above, and upon my own examination,  
I am satisfied that the annual report and accounts  
represent a true and fair account of FCO Services'  
performance.

[HCWS72]

**HEALTH**

NHS Transformation: Investment

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):**This Government are backing the NHS's own plan for  
the future, the Five Year Forward View, and funding it  
with an additional £8 billion a year in real terms by the  
end of the Parliament. Delivering that vision relies on  
health and care organisations working together at a  
local level, which the NHS is taking forward through  
sustainability and transformation partnerships. These  
are clinically led, locally driven—and can deliver real  
improvements for patients. The independent King's Fund  
has called STPs “the right approach for improving care  
and meeting the needs of an ageing population”.

In the spring Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer  
announced an additional £325 million of capital funding  
to invest in local areas who have come together and  
developed robust plans.

Today, I announce the provisional allocation of this  
first tranche of capital funding. From a large number of  
proposals, 25 schemes have been selected in total from  
across the 15 STP areas as follows:

Greater Manchester

Lancashire and South Cumbria

Dorset

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire and Luton

Derbyshire

West, North and East Cumbria

Nottinghamshire

Suffolk and North East Essex

Herefordshire and Worcestershire

South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw

Mid and South Essex

Norfolk and Waveney

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West

North East London

Further detail on the schemes that will receive funding  
is available as an online attachment.

In order to qualify for this first tranche of funding,  
these areas were all judged to be sufficiently advanced  
on the basis of the STP assessment data (that NHS  
England will publish on Friday). This data allows patients,  
managers and the public to see how their STP area is  
performing across three themes: hospital performance,  
patient-focused change, and transformation. Each theme  
is underpinned by key metrics, such as performance in  
emergency and elective care, safety and leadership. It is  
a mechanism by which organisations, patients and the  
public can hold their STP to account.

The quality and diversity of proposals put forward  
show that the NHS is working innovatively to identify  
opportunities for transformation in the delivery of health  
services across their local footprint. The Government  
are fully committed to supporting this process and the  
schemes selected for funding will make a substantial  
difference to the performance of local health systems.

Final confirmation of this funding will be subject to  
the successful approval of business cases. Organisations  
receiving funding will also be required to demonstrate  
that their proposals form part of a robust capital and  
estates strategy which maximises all opportunities for  
generating receipts from surplus land disposals within  
their STP area. We will also expect them to agree a clear  
delivery plan for generating these receipts. This process  
will be supported by a central team of strategic estates  
advisers

The Government remain committed to considering a  
further round of local proposals for funding in the  
autumn Budget, subject to the same rigorous value for  
money tests. In considering these bids we will look to  
STPs to demonstrate further progress on generating  
funding from disposals receipts and other sources of  
finance.

Attachments can be viewed at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-statements/written-  
statements/Commons/2017-07-19/HCWS71/.

[HCWS71]

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):**On Wednesday 12 July, Ministers at the Department of  
Health were informed by the Medicines and Healthcare  
products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) about an issue  
identified during a routine inspection of Bio Products  
Laboratory (BPL). The MHRA provided confirmation  
on Monday of this week that, in light of all of the

51WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

52WS

information currently available, their assessment is that  
no patients have been harmed and none put at additional  
risk of harm due to the issue.

BPL is responsible for the supply of a range of  
plasma products to the NHS and a range of other  
major health systems around the world. The company,  
in line with best practice, operates a three stage process  
to ensure the safety of its products:

1. Selection of healthy donors, with all donations tested and  
   traceable to the donor.
2. Further safety tests of plasma in advance of the manufacturing  
   process.
3. During the manufacturing process, all products are specially  
   treated to inactivate viruses.

The MHRA informed Ministers that their inspection  
identified a problem with the computer software, which  
controls the stage one process set out above. Following  
the identification of the issue by the MHRA, a manual  
review was undertaken by the company to ensure that  
no inappropriate donations made it through this stage  
of the process due to the problems with the computer  
system. This manual review confirmed that no inappropriate  
samples had made it through to the next stage of the  
process, and a range of other risk mitigation steps were  
also implemented.

The MHRA have continued to provide progress updates  
to Ministers regularly since notification on 12 July.

On Monday of this week the MHRA confirmed to  
Ministers their assessment that the problem had been  
addressed through interim measures to provide the  
necessary assurance while long-term solutions are being  
implemented. In the opinion of the MHRA, due to the  
three stage process outlined above, and in light of all of  
the information currently available, no patients have  
been harmed and none put at additional risk of harm  
due to the issue.

The MHRA is continuing to undertake all necessary  
regulatory activities in order to ensure patient safety,  
and will continue to keep Ministers informed of this  
work.

Although there is no evidence of risk to patients in  
this case, in the interest of transparency, I wanted to  
update the House to this situation as quickly as possible  
with the relevant information. In the unlikely event of  
any changes, I will update the House accordingly.

[HCWS70]

**HOME DEPARTMENT**

**Fire and Rescue Authorities: England**

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department  
(Amber Rudd):** In May 2016, this Government set out  
plans to create an independent inspectorate for fire and  
rescue authorities in England as part of our fire reform  
programme.

The response to the recent tragic Grenfell Tower fire  
showcased the very best of fire and rescue services. As  
the dreadful event unfolded, we saw the resounding  
bravery and skill of our firefighters and emergency  
responders.

An inspectorate will help support the continuous  
improvement of this critical public service and enable  
fire and rescue authorities to become even more effective,  
as it is only by identifying and understanding problems  
that action can be taken to overcome them.

I can today announce that this inspectorate will form  
part of a newly expanded Her Majesty's inspectorate of  
constabulary (HMIC). In order to preserve fire and  
rescue's distinct identity, HMIC will re-brand as Her  
Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and fire and  
rescue services.

I have recommended to Her Majesty that, following  
commencement of fire and rescue inspection provisions  
in the Policing and Crime Act 2017, she appoint Her  
Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, Sir Thomas  
Winsor, as chief fire and rescue inspector, and for  
HMIC's existing inspectors to be appointed fire and  
rescue inspectors. This will be in addition to their existing  
police inspection responsibilities.

A dedicated team will be appointed to carry out fire  
and rescue inspections which will include expertise drawn  
from the fire and rescue sector.

The new inspectorate will work alongside other  
institutional changes under way in the fire and rescue  
sector, namely the establishment of the National Fire  
Chiefs Council and the planned creation of a body with  
responsibility for setting professional standards for fire  
and rescue services.

HMIC has a strong track record in holding policing  
to the highest standards and identifying where action  
must be taken to improve behaviour and practice. I  
expect them to replicate this when inspecting fire and  
rescue authorities. This new inspectorate will provide a  
crucial assurance function to assess the efficiency and  
effectiveness of every authority in England and whether  
they are fulfilling their statutory obligations.

My officials, together with representatives from the  
fire and rescue sector, will work with the inspectorate  
over the coming months to develop a comprehensive  
inspection framework against which fire and rescue  
authorities will be inspected. The Secretary of State is  
required to agree both the inspection framework and  
programme. The first inspection will take place in early  
2018 and every fire and rescue authority in England will  
be inspected thereafter with a report published on every  
inspection.

The provisions made by the Policing and Crime Act  
2017 require the chief fire and rescue inspector for  
England to lay before Parliament an annual report on  
the inspections undertaken. This will include his assessment  
of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue  
authorities in England for the period in respect of  
which the report is prepared. The Home Secretary also  
has the ability to commission the inspectorate to inspect  
and report on any particular issue in addition to individual  
authority inspections.

[HCWS78]

Avon Fire and Rescue Service

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick  
Hurd):** On 2 February, the previous Minister for Policing  
and Fire announced an independent inspection, led by  
Dr Craig Baker, into a number of allegations made  
against Avon Fire and Rescue Authority. I am pleased  
to announce to Parliament that the inspection is now  
complete and the Government have today laid before  
the House and published the report and recommendations.

53WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

54WS

The inspection, which was the first of its kind, was  
established under section 10 of the Local Government  
Act 1999 (the “1999 Act”). The inspection considered  
the authority's compliance with its “best value duty”  
under section 3 of the 1999 Act which requires the  
authority to make arrangements to secure continuous  
improvement in the way in which its functions are  
exercised, having regard to a combination of economy,  
efficiency and effectiveness.

The report concluded that, in the lead inspector's  
opinion, the authority is failing to comply with its duty  
under section 3 of the 1999 Act and makes a number of  
proposals for improvement in the areas of governance,  
leadership, culture and external scrutiny. The proposals  
include:

a review of the senior management board to ensure they  
have the necessary experience and capabilities to plan and  
deliver the transformational change required;

a de-layering exercise with regards to the senior management  
board with a focus on culture change and professionalism;

a review of the authority's integrated risk management plan;  
and

the introduction of a programme board to drive change and  
support the senior management team.

The Government welcome this independent,  
comprehensive report and will work closely with Avon  
Fire and Rescue Authority, the National Fire Chiefs  
Council and the Local Government Association (LGA)  
to fully consider the inspector's findings.

Public safety is a key Government priority and it is  
our ambition to build on the good progress fire and  
rescue services have already made to create a service  
that is more accountable, effective and professional  
than ever before. To support this, the Government have  
already announced:

an independent inspection regime for fire and rescue services  
in England;

the development of an independent professional standards  
body that will provide a coherent and comprehensive set of  
professional standards to drive improvements across the  
sector; and

a consultation on amendments to the fire and rescue national  
framework for England to include a requirement to discourage  
the practice of re-engaging senior officers post-retirement  
with an increase in take-home pay and pension benefits. The  
national framework is undergoing a complete revision and  
the new version will be published in early 2018.

I would like to thank Dr Baker and his team for the  
detailed report and recommendations and the professional  
manner in which they approached the inspection.

[HCWS79]

Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department  
(Amber Rudd):** Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention  
and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (the Act) requires  
the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as  
reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant  
three-month period on the exercise of her TPIM powers  
under the Act during that period.

The level of information provided will always be subject  
to slight variations based on operational advice.

TPIM notices in force (as of 28 February 2017) 7

TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 6  
28 February 2017)

TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period) 0

TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period) 0

TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period) 0  
Variations made to measures specified in TPIM 7  
notices (during the reporting period)

Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM 1  
notices refused (during the reporting period)

The number of current subjects relocated under 7  
TPIM legislation (as of 28 February 2017)

The TPIM review group (TRG) keeps every TPIM  
notice under regular and formal review. The TRG met  
on 12, 13, 15 and 16 December 2016. The next TRG  
meetings took place on 6, 9, 13, 16 and 17 March 2017.

[HCWS80]

**JUSTICE**

Justice Update

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice  
(Mr Sam Gyimah):** Probation services play a vital role  
in protecting communities and rehabilitating offenders.  
In delivering the sentences of the court, supervising  
offenders and helping them to address problems such as  
unemployment, homelessness and mental health issues,  
probation officers keep the public safe and prevent  
future victims of crime.

In 2014-15 the Government reformed the probation  
system to strengthen its focus on reducing reoffending  
and protecting communities, and much progress has  
been made in implementing these reforms. For the first  
time around 40,000 offenders a year released from  
custodial sentences of less than 12 months are entitled  
to statutory support from probation on release, and  
new through-the-gate services have been introduced to  
improve the resettlement of released prisoners in the  
community. We have established 21 community  
rehabilitation companies (CRCs) to supervise low and  
medium-risk offenders, and a national probation service  
(NPS) dedicated to protecting the public from higher-risk  
offenders. Staff working in the probation system deserve  
enormous credit for their commitment and professionalism  
during this period of significant change.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the current delivery of  
some aspects of probation services must improve. It is  
inevitable that such fundamental reforms to a complex  
public service will take some time to bed down. In  
addition, since the contracts were negotiated the number  
of offenders sentenced to community orders has fallen,  
and there has been an increase in the proportion of  
offenders assessed as posing a higher risk of harm. The  
result is fewer offenders are being referred to CRCs,  
leading to falls in CRC income to significantly below  
the levels expected at the time of the competition. This  
has made it extremely challenging for CRCs to deliver  
the services outlined in their contracts. In turn the NPS  
has seen a growth in their caseload and increased demands  
on its staff. That is why we have been reviewing the  
probation system, and why we are now taking steps to  
improve services.

55WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

56WS

We have recently taken urgent action to adjust the  
payment mechanism within the CRC contracts so it  
better reflects the fixed nature of most of the costs that  
providers incur when delivering services to offenders.  
This additional investment, which will see projected  
payments to CRCs still being no higher than originally  
budgeted for at the time of the reforms, will make CRC  
income less sensitive to changes in demand and therefore  
more reflective of their actual cost structures. This  
increased certainty about future income will enable  
CRCs to focus on delivering critical operational services.  
We are also exploring with providers further improvements  
that could be made to the delivery of rehabilitative  
services, and we will set out at a later stage any further  
changes we will be making as a result.

In addition we are working with the Department of  
Health, NHS England and Public Health England to  
develop a joint protocol setting out how probation,  
health and treatment services should work together to  
support those serving community sentences in England.  
We will seek to implement the protocol in a number of  
test-bed areas this year, and have agreed with the Welsh  
Government that we will seek to establish a similar  
protocol in Wales. We are also providing additional  
funding to Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation and  
supporting them to introduce a new framework for the  
inspection of probation services from April 2018. This  
will provide stronger scrutiny and increased transparency  
of the performance of probation by introducing annual  
inspection of CRCs and NPS areas and the publication  
of individual ratings for providers.

The Government remain wholeheartedly committed  
to reducing reoffending and protecting the public. The  
transforming rehabilitation reforms created a framework  
for more effective probation services and we intend to  
ensure they deliver the benefits of reduced reoffending.  
Over the coming months we will continue to work with  
providers to improve the delivery of probation services  
and we will make further statements in due course.

[HCWS81]

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

Northern Ireland Finances

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James  
Brokenshire):** When the Assembly dissolved in January,  
no budget had been set for the Northern Ireland Executive  
for the 2017-18 financial year. Since the end of March it  
has fallen to the Permanent Secretary of the Department  
of Finance to allocate funding to Northern Ireland  
Departments under powers provided by section 59 of  
the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

This situation has led to understandable concern and  
uncertainty among businesses and those relying on  
public services alike. Since April I have therefore worked  
closely with the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil  
Service (NICS), in conjunction with the NICS board, to  
keep under review how to provide ongoing assurance  
around the budget in the absence of an Executive.

In the first instance this led, on 24 April, to my  
written statement to the House setting out an indicative  
budget position and set of departmental allocations.

This sought to enable Permanent Secretaries to plan  
and prepare to take more detailed decisions on cash  
allocations.

Disappointingly, we remain without an Executive  
three months on. While progress has been made in  
discussions between the parties, resolution has not been  
reached. The parties have, however, made clear that  
they remain committed to engaging with each other to  
agree a basis on which an Executive can be formed. If  
an agreement is reached, I will move quickly to bring  
forward the necessary legislation to allow an Executive  
to meet at the next earliest opportunity.

While it is for the Northern Ireland parties to reach  
an agreed way forward, the UK Government remain  
committed to working with them and, as appropriate,  
the Irish Government to secure the restoration of devolved  
government as quickly as possible. I will maintain close  
contact with party leaders and the Irish Government  
over the coming weeks to seek to consolidate progress  
and encourage continuing discussions towards a deal.

While agreement remains possible, it is clear that an  
Executive will not be capable of being formed before  
the autumn. During that time pressures will continue to  
build, particularly in health and education services.  
And so as I set out in my written statement on 11 July, I  
consider it necessary to provide further clarity to support  
Northern Ireland Permanent Secretaries in addressing  
those pressures, maintaining public services and continuing  
to uphold the commitments arising from the Stormont  
House and Fresh Start agreements.

With that in mind, I set out below adjusted indicative  
budget positions and departmental allocations for this  
year. These include resource and capital funding provided  
in the spring Budget by the Chancellor, as well as  
resource and capital funding expected to be available  
from budget transfers and updated forecasts, subject to  
final data and the usual HM Treasury approval processes.

The allocations do not include any of the financial  
support the UK Government would be prepared to  
make available to Northern Ireland following the agreement  
between the Conservative Party and the Democratic  
Unionist Party. This Government recognise the unique  
challenges faced by Northern Ireland as a result of its  
distinct history and geographical position. However a  
restored Executive will need to agree how it wishes to  
allocate these funds to projects within the priority areas.

As previously, the allocations in the table showed in  
the attachment do not reflect input from UK Government  
Ministers on priorities nor do they constrain the future  
ability of an incoming Executive to adjust its priorities.  
And it remains for NI civil servants to allocate cash  
under s59 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is  
important to acknowledge, however, that as the year  
progresses the scope for significant changes will become  
more constrained.

This statement does not replace the ultimate need for  
a formal budget for Northern Ireland. The exercise of  
s59 powers cannot be sustained indefinitely. And though  
the advice I have received from the Head of the NICS is  
that we have not yet reached that critical point, it is  
approaching. It should be for a new Executive to make  
swift decisions on its budget to make use of the spending  
power available to it.

At the same time we will not forget our ultimate  
responsibility as a Government to uphold political stability  
and good governance in Northern Ireland. Accordingly,

57WS

Written Statements

19 JULY 2017

Written Statements

58WS

I reaffirm that the UK Government remain prepared to  
take forward legislation at Westminster to give authority  
for the expenditure of Northern Ireland departments  
should an Executive not be restored in the autumn. If  
resolution continues to prove intractable beyond that  
point, we will take further steps to provide the necessary  
political decision-making in the best interests of everyone  
in Northern Ireland.

Attachments can be viewed online at: http://  
[www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-  
questions-answers-statements/written-statement/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/)  
Commons/2017-07-19/HCWS77/.

[HCWS77]

59WS

Written Statements

20 JULY 2017

Written Statements

60WS

Written Statements

*Thursday 20 July 2017*

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL  
STRATEGY**

**Insolvency Service Performance Targets**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James):** Ihave  
set performance targets for the Insolvency Service for  
the financial year 2017-18.

The Insolvency Service is the Government agency  
that provides public services to those affected by financial  
distress or failure.

The Insolvency Service provides the frameworks that  
deal with insolvency and the financial misconduct that  
sometimes accompanies or leads to it. Its aim is to  
deliver economic confidence through a corporate and  
personal insolvency regime which is regarded as fair  
and that gives investors, lenders and creditors confidence  
to take the commercial risks necessary to support economic  
growth.

In 2017-18, an important priority for the Insolvency  
Service will be to maintain its current high level of  
customer service while initiating a major change programme.  
I have set measures and targets at a level which reflects  
the challenges that the agency continues to face.

Attachments are available online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/>  
written-questions-answers-statements/written-  
statement/Commons/2017-07-20/HCWS84/

[HCWS84]

**CABINET OFFICE**

**Cabinet Committees and Implementation Taskforces**

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the  
Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** Today the Government  
are publishing an updated list of Cabinet Committees  
and implementation taskforces.

Copies of the associated documents will be placed in  
the Library of the House and published on gov.uk.

[HCWS100]

**DEFENCE**

**Type 26 Frigates**

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**Following the announcement earlier this month that the  
Ministry of Defence had signed a £3.7 billion contract  
for the first batch of the new Type 26 anti-submarine  
warfare frigates, I am pleased to announce that the  
frigates will be known as the City Class. The first ship is  
to be named HMS Glasgow and her construction formally  
began today. Naming the ships after cities provides  
significant and readily identifiable linkages with large  
populations across the United Kingdom. Glasgow is a  
name with a distinguished historical pedigree, and this

first name in the class provides a tangible connection  
with the city where the ships will be constructed. There  
have been eight Royal Navy ships of the name from the  
early 1700s, who between them have earned 10 battle  
honours. In more recent history, two ships served in the  
world wars, including the Arctic convoys and the Normandy  
landings, and the last ship to bear the name was awarded  
the “Falkland Islands 1982” battle honour to add to the  
“Falkland Islands 1914” honour won by her predecessor.  
The Type 26 frigates, the first of which we expect to  
enter service with the Royal Navy in the mid-2020s, will  
provide essential protection to our nuclear deterrent  
and aircraft carriers into the 2060s, keeping British  
interests safe across the world.

[HCWS89]

**EDUCATION**

Post-16 Education

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** Today  
the Government are publishing Professor Sir Adrian  
Smith's authoritative and wide-ranging review of 16 to  
18 mathematics education in England.

The Government are determined to give all young  
people the world-class education they need to fulfil  
their potential. This includes providing opportunities to  
develop the mathematical and quantitative knowledge  
and skills appropriate to their chosen careers. In an  
increasingly technological world this will be vital to  
ensuring that our future workforce will be productive  
and competitive in the global marketplace.

Sir Adrian Smith's review identifies a strong economic  
and social mobility case for raising participation in  
post-16 mathematics and improving knowledge and  
skills at all levels. He presents clear evidence for the  
value of mathematical and quantitative skills to students,  
whichever route they take.

The report includes recommendations and challenges  
that are wide-ranging—for example, the need to address  
negative cultural perceptions of mathematics. These  
issues will require detailed engagement and action between  
Government, industry, universities, schools and colleges.

I have today written to Sir Adrian thanking him for  
the review and confirming that the Government will set  
out our plans across the range of Sir Adrian's  
recommendations in due course. The letter confirms  
that work is already under way to address a number of  
the challenges highlighted in the report, and there are a  
number of recommendations where we have been able  
to take immediate action.

We agree with Sir Adrian that we must be ambitious  
and take greater action to encourage and support more  
young people to choose mathematics post-16, particularly  
in areas where take-up is low. That is why one of the  
immediate actions we are taking today is to announce a  
new £16 million level 3 maths support programme. It  
will build on the momentum created by the further  
mathematics and core maths support programmes, and  
will work with schools and colleges to improve mathematics  
education by sharing best practice, and delivering  
knowledge-rich curriculum materials, as well as working

61WS

Written Statements

20 JULY 2017

Written Statements

62WS

to increase participation and attainment in 16 to  
18 mathematics. The programme will work to deliver  
focused intervention targeted to those who need it  
most.

The other immediate actions we have taken in response  
to Sir Adrian's recommendations are set out in my  
letter. For example, taking forward work on the new  
T-level qualifications to ensure they include mathematics  
where employers identify this as a requirement for  
employment; working with the newly constituted Royal  
Society Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education  
to ensure appropriate expert advice. We are also working  
with institutions such as the Royal Society and British  
Academy to encourage universities and employers to  
signal the value of level 3 mathematics qualifications  
for entry to undergraduate courses with a significant  
quantitative element and for a wide range of job roles.

We have placed a copy of Sir Adrian's report and our  
letter in the Libraries of both Houses and on the  
Government's website.

[HCWS99]

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS  
Inter-Pillar Transfer Rate in England

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** Today I am announcing  
that the amount transferred from farmers'pillar 1 direct  
payments to pillar 2 rural development in England will  
remain at 12% for 2019 and 2020.

Leaving the EU presents an unprecedented opportunity  
to develop a new system that works for us. The Government  
have committed to maintain the same total in cash  
funds until the end of this Parliament. As we prepare to  
leave, we will work with farmers, food producers and  
environmental experts across the United Kingdom and  
with the devolved Administrations to devise a new  
agri-environment system, to be introduced in the following  
Parliament.

I have, therefore, concluded that the inter-pillar transfer  
should remain unchanged in England under the current  
common agricultural policy framework.

[HCWS87]

**EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**New Bulgarian EU Commissioner**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting  
the European Union (Mr Steve Baker):** My right hon.  
Friend, Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE, Minister of  
State for Exiting the European Union, has made the  
following statement:

On 7 July 2017, the Council of the European Union supported  
the appointment of Ms Mariya Gabriel as the new Commissioner  
for Digital Economy and Society. The UK voted in favour of  
the appointment of Ms Gabriel as Commissioner. Ms Gabriel  
is scheduled to hold the post until 31 October 2019.

The Bulgarian Government nominated Ms Gabriel as  
Commissioner following the resignation of the previous  
Commissioner for Bulgaria, Ms Kristalina Georgieva, in  
December 2016. Before her appointment, Ms Gabriel had  
been a member of the European Parliament since 2009.

[HCWS104]

**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs (Boris Johnson):** I have today laid before Parliament  
a copy of the 2016 Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
report on human rights and democracy (Cm 9487).

The report highlights policy developments on human  
rights issues overseas in 2016.0

The report assesses the human rights situation in  
30 countries which FCO has designated as its human  
rights priority countries. These are: Afghanistan, Bahrain,  
Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic,  
China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea,  
Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran,  
Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories,  
Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia,  
South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan,  
Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

This report focuses on how the Government are  
striving to protect and promote human rights around  
the world. In the two centuries since Britain became the  
first country to outlaw the slave trade, this country has  
helped to lead the struggle for justice and decency. The  
Government's approach towards human rights stands  
in this long tradition, based on the firm belief that our  
values are not only right in themselves but the key to  
prosperity and development.

[HCWS90]

EU-Canada Strategic Partnership Agreement

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan  
Duncan):** The Government wish to inform the House of  
their decision to opt in to the Council decision on  
conclusion of the EU-Canada strategic partnership  
agreement (SPA), in respect of article 18(2) of the  
agreement, which relates to judicial co-operation in the  
field of civil and commercial matters. This article falls  
within title V of part III of the treaty on the functioning  
of the European Union.

The SPA, a framework political agreement, will update  
the previous EU-Canada 1976 framework agreement  
for commercial and economic co-operation between the  
European Communities and Canada. It has two aims: i)  
to enhance EU-Canada political ties and co-operation  
on foreign and security policy issues; and ii) to upgrade  
co-operation on a wide range of other areas. The SPA,  
though not technically linked to the EU-Canada  
comprehensive economic trade agreement (CETA), is  
complementary and will provide wider benefits to the  
EU-Canada relationship.

The SPA has been under negotiation, between the EU,  
its member states and Canada, since 2011. The draft Council  
decision on conclusion issued on 24 November 2016.  
Notwithstanding the result of the referendum on EU  
membership the Government consider that it is in the  
UK's interests to opt in to article 18(2) of this agreement  
at the conclusion stage of the SPA negotiations. Article 18(2)  
of the agreement provides for judicial co-operation in  
civil and commercial matters. While it is not specific

63WS *Written Statements* 20 JULY 2017 *Written Statements* 64WS

about the type of co-operation that might be envisaged, stolen vehicles, lost or cancelled travel documents and  
the Government believe that it is beneficial for the UK suspected criminals and terrorists on whom information  
to be involved in any such work between the EU and is sought.

one of our closest Commonwealth partners while we The proposed police co-operation regulation will replace

remain a member of the European Union. the legislation that currently governs SIS II's use for  
We do not expect the Council decision on conclusion that purpose. The UK has participated in this aspect of  
to be adopted until all member states have ratified the SIS II since April 2015. Our law enforcement agencies  
SPA. benefit from this, for example by being able to detain at

[HCWS93] the border people who are wanted under European  
arrest warrants and to obtain intelligence from police  
forces across the EU on suspected criminals and security  
**Somalia (Security Assistance)** risks.Thedraftregulationcontainsanumberof proposals  
that would update SIS II's capabilities, for example  
allowing it to store a wider range of biometric data and  
**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** The UK permitting alerts to be created to protect children whoare at risk of going missing. There are some changes we  
remains committed to building a stable, peaceful and

will seek, in particular to maintain member states'  
prosperous future for Somalia. Instability in Somalia

control over when alerts are created, but the Government  
affects stability across east Africa—fuelling irregular

believe we will be in a better position to do this by not  
migration and providing a foothold for terrorist groups

opting out and remaining full participants in the negotiation.  
such as al-Shabaab and Daesh. It is important that we

maintain our support in order to tackle these shared The proposed returns regulation would allow member

threats to both the UK and the Somali people. This is states to use SIS II to circulate alerts on non-EEA  
why the British Government have announced a further nationals who have been made subject to removal decisions.  
£21 million of support for security work in Somalia, Therefore, the UK will not opt in to the draft returnsand helped to agree the security pact at the London regulation.

Somalia conference earlier this year. The decisions announced here have no implications

In the shorter term, with the support of the Somali for our general opt out from the internal border-free  
Government, the UK has funded the construction of a zone established by Schengen.

police training facility in Mogadishu at a cost of £1,767,016 Until the UK leaves the EU it remains a full member,

which will shortly be handed over to the Somali police and the Government will continue to consider the  
force. This facility has been funded by FCO policy application of the UK's right to opt in to, or opt out of,  
programme funding. The development of security partners forthcoming EU legislation in the area of justice and  
and counter-terrorism (CT) policing in Somalia is vital home affairs on a case-by-case basis, with a view to  
to help ensure that the Somali authorities have the right maximising our country's security, protecting our civil  
tools to deploy in their ongoing fight against terrorism. liberties and enhancing our ability to control immigration.

The provision of this facility is fully in line with the [HCWS96]  
Government's strategic CT objectives for east and south

Africa. Using the overseas security and justice assistance **Newly Naturalised Passport Applicants**

guidance, FCO officials have also assessed the project  
for human rights risks, and concluded that the risk of

such violations arising from the project's delivery may **The Minister for Immigration (Brandon Lewis):** Iambe mitigated. writing to advise you that Her Majesty's Passport Office

[HCWS91] is introducing changes to its interviewing processes.

HM Passport Office reserves the right to call any  
passport applicant for an identity interview. However,  
where the identity of a newly naturalised British citizen  
**HOME DEPARTMENT** can be confirmed using records already held by UK  
Visas and Immigration, they will not be routinely required  
to attend an interview as part of their first UK passport  
**Second Generation Schengen Information System** application.

The new process maintains our high standards of  
identity assurance but removes an unnecessary burden  
**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick** on newly naturalised citizens by no longer requiring  
**Hurd):** The Government have decided not to opt out of them to confirm their identity twice to the Home Office  
a new EU proposal for a regulation governing the use of before being issued with a UK passport.

the second generation Schengen information system [HCWS97]  
(SIS II) for police and judicial co-operation purposes

(“the draft police co-operation regulation”), and not to **Mutual Recognition of Freezing and Confiscation**

opt in to a proposal for a regulation on the use of SIS II **Orders**

for the return of illegally staying non-European economic  
area (EEA) nationals (“the draft returns regulation”).

SIS II is an EU-wide system that circulates alerts on **The Minister for Security (Mr Ben Wallace):** The  
people and objects that are of interest to law enforcement Government have decided that the UK will opt in to the  
agencies across the EU. This includes people who are regulation on the mutual recognition of freezing and  
wanted for extradition on European arrest warrants, confiscation orders.

65WS *Written Statements* 20 JULY 2017 *Written Statements* 66WS

The proposed regulation would replace and build opted into one set of JHA provisions in the measure,  
upon the existing mutual recognition framework which and did not opt into another). The Government have  
is currently in two existing instruments—the Council not asserted the Schengen opt-out to any proposals  
framework decision on the execution in the European during that period.

Union of orders of freezing property of evidence The seventh report covers decisions taken over the  
(2003/577/JHA) and the Council framework decision period 1 December 2015 to 30 November 2016. In that  
(2006/783/JHA) on the application of the principle of period, decisions on UK participation in 36 EU JHA  
mutual recognition to confiscation orders. These framework legislative proposals have been taken. The UK hasdecisions were transposed into UK law in 2014. decided to opt in under the JHA opt-in protocol in  
Through our serious organised crime strategy and 12 cases and has decided not to opt in in 24 cases. The  
action plan for anti-money laundering and counter Government have not asserted the Schengen opt-out to  
terrorist finance, we have made it clear that being able any proposals during that period.

to recover criminal monies is a priority. The proposed These opt-in decisions are without prejudice to  
regulation will bring benefits to the UK through discussions on the UK's future relationship with the  
strengthening the ability of our operational agencies to EU. The UK's relationship with the EU will change as a  
have our orders recognised and executed, particularly in result of leaving the EU. However, the UK retains thecountries which have traditionally been slower to assist rights and obligations of membership of the EU while  
in cross-border asset recovery cases. we remain a member.

The UK's experience of the existing framework decisions [HCWS94]

has been positive, although numbers of mutual recognition  
requests are limited due to the short time (since 2014)  
that the decisions have been fully transposed in UK law. **Publications: Former Independent Reviewer of**

Asset recovery in some EU states has traditionally been **Terrorism Legislation**

difficult through mutual legal assistance routes, which  
are lengthy and cumbersome.

Opting into this measure is also consistent with the **The Secretary of State for the Home Department**UK's approach to participating in EU mutual recognition **(Amber Rudd):** In November 2013, the then Homemeasures to improve practical co-operation between Secretary asked David Anderson QC to conduct amemberstates.Optinginatthispointshowsourcontinued review of the framework of the UK's deportation withpositiveengagementwiththismeasure,anddemonstrates assurances (DWA) policy, and to make recommendationsour commitment to work together with our European on how the policy might be strengthened or improved,partners to fight crime and prevent terrorism now and with particular emphasis on its legal aspects. Iamafter we leave the European Union. pleased to be publishing his report today (Cm 9462). I

can confirm that no redactions have been made to the

In accordance with section 36(5) of the Terrorism

**Annual JHA Opt-in Reports** Act 2006, David Anderson QC, the former independent

reviewer of terrorism legislation, prepared a report on  
the operation in 2015 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and  
**The Secretary of State for the Home Department** part1of the Terrorism Act 2006, which was laid before  
**(Amber Rudd):** The Home Office and Ministry of Justice the House on 1 December 2016. I have carefully consideredhave prepared the sixth and seventh annual reports to its recommendations and observations. I am today layingParliament on the application of protocols 19 and 21 to before the House the Government's response (Cm 9489).the treaty on European Union (TEU) and the treaty on I am very grateful to David Anderson for his work on

the functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (“the both reportstreaties”) in relation to EU justice and home affairs Copies of David Anderson's report into DWA, and  
(JHA) matters (Cm 9488). The reports, which are today the Government's response to his section 36(5) report  
being laid before the House, are submitted on behalf of will be available in the Vote Office and on gov.uk.  
both my own Department and that of the Secretary of [HCWS105]

State for Justice. Copies of the Command Paper are  
available from the Vote Office and on gov.uk.

On 9 June 2008, the then Leader of the House of **Immigration Rules**Lords committed to table a report in Parliament each  
year setting out the decisions taken by the Government  
in accordance with protocol 21 (“the justice and home **The Minister for Immigration (Brandon Lewis):** Myaffairs opt-in protocol”) and to make that report available right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is today layingfor debate. These commitments were designed to ensure before the House a statement of changes in immigrationthat the views of the scrutiny committees should inform rules (HC 290).

the Government's decision-making process. The purpose of the changes is to give effect to the  
The sixth report covers decisions taken over the period Supreme Court judgment in MM (Lebanon) & Others,1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015. In that period, handed down on 22 February 2017.

decisions on UK participation in 23 EU JHA legislative The changes, together with changes to the Secretary

proposals have been taken. The UK has decided to opt of State's guidance to decision makers, are intended to  
in under the JHA opt-in protocol in 11 cases and has give effect to the judgment's findings in respect of, first,  
decided not to opt in in 13 cases (this includes one the income sources which may be relied upon to meet  
decision on an international agreement where the UK the minimum income requirement in specified exceptional

67WS *Written Statements* 20 JULY 2017 *Written Statements* 68WS  
circumstances; and, secondly, the duty to have regard to and compliant with the principles set out in the principles

the welfare of children under section 55 of the Borders, of good corporate governance for advisory NDPBs, the  
Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. They also make code of practice for scientific advisory NDPBs and the  
other minor amendments and clarifications to the family principles of scientific advice to Government.

immigration rules. The review recommends that the remit of the

[HCWS95] NDNADEG should be extended to cover the ethical  
issues associated with all forensic identification techniques  
**Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures** including facial recognition technology and fingerprinting,

and the collection and retention of biometric data. This  
**The Secretary of State for the Home Department** recommendation has been accepted and therefore the  
**(Amber Rudd):** Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention name of the NDNADEG will change to the Biometrics

and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (the Act) requires And Forensics Ethics Group. The review also makes  
the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as two recommendations in relation to accountability of

reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant Ministers for the bodies: that the chair of the NDNADEG

three-month period on the exercise of her TPIM powers should meet a Home Office Minister in the next 12 months;

under the Act during that period. and an annual report should be published for the ASC  
The level of information provided will always be and ACMD. Both recommendations have been accepted.

subject to slight variations based on operational advice. The full report of the triennial review of the ACMD,  
 the ASC and the NDNADEG can be found on the  
TPIM notices in force (as of 31 May 2017) 6 gov.uk website and copies have been placed in the

TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 31 May 5 Library of the House.

2017) [HCWS92]

TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period) 0

TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period) 1

TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period) 1 **JUSTICE**

Variations made to measures specified in TPIM notices 10

(during the reporting period)

Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM notices 3 **Lugano and Hague Conventions**

refused (during the reporting period)

The number of current subjects relocated under TPIM 6

legislation(as of 31 May 2017) **The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice**

The TPIM review group (TRG) keeps every TPIM **(Mr David Lidington):** The United Kingdom has opted  
notice under regular and formal review. The most recent in to the following Council decisions:

TRG meetings took place on 26 and 30 June, and 3 and (i) Council decision of 7 February 2013, authorising the

4 July. opening of negotiations on agreements between the EU and

ThecaseofSecretaryofStatefortheHomeDepartment Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland in the areas of

cross-border service of judicial and non-judicial documents  
*v*. EC and EG [2017] EWHC 795 (Admin) was heard andthetakingofevidenceincivilandcommercialproceedings.

again at the High Court between 24 January and 2 February (Norway, Iceland and Switzerland are commonly referred to

2017. In a judgment handed down on 11 April 2017 as the Lugano States).

Mr Justice Collins upheld the Secretary of State's decision The negotiating mandates set out the position of theto impose a TPIM notice on EC and EG. This judgment EU in discussions on the prospects for agreements

can be found at: [www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/](http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/) between those states in the areas of cross-border service

Admin/2017/795.html. of judicial and non-judicial documents and taking of

[HCWS98] evidence in civil and commercial proceedings.

**Science Advisory Non-Departmental Public Bodies:** There have been three rounds of discussions so far,**Triennial Review** and final agreements have yet to be reached. The decision

of the then Government in 2013 to opt in to the  
negotiating mandates does not commit this Government  
**The Secretary of State for the Home Department** to opt in to future EU agreements in these spheres. I will  
**(Amber Rudd):** On 21 July 2014, my predecessor as update the House as further information becomes available.

Home Secretary my right hon. Friend the Member for (ii) Council decision authorising the opening of negotiations  
Maidenhead(MrsMay),announcedinParliament,through on a convention on the recognition and enforcement of

a written ministerial statement, the commencement of judgments in civil and commercial matters (the Judgments

the triennial review of the Home Office science advisory Convention) in the framework of the Hague Conference on  
non-departmental public bodies: the Advisory Council Private International Law.

on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD); the Animals in The negotiating mandate of May 2016 sets out the  
Science Committee (ASC); and the National DNA position of the EU in discussions at a Hague conference

Database Ethics Group (NDNADEG). I amnowpleased level on the prospects for an international convention

to announce the completion of the review. which would set out rules for the recognition and

The ACMD, ASC and NDNADEG are independent enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters,

bodies that advise ministers on scientific issues. delivered by foreign courts.

The review concludes that the functions performed Detailed discussions on the form of a convention text  
by the ACMD, the ASC and the NDNADEG are still began in June 2016 and will continue among EU member  
required and that they should be retained as non- states and at Hague conference level for some time to  
departmental public bodies. The review concludes that come. The next Hague conference special commission  
the control and governance arrangements are robust to discuss the project will take place in November 2017.

69WS *Written Statements* 20 JULY 2017 *Written Statements* 70WS

Opting in to the EU negotiating mandate does not R and D hubs across the city-region. These hubs will  
commit the UK Government to acceding to any future focus on growth in key sectors of the local economy  
convention. such as data science, robotics, financial services, creative  
Due to an oversight, a written ministerial statement tech and agri-tech.

on these Council decisions has not thus far been placed We will also deliver our manifesto commitment to  
before both Houses, for which I apologise. support a new concert hall in Edinburgh, meeting the

[HCWS102] need for a mid-sized venue in the city.

Projects and programmes announced in the heads of  
terms document will be subject to the development and  
**PRIME MINISTER** approval of business cases. Moving forward, the

**PRIME MINISTER** Government will work with the Scottish Government

and the civic, academic and business leaders of Edinburgh  
**Home Buying Policy, Commonhold Law and Protected** and south-east Scotland to ensure the successful

**Persons** implementation of the deal.

This represents an important step in delivering the  
UK Government's commitment to a city deal for each  
**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** This written of Scotland's cities, as we work to strengthen the Union  
statement confirms three machinery of Government and build a United Kingdom that works for everyone.  
changes. [HCWS103]  
Responsibility for home-buying policy, including estate  
agent regulation, will transfer from the Department for  
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to the Department  
for Communities and Local Government. Responsibility **TRANSPORT**

for commonhold law will transfer from the Ministry of  
Justice to the Department for Communities and Local  
Government. These changes will be effective immediately. **High Level Output Specification**

Responsibility for protected persons policy will transfer  
from the Ministry of Justice to the Home Office. This  
change will be effective immediately. **The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):**

I am today publishing my high-level output specification  
[HCWS88] (HLOS) and initial statement of funds available (SOFA)  
for the railway for control period 6, which covers the  
years 2019 to 2024.

**SCOTLAND** The Government are determined that the railway  
becomes more focused on issues that matter most to  
**Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal** passengers—such as punctuality and reliability. A more

reliable railway also plays a critical role in underpinning  
economic growth and bringing the country together.  
**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):** The Government are committed to taking action toIn March 2016, the Government announced their intention achieve these outcomes.

to negotiate a city region deal for Edinburgh and south-east The HLOS is therefore focused on the operation,

Scotland. As well as deals across England and Wales, maintenance and renewal of the existing railway—the  
this follows the successful agreement of city region areas of activity that will deliver a more reliable railway  
deals for Glasgow and Clyde Valley, Inverness and the for passengers. The Government are already deliveringHighlands and Aberdeen city region. significant enhancements to the railway, including High

Speed 2 and Crossrail and expect to continue to invest  
I can today inform the House that the Government

in the enhancement to the wider rail network in the next  
have reached agreement with the Scottish Government

control period. In the light of the findings of the Bowe  
and regional partners on a heads of terms for a city

review, which emphasised the need to enable better  
region deal for Edinburgh and south-east Scotland.

planning, cost control and alignment with the needs of  
This deal will bring in excess of £1 billion of investment users of the railway, Government will take forward the  
into the Scottish capital city region. Local partners' funding of these enhancements separately. The Government  
aspirations are that this investment will create in excess are developing a new process for delivering enhancements  
of 21,000 good quality jobs. and intend to publish more information on this in the  
Central to the investment is the UK Government autumn.

contribution of up to £300 million, which is being On the basis of independent advice from the Office of

matched by Scottish Government. This investment is Rail and Road, as well as from the rail industry, the  
expected to unlock a considerable further investment Government have agreed that an increased volume of  
from the city region's universities, higher education renewals activity will be needed over the course of  
sector and the private sector. control period 6, to maintain safety and improve on

UK Government investment will support local partners current levels of reliability and punctuality, which in  
in delivering their ambition to make Edinburgh a leader places fall short of the levels that passengers rightly  
in data-driven innovation. Building on existing regional expect. This enhanced programme of renewals will be  
excellence in R and D and innovation, the investment supported by appropriate volumes of operations and  
will see significant investments in digital infrastructure maintenance activity required to maintain safety and  
and data storage as well as the development of five improve the reliability and punctuality of train services.

71WS *Written Statements* 20 JULY 2017 *Written Statements* 72WS

Before committing to the specific levels of funding *Midlands*

required, I have decided that the Government require The competition to find the next operator for themore assurance on the likely costs of the work programme. midland main line is under way. Our goals for the next  
Network Rail's progress on improving its efficiency in east midlands franchise are to improve journeys forrecent years has fallen short of my expectations. Improving passengers, drive even stronger economic growth andefficiency is vital if we are to maximise the value of support investment across the whole region. We want to  
taxpayer spending on the railway in driving improvements hear from passengers and local communities about the  
for passengers and freight shippers. next rail franchise to ensure it delivers the services that

The Government will therefore carry out further passengers want. I am therefore pleased to inform the  
work to examine the approach to setting appropriate House that my Department is today launching a public  
levels of maintenance and renewals activity for control consultation on the next franchise. The consultation,  
period 6 and to improving Network Rail's efficiency. which will run for 12 weeks from today, will help to  
This will enable me to confirm the extent of Government's inform and develop the franchise specification for inclusion  
funding envelope through the publication of a statement in the invitation to tender. The consultation is available  
of funds available by 13 October 2017. This work will online and will also include a number of local stakeholder  
draw on a number of sources, including the new events.

independent review of progress on efficiency planning The next east midlands franchise will help drive the  
which the regulator has commissioned. midlands engine and improve passenger journeys by  
Alongside the publication of the HLOS, I am issuing maximising the passenger benefits of the significant  
new statutory guidance to the independent Office of upgrade of the midland main line, the biggest investment  
Rail and Road. This sets out my priorities for rail in the route since it was completed in 1870. The upgrade  
regulation. These include supporting the ORR's work will enable reduced journey times and more seats for  
to improve Network Rail's efficiency and improving the long-distance passengers during the peaks, as well as  
experience of users of the railway. more capacity for commuters with dedicated services  
I am placing copies of the HLOS and SOFA, and of with longer trains. Journeys will improve from 2020  
the statutory guidance to the Office of Rail and Road in and, once the full benefits are realised, there will be  
the Libraries of both Houses. almost twice as many seats into London St Pancras in

Attachments can be viewed online at: the peak compared to today.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/> The next operator will be required to deliver modern,

written-questions-answers-statements/written- fast and efficient trains. This includes a brand new fleet  
statement/Commons/2017-07-20/HCWS86/ of bi-mode intercity trains from 2022, delivering more  
[HCWS86] seats and comfort for long-distance passengers. The  
provision of these trains will replace plans to electrify  
**Rail Update** the line north of Kettering to Sheffield and Nottingham,

improving journeys sooner, without the need for wires  
and masts on the whole route, and causing less disruption  
**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):** to services. We do not intend to proceed with plans to  
I wish to inform the House about some important electrify the line from Kettering to Sheffield and  
developments regarding the rail networks of the midland Nottingham, and there will be further investment to  
main line, south Wales and the north of England. come to ensure Sheffield is HS2-ready.

Passenger numbers on the UK rail network have *Wales*

more than doubled since privatisation 20 years ago and From autumn 2017, passengers in Wales will benefitour country's railways need to adapt and change to be from new intercity express trains which will each deliverable to meet current and future demand. Therefore we over 130 more seats, faster journey times and improvedare delivering the largest upgrade of the rail network connectivity for south Wales to London with 40% moresince Victorian times, including modernising rail services seats in the morning peak once the full fleet is in service.and infrastructure on the Great Western main line,

midland main line and in the north. These innovative new trains switch seamlessly between

electric and diesel power, delivering faster journeys and  
Technology is advancing quickly, and this Government more seats for passengers without disruptive work to  
are committed to using the best available technologies put up wires and masts along routes where they are no  
to improve each part of the network. New bi-mode longer required.

train technology offers seamless transfer from diesel

power to electric that is undetectable to passengers. The Rapid delivery of passenger benefits, minimising

industry is also developing alternative fuel trains, using disruption and engineering work should always be ourbattery and hydrogen power. This means that we no priority and as technology changes we must reconsiderlonger need to electrify every line to achieve the same our approach to modernising the railways. We will onlysignificant improvements to journeys, and we will only electrify lines where it provides a genuine benefit toelectrify lines where it delivers a genuine benefit to passengers which cannot be achieved through otherpassengers. technologies.

These new technologies mean that we can improve As a result, we no longer need to electrify the Great  
journeys for passengers on the Great Western main line Western route west of Cardiff. In addition to the new  
in south Wales, the midland main line, and on the lakes trains, Network Rail will develop further options to  
line between Windermere and Oxenholme sooner than improve journeys for passengers in Wales. These will  
expected with state-of-the-art trains, instead of carrying include, but not be limited to:

out disruptive electrification works along the whole of Improving journeys times and connections between Swansea

these routes. and Cardiff, and south Wales, Bristol and London

73WS *Written Statements* 20 JULY 2017 *Written Statements* 74WS

Improving journeys times and connections across north environment of this world heritage site. This trial will  
Wales pilot an alternative-fuelled train, removing the need to  
Direct services from Pembroke Dock to London via Carmarthen construct intrusive wires and masts in this national  
on new, state of the art intercity express trains park. Journeys between Windermere and Manchester

Station improvements at Cardiff station airport will be improved sooner and with less disruption

Station improvements in and around Swansea including to services and local communities. This replaces plans  
looking at the case for additional provision to electrify the line between Windermere and Oxenholme.

I also support a proposal for Wales' first privately This investment is a part of the great north rail  
funded railway station at St Mellons. My Department project, which will deliver more frequent trains and  
will work with the promoters of the scheme as they new direct services on the west coast main line, with  
develop their plans to the next stage. faster journeys and increased frequency into and through

The first new intercity express trains will enter service Manchester from across the north-west. It will boost  
from this October and once the whole fleet is introduced access to jobs and new opportunities, growing the northern  
and electrification to Cardiff is complete journey times powerhouse by improving connections between the Lake  
between Swansea, London and other stations along the District and the Manchester airport international gateway.  
route will be approximately 15 minutes shorter. Train operators and Network Rail will need to work*The north* as one to deliver these upgrades and introduce the new

We are investing in the northern powerhouse, upgrading fleets in a way which ensures passengers experience  
rail services across one of the country's largest networks better journeys as soon as possible.to improve connections between towns and cities. Passengers *Rail franchise schedule*in the Lake District will benefit from double the number  
of direct services to Manchester airport from May TheGovernmenthavealsotodaypublishedtheupdated2018. From 2019, there will be brand new trains with rail franchise schedule, which includes changes to themore seats and better on-board facilities including air timescales for the east midlands, cross country and westconditioning, toilets, free wi-fi and plug sockets, subject midlands rail franchises. A copy of the schedule will beto business case. placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

We have listened to concerns about electrification Attachments can be viewed online at: http://www.  
gantries spoiling protected landscapes. Northern, the parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-train operator, will therefore begin work to explore answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-the possibility of deploying alternative-fuel trains on 07-20/HCWS85/.

the route by 2021, improving comfort and on-board [HCWS85]  
facilities for passengers while protecting the sensitive

1P *Petitions* 11 JULY 2017 *Petitions* 2P

Petition their savings; further declares that the local authority  
decided to prosecute the family (on the anniversary of  
their eldest son's death) for not sending their son to a  
*Tuesday 11 July 2017* school that they believed would be harmful to him;  
further declares that they were unable to fund legal  
advice to defend themselves, but did manage to get pro  
**PRESENTED PETITION** bono support as a consequence of this were found that  
they had no case to answer.

*Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor*

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons  
**Children with Special Educational Needs** Education Select Committee investigate the use of legislation

*The petition of Alan and Karen Entwistle,* relating to absence from school by local authorities to

punish parents who disagree with the local authority as  
Declares that the petitioners are the parents of a son to what is best for their children and to propose changeswho is visually impaired and has learning difficulties in legislation so that local authorities are required tobecause of prematurity and has been diagnosed as work with parents rather than simply use the criminalautistic by Great Ormond Street hospital; further declares law to impose their will on families.

that the petitioners have had difficulties getting the

local education authority (Lancashire) to work with And the petitioner remains, etc.*—[Presented by Julie*

them and recognise that they as parents have a uniquely *Cooper.]*

good understanding of the needs of their son; declares [P002044]that the continual legal disputes with the local authority [P002044]

have now cost the family over 80,000 and depleted all

3P *Petitions* 13 JULY 2017 *Petitions* 4P

Petition of the original decision to close King George Hospital

A&E and in particular the criteria used which the  
petitioners believe are now out of date.

*Thursday 13 July 2017* And the petitioners remain, etc.*—[Presented by  
Wes Streeting, Official Report,* 26 April 2017; Vol. 624,  
**OBSERVATIONS** c. 1186*.]*

[P002041]  
*Observations from the Minister of State, Department***HEALTH** *of Health (Mr Philip Dunne):*

**Closure of King George Hospital Accident and** There is an ongoing process by the local STP Board

**Emergency Department** to revalidate and assure that the original decision to  
*The petition of residents of the UK,* closetheKingGeorgeHospitalA&Eremainsappropriate.  
Declares that the petitioners are against the closure NHS England has confirmed that the criteria used in

of the A&E department at King George Hospital in the decision are still relevant. They are the standard  
Ilford. criteria used in these cases and have been applied by  
North East London STP as part of their delivery plan.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of  
Commons urges the Government to undertake a review

5P *Petitions* 17 JULY 2017 *Petitions* 6P

Petition lobbied consistently on behalf of four imprisoned Christian  
pastors, who have now been released, partly due to our  
efforts. During his visit to Pakistan in November, the  
*Monday 17 July 2017* Foreign Secretary raised the rights of all Pakistani  
citizens, including religious minorities.

We are deeply concerned about persecution of religious  
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**OBSERVATIONS** minorities in the middle east, where we have seen appalling  
crimes committed against Christians, Madeans, Yazidis  
and other minorities, as well as the majority Muslim  
**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE** populations in Iraq and Syria. The UK is determinedtoseek justice for all the victims who have suffered as a  
**Persecution of Christians** result of crimes committed by Daesh around the world.

At the 71st United Nations General Assembly in September  
*The petition of parishioners of the Parish of Saint* 2016, together with the Government of Iraq and other  
*John Southworth, Nelson, Brierfield and Fence, Lancashire,* international partners, the Foreign Secretary launched  
Declares that the petitioners believe that attacks on the campaign to bring Daesh to Justice. On the

Christians in 20% of the world's countries since 2014 is humanitarian track, Britain has pledged more than

concerning and that more should to be done to combat £2.3 billion to support those affected by the conflict inreligious persecution. Syria, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian  
crisis. In Iraq, we are working with the authorities in  
The petitioners therefore request that the House of Ninewa to ensure that protection of minorities is properly

Commons urges the Government to take further action addressed in their strategic vision for the region.

to prevent and raise awareness of attacks on Christians, The UK works to promote Freedom of Religion orworldwide. Belief at the United Nations. We are committed to  
And the petitioners remain, etc.*—[Presented by Andrew* promoting implementation of key resolutions, including

*Stephenson , Official Report,* 30 March 2017; Vol. 624, Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18, which focuses  
c. 511*.]* the international community on combating religious

[P002032] intolerance, protecting the human rights of minorities  
[P002032] and promoting pluralism in society.

*The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth* Our programme funds support our strategic aim to  
*Affairs (Lord Ahmad) made the following observations:* promote and protect Freedom of Religion or Belief

The persecution of individuals based on their religion globally. Under the Magna Carta Fund for Human

or belief remains of profound concern to the United Rights and Democracy, we are funding a project to

Kingdom. The freedom to practise, change or share develop lesson plans for secondary school teachers in

one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent the middle east and North Africa region to enable them

opposition isa fundamental human right, and the UK to teach children about the right to Freedom of Religion

Government are committed to defending this human or Belief. We are also continuing to support a network

right and promoting respect and tolerance between of human rights defenders in South Asia, and are

religious communities. beginning to build up a network of youth activists.

*The Foreign Office's work on Freedom of Religion or* Freedom of Religion or Belief is a priority for the  
*Belief* Prime Minister, who reiterated in her Easter message  
At country level, we lobby Governments for changes her conviction that we must “do more to stand up for

in laws and practices that discriminate against individuals the freedom of people of all religions to practice their

on the basis of their religion or belief, and we continue beliefs openly and in peace and safety”. In my new role

to raise cases of persecution in individual countries. For as Minister for Human Rights, I am committed to

example, Ministers and British diplomats recently raised working with my Ministerial counterparts and our

religiousfreedominRussia,followingtheRussianSupreme diplomatic network to move this agenda forward throughCourt's decision to uphold a ruling that recognises lobbying and practical action on the ground.Jehovah's Witnesses as ‘extremists'. In Sudan, we have

7P *Petitions* 19 JULY 2017 *Petitions* 8P

Petition UK should exercise leadership in the implementation  
of the Paris Agreement, ensure coordination between  
government departments in the production and  
*Wednesday 19 July 2017* implementation of plans for emissions reduction with  
particular emphasis on local energy, cutting energy  
waste in homes and reducing the impact of vehicles on  
**PRESENTED PETITION** the environment.

*Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor* The petitioners therefore request that the House of

**Climate Change** Commons urges the Prime Minister to give priority to  
the urgent issue of global Climate Change.

*The petition of residents of Macclesfield,*And the petitioners remain, etc.*]*Declares that climate changes impacts upon both

people and places; further that on the global stage the [P002047]

1MC *Ministerial Corrections* 20 JULY 2017 *Ministerial Corrections* 2MC

Ministerial Correction East pointed this out—although it is true that we are  
spending only about £180 million in Yemen, we have to  
bear it in mind that, unfortunately, the situation in  
*Thursday 20 July 2017* Yemen is not the only situation in the world.

*[Official Report, 5 July 2017, Vol. 626, c. 169WH.]  
Letter of correction from Rory Stewart:*

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT** An error has been identified in the response I gave to

the Westminster Hall debate on Yemen: Political and  
**Yemen: Political and Humanitarian Situation** Humanitarian Situation.

*The following is an extract from the reply by the Minister* The correct response should have been:

*for Africa, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border*

*(Rory Stewart), to the Westminster Hall debate on* **Rory Stewart:** The British Government are doing an

*Yemen: Political and Humanitarian Situation on 5 July* enormous amount—probably more than we are being  
*2017.* given credit for in this Chamber—but clearly all the  
things we are doing are not sufficient to solve this crisis.

**Rory Stewart:** The British Government are doing an The problem is—the hon. Member for Leeds North  
enormous amount—probably more than we are being East pointed this out—although it is true that we are  
given credit for in this Chamber—but clearly all the spending only about **£139 million** in Yemen, we have to  
things we are doing are not sufficient to solve this crisis. bear it in mind that, unfortunately, the situation in  
The problem is—the hon. Member for Leeds North Yemen is not the only situation in the world.