

**Wednesday
17 July 2024**

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No. 5**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 17 July 2024

Chronology of The Parliamentary Debates

The Parliamentary History contains all that can be collected of the Legislative History of this country from the Conquest to the close of the XVIIIth Century (1803), 36 vols. The chief sources whence these Debates are derived are the Constitutional History, 24 vols.; Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Journal; Debates of the Commons in 1620 and 1621; Chandler and Timberland's Debates, 22 vols.; Grey's Debates of the Commons, from 1667 to 1694, 10 vols.; Almons Debates, 24 vols.; Debrett's Debates, 63 vols.; The Hardwicke Papers; Debates in Parliament by Dr. Johnson, &c. &c.

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Abbott, Rt Hon. Diane Julie (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab)
Abbott, Jack Simon (Ipswich) (Lab/Co-op)
Abrahams, Deborah Angela Elspeth Marie (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)
Adam Patel, Shockat Hussain (Leicester South) (Ind)
Ahmed, Zubir (Glasgow South West) (Lab)
Akehurst, Luke (North Durham) (Lab)
Al-Hassan, Sadik Adam (North Somerset) (Lab)
Alaba, Adebayo (Southend East and Rochford) (Lab)
Aldridge, Daniel Colin (Weston-super-Mare) (Lab)
Alexander, Rt Hon. Douglas Garven (Lothian East) (Lab/Co-op)
Alexander, Heidi (Swindon South) (Lab)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Stepney) (Lab)
Ali, Tahir (Birmingham Hall Green and Moseley) (Lab)
Allin-Khan, Rosena Chantelle (Tooting) (Lab)
Allister, James Hugh (North Antrim) (TUV)
Amesbury, Michael Lee (Runcorn and Helsby) (Lab)
Amos, Gideon John (Taunton and Wellington) (LD)
Anderson, Callum Bradley (Buckingham and Bletchley) (Lab)
Anderson, Fleur (Putney) (Lab)
Anderson, Lee (Ashfield) (Reform)
Anderson, Stuart Paul (South Shropshire) (Con)
Andrew, Rt Hon. Stuart James (Daventry) (Con)
Antoniazzi, Antonia Louise (Gower) (Lab)
Aquarone, Steffan Luke (North Norfolk) (LD)
Argar, Rt Hon. Edward John Comport (Melton and Syston) (Con)
Arthur, Scott (Edinburgh South West) (Lab)
Asser, James Edward (West Ham and Beckton) (Lab)
Athwal, Jasbir Singh (Ilford South) (Lab)
Atkins, Rt Hon. Victoria (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)
Atkinson, Catherine Helen (Derby North) (Lab)
Atkinson, Lewis Malcolm (Sunderland Central) (Lab)

B

Babarinde, Joshua Thomas Aderele (Eastbourne) (LD)
Bacon, Gareth Andrew (Orpington) (Con)
Badenoch, Rt Hon. Olukemi Olufunto (North West Essex) (Con)
Bailey, Calvin George (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab)
Bailey, Olivia Joanna (Reading West and Mid Berkshire) (Lab)
Baines, David Edward (St Helens North) (Lab)
Baker, Alexandra (Aldershot) (Lab)
Baker, Richard James (Glenrothes and Mid Fife) (Lab)
Baldwin, Dame Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire) (Con)
Ballinger, Alexander Robert (Halesowen) (Lab)
Bance, Antonia Kay (Tipton and Wednesbury) (Lab)
Barclay, Rt Hon. Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con)
Barker, Paula (Liverpool Wavertree) (Lab)
Barron, Lee Jason (Corby and East Northamptonshire) (Lab)
Barros-Curtis, Alexandre Samuel (Cardiff West) (Lab)

Baxter, Johanna (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
Beales, Danny Boy (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Lab)
Beavers, Lorraine (Blackpool North and Fleetwood) (Lab)
Bedford, Peter Alexander (Mid Leicestershire) (Con)
Begley, Órfhlaith Acife (West Tyrone) (SF)
Begum, Apsana (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)
Bell, Torsten Henricson (Swansea West) (Lab)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds South) (Lab)
Bennett, Alison Elizabeth (Mid Sussex) (LD)
Berry, Siân Rebecca (Brighton Pavilion) (Green)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East) (Lab)
Bhatti, Mohammad Saqib (Meriden and Solihull East) (Con)
Billington, Polly (East Thanet) (Lab)
Bishop, Matthew Adrian (Forest of Dean) (Lab)
Blackman, Kirsty Ann (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East) (Con)
Blake, Rachel Nancy (Cities of London and Westminster) (Lab/Co-op)
Blake-Dagnall, Olivia Frances (Sheffield Hallam) (Lab)
Bloore, Christopher James (Redditch) (Lab)
Blundell, Elsie Jane (Heywood and Middleton North) (Lab)
Bonavia, Kevin (Stevenage) (Lab)
Bool, Sarah (South Northamptonshire) (Con)
Botterill, Jade Alexandra (Ossett and Denby Dale) (Lab)
Bowie, Andrew Campbell (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con)
Brackenridge, Sureena (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab)
Bradley, Rt Hon. Dame Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con)
Brandreth, Aphra Kendal Alice (Chester South and Eddisbury) (Con)
Brash, Jonathan James Frederick (Hartlepool) (Lab)
Braverman, Rt Hon. Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham and Waterlooville) (Con)
Brewer, Alexandra Katherine (North East Hampshire) (LD)
Brickell, Philip Michael (Bolton West) (Lab)
Brooks-Osborne, Katharine Helen (Jarrow and Gateshead East) (Lab)
Brown-Fuller, Jessica Sian Louise (Chichester) (LD)
Bryant, Sir Christopher John (Rhondda and Ogmore) (Lab)
Buckley, Julia (Shrewsbury) (Lab)
Burghart, Michael Alex (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East) (Lab)
Burke, Maureen (Glasgow North East) (Lab)
Burton-Sampson, David Edmund (Southend West and Leigh) (Lab)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent East) (Lab)
Byrne, Ian Robert (Liverpool West Derby) (Lab)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham Hodge Hill and Solihull North) (Lab)

C

Cadbury, Ruth Margaret (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)
Caliskan, Nesil (Barking) (Lab)
Campbell, Rt Hon. Sir Alan (Tynemouth) (Lab)

Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry) (DUP)
 Campbell, Irene (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab)
 Campbell, Juliet Olive (Broxtowe) (Lab)
 Campbell-Savours, Markus Dale (Penrith and Solway) (Lab)
 Cane, Charlotte Kathryn Bourne (Ely and East Cambridgeshire) (LD)
 Carden, Daniel Joseph (Liverpool Walton) (Lab)
 Carling, Samuel (North West Cambridgeshire) (Lab)
 Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alistair (Orkney and Shetland) (LD)
 Carns, Alistair Scott (Birmingham Selly Oak) (Lab)
 Cartlidge, James Roger (South Suffolk) (Con)
 Chadwick, David Wain (Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe) (LD)
 Chamberlain, Wendy Anne (North East Fife) (LD)
 Chambers, Danny Seiorse (Winchester) (LD)
 Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham) (Lab)
 Charalambous, Charalambos (Southgate and Wood Green) (Lab)
 Charters, Luke Jonathan (York Outer) (Lab)
 Chope, Sir Christopher Robert (Christchurch) (Con)
 Chowns, Eleanor Elizabeth (North Herefordshire) (Green)
 Clark, Feryal Demirci (Enfield North) (Lab)
 Cleverly, Rt Hon. James Spencer (Braintree) (Con)
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey Robert (North Cotswolds) (Con)
 Cocking, Lewis Christopher (Broxbourne) (Con)
 Coghlan, Christopher Austin Francis (Dorking and Horley) (LD)
 Coleman, Benjamin John (Chelsea and Fulham) (Lab)
 Collier, Jacob (Burton and Uttoxeter) (Lab)
 Collinge, Elizabeth Rachel (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Lab)
 Collins, Thomas George Howard (Worcester) (Lab)
 Collins, Victoria Mei Elizabeth (Harpenden and Berkhamsted) (LD)
 Conlon, Liam Joseph (Beckenham and Penge) (Lab)
 Coombes, Sarah Rose Tattum (West Bromwich) (Lab)
 Cooper, Andrew Graham (Mid Cheshire) (Lab)
 Cooper, Daisy (St Albans) (LD)
 Cooper, John Matthew (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con)
 Cooper, Rebecca Claire (Worthing West) (Lab)
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley) (Lab)
 Corbyn, Rt Hon. Jeremy Bernard (Islington North) (Ind)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire) (Con)
 Costigan, Deirdre Theresa (Ealing Southall) (Lab/Co-op)
 Coutinho, Rt Hon. Claire Coryl Julia (East Surrey) (Con)
 Cox, Rt Hon. Sir Charles Geoffrey (Torridge and Tavistock) (Con)
 Cox, Pamela Margaret (Colchester) (Lab)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab)
 Craft, Jennifer (Thurrock) (Lab)
 Creagh, Mary Helen (Coventry East) (Lab)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op)
 Crichton, Torcuil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
 Cross, Harriet Iona (Gordon and Buchan) (Con)
 Cullen, Patricia Yvonne (Fermanagh and South Tyrone) (SF)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South) (Lab)
 Curtis, Chris (Milton Keynes North) (Lab)

D

Daby, Janet Jessica (Lewisham East) (Lab)
 Dakin, Sir Nicholas (Scunthorpe) (Lab)
 Dalton, Ruth Ashley Charman (West Lancashire) (Lab)
 Dance, Adam James (Yeovil) (LD)

Darling, Stephen Matthew (Torbay) (LD)
 Darlington, Emily Catrin (Milton Keynes Central) (Lab)
 Davey, Rt Hon. Edward Jonathon (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD)
 Davies, Celia Ann (Caerfyrddin) (PC)
 Davies, Gareth Mark (Grantham and Bourne) (Con)
 Davies, Jonathan Peter Tom (Mid Derbyshire) (Lab)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (East Grinstead and Uckfield) (Con)
 Davies, Paul (Colne Valley) (Lab)
 Davies, Shaun (Telford) (Lab)
 Davies-Jones, Alexandra Mary (Pontypridd) (Lab)
 Davis, Rt Hon. Sir David Michael (Goole and Pocklington) (Con)
 De Cordova, Marsha Chantal (Battersea) (Lab)
 Dean, Bobby Warren (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD)
 Dean, Joshua Robert Abraham (Hertford and Stortford) (Lab)
 Dearden, Kate Alexandra (Halifax) (Lab/Co-op)
 Denyer, Carla Suzanne (Bristol Central) (Green)
 Dewhurst, Charles Alistair Geoffrey (Bridlington and The Wolds) (Con)
 Dhesi, Tanmanjeet Singh (Slough) (Lab)
 Dickson, James Rowan Chatterton (Dartford) (Lab)
 Dillon, Lee Raymond James (Newbury) (LD)
 Dinanage, Dame Caroline Julia (Gosport) (Con)
 Dixon, Anna Louise (Shipley) (Lab)
 Dixon, Samantha Kate (Chester North and Neston) (Lab)
 Dodds, Rt Hon. Anneliese Jane (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)
 Dollimore, Helena (Hastings and Rye) (Lab/Co-op)
 Doogan, David Michael (Angus and Perthshire Glens) (SNP)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op)
 Dowd, Peter Christopher (Bootle) (Lab)
 Dowden, Rt Hon. Sir Oliver James (Hertsmere) (Con)
 Downie, Graeme James (Dunfermline and Dollar) (Lab)
 Duffield, Rosemary Clare (Canterbury) (Lab)
 Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. Sir George Iain (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con)
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil John (Poole) (Lab)
 Dyke, Sarah (Glastonbury and Somerton) (LD)

E

Eagle, Dame Angela (Wallasey) (Lab)
 Eagle, Rt Hon. Maria (Liverpool Garston) (Lab)
 Easton, Alex (North Down) (Ind)
 Eastwood, Colum (Foyle) (SDLP)
 Eastwood, Sorchia-Lucy (Lagan Valley) (Alliance)
 Eccles, Catherine (Stourbridge) (Lab)
 Edwards, Lauren Rae (Rochester and Strood) (Lab)
 Edwards, Sarah Siena (Tamworth) (Lab)
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham and Chislehurst) (Lab)
 Egan, Damien (Bristol North East) (Lab)
 Ellis, Maya Anneke Elsie (Ribbles Valley) (Lab)
 Elmore, Christopher Philip James (Bridgend) (Lab)
 Entwistle, Kirith (Bolton North East) (Lab)
 Eshalomi, Florence Dauta (Vauxhall and Camberwell Green) (Lab/Co-op)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central) (Lab)
 Evans, Christopher James (Caerphilly) (Lab/Co-op)
 Evans, Luke Morgan (Hinckley and Bosworth) (Con)

F

Fahnbulleh, Miatta Nema (Peckham) (Lab/Co-op)
 Falconer, Hamish Nicholas (Lincoln) (Lab)
 Farage, Nigel Paul (Clacton) (Reform)
 Farnsworth, Linsey Jayne (Amber Valley) (Lab)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD)
 Fenton-Glynn, Joshua (Calder Valley) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Mark Andrew (Gateshead Central and Whickham) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia Josephine (Glasgow West) (Lab)
 Finucane, John (Belfast North) (SF)
 Fleet, Natalie Sarah (Bolsover) (Lab)
 Flynn, Rt Hon. Stephen Mark (Aberdeen South) (SNP)
 Foody, Emma Louise (Cramlington and Killingworth) (Lab/Co-op)
 Fookes, Catherine Ann (Monmouthshire) (Lab)
 Foord, Richard John (Honiton and Sidmouth) (LD)
 Forster, William Paul (Woking) (LD)
 Fortune, Peter Timothy (Bromley and Biggin Hill) (Con)
 Foster, Paul Andrew (South Ribble) (Lab)
 Fox, Sir Ashley Peter (Bridgwater) (Con)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham North) (Lab)
 Foy, Mary Kelly (City of Durham) (Lab)
 Francis, Daniel (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Lab)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)
 Franklin, Zöe Louise (Guildford) (LD)
 Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk) (Con)
 French, Louie Thomas (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con)
 Frith, James Richard (Bury North) (Lab)
 Fuller, Richard Quentin (North Bedfordshire) (Con)
 Furniss, Gillian (Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab)

G

Gale, Rt Hon. Sir Roger James (Herne Bay and Sandwich) (Con)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent West) (Lab)
 Gardner, Allison (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest) (Con)
 Gelderd, Anna Preston (South East Cornwall) (Lab)
 Gemmell, Alan (Central Ayrshire) (Lab)
 George, Andrew Henry (St Ives) (LD)
 German, Gill (Clwyd North) (Lab)
 Gethins, Stephen Patrick (Arbroath and Broughty Ferry) (SNP)
 Gibson, Sarah (Chippenham) (LD)
 Gilbert, Tracy (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Gill, Preet Kaur (Birmingham Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op)
 Gilmour, Rachel Clare (Tiverton and Minehead) (LD)
 Gittins, Rebecca (Clwyd East) (Lab)
 Glen, Rt Hon. John Philip (Salisbury) (Con)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (Newcastle upon Tyne East and Wallsend) (Lab)
 Glover, Oliver Guy Nicholas (Didcot and Wantage) (LD)
 Goldman, Marie Clare (Chelmsford) (LD)
 Goldsborough, Ben (South Norfolk) (Lab)
 Gordon, Thomas (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (LD)
 Gosling, Jodie Claire (Nuneaton) (Lab)
 Gould, Georgia Anne Rebuck (Queen's Park and Maida Vale) (Lab)
 Grady, John Andrew Dominic (Glasgow East) (Lab)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and Malling) (Con)
 Green, Sarah Louise (Chesham and Amersham) (LD)
 Greenwood, Lilian Rachel (Nottingham South) (Lab)

Griffith, Andrew John (Arundel and South Downs) (Con)
 Griffith, Dame Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli) (Lab)
 Griffiths, Alison Louise (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Gorton and Denton) (Lab/Co-op)

H

Hack, Amanda Jayne (North West Leicestershire) (Lab)
 Haigh, Rt Hon. Louise Margaret (Sheffield Heeley) (Lab)
 Hall, Sarah Edith (Warrington South) (Lab/Co-op)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Paulette Adassa (Birmingham Erdington) (Lab)
 Hanna, Claire Aisling (Belfast South and Mid Down) (SDLP)
 Harding, Monica Bernadette Etheldreda (Esher and Walton) (LD)
 Hardy, Emma Ann (Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice) (Lab)
 Harris, Carolyn (Neath and Swansea East) (Lab)
 Harris, Dame Rebecca Elizabeth Scott (Castle Point) (Con)
 Hatton, Lloyd (South Dorset) (Lab)
 Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)
 Hayes, Rt Hon. Sir John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)
 Hayes, Thomas John (Bournemouth East) (Lab)
 Hazelgrove, Claire Ruth (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Lab)
 Hazzard, Christopher John (South Down) (SF)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Rawmarsh and Conisbrough) (Lab)
 Hendrick, Sir Mark Phillip (Preston) (Lab/Co-op)
 Heylings, Phillippa (South Cambridgeshire) (LD)
 Hillier, Dame Margaret Olivia (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op)
 Hinchliff, Christopher Volante (North East Hertfordshire) (Lab)
 Hinder, Jonathan James (Pendle and Clitheroe) (Lab)
 Hinds, Rt Hon. Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire) (Con)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset) (Con)
 Hobhouse, Wera Benedicta (Bath) (LD)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Gateshead South) (Lab)
 Holden, Richard John (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)
 Holmes, Paul John (Hamble Valley) (Con)
 Hopkins, Rachel Louise (Luton South and South Bedfordshire) (Lab)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Harvey (Chorley) (Ind)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Droitwich and Evesham) (Con)
 Hudson, Neil Peter Hammerton (Epping Forest) (Con)
 Hughes, Claire Diane (Bangor Aberconwy) (Lab)
 Hughes, Dáire (Newry and Armagh) (SF)
 Hume, Alison Louise (Scarborough and Whitby) (Lab)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (Godalming and Ash) (Con)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)
 Hurley, Patrick Brian (Southport) (Lab)
 Hussain, Adnan (Blackburn) (Ind)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East) (Lab)
 Huws, Llinos Medi (Ynys Môn) (PC)

I

Ingham, Leigh (Stafford) (Lab)
Irons, Natasha Dawn (Croydon East) (Lab)

J

Jameson, Sally Anne (Doncaster Central) (Lab/Co-op)
Jardine, Christine Anne (Edinburgh West) (LD)
Jarvis, Daniel Owen (Barnsley North) (Lab)
Jarvis, Elizabeth (Eastleigh) (LD)
Jenkin, Sir Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)
Jerrick, Rt Hon. Robert Edward (Newark) (Con)
Jermy, Terry (South West Norfolk) (Lab)
Jogee, Adam Habib (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab)
Johnson, Caroline Elizabeth (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)
Johnson, Rt Hon. Dame Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North and Cottingham) (Lab)
Johnson, Kim Marie (Liverpool Riverside) (Lab)
Jones, Clive Richard (Wokingham) (LD)
Jones, Rt Hon. Darren Paul (Bristol North West) (Lab)
Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare) (Lab)
Jones, Lillian (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
Jones, Louise Elizabeth (North East Derbyshire) (Lab)
Jones, Ruth Lorraine (Newport West and Islwyn) (Lab)
Jones, Sarah Ann (Croydon West) (Lab)
Jopp, Lincoln Peter Munro (Spelthorne) (Con)
Josan, Gurinder Singh (Smethwick) (Lab)
Joseph, Sojan (Ashford) (Lab)
Juss, Warinder Singh (Wolverhampton West) (Lab)

K

Kane, Chris (Stirling and Strathallan) (Lab)
Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)
Kaur, Satvir (Southampton Test) (Lab)
Kearns, Alicia Alexandra Martha (Rutland and Stamford) (Con)
Kendall, Rt Hon. Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West) (Lab)
Khan, Ayoub (Birmingham Perry Barr) (Ind)
Khan, Mohammed Afzal (Manchester Rusholme) (Lab)
Khan, Naushabah Parveen (Gillingham and Rainham) (Lab)
Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberafan Maesteg) (Lab)
Kirkham, Jayne Susannah (Truro and Falmouth) (Lab/Co-op)
Kitchen, Genevieve Victoria (Wellingborough and Rushden) (Lab)
Kohler, Paul Christopher (Wimbledon) (LD)
Kruger, Daniel Rayne (East Wiltshire) (Con)
Kumar, Sonia (Dudley) (Lab)
Kumaran, Uma (Stratford and Bow) (Lab)
Kyle, Rt Hon. Peter John (Hove and Portslade) (Lab)
Kyrke-Smith, Laura Elizabeth (Aylesbury) (Lab)

L

Lake, Ben Morgan (Ceredigion Preseli) (PC)
Lam, Katie Jane Lotte (Weald of Kent) (Con)
Lamb, Peter (Crawley) (Lab)
Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham) (Lab)
Lamont, John Robert (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con)
Lavery, Ian (Blyth and Ashington) (Lab)

Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee Central) (SNP)
Law, Noah Charles (St Austell and Newquay) (Lab)
Leadbeater, Kim Michele (Spenn Valley) (Lab)
Leadbitter, Graham (Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey) (SNP)
Leigh, Rt Hon. Sir Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough) (Con)
Leishman, Brian William (Alloa and Grangemouth) (Lab)
Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields) (Lab)
Lewin, Andrew Alan (Welwyn Hatfield) (Lab)
Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South) (Lab)
Lewis, Rt Hon. Sir Julian Murray (New Forest East) (Con)
Lightwood, Simon Robert (Wakefield and Rothwell) (Lab/Co-op)
Lockhart, Carla Rebecca (Upper Bann) (DUP)
Logan, Seamus (Aberdeenshire North and Moray East) (SNP)
Long Bailey, Rebecca (Salford) (Lab)
Lopez, Julia Louise (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con)
Lowe, Rupert James Graham (Great Yarmouth) (Reform)

M

MacAlister, Joshua (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab)
McAllister, Douglas (West Dunbartonshire) (Lab)
McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East) (Lab)
MacCleary, James Neville (Lewes) (LD)
McCluskey, Martin James (Inverclyde and Renfrewshire West) (Lab)
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab)
McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough and Thornaby East) (Lab)
McDonald, Angus Francis (Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire) (LD)
McDonald, Christopher (Stockton North) (Lab)
McDonnell, Rt Hon. John Martin (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)
McDougall, Blair (East Renfrewshire) (Lab)
McEvoy, Laura Marie Keough (Darlington) (Lab)
McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)
McGovern, Alison (Birkenhead) (Lab)
McIntyre, Alexander Forbes (Gloucester) (Lab)
McKee, Gordon (Glasgow South) (Lab)
McKenna, Kevin (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Lab)
McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)
McMahon, James Ignatius O'Rourke (Oldham West, Chadderton and Royton) (Lab/Co-op)
McMorrin, Anna Rhiannon (Cardiff North) (Lab)
McMurdoch, James (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Reform)
McNae, Andy (Rossendale and Darwen) (Lab)
McNally, Francis Joseph (Coatbridge and Bellshill) (Lab)
McNeill, Kirsty (Midlothian) (Lab/Co-op)
McVey, Rt Hon. Esther Louise (Tatton) (Con)
Macdonald, Alice (Norwich North) (Lab/Co-op)
Madders, Justin Piers Richard (Ellesmere Port and Bromborough) (Lab)
Maguire, Benedict (North Cornwall) (LD)
Maguire, Helen Elaine (Epsom and Ewell) (LD)
Mahmood, Rt Hon. Shabana (Birmingham Ladywood) (Lab)
Mak, Alan (Havant) (Con)
Malhotra-Saluja, Seema (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op)

Mallaghan, Cathal Sean (Mid Ulster) (SF)
 Malthouse, Rt Hon. Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire) (Con)
 Martin, Amanda Louise (Portsmouth North) (Lab)
 Martin, Michael Peter (Tunbridge Wells) (LD)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central) (Lab/Co-op)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West) (SF)
 Mather, Keir Alexander (Selby) (Lab)
 Mathew, Brian George Felton (Melksham and Devizes) (LD)
 Mayer, Alexandra (Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard) (Lab)
 Mayhew, Jerome Patrick Burke (Broadland and Fakenham) (Con)
 Maynard, Charles Adrian MacFie (Witney) (LD)
 Midgley, Anneliese (Knowsley) (Lab)
 Mierlo, Frederick Isaac van (Henley and Thame) (LD)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Edward Samuel (Doncaster North) (Lab)
 Miller, Calum Alexander (Bicester and Woodstock) (LD)
 Milne, John Laurence (Horsham) (LD)
 Minns, Julie (Carlisle) (Lab)
 Mishra, Navendu Prabhat (Stockport) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)
 Mohamed, Abtisam (Sheffield Central) (Lab)
 Mohamed, Iqbal Hussain (Dewsbury and Batley) (Ind)
 Mohindra, Gagan (South West Hertfordshire) (Con)
 Moon, Perran Henry Rupert (Camborne and Redruth) (Lab)
 Moore, Robert Peter (Keighley and Ilkley) (Con)
 Moran, Layla Michelle (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East) (Lab)
 Morello, Robin Edward Charles (West Dorset) (LD)
 Morgan, Helen Margaret Lilian (North Shropshire) (LD)
 Morgan, Stephen James (Portsmouth South) (Lab)
 Morris, Grahame Mark (Easington) (Lab)
 Morris, Joseph Ronald (Hexham) (Lab)
 Morrison, Thomas William (Cheadle) (LD)
 Morrissey, Joy Inboden (Beaconsfield) (Con)
 Morton, Rt Hon. Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con)
 Mullan, Kieran John (Bexhill and Battle) (Con)
 Mullane, Margaret (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con)
 Munt, Tessa Jane (Wells and Mendip Hills) (LD)
 Murphy, Luke Sean (Basingstoke) (Lab)
 Murray, Christopher (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Murray, Rt Hon. Ian (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 Murray, James Stewart (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)
 Murray, Katrina Laidlan (Cumbernauld and Kirkintilloch) (Lab)
 Murray, Susan Catherine (Mid Dunbartonshire) (LD)
 Murrison, Rt Hon. Andrew William (South West Wiltshire) (Con)
 Myer, Luke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab)

N

Naish, James William (Rushcliffe) (Lab)
 Naismith, Connor James (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab)
 Nandy, Rt Hon. Lisa Eva (Wigan) (Lab)
 Narayan, Kanishka (Vale of Glamorgan) (Lab)
 Nash, Pamela Ann Catherine (Motherwell, Wishaw and Carluke) (Lab)
 Newbury, Joshua Alan Austin (Cannock Chase) (Lab)

Niblett, Samantha Ruth Margaret (South Derbyshire) (Lab)
 Nichols, Charlotte Louise (Warrington North) (Lab)
 Nokes, Rt Hon. Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)
 Norman, Rt Hon. Jesse Alexander (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con)
 Norris, Alexander James Jorden (Nottingham North and Kimberley) (Lab/Co-op)
 Norris, Dan (North East Somerset and Hanham) (Lab)

O

O'Brien, Neil John (Harborough, Oadby and Wigston) (Con)
 O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll, Bute and South Lochaber) (SNP)
 Obese-Jecty, Ben (Huntingdon) (Con)
 Olney, Sarah Jane (Richmond Park) (LD)
 Onn, Melanie (Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes) (Lab)
 Onwurah, Chinyelu Susan (Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West) (Lab)
 Opher, Simon Joseph (Stroud) (Lab)
 Oppong-Asare, Abena (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)
 Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton and Winchmore Hill) (Lab/Co-op)
 Osborne, Tristan John (Chatham and Aylesford) (Lab)
 Owatemi, Taiwo Victoria (Coventry North West) (Lab)
 Owen, Sarah Mei Li (Luton North) (Lab)

P

Paffey, Darren James (Southampton Itchen) (Lab)
 Pakes, Andrew Elliot (Peterborough) (Lab/Co-op)
 Patel, Rt Hon. Priti Sushil (Witham) (Con)
 Patrick, Matthew John (Wirral West) (Lab)
 Paul, Rebecca Sheila (Reigate) (Con)
 Payne, Michael Richard (Gedling) (Lab)
 Peacock, Stephanie Louise (Barnsley South) (Lab)
 Pearce, Jonathan (High Peak) (Lab)
 Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)
 Perkins, Matthew Toby (Chesterfield) (Lab)
 Perteghella, Manuela (Stratford-on-Avon) (LD)
 Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham Yardley) (Lab)
 Phillipson, Rt Hon. Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab)
 Philp, Rt Hon. Chris Ian Brian Mynott (Croydon South) (Con)
 Pinkerton, Alasdair Douglas (Surrey Heath) (LD)
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David (Hendon) (Lab)
 Pitcher, Lee Michael (Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme) (Lab)
 Platt, Joanne Marie (Leigh and Atherton) (Lab/Co-op)
 Pollard, Luke (Plymouth Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)
 Powell, Joseph Edward (Kensington and Bayswater) (Lab)
 Powell, Rt Hon. Lucy Maria (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)
 Poynton, Gregor Arthur (Livingston) (Lab)
 Prinsley, Peter Richard (Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket) (Lab)
 Pritchard, Rt Hon. Mark Andrew (The Wrekin) (Con)

Q

Quigley, Richard Michael (Isle of Wight West) (Lab)
 Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South and Walkden) (Lab)

R

Race, Stephen (Exeter) (Lab)
 Raja, Shivani (Leicester East) (Con)
 Ramsay, Adrian Philip (Waveney Valley) (Green)
 Rand, Connor Dean (Altrincham and Sale West) (Lab)
 Ranger, Andrew Steven (Wrexham) (Lab)
 Rankin, Jack Michael (Windsor) (Con)
 Rayner, Rt Hon. Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)
 Reader, Michael (Northampton South) (Lab)
 Redmond-Withey Asato, Jessica (Lowestoft) (Lab)
 Reed, David George (Exmouth and Exeter East) (Con)
 Reed, Rt Hon. Steven Mark Ward (Streatham and Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op)
 Reeves, Eleanor Claire (Lewisham West and East Dulwich) (Lab)
 Reeves, Rt Hon. Rachel Jane (Leeds West and Pudsey) (Lab)
 Reid, Joani (East Kilbride and Strathaven) (Lab)
 Reynolds, Emma Elizabeth (Wycombe) (Lab)
 Reynolds, Rt Hon. Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op)
 Reynolds, Joshua Peter (Maidenhead) (LD)
 Rhodes, Martin (Glasgow North) (Lab)
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bellavia Janet (Clapham and Brixton Hill) (Lab)
 Richards, Jacob Ben (Rother Valley) (Lab)
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jennifer Barbara (Suffolk Coastal) (Lab)
 Rigby, Lucy (Northampton North) (Lab)
 Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab)
 Robertson, David Charles (Lichfield) (Lab)
 Robertson, Joe Paul James (Isle of Wight East) (Con)
 Robinson, Rt Hon. Gavin James (Belfast East) (DUP)
 Roca, Juan Timothy Charles (Macclesfield) (Lab)
 Rodda, Mathew Richard Allen (Reading Central) (Lab)
 Roome, Ian (North Devon) (LD)
 Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford) (Con)
 Rushworth, Samuel Jonathan (Bishop Auckland) (Lab)
 Russell, Sarah Alison (Congleton) (Lab)
 Rutland, Thomas William (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Lab)
 Ryan, Oliver David (Burnley) (Lab/Co-op)

S

Sabine, Anna Elizabeth (Frome and East Somerset) (LD)
 Sackman, Sarah Rebecca (Finchley and Golders Green) (Lab)
 Sandher, Jeevun Gurpeet Singh (Loughborough) (Lab)
 Savage, Rosalind Elizabeth Adriana (South Cotswolds) (LD)
 Saville Roberts, Rt Hon. Elizabeth (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC)
 Scrogg, Michelle (Barrow and Furness) (Lab)
 Sowards, Mark James (Leeds South West and Morley) (Lab)
 Shah, Naseem Akhtar (Bradford West) (Lab)
 Shanker, Bhagat Singh (Derby South) (Lab/Co-op)
 Shanks, Michael (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Shannon, Richard James (Strangford) (DUP)
 Shastri-Hurst, Neil (Solihull West and Shirley) (Con)
 Shelbrooke, Rt Hon. Sir Alec (Wetherby and Easingwold) (Con)
 Siddiq, Tulip Rizwana (Hampstead and Highgate) (Lab)
 Simmonds, David Timothy (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)
 Simons, Joshua Cameron (Makerfield) (Lab)

Slade, Vikki (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD)
 Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith and Chiswick) (Lab)
 Slinger, John Anthony (Rugby) (Lab)
 Smart, Lisa (Hazel Grove) (LD)
 Smith, Catherine Jane (Lancaster and Wyre) (Lab)
 Smith, David William (North Northumberland) (Lab)
 Smith, Greg (Mid Buckinghamshire) (Con)
 Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester Withington) (Lab)
 Smith, Rt Hon. Sir Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon) (Con)
 Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney) (Lab)
 Smith, Rebecca Jane (South West Devon) (Con)
 Smith, Sarah Madeleine Webster (Hyndburn) (Lab)
 Smyth, Karin Marguerite (Bristol South) (Lab)
 Snell, Gareth Craig (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op)
 Snowden, Andrew James (Fylde) (Con)
 Sobel, Alexander David (Leeds Central and Headingley) (Lab/Co-op)
 Sollom, Ian Fraser (St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire) (LD)
 Spencer, Benjamin Walter Jack (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)
 Spencer, Patrick (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con)
 Stafford, Gregory James (Farnham and Bordon) (Con)
 Stainbank, Euan (Falkirk) (Lab)
 Starmer, Rt Hon. Sir Keir (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)
 Stephenson, Blake (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con)
 Stevens, Rt Hon. Joanna Meriel (Cardiff East) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Kenneth (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Stewart, Elaine (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Lab)
 Stone, James Hume Walter Mieville (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Stone, Will (Swindon North) (Lab)
 Strathern, Alistair Luke (Hitchin) (Lab)
 Streeting, Rt Hon. Wesley Paul William (Ilford North) (Lab)
 Strickland, Alan David (Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor) (Lab)
 Stride, Rt Hon. Melvyn John (Central Devon) (Con)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Middleton South) (Lab)
 Stuart, Rt Hon. Graham Charles (Beverley and Holderness) (Con)
 Sullivan, Kirsteen Ann (Bathgate and Linlithgow) (Lab/Co-op)
 Sullivan, Lauren (Gravesham) (Lab)
 Sultana, Zarah (Coventry South) (Lab)
 Sunak, Rt Hon. Rishi (Richmond and Northallerton) (Con)
 Swallow, Peter (Bracknell) (Lab)
 Swann, Robert Samuel (South Antrim) (UUP)
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Sir Desmond Angus (New Forest West) (Con)

T

Tami, Rt Hon. Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab)
 Tapp, Michael Adrian (Dover and Deal) (Lab)
 Taylor, Alison Suzanne Watt (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (Lab)
 Taylor, David (Hemel Hempstead) (Lab)
 Taylor, Luke (Sutton and Cheam) (LD)
 Taylor, Rachel Margaret (North Warwickshire and Bedworth) (Lab)
 Thomas, Aaron Cameron (Tewkesbury) (LD)

Thomas, Bradley Anthony (Bromsgrove) (Con)
 Thomas, Frederick Jacob Theseus (Plymouth Moor View) (Lab)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op)
 Thomas-Symonds, Rt Hon. Nicklaus (Torfaen) (Lab)
 Thompson, Adam (Erewash) (Lab)
 Thornberry, Rt Hon. Emily (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)
 Tice, Richard (Boston and Skegness) (Reform)
 Tidball, Marie (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab)
 Timms, Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Creswell (East Ham) (Lab)
 Timothy, Nicholas James (West Suffolk) (Con)
 Toale, Jessica Jade (Bournemouth West) (Lab)
 Tomlinson, Daniel Mark (Chipping Barnet) (Lab)
 Trickett, Jon Hedley (Normanton and Hemsworth) (Lab)
 Trott, Rt Hon. Laura (Sevenoaks) (Con)
 Tufnell, Henry (Mid and South Pembrokeshire) (Lab)
 Tugendhat, Rt Hon. Thomas Georg John (Tonbridge) (Con)
 Turley, Anna Catherine (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op)
 Turmaine, Matthew Robert (Watford) (Lab)
 Turner, Karl (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab)
 Turner, Laurence David Russell (Birmingham Northfield) (Lab)
 Twigg, John Derek (Widnes and Halewood) (Lab)
 Twist, Mary Elizabeth (Blaydon and Consett) (Lab)

U

Ul-Ghani, Nusrat Munir (Sussex Weald) (Con)
 Uppal, Harpreet Kaur (Huddersfield) (Lab)

V

Vaughan, Anthony (Folkestone and Hythe) (Lab)
 Vaz, Rt Hon. Valerie Carol Marian (Walsall and Bloxwich) (Lab)
 Vickers, Martin John (Brigg and Immingham) (Con)
 Vickers, Matthew Alexander (Stockton West) (Con)
 Vince, Christopher John (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op)
 Voaden, Caroline Jane (South Devon) (LD)

W

Wakeford, Christian (Bury South) (Lab)
 Walker, Imogen (Hamilton and Clyde Valley) (Lab)
 Ward, Christopher David (Brighton Kemptown and Peacehaven) (Lab)

Ward, Melanie Claire (Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Waugh, Paul (Rochdale) (Lab/Co-op)
 Webb, Christopher Paul (Blackpool South) (Lab)
 Welsh, Michelle (Sherwood Forest) (Lab)
 West, Catherine Elizabeth (Hornsey and Friern Barnet) (Lab)
 Western, Andrew Howard (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab)
 Western, Matthew Raymond (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab)
 Whately, Helen Olivia Bicknell (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con)
 Wheeler, Michael Joseph (Worsley and Eccles) (Lab)
 Whitby, John Michael (Derbyshire Dales) (Lab)
 White, Jo (Bassetlaw) (Lab)
 White, Katie Jayne (Leeds North West) (Lab)
 Whittingdale, Rt Hon. Sir John Flasby Lawrance (Maldon) (Con)
 Whittome, Nadia Edith (Nottingham East) (Lab)
 Wild, James Oliver (North West Norfolk) (Con)
 Wilkinson, Maximilian Peter McGregor (Cheltenham) (LD)
 Williams, David (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab)
 Williamson, Rt Hon. Sir Gavin Alexander (Stone, Great Wyrley and Penkridge) (Con)
 Wilson, Munira (Twickenham) (LD)
 Wilson, Rt Hon. Samuel (East Antrim) (DUP)
 Wishart, Peter (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Witherden, Steve (Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr) (Lab)
 Wood, Michael Jon (Kingswinford and South Staffordshire) (Con)
 Woodcock, Sean Lee (Banbury) (Lab)
 Wright, Rt Hon. Sir Jeremy Paul (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)
 Wrighting, Rosie May (Kettering) (Lab)
 Wrigley, John Martin Charles (Newton Abbot) (LD)

Y

Yang, Yuan (Earley and Woodley) (Lab)
 Yasin, Mohammad (Bedford) (Lab)
 Yemm, Steve (Mansfield) (Lab)
 Young, Claire Louise (Thornbury and Yate) (LD)

Z

Zeichner, Daniel Stephen (Cambridge) (Lab)

HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT HON. SIR KEIR STARMER KCB, KC, MP, JULY 2024)

PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY—The Rt Hon. Sir Keir Starmer KCB, KC, MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—
The Rt Hon. Angela Rayner, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Rachel Reeves, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt Hon. Pat McFadden, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. David Lammy, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt Hon. Yvette Cooper, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt Hon. John Healey, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE—The Rt Hon. Shabana Mahmood, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Lucy Powell, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Baroness Smith of Basildon
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Wes Streeting, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Bridget Phillipson, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO—The Rt Hon. Edward Miliband, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS—The Rt Hon. Liz Kendall, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE, AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Jonathan Reynolds, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY—The Rt Hon. Peter Kyle, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Louise Haigh, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. Steve Reed OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Lisa Nandy, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt Hon. Hilary Benn, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Ian Murray, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt Hon. Jo Stevens, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Business and Trade—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Jonathan Reynolds, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Douglas Alexander, MP
Sarah Jones, MP §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Gareth Thomas, MP
Justin Madders, MP
Baroness Jones of Whitchurch §

Cabinet Office—

PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY—The Rt Hon. Sir Keir Starmer KCB, KC, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt Hon. Pat McFadden, MP

PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Nick Thomas-Symonds, MP

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—Ellie Reeves, MP

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—

Georgia Gould, MP
Abena Oppong-Asare, MP

Culture, Media and Sport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Lisa Nandy, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Sir Chris Bryant, MP §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Stephanie Peacock, MP

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. John Healey, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Maria Eagle, MP (Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry)
Lord Coaker

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Luke Pollard, MP (Minister for the Armed Forces)
Al Carns OBE MC, MP (Minister for Veterans and People)

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Bridget Phillipson, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Anneliese Dodds, MP (Minister for Women and Equalities) §
Catherine McKinnell, MP
The Rt Hon. Baroness Smith of Malvern

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Janet Daby, MP
Stephen Morgan, MP

Energy Security and Net Zero—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Edward Miliband, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Sarah Jones, MP §
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath OBE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Kerry McCarthy, MP
Miatta Fahnbulleh, MP
Michael Shanks, MP

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Steve Reed OBE, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Daniel Zeichner, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Emma Hardy, MP
Baroness Hayman of Ullock

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. David Lammy, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Anneliese Dodds, MP §
Stephen Doughty, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Catherine West, MP
Lord Collins of Highbury §

Health and Social Care—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Wes Streeting, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Stephen Kinnock, MP
Karin Smyth, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Andrew Gwynne, MP
Baroness Merron

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Yvette Cooper, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Dan Jarvis MBE, MP
The Rt Hon. Dame Diana Johnson DBE, MP
Dame Angela Eagle DBE, MP
The Rt Hon. Sir David Hanson

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Seema Malhotra, MP
Jess Phillips, MP

Housing, Communities and Local Government—

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Angela Rayner, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Jim McMahon OBE, MP
Matthew Pennycook MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Alex Norris, MP
Rushanara Ali, MP
Baroness Taylor of Stevenage §
Lord Khan of Burnley

Justice—

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Shabana Mahmood, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

James Timpson OBE (Minister for Prisons, Parole and Probation)
Heidi Alexander, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Alex Davies-Jones, MP
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede §

Law Officers—

ATTORNEY GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Richard Hermer, KC
SOLICITOR GENERAL—Sarah Sackman, MP

Leader of the House of Commons—

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Lucy Powell, MP

Leader of the House of Lords—

LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Baroness Smith of Basildon
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—Lord Collins of Highbury §

Northern Ireland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Hilary Benn, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Fleur Anderson, MP

Science, Innovation and Technology—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Peter Kyle, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Lord Vallance of Balham (Minister for Science)
Sir Chris Bryant, MP §
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Feryal Clark, MP
Baroness Jones of Whitchurch §

Scotland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Ian Murray, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Kirsty McNeill, MP

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Louise Haigh, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Simon Lightwood, MP
Lilian Greenwood, MP
Mike Kane, MP

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY—The Rt Hon. Sir Keir Starmer KCB, KC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Rachel Reeves, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Darren Jones, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Lord Livermore
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Tulip Siddiq, MP
EXCHEQUER SECRETARY—James Murray, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
Sir Alan Campbell, MP (Chief Whip)
Emma Reynolds, MP §
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Sir Nicholas Dakin, MP
Vicky Foxcroft, MP
Jeff Smith, MP
Anna Turley, MP
Taiwo Owatemi, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Christian Wakeford, MP
Gen Kitchen, MP
Keir Mather, MP
Gerald Jones, MP
Anna McMorrin, MP

UK Export Finance—

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Jonathan Reynolds, MP

Wales Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Jo Stevens, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Dame Nia Griffith DBE, MP

Work and Pensions—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Liz Kendall, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Alison McGovern, MP (Minister for Employment)

The Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms, MP (Minister for Social Security and Disability)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Emma Reynolds, MP §

Andrew Western, MP

Baroness Sherlock OBE

His Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt Hon. Lord Parker of Minsmere GCVO KCB

LORD STEWARD—The Earl of Rosslyn

MASTER OF THE HORSE—Lord De Mauley

TREASURER—The Rt Hon. Mark Tami, MP

COMPTROLLER—Chris Elmore, MP

VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Samantha Dixon, MP

CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt Hon. Lord Kennedy of Southwark

CAPTAIN OF THE KING'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—Baroness Wheeler MBE

LORDS IN WAITING—

Lord Collins of Highbury §

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede §

Lord Leong CBE

BARONESSES IN WAITING—

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage §

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch §

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent

Baroness Twycross

Baroness Blake of Leeds

§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 July 2024

*The House met at twenty-five minutes
past Eleven o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER in the Chair]

Message to attend His Majesty delivered by the Lady Usher of the Black Rod.

The Speaker, with the House, went up to attend His Majesty; on their return, the Speaker suspended the sitting.

Members Sworn

2.28 pm

Mr Speaker: Will Members wishing to take their seats please come to the Table?

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Jonathan Neil Reynolds, for Stalybridge and Hyde

Right honourable Sir Charles Geoffrey Cox, Torridge and Tavistock

Right honourable Andrew William Murrison, South West Wiltshire

Speaker's Statement

2.31 pm

Mr Speaker: The House has directed the Speaker to make a statement at the beginning of each Session about the duties and responsibilities of hon. Members. I begin by reminding Members of their duty to observe the code of conduct and the behaviour code agreed by the House and to behave with civility and fairness in all their dealings. Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously, independently and with effective sanctions.

The House asserts its privilege of freedom of speech. That privilege is enjoyed by Members of Parliament only in their work in this House as private individuals. We are equal under the law with those whom we represent. The privilege is there to ensure that our constituents can be represented by us without fear or favour. It is an obligation upon all of us to exercise the privilege responsibly.

It is incumbent on Members to be accurate in what they say in this House and to correct any mistakes as soon as possible. All Members can now submit written correspondence directly to *Hansard* to amend errors of fact in their contributions, as well as being able to correct the record by a point of order. The Speaker does not have the power to police the accuracy of Members' contributions—if only I could—and I reflect that to the media, as well.

On courtesy and temperate language, I draw the House's attention to the guidance on rules of behaviour and courtesies in this House of Commons. Members must be mindful of the impact of what we say not only

on other Members, but on others who follow our proceedings. Members should be heard courteously, whatever their views. In particular, Members should address the Chair, rather than each other directly, and I say to hon. Gentlemen, please wear a tie or you just might not catch my eye. Members should remain in the Chamber for at least the next two speeches, or in Question Time, for two substantive questions after their own. Show respect to other Members.

Of course, I understand that new Members may need a bit of time to familiarise themselves with the conventions and courtesies of the House, and I will take that into account when I am in the Chair, but I urge every Member to study the guidance carefully. The use of mobile phones in this House is a privilege. Please try to think about when you need them and when you use them. Members should be able to ask a question without reading it. Let us show the ability of this House. Let us show what we can do by working together. As I say, new Members will need a bit of time, and I will work with all new Members and take that into account when I am in the Chair, but I urge every Member to study the guidance. Please read it. If any advice is needed, come and check with me and the Clerks.

On the criticism of other Members, in this place we are honourable Members, and the language that we use about each other should reflect that. If a Member falls short of the standards expected of us all, there are ways of dealing with that—not by accusations made as sideswipes during questions or debates. If we fail to treat each other with respect in debates, that diminishes our work. It also risks raising the temperature of discussions outside this place, particularly on social media, where discussions already too often descend into online abuse against hon. Members. My job is to look after all Members. If we show respect to each other here, I believe that the public should also show respect to Members, so please let us get it right and let us work together. I do not want people to agree with each other—this could be the most boring Chamber that I have ever seen, and that would not be good for me either—but please let us make tolerance and respect our main aim.

It is important that hon. Members can raise matters with me freely. For that reason, I keep such correspondence confidential. That includes applications for urgent questions. I remind hon. Members that it is equally important that my response, particularly on matters of privilege, is treated with the same respect.

I also wish to give some advice about seeking to speak in the Chamber. I take into account a number of factors when determining who to call. One of those is how often a Member speaks. In other words, if you have spoken much more than colleagues, others will be called before you; I ask Jim Shannon to remember that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] I think that falls on deaf ears—[*Laughter.*]—but colleagues are more likely to be called in the next debate for which they apply if they missed out in the last one.

I know that it can be frustrating not to be called in a debate, or to be called very late. Prioritising the debates, Question Times, urgent questions and statements in which you seek to participate is one way of trying to avoid that happening. Staff in my office can always offer further advice. It will be very frustrating for

Government Members, as there are so many of you, so remember that. Do not take it out on my office; please blame me at any time.

Finally, I want all Members and everyone in the parliamentary community to be able to go about their work safely, both online and here in Westminster. The security of this building and those who work here depends on us all. We have a duty to be vigilant, and to assist those whose job it is to maintain this place as a safe place of work, but I also know that being a constituency MP is about meeting constituents and being able to represent them within our constituencies, and I take that seriously. Two Members lost their lives not in this House but in their constituency, so whatever I can do to support you, I will. Make sure that you follow all the security measures. I never want to receive another phone call like those I have previously, so please look after yourselves and follow the advice. Your families matter, your staff matter, and this House matters. Security is at the top of my agenda.

Before moving to the first business of the new Session, I express my best wishes to all hon. Members and all those who work in the House. I thank all the staff who have made this transition happen; I really appreciate it. Please, let us enjoy the next Session.

OUTLAWRIES BILL

A Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time.

Deputy Speakers

2.39 pm

Mr Speaker: Before I call the Leader of the House, I can now formally announce the arrangements for the election of the Deputy Speakers. The ballot will be held on Tuesday 23 July between 10 am and 1.30 pm in Committee Room 8. Nominations must be submitted to the Table Office between 10 am and 5 pm on Monday 22 July. Nomination forms and an updated briefing note with information about the election are available in the Vote Office. I call the Leader of the House to move the motion on temporary Deputy Speakers.

Ordered,

That, for the period up to the first sitting day following the election of the Deputy Speakers under Standing Order No. 2A, Sir Edward Leigh be Chairman of Ways and Means, Dame Siobhain McDonagh be First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means and Sir Christopher Chope be Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.—(*Lucy Powell.*)

King's Speech

Mr Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended His Majesty in the House of Peers, and that His Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy. I shall direct that the terms of the speech be printed in the *Votes and Proceedings*. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons,

My Government will govern in service to the country.

My Government's legislative programme will be mission led and based upon the principles of security, fairness and opportunity for all.

Stability will be the cornerstone of my Government's economic policy and every decision will be consistent with its fiscal rules. It will legislate to ensure that all significant tax and spending changes are subject to an independent assessment by the Office for Budget Responsibility. Bills will be brought forward to strengthen audit and corporate governance, alongside pension investment.

Securing economic growth will be a fundamental mission. My Government will seek a new partnership with both business and working people and help the country move on from the recent cost of living challenges by prioritising wealth creation for all communities. My Ministers will establish an Industrial Strategy Council. It is my Government's objective to see rising living standards in all nations and regions in the United Kingdom.

My Ministers will get Britain building, including through planning reform, as they seek to accelerate the delivery of high quality infrastructure and housing. They will also pursue sustainable growth by encouraging investment in industry, skills and new technologies.

My Government is committed to making work pay and will legislate to introduce a new deal for working people to ban exploitative practices and enhance employment rights. It will seek to establish the appropriate legislation to place requirements on those working to develop the most powerful artificial intelligence models.

My Government believes that greater devolution of decision making is at the heart of a modern dynamic economy and is a key driver of economic growth and my Ministers will introduce an English Devolution Bill. Legislation will be introduced to give new powers to metro mayors and combined authorities. This will support local growth plans that bring economic benefit to communities.

A Bill will be introduced to allow local leaders to take control of their local bus services. My Ministers will bring forward legislation to improve the railways by reforming rail franchising, establishing Great British Railways and bringing train operators into public ownership.

Taken together these policies will enhance Britain's position as a leading industrial nation and enable the country to take advantage of new opportunities that can promote growth and wealth creation.

My Government recognises the urgency of the global climate challenge and the new job opportunities that can come from leading the development of the technologies of the future. It is committed to a clean energy transition which will lower energy bills for consumers over time. A Bill will be introduced to set up Great British Energy, a publicly owned clean power company headquartered in

Scotland, which will help accelerate investment in renewable energy such as offshore wind. Legislation will be brought forward to help the country achieve energy independence and unlock investment in energy infrastructure. A Bill will be introduced to support sustainable aviation fuel production. My Government recognises the need to improve water quality and a Bill will be introduced to strengthen the powers of the water regulator.

My Government will seek to strengthen the border and make streets safer. A Bill will be introduced to modernise the asylum and immigration system, establishing a new Border Security Command and delivering enhanced counter terror powers to tackle organised immigration crime. Legislation will be brought forward to strengthen community policing, give the police greater powers to deal with anti social behaviour and strengthen support for victims.

Measures will be introduced to improve the safety and security of public venues and help keep the British public safe from terrorism. My Government will bring forward plans to halve violence against women and girls.

My Ministers will seek to raise educational standards and break down barriers to opportunity. Action will be taken to get people back in employment following the impact of the pandemic. A Bill will be introduced to raise standards in education and promote children's wellbeing. Measures will be brought forward to remove the exemption from Value Added Tax for private school fees, which will enable the funding of six and a half thousand new teachers. My Government will establish Skills England which will have a new partnership with employers at its heart, and my Ministers will reform the apprenticeship levy.

Legislation will be introduced to give greater rights and protections to people renting their homes, including ending no fault evictions and reforming grounds for possession. Draft legislation will be published on leasehold and commonhold reform.

A Bill will be introduced to establish an independent football regulator to ensure greater sustainability in the game and strengthen protections for fans.

My Government will improve the National Health Service as a service for all, providing care on the basis of need regardless of the ability to pay. It will seek to reduce the waiting times, focus on prevention and improve mental health provision for young people. It will ensure mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health. My ministers will legislate to modernise the Mental Health Act so it is fit for the twenty first century. A Bill will be introduced to progressively increase the age at which people can buy cigarettes and impose limits on the sale and marketing of vapes. My Ministers will also legislate to restrict advertising of junk food to children along with the sale of high caffeine energy drinks to children. A draft Bill will be brought forward to ban conversion practices.

My Government will take steps to help rebuild trust and foster respect. Legislation will be brought forward to introduce a duty of candour for public servants. A Bill will be introduced to establish a statutory Armed Forces Commissioner to act as a strong independent champion for our gallant Armed Forces and their families.

Legislation on race equality will be published in draft to enshrine the full right to equal pay in law.

My Government will strengthen its work with the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland so that the best outcomes possible are delivered for citizens

across the United Kingdom. My Ministers will establish a new Council of the Nations and Regions to renew opportunities for the Prime Minister, heads of devolved governments and mayors of combined authorities to collaborate with each other.

My Government will continue to support the political institutions and devolved government in Northern Ireland. In consultation with all parties, measures will be brought forward to begin the process of repealing and replacing the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023.

Measures to modernise the constitution will be introduced including House of Lords reform to remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the Lords. My ministers will strengthen the integrity of elections and encourage wide participation in the democratic process.

The Government will propose a modernisation committee of the House of Commons which will be tasked with driving up standards, improving work practices and reforming procedures.

My Government will ensure a strong defence based on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Its commitment to NATO will remain unshakeable. It will maintain a strong Armed Forces, including the nuclear deterrent. To ensure that the United Kingdom's defence capabilities are matched to the changing nature of global strategic threats, my Government will conduct a Strategic Defence Review.

My Government will continue to give its full support to Ukraine and its people and it will endeavour to play a leading role in providing Ukraine with a clear path to NATO membership.

My Government will seek to reset the relationship with European partners and work to improve the United Kingdom's trade and investment relationship with the European Union. My Ministers will seek a new security pact to strengthen cooperation on the mutual threats faced by the United Kingdom and the European Union.

My Government will play its part in trying to secure long term peace and security in the Middle East. It is committed to a two state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

Later this week, my Government will host the European Political Community meeting at Blenheim Palace. The Queen and I look forward to our Visit to Samoa alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October, and our Visit to Australia.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[1ST DAY]

Mr Speaker: Before I call the mover and the seconder of the debate, I want to announce the proposed pattern of debate during the remaining days on the Loyal Address: today—debate on the Address; tomorrow—foreign affairs and defence; Friday—planning, green belt and rural affairs; Monday—economy, welfare and public services; Tuesday—immigration and home affairs.

I now have the privilege to call Peter Dowd to move, and then Florence Eshalomi to second, the Address.

2.42 pm

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to His Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Happy birthday to Her Majesty the Queen today. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It is an honour to be asked to give thanks to His Majesty. I start by congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your election and a warm welcome to new and returning Members, including my right hon. Friend the "late" Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds). Congratulations to the Prime Minister and members of his new Government.

It is worthwhile putting into context how I came to be moving the motion on the King's Speech this afternoon. Last Thursday morning, I was standing outside the Library minding my own business, watching somewhat bewildered hon. Members wandering up and down the corridors, tentatively putting their heads into the odd room that may or may not have been a broom cupboard. And they were actually the returning Members! [Laughter.] I cannot imagine what it must have been like for the hundreds of new Members. It brought back memories of when I undertook similar meanderings in the corridors of power.

Then came the call from the Chief Whip. My first thoughts were, "Oh dear, what have I done?" Or not done, as the case may be. Fortunately, those thoughts soon dissolved when he kindly asked me if I would undertake the Humble Address, which I was delighted and relieved to accept. Unfortunately, I am not the most competitive sort, which is just as well. I am afraid I cannot claim to be the first to achieve virtually anything in my family. It started at birth as I was the last-born child. Although I was a councillor at a relatively young age, alas, I was not the first, by a long measure, from my family. I was the leader of a council, but not the first in my family, nor even the first to unveil a plaque on a new public building—that was pretty routine among my forebears. Nor will I be able to look forward to being the first person in my family to reach 100 years of age—my late grandmother, Nin, ticked that box in 1984 and drove the point home by living until she was 105. As for being the first MP in my family, I cannot claim that accolade either as there were two before me. One was the Member—no prizes for guessing—for Bootle.

Until today, my position at the back of the family queue has held sway for decades. Thanks to a good samaritan in the form of the Chief Whip, I am the first in my family to move the Humble Address to His Majesty. I am, as we say in Merseyside, made up.

It goes without saying that being a Member of Parliament is an honour, but representing the town I was born in is the icing on the cake. For those who do not know where my constituency is, it used to be a small fishing village before becoming a bathing resort for wealthy merchants just north of Liverpool—how times change. Today, my constituency comprises a number of close-knit communities that until after the war were on farmland. Ford, Litherland, Netherton and Old Roan housed thousands of families after the challenges of the war, and I think that vision can be renewed. Another part of my constituency, Seaforth, is home to the port of Liverpool, to which I will return in future debates.

The country home of the Gladstone family was in Seaforth. Indeed, Gladstone wrote about how he had seen

"wild roses growing upon the very ground that is now the centre of Bootle."

Another community, Orrell, expanded as time went by. Then there is the lovely coastline of Liverpool bay, which has Waterloo and Crosby running along its shoreline, with beautiful views across to the hills of north Wales. It is also home to Antony Gormley's "iron men" statues.

Bootle town centre is now home to many Government offices, including the Charity Commission, the Health and Safety Executive and even the Office for Nuclear Regulation. Given its location and major dock system, during the war, Bootle was a major target of the Luftwaffe. It was left badly scarred, with as many as 85% of buildings destroyed or damaged. It paid more than its fair share during that conflict. So I am proud of my communities and their history, and I want the content of the Gracious Speech to be part of their future.

As much as I would like to think that the Bootle constituency having the largest majority in the country, so I am told, is down to my character, charm and charisma—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—which are well known to my colleagues, I really know that it is down to the ambitious programme trailed in the general election campaign and now formally set out in the Gracious Speech. I welcome a legislative programme based on security, fairness and opportunity for all, on investment, stability and reform—that is not a reference to the Members opposite—and, above all, on service to our communities, our constituencies and our country. It is about securing economic growth, raising living standards and getting Britain building again with planning reform and quality infrastructure, recognising the challenges of climate change and harnessing technology and the clean energy transition. Great British Energy advancing investment into renewable energy is fundamental.

If you like, Mr Speaker, it is a new social contract that delivers attainment in education, challenges antisocial behaviour, refreshes support for victims of crime, protects our borders, enhances renters' rights, offers a new deal for working people and reinvigorates our NHS, among many other proposals. A renewed local democratic settlement through the devolution proposals set out in the Gracious Speech is welcome. In short, Westminster and Whitehall do not always know best.

[Peter Dowd]

On a day-to-day basis, I am looking forward to getting back to work, especially with new Members—the hundreds of them. I will continue to work on the various all-party parliamentary groups with which I am involved. The Gracious Speech includes proposals for a Bill to champion our armed forces and their families, with families being the key element in those proposals. I use that as a prompt to mention the armed forces APPG, of which I am a member. As an associate member of my local Crosby Royal Naval Association, I have links with local veterans, of whom there are over 12,000 in my constituency. In addition, members of my family have been in the armed forces, and my mother and grandmother both received war widows' pensions for decades, so the least I can do is participate in the armed forces APPG.

In the last year, I have participated in the armed forces parliamentary scheme with the RAF cohort, until that was so rudely interrupted by the general election. While I am always impressed by inter-service collaboration, I am even more impressed by the rivalry between the services. Before I bring a veil down on this part of my contribution, I want to relate to the House an anecdote—just one of many I could relate since participating in the scheme—about the nonchalant and insouciant rivalry between the services. When a Member joins the scheme—and it is well worth joining—they will be asked to go to the Wellington barracks, nearby, to be measured up for a uniform. When I arrived, I was led through the barracks to the stores. My conversation with a member of personnel who, it must be noted, was from the army went as follows:

“Good morning, sir. How can I help you?”

“Good morning. I'm here to be measured up for a uniform.”

“And which service will you be with serving with, sir?”

“The Royal Air Force.”

“In that case, sir, you'll be needing a set of silk pyjamas and a smoking jacket.”

[Laughter.] They fit like a dream, Mr Speaker.

Our country faces so many challenges and I believe the wide-ranging proposals in the King's Speech will go a good deal of the way to tackling those challenges, both at home and abroad.

Only on Saturday evening, I was at a function for one of my local charities, Sefton Women and Children's Aid, at Liverpool FC's Anfield stadium, which was a real stretch as I am an Everton supporter. While I was there, I paid a visit to the memorial to the 97 victims of Hillsborough, so I want to pay particular attention to the inclusion of what has become known as the Hillsborough law in the Gracious Speech. I thank the many individuals, families, survivors and the coalition of other organisations who have campaigned selflessly for decades to achieve this outcome, including Members of this House. It means so much to the families of the victims of those who died and the survivors, from our city region and beyond, that the Government will be fulfilling their promise to ensure a duty of candour on public servants. Justice and respect at last.

Mr Speaker: It is a privilege to call the seconder.

2.53 pm

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall and Camberwell Green) (Lab/Co-op): May I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) on his fantastic speech? As the eldest of three girls, we like the last ones because we can blame them for everything.

It is an honour to follow my hon. Friend and to second the Loyal Address, not only for me but for my constituents across Vauxhall and Camberwell Green. When I was asked by the Chief Whip, my excitement was quickly replaced by fear because I remembered my attempt to make a Big Shaq reference during Second Reading of the Procurement Bill, which went completely over the head of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart) and indeed many other Members in the Chamber. I nearly backed out, but then I remembered that this is my opportunity to get on record that Nigerian jollof is the best jollof, before my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare) puts forward any other ideas.

It is nearly 15 years since a Labour Member seconded a Loyal Address; the last Labour Member to do so was my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry), my good friend. I have to say that the notices I receive when she visits my constituency are perhaps my favourite. I remember receiving a note from her office saying that she was going to tour the Beefeater Gin Distillery in my constituency the next evening and that I should join her. Sadly, I do not drink gin—but I know that she drank my share! I can only say that I look forward to welcoming other Members to my constituency many more times during this Parliament. Can I remind all Members that it is their duty to let me know if they are attending one of the many fabulous parties in Vauxhall and Camberwell Green—otherwise I will be complaining to Mr Speaker.

It truly is a wonderful constituency. We have the National theatre, the British Film Institute, the Southbank centre, the Young Vic and the Old Vic, which is currently hosting a play about the life of an MP in which James Corden turns out to be one of their constituents—although I believe he lives in California, so perhaps he should get in touch with the Leader of the Opposition.

We also have the London Eye. I am sure the whole House will be delighted to know that it received permanent planning status in May this year. That keeps it safe even from the clutches and planning reforms of the Chancellor and the Deputy Prime Minister. We have communities from all over the world. Even among the sea of England shirts on Sunday, there were a few brave Spanish fans proudly wearing their colours—although they may have just been SNP MPs.

We are also home to a number of MPs, advocacy groups and journalists, which means, when I am trying to avoid a journalist or to politely decline an invitation, I often get hit with the dreaded line, “Oh, but I am a constituent as well”. I do warn journalists and Members that I shall continue my policy of giving no special treatment when they come up to me with any casework.

Like many continuing MPs, the area that I represent changed significantly at this election following the boundary review. Sadly, this means that I no longer represent one of the Brixton estates that I grew up on, my church and my old primary school. The church is central to my life and it is a microcosm of Lambeth. After mass, I can see

the impatience on the faces of my family as I often discuss varied casework from the congregation. I just want to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Clapham and Brixton Hill (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) that she is going to receive multiple blessings for all that varied casework. I know the wards that I have lost will be well represented by her. Then again, based on past experience, not all the lobby journalists will notice that anything has changed.

If the House will indulge me, I wish to speak briefly to a couple of policy issues that are close to my heart and to the hearts of my constituents and that I am looking forward to working with the new Labour Government on. As an MP, one of the hardest conversations that any of us will have is with the victims of violent crime. I have sat in many front rooms holding grieving mothers and fathers as they tell me about their loved ones who have been taken from them too soon. With every hug and tear wiped away, I can feel their pain and the impact that that has on the siblings and other family members. Crime rips communities apart, leaving too many people vulnerable and open to exploitation.

One area that I am proud to work on is preventing abuse of gang-associated girls. Sadly, their mistreatment is just one example of why our streets need to be safer. The Home Secretary's commitment to halving rates of violence against women and improving the support for victims should be welcomed across the House.

Over the last couple of years, I have seen at first hand the impact of the cost of living crisis on my constituents in Vauxhall and Camberwell Green and on communities right across the country. We also know that tackling climate change is one of the most urgent issues facing the world, and that we cannot delay meaningful action any longer. I am therefore very pleased that the Government are committed to addressing both issues with an investment in the clean energy transition that will lower energy bills for households and restore the UK's reputation as a climate leader.

But for millions of working people, real change will not come without action on housing. That is why I welcome the Deputy Prime Minister's plans to build 1.5 million new homes across the country, including a new wave of council houses, like the one that gave me and my family security. I still remember that daily commute from a B&B in King's Cross, and the excitement on my mum's face when we received the keys to permanent housing—we no longer had to lug our belongings around in black bin bags. Sadly, in 2024, that is still the case for so many people. Vauxhall and Camberwell Green is also home to a high number of young people, many of whom are private renters. The power that section 21 gives immoral landlords to evict tenants for no reason is an outrage. I am glad that the Government will finally ban no-fault evictions for good.

Lastly, I am proud to be an advocate for the eradication of HIV and AIDS—an issue on which we have made so much progress recently. Alongside my fellow co-chairs of the all-party parliamentary group on HIV and AIDS, in November last year I had the honour of hosting a reception in Mr Speaker's House to thank Sir Elton John for his work in this field over the last 40 years. It was a fantastic event, at which our new Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to ending new HIV transmissions in the UK by 2030. It also means that today's royal event is the second in the last 12 months at which I have had the privilege of speaking—because we can all agree that Sir Elton is music royalty!

This Parliament sees a large churn of MPs, so may I take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome new Members? Don't worry if you get lost; I have been here almost five years and I still get lost. My one piece of advice is this: make sure you know where Westminster Hall is, because you will always find the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) there, on hand to point you in the right direction—after he has finished speaking in whatever debate is going on that day!

Although it was wonderful seeing so many Labour MPs winning on 4 July, it was mixed with a slight sadness that we had to say goodbye to colleagues who worked across the House for their constituents with great dedication. Although I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Rachel Blake) in her place on these Benches, I want to refer to the important work I did with her predecessor, my friend Nickie Aiken. As the two MPs responsible for Westminster bridge, we worked together in the last Parliament to commemorate the horrific 2017 Westminster bridge attack, in which six people sadly lost their lives, including the late PC Keith Palmer, and to improve the safety of a very busy and active part of London. Nickie also worked tirelessly to ensure that the Pedicabs (London) Act 2024 was brought into law, despite the persistent objections of the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope), which I am sure many new Members will also get used to.

I also pay tribute to the outgoing Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley. I remember, as a new MP, walking into a meeting of the all-party parliamentary group on votes at 16. The room was buzzing with excitement, energy and all these young people, and—to my surprise—Sir Peter was in the chair; he really proved that age is just a number.

I must mention my good friend and former constituency neighbour, the new Baroness Harriet Harman. Her 42 years in office blazed a trail for the rights of women in politics and wider society. When Harriet was elected, just 3% of MPs were women; that figure now stands at 40%. While there is some way to go, that rise is a testament to Harriet's unending work and drive never to take no for an answer. While I am daunted to have the responsibility of representing parts of her former constituency in Camberwell Green, I could not have had a better example to learn from. My pledge to her and my new constituents is that I will do my best to carry on her legacy and be a strong voice in Parliament for those communities.

Lastly, I cannot think of a more fitting replacement as the Mother of the House than my good friend, our auntie, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott). She was elected when I was just six years old, and seeing her in the media, making the voice of black women heard in Parliament, gave me the confidence that I could stand here and ensure people in my community had a voice in the decisions that impacted them. I say to her, "We stand on your shoulders, and we respect and salute you. Thank you."

I welcome the Government's plan to introduce draft race equalities legislation to build on that work, and I look forward to working with Ministers to develop it. We should not underestimate the difficulties that both Baroness Harman and my right hon. Friend have gone through to make their voices heard, or the challenges

[*Florence Eshalomi*]

they face even now, but their trailblazing examples mean that those of us elected today face fewer challenges in representing our communities, and we have more friends to go through those challenges with. Because of them, Mr Speaker, a black working-class girl from a south London estate can stand before you today with the honour of seconding this Loyal Address.

Mr Speaker: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

3.6 pm

Rishi Sunak (Richmond and Northallerton) (Con): Before I turn to the Address, I am sure the whole House would like to join me in paying tribute to His Majesty the King. It is typical of his dedication to duty that, despite the medical challenges he has faced, he was here today to open Parliament and will travel to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Samoa and to Australia this autumn. The King is a true model of public service. I know the Prime Minister will value his audiences with His Majesty as much as I did. We all recognise that the King is aided by the constant support of Her Majesty the Queen, and I know the whole House will join me in wishing her a very happy birthday.

Today we also pay tribute to Tony Lloyd. Tony served the people of Greater Manchester for 45 years, and for 36 of those as a Member of this House. He was a great parliamentarian, kind and wise. His family should have enormous pride in the contribution he made to this place and to the community he loved and served. They are in all our thoughts today.

I welcome all new Members to their places. Being elected as a Member of Parliament is a great honour and a great responsibility. We serve our communities and our United Kingdom. I know, whatever our political differences might be, we are all motivated by a desire to make life better for our constituents and to make our country stronger. I know the whole House will join me in deploring the assassination attempt on President Trump. Our thoughts are with the victims. Violence and intimidation have no place in the democratic process.

I commend the proposer of the Address on his excellent speech. I know the whole House will agree that the hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) has set a high bar for speeches in this Parliament. My little sister always reminds me that being the youngest means having to learn how to make oneself heard—well, the hon. Gentleman is the youngest of eight, and it really shows. I had the good fortune to get to know him when he was shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and he was always courteous and pleasant as my opposite number. As he outlined, he comes from a family committed to public service. Both his great-uncles were Members of this House and, although he was very modest about it, he has been in public service for more than 40 years. The new Members of the House have much to learn from him. I know that I speak for the whole House in saying how much we all admire his personal bravery in campaigning for more victim support following the tragic death of his daughter in a hit-and-run accident.

Not only is the hon. Gentleman one of the more popular Members of the House, as we heard, but he is also the most popular constituency MP, enjoying the biggest majority of any Member of this place. In a

recent election, he even won an astonishing 84% of the vote. He might be the only person who can persuade Kim Jong-un of the benefits of democracy—although “The People’s Republic of Bootle” doesn’t quite have the same ring to it.

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman was chosen to speak today to head off the reintroduction of his ten-minute rule Bill. I speak of course of his Bill for a four-day week. I am not sure whether he has consulted his Whips on how compatible that would be with their desire to make Fridays a new norm sitting day. I will say this to him: if they will not let him have his ten-minute rule Bill, he should work to rule—although I suspect that as a Labour Member for Merseyside he needs no tips on trade union organising from a former banker.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi) spoke with typical verve. She is inspired by a desire to serve and her strong faith, but she never lets any of this go to her head. Today, she was chosen because of the high regard that she is held in, but she is also one of the kindest Members of this House, regularly baking Victoria sponges for her staff and others—although post the election result, perhaps red velvet might now be on the menu. She has campaigned bravely against gang violence, in both the London Assembly and this House, and she is so right that we must not become desensitised to knife crime. She represents the place where she grew up, and does so with passion and determination.

Now that I have a lot more time on my hands, I intend to be a regular visitor to the hon. Lady’s constituency—especially in the summer months. One of my favourite places to watch cricket is of course the Oval; as Prime Minister, I had the privilege of playing there with the wonderful Ebony Rainford-Brent and the young black cricketers of the African Caribbean Engagement programme. I applaud the hon. Lady for her work with that scheme. I can reassure her that I will not go as far as the last Conservative Prime Minister to speak from this Dispatch Box, who proposed removing that part of her constituency to a desert island, along with his eight favourite records.

The hon. Lady’s story is truly an inspirational one. To go from caring for her mother as a teenager to being a Member of this House shows what is possible in our country. But the online abuse that she has received—an experience that is far too common in this House—shows one of the challenges facing our democracy. The intimidation that some candidates received in this election, both physical and digital, was completely unacceptable and is a threat to our electoral process. There can be no excuse for threats of physical violence or intimidatory protests outside politicians’ homes.

The hon. Lady will have been picked to second the Loyal Address because the Whips Office has her down as one who will go far. May I offer some words of advice to Labour Members? On the Government Benches, life comes at you fast. Soon, you might be fortunate enough to be tapped on the shoulder and offered a junior ministerial role. Then, you will find yourself attending Cabinet, and then in the Cabinet. Then, when the Prime Minister’s position becomes untenable, you might end up being called to the highest office, and before you know it, you have a bright future behind you and are left wondering whether you can credibly be an elder statesman at the age of 44. [*Laughter.*]

It is right to begin by congratulating the Prime Minister on his decisive victory in the election. He deserves the good will of us all in this House as he takes on the most demanding of jobs in the increasingly uncertain world in which we now live. The Labour party has successfully tapped into the public's desire for change, but it must now deliver change, and we in the Opposition will hold it accountable for delivering on the commitments that it made to the British people. In the national interest, we will not oppose for the sake of it, but when we disagree with the Government, it is our responsibility as the Opposition to say so. What will guide us will be our principles: sound public finances; a belief that people know how to spend their own money better than Governments do, and that private enterprise, not state intervention, is the key to delivering growth and prosperity; public services that work for those who need them; an education system that gives everyone the best start in life; secure borders; and a strong national defence.

I welcome the Government's decision to bring forward Martyn's law. I am sure that the Prime Minister will find, as I did, that one of the most humbling parts of the job is seeing people whose lives have been touched by tragedy not turn to anger or bitterness, but campaign to ensure that other families do not have to endure the same pain. I particularly commend Figen Murray for her work to get this law on to the statute book. I can assure her that this measure will command consensus in this House, and we will work with the Government to make sure that it becomes law as soon as possible.

I am also glad that the Government will continue with plans for a smokefree generation. I know there are deeply held views on both sides of this issue, and I have deep respect for those—especially on my own Benches—who disagree with me on this question. Measures that end access to products are never easy, but I believe that ensuring that our children can be the first generation that does not have to suffer the false choice between quitting smoking and not, because they will have never started, is a truly worthy aim. It will make us a healthier, fairer country where people live longer and better lives.

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm, and we are fortunate in our country to be protected by armed forces who are unrivalled in the world for their professionalism, bravery and skill. I know the whole House will agree that they are truly the best of us.

Every month in my previous job, I became more concerned about the threats to our country's security. We live in an increasingly uncertain world. We need greater investment in our military if we are to deter our enemies and defend our interests. As I warned earlier this year, there is an axis of authoritarian states that are a threat to our values—freedom, democracy and the rule of law—and we must collectively stand up to them. The world is more dangerous now than it has been at any time since the end of the cold war, so I urge the Prime Minister to commit to boosting defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030. If we lead the way on this issue, we can make 2.5% the new NATO benchmark for defence investment. That is the single best way to strengthen the alliance. It would show the Americans that we do not expect them to bear every burden, and would show President Putin that NATO is serious about bolstering its defences, and be the most effective way to deter further acts of Russian aggression.

In the past few years, there has been an impressive amount of consensus across the House on foreign policy—on the importance of supporting Ukraine, and on the centrality of NATO to our national defence. In that spirit, I commend the Prime Minister for his work at the NATO summit, and I am glad that he and the Secretary of State for Defence have taken such rapid steps to demonstrate that, although the Government have changed, this country's commitment to Ukraine's security remains constant. I also welcome the visit of the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) to the middle east. It is of fundamental importance to this country that, as we make real progress towards a two-state solution, our friend and ally Israel has a right to defend itself and to live in peace.

Let me turn next to another crucial issue facing not just our country but the broader western world: illegal migration. The fundamental question is what to do with people who arrive here illegally but cannot be returned to their home country. Our approach was to send them to a safe third country; the Prime Minister was clear that he would scrap those plans, and I acknowledge that. Our fear remains that without such a deterrent the country will end up having to accept that a large number of those who cross the channel illegally will end up remaining here. How to prevent that is something that the Government, I know, will soon look to address. When it comes to legal migration, I urge the Home Secretary to retain the measures that we implemented, which are forecast to halve net migration in the next 12 months.

If I may turn next to the economy, I understand well that the Chancellor is keen to paint as bleak a picture as possible, but I would gently point out that that is not exactly what the facts say. With inflation at 2%, unemployment at 4% and the fastest growing economy in the G7 so far this year, the Labour party has inherited an economy that is already on an upward trajectory.

The Government have set out plans to strengthen the role of the Office for Budget Responsibility, and we will examine those proposals carefully, but the work of the OBR already means that Labour Members had the full details of the public finances when they set out their manifesto. The OBR has rightly taken away from Governments the ability to make forecasts say what they want them to say, but that has also taken away from Oppositions coming into government the ability to say that they did not know the true state of the public finances. As Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said:

“The books are wide open, fully transparent.”

In his words, trying to pretend that things are worse than expected “really won't wash”.

Labour Members promised no tax rises on working people and no plans for tax rises beyond what is in their manifesto in full knowledge of the public finances. It would be difficult for them to claim that things are worse than they thought and then renege on those pledges, and we will hold the Government to their promises come the Budget.

I note the plans for new employment legislation. In this country, our unemployment rate is far lower than the European average, and that is thanks in part to our flexible labour market. I urge Labour not to impose new burdens on businesses. Business leaders themselves

[*Rishi Sunak*]

have warned of the unintended consequences of those plans—that they could lead to firms being less likely to invest and less likely to hire, so increasing unemployment in the long term.

I further note the Government's desire to impose new, potentially rigid legislation on technologies such as artificial intelligence. We are third only to the US and China in the size of our fast-growing technology sector, and we lead the world when it comes to AI safety. We should all in this House be careful not to endanger this country's leading position in this field, which will drive growth and prosperity for decades to come.

Although today's King's Speech contained a slew of Bills, what was missing was a concrete plan to tackle the unsustainable post-covid rise in the welfare bill. Without action, the cost of providing benefits to the working-age population with a disability or health condition will rise to £90 billion—more than we spend on our national defence, schools or policing. That is not only unsustainable, but unfair to taxpayers. That is why in government we had laid out a plan to reduce the welfare bill significantly, but crucially to support all those who could do so to go back into work. I hope the Government look at those proposals when they have the time to study them in detail. On the Conservative Benches we will continue to advocate for a welfare system that is compassionate and fair to those who need it, but fair too to those who pay for it.

The Government have set out plans to change the planning system. We will of course study those thoroughly as well, as we all wish to see more homes built and the planning process speeded up. However, I would say that a system that does not allow local people to have a say will damage public consent for more housing in the long term. I regret that there was no mention in the King's Speech of farming and rural communities, much like my own, but I hope in time that the Government will bring forward proposals.

Turning to net zero, this country has decarbonised quicker than any other major country, and we have managed to do that while growing the economy. As a country and across this whole House, I know we will all be proud of that achievement. The Government plan to decarbonise the grid by 2030, but there is a real danger that, if the Government put the speed of doing that ahead of family finances and our energy security, we will again lose public consent for the measures necessary to ensure that we actually reach our 2050 net zero target—a target on which there is genuine consensus between our two parties. As even one of the Prime Minister's own supporters has warned, this 2030 plan

“just means we have to import our energy. Strategically we become more vulnerable. We pay more money for our energy.”

I hope that the Energy Secretary reflects on those thoughts.

Lastly, the Government have set out plans for reforms to the other place. Looking at the Government Benches, there can be no doubt about their ability to get them through this House, but the effects of the changes will last long beyond this Parliament and long beyond our tenures in these jobs. I would suggest that, when it comes to constitutional reform, it would be good to proceed on a cross-party basis, rather than to use a simple majority in this House to push things through.

That consensus should include the Cross Benches, whose convenor would be removed by the Government's proposals.

I also suspect that the public would prefer the Government to prioritise practical, real-world issues over constitutional wrangling. However, I welcome the news that the Government have paused their plan to force Members of the other place to retire at 80. That proposal always felt like it would be a blunt instrument. Indeed, in the Dissolution honours, the Prime Minister nominated, rightly, the former right hon. Member for Derby South, who will be a strong addition to the other place, despite the right hon. Lady being already over the retirement age that the Labour manifesto proposed.

Let me close by saying that we of course recognise that the British people have entrusted the Labour party with the task of governing our country. On our side of the House, we will fulfil our duties, as the loyal Opposition, professionally and effectively. Across this House, we are all, first and foremost, patriots. We all wish to see our country and our people flourish and succeed. In that spirit, I wish the new Prime Minister and the new Government well.

Mr Speaker: I now call the Prime Minister.

3.25 pm

The Prime Minister (Keir Starmer): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I join the Leader of the Opposition in his tribute to His Majesty the King. It is so heartening to see him in his rightful place, delivering the Gracious Speech. I am sure that the whole House will not mind once again wishing him a speedy recovery. I also join the right hon. Gentleman in wishing Her Majesty the Queen a happy birthday.

We also wish President Trump a speedy recovery from the appalling attempt on his life at the weekend. I spoke with President Trump on Sunday night, to pass on our best wishes and also to share our revulsion at the senseless violence which has no place in democracy. The last time that we debated the Loyal Address and I stood at the Opposition Dispatch Box, I could see for the first time the then new plaque, now behind me, commemorating the memory of Sir David Amess. I know how hard that loss was for Conservative Members. Now, standing on this side of the House, I can see for the first time, in front of me, the plaque to our dear friend Jo Cox, with her words that catch the air of this Chamber even more at a moment like this: “More in Common”. While our thoughts at this time are of course with President Trump and the American people, we cannot think that this is something that only happens elsewhere. We must heed the words of President Biden to lower the temperature of our democracy, work across our disagreements and find each other's common decency.

I congratulate the England football team on their achievements in the Euros, which the Leader of the Opposition and I were talking about this morning. Yes, the trophy eluded us again, but the team can be proud of another exceptional performance—something I am sure the whole House would be only too pleased to recognise. We pay tribute to Gareth Southgate, who shouldered the burden of national leadership with such dignity.

This Government have been elected to deliver nothing less than national renewal, to stop the chaos of the past 14 years, turn the page on an era of politics as noisy

performance, and return it to public service and start the work of rebuilding our country—a determined rebuilding, a patient rebuilding, a calm rebuilding. It is a rejection, in this complicated and volatile world, of those who can only offer the easy answer, the snake oil charm of populism. As the past 14 years have shown, that road is a dead end for this country. It does nothing to fix our foundations, and the British people have rejected it, as they have throughout our history.

What people really want is change, and change is what this Government of service will deliver: a King's Speech that takes the brakes off our economy and shows to the British people that politics can be a force for good; the vehicle for improving the lives of millions, no matter who they voted for.

This is a day when we get on with the serious business of government, yet a House with no time for levity would go against the grain of our traditions, so it was fantastic to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) in such fine fettle today when he proposed the Humble Address. He spoke with great passion, as he always does, for his constituency, which is famous, as he mentioned, for the Antony Gormley sculptures on Crosby beach. That work of art is entitled "Another Place": a collection of gently rusting figures for whom the tide is perpetually coming in—a solid grounding should my hon. Friend ever consider a career in the other place.

I am sure that the House will agree that my hon. Friend is also one of the warmest and most generous Members. That generosity extended, ahead of a previous election, to an offer to hand-deliver Conservative leaflets—a commitment to the democratic process that should be applauded, not least because it resulted in a stonking increase in his majority for Labour.

As anyone who knows my hon. Friend will confirm, although he does like to relax with a glass of wine and listen to Engelbert Humperdinck, for him family always comes first. The Leader of the Opposition referred to my hon. Friend's daughter, and growing up he was cared for by his four sisters. Now, he is never happier than when he is with his grandchildren, who are convinced that he knows Mary Poppins personally—a belief that, I note, he has never discouraged. He has been a tremendous servant to our family—the Labour family—and we thank him for his outstanding speech today.

The address was seconded by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi). It was a fitting tribute for a royal occasion, as I am told that she is known as "Queen Flo" on Instagram. The House will know her as a tireless champion for her community, as well as a founding member of one of our most vital affiliates: the Labour friends of karaoke. In fact, I am reliably told that Queen Flo does a mean Queen Bee, which we look forward to hearing at Labour conference.

Truly, it was a fantastic speech—another demonstration that my hon. Friend is a shining example of our movement. She was a young carer when growing up, and is a fighter for their causes, on AIDS and HIV, on the health inequalities that still deliver poorer outcomes for black women, and on sickle cell, which her late mum suffered from. I know what it is like to watch your mum move in and out of hospital as a child, so I respect and admire the way my hon. Friend now champions young people from poorer households and fights for the opportunities that they deserve.

Perhaps most powerfully of all, my hon. Friend has spoken about her own experience of arriving at the scene of a stabbing, and has rightly demanded that we never allow ourselves to become desensitised to the tragedy of knife crime. As a fellow inner-London MP, I know how much this is hurting our city, as it is hurting towns and cities across the country. I know how much potential is lost, and how many families fear that their child could be next. So be under no doubt: turning the tide on this violence is absolutely central—a key mission that this Government of service will take on.

Both speeches were in the finest traditions of this House. Let me follow the Leader of the Opposition and mark the passing of our colleagues in the traditional way. Since the last Gracious Speech, the Labour party has lost a stalwart of our movement with the passing of Tony Lloyd, who served, in 36 years of distinction, the communities of Rochdale, Manchester Central and Stretford. I had the chance to speak to Tony just days before he left us, when he was leaving hospital to go home. He knew that it was for the last time and that he would not see a day like this. Without being partisan, I can tell you that he would have loved to have seen the House set up as it is today. He would have told us, using his experience, to use every precious moment that we have to serve those communities that he held so dear. That is what he stood for: the best of our movement. He was a champion of politics as a force for good.

That is the great test of our times. The fight for trust is the battle that defines our political era. It is a task not just for the Government but for the whole Parliament. We are all responsible for the tone and standards that we set. I want to thank the right hon. Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, because in every exchange that we have had since the election and in his words today, he has gone well beyond the usual standards of generosity. I thank him for that.

In that spirit, this King's Speech picks up some of the important business not concluded in the last Session. On football governance and the reduction of smoking, we hope to proceed in a manner that recognises the previous consensus. We will also carry forward the Holocaust Memorial Bill so that we build that memorial next to this Parliament and ensure that every generation reaffirms our commitment to "never again".

We will also honour the promises that I and the Leader of the Opposition made to the family of Martyn Hett and all the families affected by the horrific events in Manchester that day. Figen Murray, Martyn's mum, walked 200 miles to tell us that Britain needs that law quickly. I told her then that she would get that from a Labour Government, and we honour that promise today. I am grateful for the indication of the cross-party support that we will have on that important provision, because the security of the British people is the most fundamental priority of any Government, and whether our fight is against terrorists, the vile criminal smuggling gangs that weaken our borders or foreign powers that threaten the security of this nation, we will leave no stone unturned when it comes to keeping the British people safe.

We will recognise the bravery of those on the frontline of keeping us safe with a new armed forces commissioner. That is not just a name or a role, but a strong and independent champion for those who have committed to the ultimate service as a way in which we can show our respect.

[*The Prime Minister*]

We will also move quickly on the lessons from the infected blood scandal that the House debated in almost the final act of the last Session: a day when we—all of us—undertook a solemn responsibility not just to deliver justice to those people, but to take on the work of prevention, to ensure that those lessons shape the future of public service in our country. Because scandals like infected blood, Windrush, Horizon and Hillsborough are united not just by the scale of the injustice, but by the indignity that the victims and their families have been put through merely for standing up for truth and justice. So it is high time to bring in a duty of candour—the Hillsborough law—because a Government of service must also be a Government of accountability and justice. That is what service means.

Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for giving way during his excellent speech, outlining the hope and renewal within the King's Speech, which is much needed in constituencies such as mine, Luton North, where over 45% of children are growing up in relative poverty. What reassurances can he give me and my constituents that he personally takes this issue seriously and that his Government will address it?

The Prime Minister: Let me reassure my hon. Friend and the whole House that I take child poverty extremely seriously. I am proud of the last Labour Government's record on reducing child poverty; they clearly had a strategy, and we will have a strategy. I am very pleased to have announced today the taskforce that will lead our strategy to reduce child poverty. No child should grow up in poverty. We will work across the House on that issue.

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way on his newly announced taskforce, which Beth Rigby announced on Twitter as we were all in this Chamber. Can the Prime Minister outline how many children will remain in poverty while that taskforce undertakes its work, which ultimately will lead to the same conclusion that we are proposing—to scrap the two-child benefit cap?

The Prime Minister: I do welcome this, and I know that it is an issue across the whole House—I do not think there is a single Member who does not care about child poverty. The point of the taskforce is to devise a strategy, as we did when we were last in government, to drive those numbers down. It cannot be a single issue, but one that crosses a number of strands, and we will work with people across the House in order to tackle it. What matters is the commitment to drive those numbers down. That is what we did when last in government, and we will do it again.

Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will make some progress and then give way.

I respect the tone of the Leader of the Opposition's contribution, but I cannot stop my mind from wandering back to nine months ago when he was at this Dispatch Box. His great political hero, Nigel Lawson, once said, "To govern is to choose." Every day serving the people

of this country is a chance to make a difference for them. The last King's Speech was the day when the veil of his choices slipped, and we all saw his party content to let our country's problems fester and to push aside the national interest as they focused almost entirely on trying to save their own skins.

We will have time over the weeks, months and years ahead to debate the measures in this King's Speech and the choices of this Government, but I defy anyone on the Opposition Benches or elsewhere to look at the ambition and purpose of our intent and not to see a return to the serious business of government. No more wedges issues; no more gimmicks; no more party political strategy masquerading as policy. This is an agenda focused entirely on delivering for the people of this country—legislation for the national interest that seeks only to fix our foundations and make people better off, and to solve problems, not exploit them.

Graham Stuart *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will just make some progress.

With each day that passes, my Government are finding new and unexpected marks of their chaos: scars of the past 14 years, where politics was put above the national interest, and decline deep in the marrow of our institutions. We have seen that in our prisons, writ large. We have seen it in our rivers and seas, even worse than we thought. We have seen it in our councils, pushed to the brink by the previous Government and now unable to deliver even basic services to children with special educational needs. We have already taken the first steps on so many of the priorities we put before the British people. The work of change has begun, but we know—as they do—that national renewal is not a quick fix. The rot of 14 years will take time to repair.

Graham Stuart: I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way. He talks about priorities. Of course, people in rural communities around the country see the vast majority that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has assembled, and they are afraid. They see a manifesto in which just 87 words are about farming. They see a King's Speech with no mention of rural communities or priorities. Will the Prime Minister please take this opportunity to reassure people in rural and farming communities that his Labour Government will take notice of them?

Mr Speaker: Order. Interventions are one thing, but this is not the best time to actually make a speech.

The Prime Minister: Let me take this opportunity to reassure those in rural communities. I grew up in a rural community myself. If we look at the places now represented on the Labour Benches, we can see the reassurance that has been given and will be given again.

The King's Speech that we have brought to the House today is a marker of our intent: not only a certain destination for the future of this country, but a new way of governing; a Government of service guided by clear missions, with a long-term plan to fix the foundations; a plan that starts, as it must, with our economy. Under the watch of the right hon. Member for Richmond and Northallerton (Rishi Sunak), the last Parliament was the first in modern history to leave living standards in a

worse place than it found them—the consequence not just of Tory irresponsibility, but of a more pervasive inability to face the future; a ducking of the hard choices; eyes fixed always on the horse trading of Westminster politics, rather than the long-term national interest.

Dr Luke Evans (Hinckley and Bosworth) (Con): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I will in a moment.

We do not just turn the page on that today; we close the door on it forever. The Budget responsibility Bill will protect the living standards of working people from the chaos they endured under the last Government—a commitment, no matter how fierce the storms, to economic stability as the foundation we build on. That is a changed Labour party at work. And then, on that foundation, we take the brakes off Britain and go further and faster on measures to generate higher economic growth—workers and business united in the cause of wealth creation. We will reform the planning rules, a choice ignored for 14 years, to build the homes and infrastructure that Britain needs. We will level up rights at work, a choice ignored for 14 years, to deliver security and dignity at work. We will create a new industrial strategy; invest in cleaner, cheaper British energy; harness the power of artificial intelligence; improve our public transport; confront our historic challenges on technical education; transform our skills agenda in partnership with business; and push forward devolution to the cities, regions and councils of England. A plan for wealth creation that will finally lead us out of the pay more, get less doom loop that is the last Government's legacy.

Let me be clear: we will work with anyone invested in the future of our country.

Dr Luke Evans: Will the Prime Minister give way on that point?

The Prime Minister: I will just complete this point.

I said that we would serve everyone, whether they voted for us or not, and I meant it. Let me say directly to those on the Opposition Benches that if you are invested in the success of your community, we will work with you. This is a new era. We are turning the page, returning politics to service, because that is what the people of this country want to see from their politicians. And service is a stronger bond than political self-interest. That is what “country first” means—the only way we can restore trust and the reason this Government of service were elected.

We were also elected to repair our public services with investment and reform to make them once again beacons of justice for the communities they serve—a signal to our country of the cause that fires national renewal. My determination is for everyone in our country—England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales; no matter where they started in life—to feel that success belongs to them. It is a cause that I believe unites this House and indeed the people of this great nation.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I will. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hooray!”]

Jim Shannon: May I commend the Prime Minister? There are many in this House, on both sides of the Chamber—not only in his party, but on the Opposition Benches—who welcome his election as Prime Minister and look forward to the delivery of some feel-good factor for all of this great nation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Better together is what I always say. Perhaps even those in the Chamber who have different ideas think the same. In my provincial paper two weeks ago, it was recognised that Northern Ireland was very much part of the Prime Minister's 10-year plan. Will he outline exactly what that plan will be for Northern Ireland? Can he ensure us that our position will never weaken and always get stronger?

Mr Speaker: Jim, you will definitely be at the bottom of the list now—don't worry!

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for that intervention. It was very important to me, and to my Government, that within days of being elected I went to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales with that message about working together. As the hon. Gentleman will know, I worked in Northern Ireland for five years on reforms to the Police Service in Northern Ireland. It matters to me that we make progress on all matters across all our nations, and that is the way in which we will operate as a Government. It was a statement of intent that I made in those early days, and let me say, in direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, that I will continue in that vein.

As well as maintaining our plan to cut waiting times, we will modernise the Mental Health Act 1983 and finally drag it into the 21st century. We will raise standards in our schools and improve the confidence, the wellbeing and the happiness of our children, because that is so often the barrier that holds them back. We will also work on landmark legislation on race equality, and tackle the structural injustice of unfair, discriminatory pay. Britain has come a long way on such matters—one look at this Parliament shows that we are moving forward, and I recognise the efforts of so many in this House, on all sides, to tackle this injustice—but we can still do more, and therefore we must and we will. We will also begin work on banning conversion practices, and will bring forward tough new protections for renters. Those are promises that have lingered in the lobby of good intentions for far too long.

We will signal our intent to transform society with measures on crime and justice that will not only rid our streets of antisocial behaviour, but launch a new mission to reduce violence against women and girls by 50%. In this, we are inspired by the work of unbelievable campaigners: Mina Smallman, Claire Waxman, Melanie Brown, and my friends John and Penny Clough. I will never forget the day John and Penny came to my office and told me what they had been through just to get justice for their daughter Jane, murdered in the car park of the Blackpool hospital where she worked by the man awaiting trial on multiple charges of raping her. I gave them my word then that I would do what I could, not just for John and Penny and Jane but for all the Johns, Pennys and Janes in our country; but it is an enormous undertaking. I wish it were not, but it is. Just listen to the contribution made every year in this House by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Yardley

[*The Prime Minister*]

(Jess Phillips), a grim reminder of just how many women are killed every year by domestic violence. And yet, as everybody who works in public service knows, Government can make or break a life. I have seen it myself, as a public servant, and I also know from those campaigners what service can do when it listens and empowers people far beyond the walls of the state.

So this is how we will go about our business: mission-driven, focused on ambitious goals, bringing together the best of our country, committed to the practical difference—big and small—that we can make together. That is the reward and the hope of service, the business of change, and the work of this Government of service that we will take on. We will stop the chaos, fix our foundations, and take the brakes off Britain. This is a King's Speech that returns politics to serious government, that returns government to public service, and that returns public service to the interests of working people. That is the path of national renewal, the rebuilding of our country, and we take another step today.

Mr Speaker: Order. I call the Leader of the—[*Interruption.*] Order. Please, let us show respect to each other. Let us not set off on the wrong foot; we want to be on the right foot. I call the leader of the Lib Dems.

3.54 pm

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): On behalf of the Liberal Democrats, I add our sincere thanks to His Majesty King Charles for his Gracious Speech. Like other party leaders, I wish him well as he continues his recovery, and I join them in sending our happy returns on the birthday of Her Majesty.

As we remember Members who were killed in service and condemn the appalling assassination attempt on President Trump, we should all commit ourselves to a new politics, whereby we disagree with respect, listen to each other and try to bring together the dialogue on politics in our country following the divisions we have seen.

May I join others in paying tribute to the late Tony Lloyd, who championed many campaigns and issues in this House? I had the huge privilege of joining him on an all-party trip to Israel and Gaza, and one of his commitments was to peace in the middle east. He wanted justice for the Palestinians and a two-state solution, and let us all commit ourselves to that again.

I also pay tribute to the hon. Members for Bootle (Peter Dowd) and for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi) for their accomplished speeches in proposing and seconding the Loyal Address. I know the hon. Member for Bootle comes from a political family—he explained that in some detail—and I believe that his great-uncle Peter, who was once the Labour MP for Preston South, later became a Liberal councillor in Liverpool. So may I say to the hon. Gentleman that if he does follow in his great-uncle's footsteps, he will not be the first in his family to see the Liberal light? Our door is always open.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green made an impressive mark in her first Parliament, as she campaigned on issues such as knife crime, the NHS and housing. She spoke eloquently on an issue that is close to her heart and mine: care. She spoke

movingly about how she cared for her mum when she was just a very young child, and about how she learned at a young age about all the different painkillers needed to treat her mum. As someone who believes that we need to hear the voice of carers in this Chamber far more often, it was a pleasure to listen to her speech today. I am left in no doubt that she will make an even bigger mark in her second Parliament.

While I am paying tribute, let me add our thanks to the Three Lions, who captivated the whole nation and came so agonisingly close to ending all those years of hurt. They did us proud, and let us hope the Lionesses retain their European crown next year.

I welcome the Prime Minister to his place, and congratulate him and his party on their election victory. As he says, they now have an enormous undertaking, and we wish them well. I read somewhere that the Prime Minister apparently surfed to power on a wave of Conservative failure, but may I say to him gently, and with a pang of envy, that watersports are my thing?

The challenges awaiting the new Government are certainly great. Set against the challenging backdrop, there is much to welcome in the programme set out today, not least the Government's focus on getting our economy growing strongly again. The Prime Minister is right to say that building more homes is an essential part of that, as we can see from the work of many brilliant Liberal Democrat councils, from Cumbria to Eastleigh and, in my own area, the royal borough of Kingston. The best way to build the many extra homes we need, especially social and affordable homes, is to properly engage local people and communities, and bring them along with us. That is the community-led approach that we on the Liberal Democrat Benches will continue to champion.

Paul Holmes (Hamble Valley) (Con): I am delighted to see that the leader of the Liberal Democrats seems to be openly advocating the work of Eastleigh borough council. May I just remind him that the council is building double the number of houses required only because his party leadership has got it into £800 million-worth of debt and it needs to pay off the debts that it accrued?

Ed Davey: I am delighted to say that today we welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Liz Jarvis), the new Member for that constituency, to the Liberal Democrat Benches. I am sure she will have all the answers that the hon. Gentleman needs.

But growth and house building are not the only challenges, crucial though they are. I am sure that all of us across the House, as we knocked on doors during the election campaign, heard the same common refrain from people of all backgrounds and all walks of life: that nothing seems to be working as it should, from the health and care crisis to the sewage scandal to the cost of living. The British people have overwhelmingly rejected the past out-of-touch Conservative Government. They have gone, but after so many years of being taken for granted, many people have simply lost faith in our political system to solve their problems.

We on the Liberal Democrat Benches recognise the scale of the challenge now facing the new Government. They have a big job to do, and so do we. We will work hard on behalf of our constituents. We will scrutinise

the Government's plans carefully and strive to improve them, and we will oppose them when we think they have got it wrong, but where they act in the national interest to solve these problems and improve people's lives, we will support them.

One issue that came up more than any other at door after door—I am sure it was the same for Members of all parties—was the issue of health and care. Patients are waiting weeks to see a GP or an NHS dentist, if they can find one; more than 6 million people are waiting on NHS waiting lists; tens of thousands of cancer patients are waiting months to start urgent treatment; patients are stuck in hospital sometimes for weeks, ready and wanting to leave but unable to do so because the care home place is not there or the care worker or support for the family carer is not in place. Fixing this crisis in our NHS is essential, not only for people's health and wellbeing but for the economy and for growth. Only if we get people off the waiting lists and into work can we get our economy growing strongly again.

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman mentions the delays and waiting times in the NHS and social care, but how much does he regret his role in the five years he spent in a coalition with the Conservatives creating that situation?

Ed Davey: I am disappointed in the hon. Gentleman's intervention. We can all go back to things that other parties did in government and say that they were wrong. I would just say to him that I come to this task now in a spirit of constructive opposition to work for the best for our country, and I hope that he and other Members will do that too.

I welcome a number of the measures for the NHS in the King's Speech, including on reducing waiting times and particularly on mental health. I want to work with the Government to improve those; they are long overdue. Of course, I also urge the Government to look at the proposals on the NHS in our manifesto, on boosting GP numbers so everyone can get an appointment within seven days or 24 hours if it is urgent, on improving access to dentists and crucially to local pharmacists—if more people can get the care they need early and locally, fewer people go into hospital—and on giving cancer patients the care they deserve with a cast-iron guarantee that they will start treatment within two months after diagnosis. This is the scale of the ambition we need for our NHS right now, and I hope the Government will show it.

There is another part of this crisis that needs to be fixed through urgent attention, and it is care. I spoke during the election about my own caring journey, first for my mum when I was a teenager, then for my dear nana, and now as Emily and I care for our severely disabled son, John. I have been incredibly touched by the response from colleagues across the House who have reached out to tell me how important it is that we speak out on care, for people who need care and for carers, both professional social care workers and the family carers who are looking after their loved ones.

I have had the chance to hear from carers of all ages all over the country as they shared personal stories with me. They include the couple who care for a son with similar care needs to John's, who reached out to say that they know what it is like to worry about what will

happen when they are no longer there to look after their disabled son. They offered me advice, and I was touched by their kindness and generosity.

Each care story is so different yet, in many ways, they have much in common. We all share a special, wonderful bond with the ones we care for, and we all share the feeling that no one else understands us. Caring has been in the shadows for far too long. Let this be the Parliament in which carers' voices are heard and we become the caring nation.

Caring means people doing extraordinary things every day for the ones they love, often in the face of difficult circumstances, physical challenges, no breaks, mountains of paperwork, countless appointments and endless phone calls. They try to navigate a broken system that is simply not designed to work for carers. We on the Liberal Democrat Benches will do our very best to get a fair deal for carers, whether on carer's allowance or on the big challenge of fixing social care, so that our loved ones get the support they need, when and where they need it.

Of course, this will not be easy. Fixing social care after years of neglect will be incredibly complicated, but we cannot shy away from it. Although it was not in the King's Speech, I am encouraged by the reports that the Government are planning a cross-party commission on social care, which we urgently need to find a solution that stands the test of time. I hope we will hear more about that from the Government very soon. Fixing social care is not only essential to give people the care and dignity they deserve and to support family carers. Without it, we cannot fix our NHS.

It would be a big enough task if health and care were the only major crisis facing the Government, but clearly it is not. Inflation may have finally come down to normal levels, but the cost of living crisis persists. Families and pensioners still face record energy bills and sky-high housing costs and food bills. They need support and understanding, which begins with the Government's promise to be fiscally responsible—that would mark a big and welcome shift from the previous Government's rather reckless approach to the Budget. With energy bills forecast to rise by 10% in October, clearly we need bold action to bring down costs, from insulating homes to expanding renewable power.

The Liberal Democrats have a proud record of investing in renewable power, almost quadrupling it when we ran energy policy. Our policy drove the cost of renewable electricity below the cost of fossil fuel-generated power. I hope the Government will act with the same level of ambition to tackle not only the cost of living crisis but climate change too, because urgent action is needed to prevent catastrophic climate change. We have shown how it can be done, and how doing it well will benefit consumers, the economy and the environment. We welcome the Government's focus on this challenge, and we will push them to meet it.

We will also push the Government on another environmental challenge: ending the sewage crisis. For anyone who still doubted, the election campaign clearly showed the strength of public anger about the pollution of our rivers, lakes and beaches. The Government have made welcome noises about holding the water companies to account and making sure they put these environmental issues before profit, but the Liberal Democrats will push Ministers to act as quickly and decisively as possible to put an end to this appalling scandal.

[Ed Davey]

Health and care, the cost of living, climate change and sewage, these big crises just got worse and worse over the last years of the previous Government, whose failure to address them is a big part of why people's trust in politics is so low. This year's British social attitudes survey found that 45% of people—a record high—almost never trust the Government to put the national interest first. I am sure I speak for everyone in the House when I hope that this Government will prove that wrong. But restoring public trust and confidence in our politics is a major task for us all, right across this House, no matter our party.

I think there are two parts to how we restore that trust. The first is by tackling the root causes of the many scandals that have caused so much harm and done so much damage to public trust, from Hillsborough to Horizon to infected blood. We welcome the promised Hillsborough law, with its statutory duty of candour on public officials, but we urge the Government to go further in this area. Given the vital role that whistleblowers have played in exposing these scandals, I urge Ministers to look at our proposals for stronger protections for whistleblowers, including a new office of the whistleblower.

The second way to restore trust is by transforming our politics, so they are relevant, engaging and responsive to people's needs and dreams. The measures that the Government have promised to strengthen democratic rights and participation are therefore welcome, as is the principle of shifting more power out of Westminster and Whitehall, so local decisions are made by the people for them and the communities they live in. I am sure the Prime Minister knows that the devil is in the detail, so we will scrutinise those plans carefully when they come. We fear they will not go far enough.

It will not surprise anyone in the House to hear that we on the Liberal Democrat Benches believe that political reform must include electoral reform: proportional representation giving everyone equal power to hold Members of Parliament properly to account. Maybe even the Conservatives support that these days. I note that according to the same survey on British social attitudes, the majority of the public agrees with us.

I have focused on the many big domestic challenges facing us, but I will conclude by touching on the enormously challenging international picture. From Vladimir Putin's appalling war in Ukraine to the dreadful conflict in Israel and Gaza, with the terrible humanitarian catastrophe there and hostages still being held by Hamas, these are tumultuous times indeed. They demand that we work together with our allies through international institutions. And yes, that means working constructively with our European neighbours, to rebuild the ties of trust, trade and friendship with our European friends that have been so badly damaged by the Conservatives.

As liberals, we believe that the UK can be an incredible force for good when we stand tall on the world stage, championing the vital British values of democracy, liberty, human rights and the rule of law. When the Government do that, they will have our full support. I close by paying tribute to those on the frontline of that effort: our armed forces, deployed around the world. Whether securing NATO's flanks in eastern Europe, combating Daesh terrorists in the middle east or supporting

peacekeeping missions in Africa, they serve our country with incredible courage and professionalism, and we all owe them an eternal debt.

4.13 pm

Dame Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Ed Davey), but I confess I am a little disappointed with him because today he walked into the Chamber. He could at least have tried a bungee jump or maybe freewheeling on a bicycle. I applaud him for his efforts in the campaign; they kept us all entertained and, looking at the number of Members on the Liberal Democrat Benches, clearly paid dividends.

I welcome and thank my hon. Friends who proposed and seconded the Humble Address, but I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) that he may be the youngest of eight, but I am the second of 10. New Members of the House will hear a lot about Big Brother, but I can tell them that they have a big sister here to support them; I am sure my hon. Friend will support them too. After 19 years in this place, I know my way around a bit, although I too still get lost, so they should not be worried about that.

I was delighted to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi). I first came across her when she was a Member of the London Assembly. I knew then that she had something special about her and we saw that here today.

I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I spent nearly a decade chairing the Public Accounts Committee in this place, in the last Parliament and the previous two. In that role, I saw many egregious examples of incompetence, bungling and waste, whether it was water companies, school buildings with reinforced concrete and other things falling down, the running sore of rail infrastructure, the national embarrassment of defence procurement and the scandal of personal protective equipment procurement during covid. Time and again, we saw Government bumbles, poorly drafted contracts, lack of oversight, dodged responsibility, endless excuses, and the taxpayer picking up the tab. No wonder people were so angry at the election. No wonder they voted for change and for my right hon. and learned Friend the Prime Minister.

Now the true extent of the Tory mess is coming to light. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has revealed, it is even worse than we thought. She has opened the books, looked under the bonnet and seen the true extent of the mess that is now for a Labour Government to clear up. The previous Government partied, squabbled and helped their mates, but they did not fix the roof when the sun shone. They trashed the joint. From austerity to the PPE scandal and Trussonomics—remember that?—they weakened the fundamentals of our economy and stretched our public services to breaking point.

In my annual report, which was one of my last reports as the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I listed what I called the “big nasties”, some of which the Chancellor is revealing to us now: 700,000 pupils are in schools that are not fit for purpose; there were in fact far fewer new hospitals than the 40 that were much vaunted and they were never going to be delivered to

the promised timetable; and the gaping hole in our defence budget. I certainly applaud the approach of this Government, and it seems some consensus from the Opposition Benches, that we need to see an increase in defence spending.

The consequences of the mess that has been left behind by the previous Government are human. According to the House of Commons Library, nearly one fifth of children in my borough of Hackney live in absolute poverty. Four in 10 children in Hackney live in poverty after housing costs are taken into account, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's recent figures. My constituency is in the top 5% of English constituencies with children who are income deprived. That is the shameful legacy of 14 years of failure.

In one of the world's greatest and richest cities—a bus ride from the financial powerhouse of Liverpool Street—no child should be cold or hungry, or lack a winter coat or decent shoes. Schools in Hackney have kit rooms for the children who turn up without the requisite uniform and lend it for the day in return for a token like their Oyster card. No parent should be having to skip meals to feed their kids, which is happening too often in Hackney and elsewhere in the country. No child should be arriving at school with a rumbling tummy, which is why I welcome the breakfast clubs that we already have in Hackney and the fact that one of the first acts of this Labour Government will be to make sure that every child in primary school has a decent breakfast.

When we talk about stagnant wages, low productivity, flattening growth, lack of investment in skills and schools, the abolition of Sure Start, and the gig economy, there is this human cost. Right now, in a Hackney school, there is a hungry child whose huge potential is being wasted, whose opportunities are stunted and whose life chances are hobbled. When I first arrived in this place 19 years ago, I had to tell people about the good things that were going on in Hackney, because people had written off my borough as a poor and deprived area where things did not happen. Now people think of the Shoreditch hipster, the tech companies and the city fringe, but underneath that there is this huge poverty and opportunity being stunted for our children. This is the mess that this Government now have to clear up.

Another example of that is the housing crisis. A safe, warm and affordable place in which to live should be, and is, a basic right. We all need a roof over our heads before we can do anything else in our life—whether it be study, work, or bringing up our families—yet, after 14 years, my constituents face a housing crisis whatever the tenure.

According to Hackney council, the median household income in Hackney is just under £36,500 a year, yet the median house price in my constituency—which has doubled since 2010—is £610,000. For those who have not caught up on the maths yet, this means that a house costs more than 16 times the median household income. According to the Land Registry, the average first-time buyer in Hackney paid just under £600,000: over half a million pounds for a first-time buyer. Well, that's not most first-time buyers, is it? It is the lucky few who either have a very good job, or have got help from the bank of mum and dad or other family members. I do not deny them that help, but it should be an opportunity available to all.

It is utterly ridiculous that we are in this situation. Young professionals with double incomes are simply unable to afford a deposit to get a place of their own and are often stuck living with family members into their 30s. Others are forced into rented accommodation, with no security of tenure and rents so high that there is no spare money to save to get on the housing ladder.

According to the work of the Public Accounts Committee, around 13% of privately rented properties—589,000 properties—pose a serious threat to health, so landlords are getting the rent but landing their tenants in hospital with lung diseases, mental illness or physical injury. I hope the Chancellor's ears are pricking up, because the Public Accounts Committee estimated that this situation costs the NHS £340 million a year. That goes to the broader point: economic inefficiency, child poverty, the housing crisis and failing public services all cost us more money. The economics of decline is an expensive business, but—we see hope now, with this Labour Government—investment in jobs, homes, schools, skills, roads, the NHS and tackling crime saves the public money down the line. As I was often saying when I had the honour of holding the role of Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, a penny of waste is theft from working people's pockets, and a fair economy is also an efficient one.

I warmly welcome the measures in this King's Speech under a Labour Government; how nice it is to say those words after 14 years. Since 5 July my colleagues in the Cabinet—I was about to say the shadow Cabinet; old habits die hard—including Labour Secretaries of State, have moved into action from the inertia of what went before, and that means that we are on the road to recovery. It is going to be a long haul, but I welcome the measures to support start-ups and tech companies, particularly as I represent Shoreditch, where so many are based; to revive skills; to modernise our health services, particularly prioritising mental health; to get more teachers into Hackney schools; and, crucially, to build more affordable homes.

We need many affordable homes in inner London, in constituencies such as mine, where social housing is the only option for so many people. Only last week, a woman came to my surgery who had four children in a one-bedroom flat, and her elderly, sick father had had to come to live with them. That is how the family lived—four children in a one-bedroom flat—and it is not uncommon at all. We need to drive change to deliver housing around the country, but particularly in the inner city.

I also recognise the lead and step change in tackling the issue of net zero to decarbonise our economy with investment in renewables, insulation, carbon capture, and green jobs—things I have examined a lot over the last decade and on which we have seen the previous Government fail so often.

Above all, I welcome the commitment of His Majesty's Government—our Labour Government—to kickstart growth in our economy. Without steady, sustainable economic growth and without the proceeds of growth fairly shared across the nation, we will continue our national decline. Instead, in this King's Speech, we are offered a hopeful prospectus for change, the prospect of progress, and a new sense of national renewal and hope after 14 years. We know it will not be easy, nor will it be as quick as we all impatiently want it to be. As a former Minister and having been a member of the Public Accounts

[*Dame Meg Hillier*]

Committee for 13 years, I know that modernisation and reform can be frustratingly slow. I have seen many good ambitions frustrated by poor delivery.

If I may proffer a word of advice for those on the Treasury Bench, finding themselves newly surrounded by eager officials, many of whom came in front of my Committee, and red boxes, it is this: “Please stay focused. Look up at that horizon. Think of the people who sent us here, who voted for that change you want to deliver and we all want to see. Keep an eye on that guiding goal of growth. Test every proposition that comes across your desk against that simple question, ‘Does this promote or hinder growth?’”

Successful government, as the Prime Minister said, is mission led. Of course we want to tackle poverty, build homes and transform our NHS, but the main mission is growth, because without that we cannot deliver any of the others.

Mr Speaker: I call the leader of the SNP.

4.25 pm

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): I begin by congratulating the Prime Minister on his first King’s Speech. I am sure it is an incredibly important moment for him and his family and I wish him well over the months to come. I am sure it will be an incredibly challenging time, but I repeat my best wishes to him and all his new colleagues beside him on the Government Benches.

I want to reflect first that, at Prime Minister’s questions on the day the election was called, I perhaps goaded the former Prime Minister in respect of calling a general election—indeed, I think I referred to him as being fazed should he not do that. I am not sure entirely who out of the two of us fared worse from his decision to do so; maybe that is something we can both reflect upon in due course.

The opportunity now in front of this Labour Government is enormous. They have a parliamentary majority that will go down in history, and that majority affords them something incredibly important: the ability to deliver change. What that change looks like, and perhaps more importantly what it feels like, for people in their homes is so important. My colleagues and I on the SNP Benches will do everything we possibly can to be as constructive as we can—[*Interruption.*] We will! However, I was a bit disappointed today, not necessarily by some of the things that were in the King’s Speech, but by some of those things that were not.

In that regard, I bring the House’s attention to the amendment that my colleagues and I, ably supported by other Members from across the Chamber, have tabled in relation to the two-child benefit cap. That iniquitous, heinous policy was brought in by the former Conservative Government in 2015. Each and every one of us in this Chamber notes that it retains children in poverty—hundreds of thousands of children across these isles. In Scotland alone, it impacts 27,000 households and it is estimated that 14,000 children would immediately be taken out of poverty were it to be scrapped, but it was not mentioned in the Government’s programme for government today.

Instead, all we have heard is that a taskforce will be created, with no timeframe for that taskforce and no indication when it will conclude. All the while, those

children will remain in poverty. Surely it should be the bare minimum expectation of a Labour Government that they would seek to do everything they possibly can immediately to lift children out of poverty, and I am particularly interested in the views of Scottish Members of Parliament from the Labour party in this regard.

Barry Gardiner (Brent West) (Lab): Could the hon. Gentleman explain to the House why the SNP Government in Scotland, who have the power to do that, have not?

Stephen Flynn: I would be more than happy to enlighten the hon. Gentleman in that regard. As he knows, in the UK, we have reserved policies and we have devolved policies, and some 70% of welfare policies are reserved to this Parliament. The Scottish Government have sought over recent years to mitigate the worst excesses of the Conservatives. With some £8 million-worth of money that we could spend on other things, we choose to mitigate Tory policies—including, of course, the likes of the bedroom tax; I am sure he would be keen to see those on his own Front Bench mitigate and end that particular policy.

However, we do that within the confines of the financial remit set, in large part, by this place.

If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting—and I am sure some of his Scottish colleagues would agree with him—that the Scottish Government should mitigate, he and the Government should outline where that money should come from. Should it come from Scotland’s NHS, our schools, our police or our budget for young people? The reality is that the constraints placed upon Scotland by this place do not afford us the opportunity to mitigate, and frankly, I find it absurd and deeply disingenuous to suggest that the remit of Scotland’s Parliament should be to mitigate Westminster. Our horizons should be so much greater than that.

I return to the point that I was making. Scottish Labour Members supposedly agree with the Scottish National party that the two-child cap should and must be scrapped, so how will they vote? Will they follow the lead of their Prime Minister in London, or will they follow the lead of the leader in Scotland and respect the views of the people they were sent here to represent?

Despite my great disappointment, there is one area in which I hope the Prime Minister can put a smile on my face: GB Energy. I am moderately surprised that we have not yet had an announcement that it is to be headquartered in Aberdeen—perhaps in the Aberdeen South constituency that I represent. Indeed, Aberdeen and Grampian chamber of commerce hired a van that has been patrolling the streets outside Parliament today calling for it to come home—that is the only time I will ever use those words—and it should come home straight to the energy capital of Europe.

Although I would welcome GB Energy’s placement in Aberdeen, I also want to see much more detail about what it will deliver. If I have read correctly, a cumulative £8.3 billion will go towards GB Energy over the next five years—£1.6 billion each and every year—but one hydro pump storage project in Scotland would almost blow that entire budget apart. We know that GB Energy will not sell energy, we know that it will not distribute energy, and it appears that it will not generate energy. It has been suggested that it will be an investment vehicle for projects to go forward, but if it is capped at £1.6 billion a year, I must question the Government’s ambition.

How does that deliver the change that is required? The change that they previously agreed to requires some £28 billion each and every year. What a contrast with the ambitions that they once had. Of course, net zero will be absolutely crucial to our economic future—to the growth and prosperity that we all want—but ultimately that growth can come about only through productivity.

I would like to hear more from the Labour Government, who have a significant majority, about what they will do to reverse some of the Conservative party's policies on migration. Migration dramatically and drastically impacts on higher education institutions in Scotland and in the constituencies of each and every Labour Member. We know that universities are a key driver of productivity. I wish to seek consensus across the House on migration, which might be moderately difficult given some of the people who now sit behind me. We need to stand up and be bold and brave in the face of those who seek to demonise migration and other those who come to work in our public and private sectors, care for us in our hospitals and teach our children. We should seek to increase migration, increase our economic output, grow our economy and enhance our communities. Brave politicians would do that, and I hope that Labour Members share that bravery.

Of course, our economy is not just about net zero, productivity or migration; it is also intrinsically linked to our relationship with the European Union. I look forward to seeing what the Government come forward with in respect of their proposed new relationship with our friends and allies in Europe. We should be seeking to rejoin the European single market; we should be seeking to rejoin the European customs union. It makes sense to all of us. The politicians in this House are afraid of doing so, but they will come to realise that the only way to achieve the aims that they want to achieve is to do just that.

On all those issues and so many more, we will seek to be a voice of reason in this House and to work constructively with Government Members. Over the coming hours and days, I look forward to hearing their contributions and what they intend to bring to our national discourse, as we all try to improve the lives of the people who we are so fortunate to represent.

Mr Speaker: I gently say to Members that we have a lot to get in today, so I would be very grateful if they tried to keep speeches below, or up to, eight minutes.

4.35 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I add my commendations for the speeches that introduced this debate. I have only one anecdote about my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd), who was in my Treasury team: he is a fan of Shostakovich, and on one occasion, we went to the Royal Albert Hall to listen to a Shostakovich symphony. It was the symphony with which Dmitri Shostakovich upset Stalin, and it almost cost him his life. We thought the performance was superb, but there were two grumpy old men in front of us, and at the end of the symphony, one turned to the other and said, "Stalin may have had a point." We enjoyed it. I thought the speeches today were superb.

I want to get to the business of the next few days: examining the King's Speech. We all come to this House with a mandate from our constituents, so it important

that we bring to the House their experience. When the exit poll landed on election night, in my community, there was almost a collective sigh of relief that we were ending 14 years of Conservative Government. My constituency, like many others—my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Dame Meg Hillier) has said this—could not take any more, to be frank.

In my constituency, like that of my hon. Friend, one in three children are living in poverty; according to the statistics, some of them are living in destitution. I have got a housing crisis, even though 4,000 properties are being built in the centre of my constituency. Most of my constituents cannot afford them; those who have scraped the money together and have got leaseholder access to those properties are now being hit by massive increases in service charges, and some of them want to hand the keys back. I have got rents spiralling out of all control, and I have got slum housing reappearing. The back-to-back has been reinvented in my constituency, where one family will rent the front of a normal house and another family will rent another floor or the back.

Turning to employment for my constituents, wages have virtually been frozen for the past 14 years. I have Heathrow in my constituency; people would fight to get a job at Heathrow because the wages were so good, but not any more. We are running low pay campaigns, and insecure work is endemic in my constituency: it was Heathrow Ltd that started fire and rehire. The same could be said about public services—we will all say this. In my area, the NHS is on its knees. I just do not know how the staff have coped. In the teaching profession, the stress is such that we cannot retain teachers: no matter how committed they are, they do not survive under that sort of pressure. For many of our areas, social care is almost non-existent, and I meet family members who are caring for other family members and unpaid carers. It is now almost inevitable that if you are looking after someone in your family—someone who has a disability or whatever—you are living in poverty as a result of the lack of support.

Yes, people voted for change, but we on the Labour Benches have to be realistic and have some humility in our assessment of the election. Only one in five of the population voted for us, and what worries me in my constituency is that our turnout has gone from 70% when I was elected in the 1990s to 51% in this election. We need to be wary of that, and to understand the reasons for it. The More in Common poll that was published this week confirms the scale of disillusionment that there is with politics overall, which has been reflected in some of today's debate. My fear is that we now have others on the political scene, in this country and elsewhere, who will feed on that disillusionment. We should guard against the far right mobilising again, as has happened in Germany, France and Italy.

We as a Labour Government have to deliver. As for all Governments, the honeymoon will inevitably be short-lived, but I welcome the King's Speech because it does set out the elements of a programme for rebuilding our country. I must say that there are elements I have to smile over in that much has been drawn from the 2017 and 2019 manifestos—but maybe we should not mention that—such as on employment rights, the new deal, rail nationalisation, buses, Great British Energy and the national investment fund, which reflects the national investment bank that we put forward then. In fact, there

[John McDonnell]

are sections of the King's Speech that could almost be the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough and Thornaby East (Andy McDonald).

People want and expect delivery sooner rather than later. I want to focus on four areas of policy on which I am desperate to see change. The first is poverty. Child poverty has to be our priority. There are 14 million people living in poverty, including 4.3 million children, with 1 million in destitution. I never thought that, in my lifetime, we would ever debate destitution again in this House, but destitution there is. I welcome the announcement today of the taskforce that will look at poverty overall, but I have to say that setting up a taskforce is one thing, and acting is another.

There is one simple act, and we all know it, that could lift 300,000 children out of poverty this month: scrapping the two-child limit. I was in this House when the Tories introduced it, and it was introduced as part of stigmatising all those on benefits. In my speech I said that

"I would swim through vomit to vote against the Bill".—[*Official Report*, 20 July 2015; Vol. 598, c. 1314.]

Given some of the speeches from the Tories at the time, I almost had to. It was an appalling form of attack on the poorest in our community. We need to lift that stigma—that impact—but we need to do it quickly.

Yes, let us set up a taskforce by all means, but we must produce a timetable that within weeks we will scrap the two-child limit. The argument is whether we can afford it and whether it will be within our fiscal rules. Many Members will know that, over the last few weeks, the OBR has lifted or revised its growth figures upwards. The International Monetary Fund has dramatically increased the growth figures upwards. That has nothing to do with the Tories building a new economy or anything like that; it is the natural business cycle, and it is also part and parcel of some companies recognising that a Labour Government were coming. Let us take the benefit of that. It is no longer an offence against the fiscal rule: the resources are there and we can lift those poor children out of poverty with this simple act. So I appeal to my own party—to the Labour Front Bench—to by all means get the taskforce working, but to now commit ourselves to scrapping the two-child limit and doing it rapidly.

On employment, the new deal for workers, which we developed when we were in opposition, is now going to be legislated on. I want no more watering down, and at the same time I do not want it delayed by endless consultations. We have consulted at length for five years nearly: it is there and it is ready. We want to scrap fire and rehire and we want to scrap zero-hours contracts, but one of the most important ingredients of that legislation should be the extension of sectoral collective pay bargaining. So far, we have committed to doing that in the social care sector, and I welcome it, because that is where poverty wages really are being paid. However, we now need to start, as we promised before, to extend that across the economy. We can build into the Bill the mechanisms for doing that stage by stage—yes, with discussions and so on, but it can be done effectively. In some areas, sectoral collective bargaining was scrapped only a few years ago, for example in agriculture. One area in which I would like to ensure that we have that is transport, and then we would have no more P&Os.

We need to be honest about the state of our public services, in terms not only of their delivery but of their finances. I did a report last September with Andrew Fischer on the incoming Labour Government's in-tray. It is calculated that, between 2010 and now, the Conservatives cut £80 billion. No one expects that £80 billion to be discovered overnight, but we need a plan for reinvestment over the length of this Parliament. That means being honest about the debate that we must have about not just this Budget but future Budgets.

People recognise that we will need to find the money. Yes, we will get some from growth, but 1% of growth brings in about £12.5 billion. To achieve 1% of growth is hard work; it requires investment and it takes time. If we can get back up to 2%, fine, but that will take time. In the meantime, we need the resources for our public services, and that means that we have to have an honest debate about taxation and the distribution of wealth in our country. It means, for example, that we need to grasp the nettle of levelling capital gains tax with income tax, making sure that our tax reliefs and the corporate welfare that is going on is effective and not simply subsidising profits. In addition, I believe we must have a discussion at some stage about what we do about wealth distribution overall.

There has been a lot of discussion about reform of public services. I agree with that, but I want reform to be placed in the hands of the frontline staff themselves—the experts in delivering the service—and for them to then work with the recipients of those services, the patients and others, so that there is co-production. The disability movement has developed the theme of "Nothing about us without us", and that should apply to every sector of public service, so that we work not just with those who deliver the service, but with those who receive it. I also agree with what has been said about unpaid carers and the way in which we treat disabled people who, I am afraid, now live in poverty and were stigmatised under the previous Government. We can come to those debates as we run to the next Budget. My conclusion is *carpe diem*—seize the moment. We have a large majority. We must beware the danger of the far right mobilising if we fail, but we must also recognise the potential that we now have.

Finally, I do not know what it was like in other constituencies, but overhanging our whole debate was the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, coming in night after night and seeing more children being slaughtered and war crimes being committed. I do not think we will solve this problem unless we seek an immediate ceasefire that will enable us to have the hostages released. However, I think we can take some immediate steps: stopping the arms sales to Israel, respecting the International Criminal Court and ensuring that we recognise that war crimes should be punished.

Since January, I tried to mobilise the previous Government to accept, as other Governments across the world have been doing, seriously injured children from Gaza so that they could come here for treatment, but not one visa has been issued to a Palestinian child for that purpose. I have written to the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary, and I hope that our Government can welcome those children here so that they can receive the treatment they need, before hopefully they can be returned to a Palestinian state that we recognise and that lives in peace.

4.48 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair this afternoon, Mr Deputy Speaker, and an honour to speak so early in this debate and to follow the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell). His speech was preceded by the contributions of two Opposition party leaders, the right hon. Members for Kingston and Surbiton (Ed Davey) and for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn). They all demonstrated that you cannot keep a good Parliament down, Mr Deputy Speaker. We already have the Liberal Democrats trying to rerun the referendum on proportional representation; the Scottish National party wants to rerun the referendum on Brexit and, of course, on Scottish independence; and I encourage the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington to continue a healthy debate about matters such as the two child policy, because his speech has just brought into question the argument that the bigger someone's majority, the more control they have over their party. I look forward to an entertaining Parliament in that respect.

This is my first opportunity to draw the House's attention to a report produced by the Liaison Committee in its dying moments in the previous Parliament—it was actually published after Parliament had risen but before Dissolution—about strategic thinking in government. I ask myself whether the King's Speech reflects comprehensive strategic thinking in government. I think it does in parts, but certainly not in others.

It is a significant moment when a newly elected Government's Gracious Speech is delivered, because that is when the rhetoric of the campaigning hits the reality of governing. How strategic are this Government? Much of the speech is good. Budget responsibility and the prioritising of wealth creation are good things, but how is that to be achieved with enhanced employment rights, which we know are a threat to the flexibility of the labour market and which businesses are already warning will destroy jobs?

What about all the new super-quangos, which are rather an echo of Labour Governments past? What about a new Great British Railways, like the failed Strategic Rail Authority under John Prescott? What about a new Great British Energy? I do not suppose that is going to be quite like the old Central Electricity Generating Board, but the limits on its authority and spending power make it rather less significant, as the SNP leader, the right hon. Member for Aberdeen South pointed out. What about a new industrial strategy council, which is rather like the unlamented National Enterprise Board set up by Tony Benn in 1975? The Prime Minister claimed that this is

“nothing less than national renewal”,

but I suggest that these are little more than the recycling of old, failed ideas.

I did not think Lords reform was going to be a first-term priority for a Labour Government. It is probably just red meat for a few Labour MPs. There is to be a new House of Commons modernisation committee, but that is 25 years out of date. The House of Commons modernises itself without having a modernisation committee. Is that really deserving of such prominence in a King's Speech as a strategic priority of the Government?

The Government appear to be deaf to the ironies of the conflicts within their own programme. They say that “greater devolution of decision making is at the heart of a modern dynamic economy”,

and I welcome that, but it is only to do things like taking control of buses. It is certainly not to take control of where the houses are built and of the housing targets in different areas.

I welcome the commitment to speeding up infrastructure investment. To that extent, I hope the Government will welcome the inheritance from the previous Government of the freeports, particularly the Harwich and Felixstowe one in my constituency. That freeport is an initiative that the Government should be pleased to advance. It has the support of all the political parties in Harwich, which are committed to its success. Given the new Government's commitment to funding infrastructure, I look forward to meeting the new Minister to discuss how we can develop the Bathside bay to generate industry and jobs for local people.

I think the Government will find that the Norwich-to-Tilbury pylons proposal is a less welcome inheritance. I welcome their objective to

“unlock investment in energy infrastructure”,

but I would like to assist with that, because it does not mean that the Government must blindly approve of anything that National Grid produces at first flush and thinks is a good idea. The Norwich-to-Tilbury pylons proposal has been much in the national news because of the local campaign against the desecration of unspoiled countryside. This is not opposition for its own sake. The submission that I will make later this week in response to the current consultation will set out how the objectives for Norwich to Tilbury cannot be achieved with the current proposals, and can be achieved more quickly and at a lower lifetime cost than that of the current proposals.

Despite what the Prime Minister tries to insist is his programme, it is still dominated by the short-term tactics of gaining power and retaining it. We heard that in his jibes at the Conservative party rather than addressing the fundamental challenges that threaten our national survival—and I put it at no less than that. What are those challenges? They can be summarised as the six big Ds: debt; digitisation, which is transforming the way we live our lives; decarbonisation; deglobalisation, which has thrown globalisation into reverse as a result of the pandemic and rising international tensions; demographics, which are afflicting every OECD country; and defence.

I very much welcome the appointment of Lord Robertson to help oversee a bipartisan defence review. It will find that we need to commit far more than 2.5% of GDP to defence to help prevent another major war. I urge hon. Members to keep thinking about Ukraine; I am very glad the Prime Minister mentioned it in his remarks. If Russia succeeds in Ukraine, we can say goodbye to European and transatlantic security.

One of the findings of the Liaison Committee's report on strategic thinking in government is that long-term strategy can be truly sustained only if it lasts across successive Parliaments and periodic changes in government. What comes to mind includes continuous at-sea deterrence, the counter-terrorism strategy, the operation of GCHQ and indeed the survival and continuation of the national health service and the achievement of net zero.

I hope that the Government will use their considerable majority to offer to make the radical reforms which, for example, the NHS needs, by finding the cross-party consent and consensus needed to drive through such reforms, as they will undoubtedly create divisions in both

[*Sir Bernard Jenkin*]

parties. The Government have an unrivalled opportunity finally to tackle the social care question, but, if we want it to stick, it must be agreed across the House.

The report covers the capacity of Whitehall for strategic thinking, how the centre of Government can lead strategy more effectively, how strategy must engage the public—particularly younger generations—in governing for the future, and how scrutiny by Select Committees can promote strategic thinking in government. I very much hope that if right hon. and hon. Members have not already read just the first chapter of the report, they will do so, because it is a manifesto for how Parliament and Government should work together to help promote the kind of country that we want, which is so threatened by the international events that we see.

I see Ministers sagely nodding—and I appreciate that—but the Government have yet to respond to the report. There are two proposals in it that I very much hope they will adopt. One is that they will recreate a national school for government to train our civil servants and spads—and even Members of Parliament—in what strategic thinking really is instead of just scrabbling around with focus groups and opinion polls to tell us what to do. The other is that the House should establish a committee for the future, as is happening in other Parliaments around the world—we drew a lot on international experience—which should be looking much further ahead than most Select Committees have time to look. That would be a great reform for the Government to bring in.

4.57 pm

Derek Twigg (Widnes and Halewood) (Lab): It is a real pleasure to speak in the King's Speech debate, setting out Labour's new programme for government after 14 years of disastrous Tory Government. It is also an honour to take part as the MP for the new constituency of Widnes and Halewood, in which I was born and bred.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that the Labour Government will be one of service, with a clear mandate to deliver the change that the country desperately needs. The King's Speech shows that Labour plans to govern with serious solutions. Labour will make the difficult decisions needed to fix the basic problems facing the country. I am really pleased that we have made growth a central plank of the Government's policy, including of course the development of an incredible industrial strategy. We must also address the serious and long-term productivity problem that the country has faced. I hope that the new Government will get on to that quickly, because it is really holding us back.

The new Labour Government of ours have a daunting job in tackling the many challenges facing the country after 14 years of mismanagement of our economy, epitomised by the disastrous Liz Truss Budget as well as the running down and underfunding of our public services. The NHS and social care are in crisis, with people dying because of delays in treatment. Waiting in hospital corridors is now the norm. Local authorities are also struggling to remain financially viable.

Rather than stick our heads in the sand or pull the wool over people's eyes as the Tories did, Labour will be straight with people about the problems that we have inherited. The truth is, there is not a switch that we can flick to fix the country's problems overnight.

This is a packed King's Speech, but, as there is limited time to speak, I will focus on just a few areas. I really welcome the decision to bring rail services back into public ownership—to improve passenger journeys and deliver better value for taxpayers—and to establish Great British Railways. Anyone who has travelled on Avanti West Coast will know of the many and continuing problems it has had over a long period of time, whether it is the fact that trains are late or cancelled, the wi-fi does not work, they do not have any hot water or whatever. We know that it has been a failure, so I welcome a decision on that.

The announcement of a Hillsborough law is really important. It would place a legal duty of candour on public services and authorities. This Government are determined to rebuild trust, foster respect, improve transparency and accountability, and address the culture of defensiveness in the public sector. I pay particular tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool Garston (Maria Eagle), who has worked tirelessly to get to this stage, and I am pleased that the Government have adopted it. Many colleagues worked with her and others on this particular policy. She and I go back many years and have worked closely with the Hillsborough families. I was at the Hillsborough disaster. We know how terrible the experience has been for those families, and the fight they have had over the years. The way that they were treated by the establishment is a scandal. I hope that they will be somewhat relieved and pleased to see this progress.

Tackling the mental health crisis and modernising the Mental Health Act to make it fit for the 21st century will help deliver the Government's mission to see people live healthy lives for longer, and will put patients at the centre of decisions about their health. I also want to raise the massive challenge of children and adolescents' mental health waiting lists and the service itself. I would like the Government to focus on that particular part. I am sure that every Member of Parliament here will have many constituents coming to them about this issue. We must also have a proper plan to try to do all we can to reduce suicides, particularly among young men. I welcome any changes and involvement from the Government.

A lot has been said about planning, but high streets have not really been mentioned. Many of us in our constituencies face real issues with high streets, which have been under massive pressure, with many shops closing down. There is a need for renewal and regeneration. I hope that the planning Bill will look at that. I welcome the reform of bus services. Particularly over the past 10 to 15 years, many communities have become more isolated because bus services have been cancelled or reduced. I hope that with this change in policy we can make some improvements to the many communities who feel isolated across this country, not least in my constituency.

In the King's Speech, the Government made a clear commitment to NATO. They said that it remains unshakeable and that they will retain a strong armed forces, including a nuclear deterrent. I welcome that from the Prime Minister and the Government. The strategic defence review, which has been commissioned by the Prime Minister and will be overseen by the Defence Secretary, is very welcome as a root and branch review. Those of us who have been around here for some time and have had to put up with a Conservative

Government who have let down the armed forces, putting this country's defence and security at risk, will welcome this review. We must look at the situation: we have the smallest Army since Napoleonic times. Even a previous Conservative Secretary of State said that the armed forces have been hollowed out. We have a shortage of munitions. There are major problems with procurement and wasted money, which need to be addressed. I am sure that they will be a priority of this new Government.

The focus has always been and will continue to be on Ukraine, and I was pleased to see the commitment to Ukraine in the King's Speech. We face a real problem with Russia, China and North Korea and the threat they pose to world order and to democracies in particular. These are some big challenges that we must get to grips with. We must look again at our armed forces and how we can improve them, get better funding and, importantly, ensure that the funding they get is spent correctly and efficiently, and not wasted. That is important for the future.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the hon. Gentleman for what he says about the armed forces. In Northern Ireland we have always had a large recruitment, both to the regular forces and to the territorials. Does he agree that when it comes to recruitment for Northern Ireland, extra money should be made available to ensure that those who want to join can do so?

Derek Twigg: I understand the hon. Member's pitch for extra resources for Northern Ireland, but I think he will recognise that there is now a major recruitment crisis in the armed forces that has been ongoing for many years. It is not just an issue of recruitment; it is also about retaining good, experienced people. That is what we have to really focus on. I am sure the defence review will look at that. It is also about looking after our service personnel, ensuring that they have better housing and better facilities, and that their pay is right, and ensuring that we have proper services and support for our veterans. I agree with him that recruitment is a challenge. We have to sort that out, because it is weakening our armed forces.

I know that time is getting on, so I just want to say a couple of things in conclusion. We still have a cost of living crisis. Living standards were lower at the end of the last Parliament than they were at the beginning of the last Parliament, and the tax burden is at its highest rate for years. Our first King's Speech will be a downpayment: just the start of the legislative plans that Labour will set out over the next five years. To transform our country, we will need to be patient and have focused work over a long period of time. As the Prime Minister has made clear, this will be a Government of service that will do things differently and properly. Rather than gimmicks and Bills that do not work, Labour will be focused on real change for working people.

5.6 pm

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): It is good to take part in this debate on the Loyal Address. In particular, it was good to see His Majesty attend the House today. I wish him well in his recovery and pay tribute to his record of service to our nation.

I congratulate all new Members who have entered the House. I thank the proposer and the seconder of the motion, the hon. Members for Bootle (Peter Dowd) and

for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi), who are no longer in their places. It is fair to say—this is a note for all new Members, as well as existing Members—that their speeches were made in the finest traditions of the House. The start of the Parliament is one of the few moments we have to unite, to respect each other's speeches and contributions, and to become accustomed to the traditions, formalities and conventions of the House.

At the same time, we get to do the greatest thing that we all love: representing our constituents. For new Members, in particular, this will become the regular pattern of their work in this House and a reflection of the hard graft that goes in. We have all come fresh from a general election campaign where a lot of graft was put in, but we are now here, elected to represent our constituents, in the normal tradition, on the issues that may sometimes divide us, but where we can advance their cause through legislation.

I want to begin my contribution on the Loyal Address by saying a few words about the new Government's tone over the past 12 days. It is an inevitable feature of a new Government that they spend their first few weeks continuing campaign rhetoric—we will hear it a lot—and talking down the record of the previous Government. However, much was advanced over the last 14 years.

We are proud of our record and the transformation we led, including on public finances. These are big things that do not just happen over a few weeks and months. We are proud that we transformed the public finances, from the Government borrowing £1 in every £4 to a much better fiscal position today. It is not easy to get into these fiscal positions and those on the Labour Benches should reflect on the fiscal position they inherit. We are proud of supporting the creation of 800 jobs per day, on average, having faster economic growth than many of our competitors, cutting the tax burden on incomes and fuel duty, overseeing an increase in doctors and nurses working in our NHS, more teachers, schools raising standards, and, on law and order, getting more police officers on our streets fighting crime. That is a record we are proud of. It is important to reflect on that. If I may say so, in a very subtle, gentle and polite way to those now on the Government Front Bench, it is all very well trying to rewrite history through slogans. It sometimes takes attention away from the responsibility of having to govern and make the big decisions and choices.

Let me touch on some policy areas. The Government have already presented a programme in one area of which I have some experience, having been Home Secretary for more than three years. We have heard quite a bit about immigration and crime, but although we have not seen the details, what we have heard from the Government so far differs little from some of the measures that were already in place. One example is the proposed UK border security command, which we actually set up just over four years ago to co-operate with international partners. Some of my colleagues who followed me in the Home Office will recognise much of this. They will recognise the need to take action in the English channel and work with our intelligence and security agencies in order to do so, and they will recognise the appointment of a clandestine channel threat commander and the establishment of joint interagency task forces, because they happened under the last Government.

[Priti Patel]

I want to commend the work of our international law enforcement agencies and our international partners. Not only do they work at an exceptional level, but they work to save lives, and I think we should reflect on that, because only last week we saw more lives lost in the channel. We also introduced robust measures to tackle criminal gangs and county lines and put together safer streets policies together to protect our constituents, but some of those measures were opposed by those who are now in government when they sat on these Benches.

It is important to recognise that some things do not happen overnight. There is no single solution to some of these issues, but through collaboration we can drive the right outcomes. We heard the Prime Minister speak about law and order today, and I welcome many of his comments about the importance of safer streets and tackling terrorism, but also the need to address those appalling problems that we still see and will continue to see: violence on our streets and domestic abuse, with victims suffering at the hands of criminals. None of us wants prisoners to be released early, but it is important to focus on the victims of crime and to have the right punishments in place to ensure that the perpetrators are given tough sentences. Again, I noted that those measures were opposed in the last Parliament. It is important for us to get fairness back into our system when it comes to law and order.

One of the great achievements of the last Government was the expansion of renewable energy generation. We can be proud of our record in that regard and proud to be world leaders, given that the energy generated by a mix of renewables passed the 40% mark. That is a huge improvement on the situation in 2010. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) has already touched on the question of how we can generate new technology for energy purposes, and I genuinely believe that technology, rather than taxation, is the path to a much more sustainable future.

I think that our colleagues in the Government will recognise the reality of some of the projects that already exist and will now be dominating their inboxes, such as the National Grid's attempts, through its Norwich to Tilbury plans, to impose more than 100 miles of pylons and overhead power lines across the east of England. It is pressing those proposals, but my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex and I are working to find alternatives through technology and ways in which we can upgrade the grid without destroying the East Anglian countryside. National Grid's plans will affect farmers and community facilities such as White Notley football club, which will lose community pitches if the pylons are built across our constituencies. That will mean a huge loss of local amenity, which is deeply concerning. My constituents, and constituents throughout Essex and East Anglia, want to see alternatives such as an offshore grid or the use of more tunnelling to build up grid infrastructure capacity. The proposed infrastructure and planning Bill will be considered in great detail. It must receive the right level of scrutiny, along with the legislation on planning and new housing, and we must ensure that local views—the views of our constituents—are not simply disregarded.

I am aware that those on the Government Front Bench are already proposing a consultation in this area. If I may give them some subtle and gentle advice,

listening to the views expressed in that consultation will be incredibly important, because this is not about saying that people do not want homes; in fact, constituencies such as mine have put forward so many plans for new homes. We have actually built over 10,000 new family homes over the last decade, which has helped my constituency to become a very good commuter town and successful when it comes to schools. Families want to move to our area, but it is a case of getting the balance right. That is incredibly important.

In the minute I have left, I want to make a point about economic growth. Of course, everybody across the country and in this House fundamentally believes in securing higher levels of economic growth, which every Government want—name me a Government who do not want that. We want more jobs, we want more job creation and we want more successful businesses, but it is about being on the side of businesses and how we can effectively support them to employ people.

Over 80% of my constituents are employed by small and medium-sized businesses. We are incredibly proud of that, but the minute that more regulatory burden comes upon those businesses, I am afraid they will lose the ability to grow and to employ local people. Of course, small businesses are the backbone of our economy. On a day like today, when we see new Bills coming forward through the Loyal Address and the King's Speech, it is right that we are given the appropriate time to scrutinise them as we go forward through this Session of Parliament. Fundamentally, however, we need to make sure that, as His Majesty's loyal Opposition, we Members of Parliament on this side of the Chamber provide scrutiny, but also redress, to ensure that constituents' voices are heard—whether on planning, development or economic growth. Fundamentally, we need to make sure that Britain advances in the right way.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Kirith Entwistle to make her maiden speech.

5.16 pm

Kirith Entwistle (Bolton North East) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the right hon. Member for Witham (Priti Patel) for her contribution to the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Bootle (Peter Dowd) and for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi) on their excellent contributions, and I join colleagues in congratulating all the new MPs who have joined me in this House for this Parliament.

I thank all the staff and Members who have welcomed me so kindly to this House. As a new MP, I want to reach across the political divide and find the things that unite us all; indeed, this King's Speech offers hope that we can come together to tackle the issues of today for the good of this country. I had the rare honour in the recent election of having the support of both of Bolton North East's living previous MPs, both Labour and Conservative. I share one ambition with both of them: for Bolton to be better connected within the region and with the rest of the country. I welcome the announcements on transport in today's King's Speech.

Sir David Crausby had a long-standing interest in improving the railways in our region—something I hope to continue work on, having experienced cancellations on day one of travelling down to this place. Sir David

has been a great mentor of mine, and I hope to build on his legacy and do the people of Bolton North East proud. I wish him, his wife Enid and their family well, and I cannot thank them enough for their ongoing support.

My predecessor, Mark Logan, who has as thick a Boltonian accent as mine, aspired to work hard to make the required Metrolink from Bolton to Manchester a reality. We have a shared vision of improving connectivity for the town in which neither of us was born or bred, but which we both call home. I hope to work with our ambitious metro mayor for Greater Manchester in making this vision a reality, and I thank Mark Logan for his service to the people of Bolton and, indeed, for his support during my general election campaign. I wish him and his family well.

I am the new Member of Parliament for Bolton North East, the first woman to represent this great constituency, and the first Ahluwalia in Parliament. I had also hoped to be the first Entwistle. However, Major Sir Cyril Fullard Entwistle—I thought Kirith Kaur Ahluwalia Entwistle was long—beat me to it in 1918. Indeed, he later returned to represent the great town of Bolton in 1931. Sir Cyril and I share some similarities. He was born in Bombay in 1887 to a cotton manufacturer and came to Bolton where he was educated at Bolton grammar school in my constituency. How fitting is it then that, all these years later, a second-generation Indian immigrant would move to Bolton, settle down and then represent our great town in Westminster?

Sir Cyril was also an early advocate for equal rights, introducing the Matrimonial Causes Act 1923 as a private Member's Bill to give women legal equality in divorce cases. We have come a long way since then, as a nation and a society, in improving the rights of women and of those from ethnic minority backgrounds such as myself. It is my hope that I can go further during my time here and support great initiatives such as the Pregnant then Screwed campaign, play my part in closing the gender and ethnicity pay gap, improve parental rights and continue to shape a country that is more accessible, accommodating and inclusive.

Bolton is a town of great innovation, entrepreneurship and industry, being the birthplace of the spinning mule, invented by the late, great Samuel Crompton. Having had the privilege of meeting so many fantastic entrepreneurs throughout my campaign, I want to pay particular tribute to the great female entrepreneurs I encountered: Allison Angel, a female mentor who has helped women launch, grow and develop sustainable businesses, and Mrs Farida Patel, who owns the shop Mum's Mate in Halliwell, a particularly formidable woman who, alongside her daughters Naaznin and Mehzabeen, goes above and beyond for the local community.

I also had the privilege of meeting Anita, who set up the Bolton Women in Business awards. She voted for the first time in this election and decided to put her faith in me. I also want to mention the inspirational organisation, Fortalice, a Bolton-based charity providing frontline services for people who are, or have been, affected by domestic abuse and violence. These women helping women, standing up and being exceptional role models in our town are the reason I am so proud to stand here today, to tell their stories, to do what I can to support them and to highlight the incredible work that Boltonians have done and are doing.

I am also the first Sikh to represent the constituency of Bolton North East. The Sikh values of *seva*—service for the betterment of others—and humility are visible throughout Bolton. They are in our history, and they have been woven through the very fabric of our town. Community assets such as the Bolton Lads and Girls club, the Octagon theatre and Bolton museum and library are testament to this. I will do my utmost to keep them at the heart of everything that I do here. I will do my best to protect them and restore rich heritage centres such as the Hall i' th' Wood museum.

I have found a great source of pride in Bolton, and it is this pride for our great town that I wish to reflect here in Westminster. I have both the desire and the determination to improve our town—in particular our town centre, which I wish to see revitalised and renewed—to give our young people hope and the chance of a brighter future again and, finally, to see our history and heritage rightly celebrated. For this little Indian girl from culture-rich Southall, it is a great honour and privilege to represent this fascinating and heritage-rich town of Bolton. It is time for me to get to work on the role that the wonderful and humble people of Bolton North East have sent me here to do.

5.23 pm

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): May I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Bolton North East (Kirith Entwistle) on her maiden speech? It is clearly a real achievement to be the first to make a maiden speech in this Parliament, and I am sure that Members on both sides of the House will join me in congratulating her and wishing her well in the years ahead here in Parliament.

I welcome all new Members to this House, not least because some of them make me look older, which I have been looking forward to for some time. I remember when I was first sworn into the House. I entered at a by-election and so swore in on my own, in a class of one. There was a real heckle on that occasion from the beast of Bolsover. He asked if I was here on work experience and everyone laughed. I have a few more grey hairs now, 10 years on, and have just been through a difficult general election in north Nottinghamshire. I want to begin by saying a special thank you to my constituents for doing me the great honour and privilege of re-electing me, all the more so on what was clearly a difficult night for my party. During this Parliament, I will represent my constituents with all of my vim and vigour.

Having served as a Minister under each of the last five Prime Ministers, I know what a special privilege it is to serve as a Minister, so I wish our successors in office all best wishes and good luck in the years ahead. As patriots, we all know that this Government's success is our success, and we want them to tackle the great challenges facing our country. I want them to enjoy their time in ministerial office as much as I did.

The general election made a number of things clear to me. I am deeply proud of many of our Government's achievements, which I will fiercely defend in the months and years ahead. We took a bankrupt country and righted our public services and public finances. We ensured a decade of good employment after inheriting high unemployment, particularly among young people. We led Europe in the defence of Ukraine. We reformed

[Robert Jenrick]

our education system, and we now outstrip countries all over the world in the literacy and numeracy of our children. We were one of the world's greatest countries in tackling environmental challenges, decarbonising faster than any other G7 country. For those and other reasons, I will always defend the record of the last Conservative Government, but I will come on to some of the lessons I have learned from their failings.

Neil Coyle: Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that voters were ungrateful on 4 July?

Robert Jenrick: I cannot quite hear the hon. Gentleman. If he is asking whether the electorate were wrong, the answer is no. No politician should ever doubt the electorate, but it is right that we defend the things we did well in government so that there is a proper diagnosis of what we got right and what we got wrong.

I think we did get some things wrong. We promised to get Brexit done when we stood in 2019, and we did. We got Brexit done and restored our sovereignty as a nation, which is a great and lasting achievement, but we also promised that we would secure our borders and that we would ensure a strong economy, lower taxes and a strong NHS and public services, which the public rightly expect. On those counts, we did not deliver the public services, the lower taxes, the economic growth and the migration system that we promised and the public rightly expect.

The baton now passes to this Labour Government. Where they succeed, I will welcome and support them; and where they fall short, I will challenge them. We want to ensure that the great issues facing our country are properly addressed. We live in one of the greatest times to be alive, but it is a time of immense change. There is a power shift from west to east, and new technology, like artificial intelligence, is upending old industries. It is an age of mass migration, which is challenging the pace of change in our country, creating huge pressures on housing, public services and integration, and making it harder to build the united country that we all want to see.

I worry that this King's Speech falls short on some of those great challenges. There are undoubtedly Bills that I welcome, and I am delighted that the new Government are taking forward the Bill for a Holocaust memorial, a project in which I have been involved for many years. Some of the Bills are radical, such as the changes to our energy policy, and I worry that they are radical for all the wrong reasons. Despite having decarbonised faster than other countries, and despite being responsible for only 1% of global emissions, we now find ourselves with a Government pursuing, for ideological reasons, a net zero policy that will make it harder for our own consumers to afford their bills. The policy will further erode our industrial base and leave us in hock to Chinese technology. We are trading dependence on Russian hydrocarbons for dependence on Chinese electric vehicles, smart meters and solar panels that will despoil our countryside. New quangos, such as Great British Energy, will spring up, serving no apparent purpose and taking inspiration from predecessors such as Robin Hood Energy in Nottingham, in my part of the world. That failed project wasted £50 million of taxpayers' money.

I worry that 200,000 jobs in the oil and gas sector have been put in danger in the first few days of this Government, at a time when they are rightly saying that they want to fuel our economy, create jobs and change the dynamics that the country has seen since the 2008 financial crash and after 20 or 30 years of low productivity growth and unsatisfactory economic growth. We should all be working to find ways to do that and to make that possible.

I worry about the message we are hearing on the economy. We want economic growth, but economic growth is founded on harnessing the entrepreneurship of our people. It is about creating a start-up country and helping small business people to found businesses around their kitchen tables, like my parents did. It is not a statist vision of this country. It is not about using new quangos or a national wealth fund, which is an oxymoron because it is going to borrow the money it seeks to invest. It is not about changing our employment laws, which will make us less competitive and drive the kind of higher structural levels of unemployment we see in Europe that we have mercifully avoided over the last 10 years.

And I worry about immigration, because we live in an age of mass migration. I have been honest—painfully honest—about the failings of the last Government on this topic, but I worry that the same or worse mistakes are about to be made again. What we are seeing in the channel is a national security emergency. We are seeing tens of thousands of people about whom we know next to nothing crossing into our country, breaking into our country, in flagrant abuse of our laws. Some of them are subjects of interest being followed by our security services. This has to stop. Scrapping the only known credible deterrent, with nothing else to put in its place, is going to surrender to the people smuggling gangs. That is wrong, it is a mistake and I worry that we are going to rue the day that we did that.

I also hope that the Government will take legal migration seriously. We have to accept that the public in most parts of our country have been voting for 20 or 30 years, in elections and referendums, for Governments that promise to control and reduce the level of legal migration, only for Governments of all political colours to do precisely the opposite. That is immensely corrosive to public trust and confidence in politics and in democracy. As one of our colleagues said earlier, about the rise of far-right parties around the world, if we centrist parties on the left and the right do nothing about this, we will see the rise of far-right parties in this country. That would be a great mistake.

I hope the reforms I started, to reduce the number of people coming into this country legally, are taken forward, and that we further reduce those numbers. We could have used the King's Speech today to implement a legal cap on net migration, embedded by Parliament in law. We have not done that, which will mean further pressure on housing, public services and the pace of change.

Let me close with this: the Prime Minister has said he wants this to be a new era, in which politics is defined by service. I think we will all agree on that point—it should be—but the question is who do we serve. I do not think we come to this place to serve the interests of new quangos, commissions and reviews, the legal fraternity in contested notions of international law, or the new and worrying rise in sectarian politics, represented in

this House for the first time in my lifetime, which again should worry us. We are sent here to serve the interests of our constituents. I choose them; I choose to ensure the working people of Newark and Nottinghamshire are always represented. They sent me here with a few clear messages: secure our border; reduce immigration; lower our taxes; stop the crime; build homes; build a more united country, cohesive and integrated, not riddled by the poison of left-wing identity politics. That is what I am here to fight. Where this Government do that and live up to that test, I will support them. Where they do not, I will fiercely challenge them.

5.34 pm

Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): Today's King's Speech has laid before us an ambitious and exciting vision that will benefit our country and my Preston constituents for decades to come. In particular, I welcome the announcement that the Government will be introducing a new publicly owned company, Great British Energy. As a first step, it will take back control of our energy supply, producing cheaper power for our country, and ensure that profits go back into our communities. As a Co-operative party MP, I want to see more community energy companies based on the Co-operative model.

Not only will Great British Energy generate clean energy, but it will cut energy bills and deliver good jobs. This news comes when our constituents are desperately in need of support. For too long, they have been exposed to the energy insecurity created under the previous Government, which has seen a cost of living crisis and bills skyrocketing to eye-watering prices.

Every family and business in Britain are still paying the price of 14 years of Conservative failure with sky-high energy bills. The Conservatives have squandered our advantage in clean energy and left the country dangerously exposed to international energy markets manipulated by dictators such as Vladimir Putin.

Under Labour's plans, oil and gas giants that have made record profits from energy insecurity in this country will now be held accountable. A windfall tax on their excess profits will benefit the entire nation, lifting the burden off the public. Working alongside the private sector, we have the opportunity to double onshore wind, triple solar power and quadruple offshore wind by 2030. That investment in renewable energy is an investment in our future. We need to harness the advantage of our long coastline along with our engineering capabilities to become energy independent again. We need to invest in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen and marine energy to ensure that we have the long-term energy storage that our country needs. We need to accelerate investment in energy infrastructure. That can be achieved by the Government's green prosperity plan, which involves investing in cutting-edge green technology to create 650,000 jobs in the industries of the future by 2030.

The previous Government were slipping more and more towards climate denial, but it is critical—now more than ever—that the UK commits to our future by doing all that we can to achieve net zero, setting a good example to the rest of the world. I have been extremely fortunate to experience first hand the progress that has been made on that over the years. As someone who worked as a professional electrical engineer before entering full-time politics, I have always been very conscious of

energy consumption issues and their impact on the environment. I also served as a Member of the European Parliament, where I sat on the Environment and Consumer Protection Committee, where we helped to develop the European emissions trading scheme. I am strongly in favour of clean energy and our mission to move towards a clean energy transition as a matter of urgency.

Under the previous Government, I sat on the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee from its inception, where I worked with colleagues to hold the then Government to account and focus on the issues so acutely felt by the public, particularly their soaring energy costs. During the Blair years, as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the former Member for Derby South during her three years as the Environment Secretary in the Cabinet, I became extremely aware of the crucial importance of reducing emissions as quickly as possible. Indeed, when the former Member for Derby South became Foreign Secretary, she achieved the huge goal of placing climate change on to the UN Security Council's agenda for the first time. Since then, the seriousness and urgency of the global challenge of climate change has only accelerated. It is not just a green issue now; it is a security issue.

I am proud and energised by the fact that this Government are committed to tackling climate change and doing so in a way that brings the public with us and encourages international collaboration. By creating jobs and opportunities that stimulate the economy and slash energy bills, we are ensuring that, together, we can become a clean energy superpower, become energy independent, reach our net zero goals and secure our future for generations to come.

5.39 pm

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): May I say what a privilege it is to follow the hon. Member for Preston (Sir Mark Hendrick) and to stand here not only as a returned representative, elected to continue my representation of my home constituency, but as the leader of Unionism in Northern Ireland—to have the opportunity to speak for the people of Northern Ireland in our national Parliament with the endorsement not only of my constituents, but of colleagues right across the Province? It is a real privilege, and I am pleased to do it during this Loyal Address and response to His Majesty's Gracious Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you know that the election brought with it some challenges. We do not have two of our colleagues that I would have liked to have been here with us today—I thank both Ian and Paul for their contribution and service to national politics and to politics more broadly in Northern Ireland—but we are not without hope, and it is very clear that the additions to the parliamentary team, even though not of our party, will make a significant contribution to life in their constituencies in Northern Ireland and to this place.

In responding to this Loyal Address and Gracious Speech, the first thing to say is that we hold His Majesty responsible for not one bit of it—it is, of course, the agenda of this Government—and if you were to ask someone in rural Ireland for directions, you might find them responding, “I wouldn't start from here.” As I read through the King's Speech, I welcome the commitment to repeal the provisions of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023; and I say that as somebody who, over the last nine years and alongside

[Gavin Robinson]

colleagues who have been here for longer, has been consistent in our approach to issues of legacy in Northern Ireland. That is not something that everyone in this Chamber can say.

Over the last number of years, we appreciated the opposition that those on the Labour Benches offered in the face of the Conservative Government's pursuit of the legacy Act. We appreciated the response from Labour colleagues, when they recognised that the removal of the pursuit of justice was obnoxious to victims—people who lost the opportunity to pursue answers and outcomes on behalf of their loved ones. But the corruption of justice in Northern Ireland commenced decades ago: the early release of prisoners was a corruption of justice; the on-the-run legislation, ill-fated though it was, was a corruption of justice; and the letters of comfort, indicating to terrorists that they would not face prosecution, was a corruption of justice.

I am well aware that this evening the Prime Minister is due to meet the Taoiseach of Ireland, Simon Harris, and that as part of this King's Speech he has indicated very clearly that he is keen to reset relations. That is important—we should have good relations with our near neighbours—but I want to take this opportunity to say very clearly that the corruption of justice has now been highlighted by the Government, we have a commitment from them that they are going to act upon it, and that should mean that we have an engagement based on honesty with the Government of the Irish Republic, and that there should be gentle and encouraging challenge to say that they have failed in their responsibilities on legacy.

When the courts have determined that the Irish Government should bring forward inquiries as to what role was played by their state actors, by An Garda Síochána and by others involved within their territory, there has been silence. In fact, all we have had over recent years from the Irish Government was a case against the UK Government on this legislation—so let's balance it up. If the engagement this evening is to be fruitful—if there is to be a positive outcome on what is a good commitment and a commitment that we welcome—then it must be to ask our near neighbours to play their part in ensuring truth and justice.

Jim Shannon: I commend my right hon. Friend and colleague for what he has said. When it comes to responsibility, the Republic of Ireland should be held accountable for the fact that it gives sanctuary to the IRA terrorists who murdered my cousin, in December 1971, and Lexie Cummings, and escaped across the border. There is something wrong with the Government in the Republic of Ireland in particular if they can give sanctuary to IRA murderers and killers—and they think they can get away with it.

Gavin Robinson: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment.

Moving on to public services, over the last number of years we have been campaigning about the fact that public services in Northern Ireland are constrained because the Barnett formula has not served us well and we have been getting less than what the Independent Fiscal Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern

Ireland Fiscal Council have accepted that we need. Therefore, year on year public services are being reduced in Northern Ireland and year on year we are not getting the sort of uplift required to ensure that our constituents benefit from devolution.

New Members of this House will probably not have experienced the protracted agony around devolution in Northern Ireland and the importance of getting it restored five months ago, but one part of that restoration was ensuring that sufficient public finances were available. There is a key opportunity—though not mentioned in this King's Speech, I hope it is something the incoming Government will focus on—to draw upon the lessons of the Holtham commission in Wales and upon the positive uplift there, to provide us with what we need to reform and transform public services.

At the moment, the challenges are not about how we grow and develop the provisions for our people, irrespective of their community background, in Northern Ireland, but about what special schools we close, what hospitals we close and what services we stop providing. As somebody who speaks for our corner of the United Kingdom in this place, I ask for earnest engagement on public services and public funding in Northern Ireland.

Devolution was restored on the basis of an agreement that we reached with the previous Government, but that agreement was supported by Labour in February of this year. The "Safeguarding the Union" document, which allowed devolution to be restored, contains within it key and significant commitments and we look forward to the new Labour Government's honouring them. Their Members supported it at the time in February. They know its importance. While I see reference in the King's Speech to resetting relations with the European Union—as I said earlier, we should have good relationships and we should build upon those good relationships with near neighbours—we need to carefully nurture the arrangements that were agreed in February and need to be delivered. This is about removing barriers within our own country.

We can focus on relationships with others outside, and we should, but not to the detriment of that which makes this country work. There are opportunities on regional connectivity and to build on the Union connectivity review. The proposed creation of a council for the regions and borders looks quite like the East-West Council that was agreed back in February as part of the "Safeguarding the Union" document. We will have to study the detail. If it is a rename and a re-badge, that is fine, but we need to talk about how we move people and products from one part of our country to another. Where is the connectivity review work on the A75 moving from Northern Ireland into Scotland and down towards Carlisle? How do we think about this as a national endeavour? There will be newly elected Scottish Members of Parliament on the Labour Benches who will take keen interest in ensuring that the Union works across the United Kingdom, and we want to play our part in that.

I have spent the last eight years on the Select Committee on Defence. I have spoken many times of the contribution of Thales from my constituency and the next-generation light anti-tank weapons, and how important they were in the initial weeks of the defence of Kyiv particularly and Ukraine more generally. However, the eye has been taken off the ball on support for those industries that are key within my constituency and important for Northern Ireland as a whole in the Defence sphere.

Hon. Members will have seen negative briefing in the last 24 hours around Harland & Wolff. I want to see a very clear commitment from this Government that they believe in the contracts that have been awarded to Belfast and in the renaissance of shipbuilding in Belfast, that they adhere to the commitments of the national shipbuilding review to building skills and opportunities throughout our United Kingdom and that—irrespective of the ups and downs, highs and lows of any individual company—the aspiration and the economic benefits of retaining shipbuilding and growing the shipbuilding capacity in Belfast are highly important. So, too, is the issue of Boeing wishing to bring Spirit AeroSystems back into its company. Significant issues arise from that for the economy of Belfast and Northern Ireland, as Spirit AeroSystems is the largest private employer, with high-skilled manufacturing jobs, in my constituency, but it services the entirety of the United Kingdom. Like previous Business Secretaries, the Government need to focus on that. I am not suggesting that they are not, but there is a huge opportunity in the next six months, and we need to land it to secure what is important for us.

Finally—I realise that I am going beyond the suggested time limit, Mr Deputy Speaker—there is a proposal for a football regulator. Good. We will have the debate in the next weeks and months—it will probably come from my hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)—about whether that football regulator should be for England or, in this national Parliament, for football within our country.

If I did not close with this, I would probably have one less vote come the next election. My constituent Davy Warren, who used to serve me in the newsagent's on my way to school, texted me to say: "Gavin, support England if you like on Sunday. They're not your team but they're the only team from our country, so support England if you like, but remind them all that Neil Diamond's 'Sweet Caroline' is a Northern Ireland football team anthem." The green and white army were very happy to lend that anthem to you all, but we will reclaim it. I gently remind the House that the last time Spain faced a home nation in any significant final or competition—my hon. Friend the Member for Strangford was there, and I was not born—Northern Ireland beat Spain.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): To make his maiden speech, I call Warinder Juss.

5.51 pm

Warinder Juss (Wolverhampton West) (Lab): I am deeply honoured and privileged to represent the new constituency of Wolverhampton West, which was created through the amalgamation of the seven wards of the former Wolverhampton South West constituency, one ward from Wolverhampton North and one from Wolverhampton South East.

As in so many other places in our country, housing is a major issue in my constituency. I am pleased to note the housing measures set out by His Majesty's Government in the Gracious Speech. Our country faces a growing housing crisis. In the year to March 2024, the number of new homes started by builders in England was about 135,000—a 22% fall on the previous year. Just over 153,800 housing units were completed in England, representing a 12% annual fall. Moreover, planning applications have fallen.

In late November 1918, Prime Minister David Lloyd George chose to start his general election campaign in the Wolverhampton West constituency with the famous "homes fit for heroes" speech. He demanded better homes and said:

"What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in."

I echo that sentiment and have every confidence that the Government will deliver a significant boost to house building—especially, I hope, council housing—just as they did in the 1920s and the 1960s. Less than 25 years ago, it was possible to allocate a one-bedroom Wolverhampton council flat in less than 48 hours. Now it seems that, as in so many parts of the country, the waiting list is nearer 48 months. We desperately need a mass programme to build council housing, which is quite literally an investment for the future.

I am a proud son of Wolverhampton—a Wulfrunian. We are so called because our great city was founded over a thousand years ago by Lady Wulfrun, and is perhaps the only city in the country founded by a woman. I have lived in the city that I love since I arrived from east Africa aged four. I went to school, college and university in the city, where I did my law degree and professional exams, and did my legal training in a solicitor's office there to begin with. I have spent my working life as a social justice lawyer at the great firm of Thompsons solicitors, focusing on work for trades union members and on clinical negligence cases.

Wolverhampton has a long and proud tradition of manufacturing. It was formerly home to renowned companies Sunbeam Motor Car Company—which held the land speed record—and Guy Motors. Incidentally, my father worked on a laser machine at Guy Motors. The constituency also contains the headquarters of Marston's, a big pub chain whose brewery is being sold to Carlsberg this month. I wish to work with others to encourage Marston's to continue our city's 149-year tradition as a major brewing location.

Our city has a fine tradition of assisting the disadvantaged. For example, headquartered in the constituency is the Haven—the second oldest charity in the country—which provides refuge accommodation for women and children escaping domestic abuse. We also have the head office of the excellent Refugee and Migrant Centre, a national centre of expertise. I am a long-standing and active trade unionist and sit on the executive council of the GMB. I am always conscious that the first national union agreement with an employer for an eight-hour day was signed in Wolverhampton in the 1930s.

Those who are unfortunate enough not to know Wolverhampton are often surprised about how much the city has to offer. We have a premier league football team in Wolverhampton Wanderers, or Wolves. I am a proud wearer of the Wolves badge, and I am fortunate enough to have a season ticket for the club with my son. In this week when English football players have done us proud and have achieved so much as a team, it is worth bearing in mind that Stan Cullis, who lived in the city for many years, captained England, as did the great Wolves player Billy Wright, who was captain of England on the most occasions. Molineux, the city centre stadium, has a statue of Billy Wright. Correspondingly, perhaps the best known captain of the England cricket team was Rachael—later Baroness—Heyhoe Flint, who in 1963 hit the first six in a women's test match against the old

[*Warinder Juss*]

enemy, Australia, and was unbeaten in six test series. Also capped for England in hockey, she grew up in the city and lived there all her life.

Wolverhampton West is also home to the country's first all-weather floodlit racecourse. Despite the budget cuts of recent years, there are three hospitals in the constituency, as well as many fine schools, including, I am pleased to say, four special schools. We are blessed with cultural facilities such as the fantastic Victoria-era West park, the 19th century Grand Theatre, Wightwick Manor—the finest arts and crafts National Trust house in the country—and the Wolverhampton art gallery, which is home to nationally important collections of pop art and Northern Ireland troubles art.

I note the contributions and influence of my predecessors, the most well known of whom may well be, regrettably, Enoch Powell. Having lived in Wolverhampton since the age of four, I can attest that community relations have improved very markedly. That has not happened by chance; it has come about because of hard work by many people, including several of my predecessors and groups such as Interfaith Wolverhampton, of which I have been a member for several years.

I pay tribute to the work of my predecessors the hon. Member for South Shropshire (Stuart Anderson), who was the MP for my constituency before deciding to stand in South Shropshire, and Jenny Jones, who fostered the developing democracies of eastern Europe around the turn of the century. I commend the work of my great friend and predecessor, and 2008 Back Bencher of the year, Rob Marris, particularly for his Assisted Dying (No. 2) Bill and his pioneering work on adaptations to climate change.

Wolverhampton is underrated. It a great place to live and a great city. I am sure that the measures set out in the Gracious Speech will help it to become greater still.

5.59 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): This morning's King's Speech was a different sort of Gracious Speech from that to which some of us in this House are accustomed. It was heartening to hear some positive proposals that I look forward to debating, such as measures to address the need for long-overdue improvements to employment rights, reforms to the archaic House of Lords, and the extension of VAT to private schools. I particularly look forward to working together on the issues related to violence against women and girls, and was very interested to hear the Prime Minister name some activists in this area. I put on record the name of Rhianon Bragg of Rhosgadfan in my constituency, and the work she has been doing after the experiences she suffered at the hands of her offender. I would also like to mention Elfyn Llwyd, my predecessor, and the work that he did on stalking legislation, which I hope we will be able to strengthen.

However, considering Labour's message of change, I was disappointed not to hear about legislation to address the inadequate funding framework which leaves us short-changed in Wales. We have heard, of course, about the situation in the north of Ireland, where I believe further steps have been taken than have been taken in Wales. While Labour's Government in Wales have been distracted by internal party politics, Plaid Cymru has

reiterated our clear and credible call for fairness and ambition for Wales. That means a fairer funding deal so that we can properly invest in our public services; it means the billions owed to us from HS2 so that we can connect our communities north to south; and it means powers over our natural resources so that we can ensure energy profits are directed into Welsh communities, helping us to build an economy fit for the future and creating well-paid green jobs.

Of course, we face the immediate challenge to the economy in Wales of the situation of Port Talbot. I think everybody in this House will be very much aware that we need security of supply when it comes to virgin steel for all the other projects that we hope to bring forward with net zero. The UK Government need to be working closely on finding some solution to what is happening in Port Talbot.

This is an important point: when we talk about fairness, it is not a matter of begging for money from Westminster. On the one hand, it is about demanding the money that is rightly owed to Wales. People who argue for the strength of the Union—possibly from the Government Benches; it is not something that my party does—should be looking for that giving the nation of Wales fair funding. However, it is equally significant to me and my party that we have the necessary levers—the tools that we need to drive up our own economic development in Wales. We do not want to have our hands out with a begging bowl; we want the means to grow our own economy, and for that to be answerable in Wales.

Interestingly, that point was raised in the King's Speech today in relation to devolution in England. Having had a quarter of a century of devolution in Wales under the model devised by Labour and under a Labour Government, it would be very interesting to strengthen the economy in Wales as well. Plaid Cymru's amendment sets out that vision in plain terms. It calls for measures to reform Wales's fiscal framework to provide consistency, transparency and fairness—replacing the Barnett formula with a needs-based formula, introducing multi-year funding settlements, and restoring the Welsh budget to 2021 spending review levels. That is how Labour could bring about real change in Wales.

Indeed, what is missing from this King's Speech is just as important as what is in it. The decision not to scrap the two-child benefit cap shows Labour's choice not to prioritise the immediate needs of nearly a third of children in Wales who live in poverty. Labour officials have repeatedly refused to make that so-called unfunded commitment, but the point—this matters—is that the decision not to fund that commitment is a political decision. Plaid Cymru has championed real change: alternative means of taxation that would enable the funding of progressive policies, such as equalising capital gains tax with income tax, which would raise £15 billion a year. Some £2.5 billion is needed to fund the abolishment of the two-child benefit cap, less than a fifth of all that potential income. Just imagine how much we could do with the remaining contribution to the public purse.

Scrapping that cap alone would help lift 65,000 affected children out of poverty in Wales—that is 11% of children in Wales. Child poverty levels are unacceptably high, and this policy only increases those levels further. Investing in our children's futures would be a real, powerful change in the here and now. Labour has committed to the idea of a taskforce, and I have to welcome that,

because it is a step in the right direction. It is very interesting that that has happened today; is this the first indication of a U-turn on the part of Labour? If so, I would welcome it, and I look forward to hearing more on that.

Today, Labour also committed to strengthening devolution in England. It is of course important that communities have a real say in decisions that affect them, yet similar promises were not made to Wales. Labour's manifesto committed to strengthening the Sewel convention and to "considering"—that weasel word—the devolution of justice and policing to Wales. That has already been considered, because it is the policy of the Labour party in Wales, but it has not been brought forward. Given the state of our prisons as bequeathed to us by the previous Government, with their policy of 14 years of austerity, we need radical ideas to tackle that blight and the question of how we rehabilitate people and deal with justice. In Wales, of course, the key measures involved with rehabilitation and making our communities safer—namely health and housing—are already in the hands of the Senedd. We need all this in place.

In recent years, Welsh devolution has been constantly undermined. It is high time to go further and pass legislation to put legal safeguards in place to protect devolved powers. We also need to heed the recommendations of experts and expand devolved powers, particularly in policing and justice, but in broadcasting too. If we are to tackle the question of the expansion of far-right populism, we need to have the means to do so through broadcasting. We also need to expand devolved powers in rail services and the Crown Estate, to name just some.

Plaid Cymru will use the clear role that we have in this new Parliament to demand that Wales is treated fairly. We will, of course, also be raising with colleagues in this place the question of our relationship with our nearest neighbours. When I am standing in Pen Llŷn, the nearest capital city is not London but Dublin, and our relationship with the rest of the EU is absolutely critical since the economic damage that Brexit caused.

We will also be raising the issue of the disaster that is unfolding in Gaza and the response of this place, and how we seek justice for the people of Palestine and make sure that in future they are properly treated and recognised as a nation in the world. Again, we will be using this theatre to make sure that our voice is heard. We will therefore continue to push the UK Labour Government to be more ambitious. I heard the Prime Minister talk about the "lobby of good intentions". Yes, there are good intentions; there are also good intentions to work together where we can, and Plaid Cymru will hold this place to account for the people of Wales.

6.8 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to speak in this Chamber. I have had the pleasure of doing so for the past 14 years, but it is not half a big improvement to be standing on the Government side of the Chamber. I look forward to giving full support to this new Labour Government in their endeavour, as they take their first steps in changing our country for the better.

I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Bolton North East (Kirith Entwistle) and for Wolverhampton West (Warinder Juss), who gave outstanding maiden speeches. They have set the bar rather high for the rest

of my hon. Friends, as I think they would all agree, but I wish them all well in their endeavours. Indeed, I congratulate all new and returning Members.

We have an inheritance after 14 years, and I would just say to some of the Conservative Members who have defended the previous Government's record, or at least have attempted to do so as they have made their various leadership pitches, that the economic performance of those 14 years tells a rather different story, with low living standards, a cost of living crisis and low growth. In fact, growth has been so low that, had we maintained the growth of the last Labour Government, GDP would be £140 billion higher, every household would on average have £5,800 more every single year and there would be £50 billion more, on the same tax rates, for spending and investing in our public services and our infrastructure. That is what 14 years of Conservative Government have meant for this country, and to cap it all we had the Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng exuberance of the mini-Budget, with the disastrous crashing of the economy, which has left people paying high interest rates even now, two years later. That is the record we inherit, it is what we have to fix and we have made a very good start.

In the Gracious Speech, the importance of economic stability was underlined with the announcement of a Budget responsibility Bill to deliver stability and to attract investment by creating confidence throughout the economy. There is the national wealth fund to attract private investment and to invest in the massive opportunity available to us in this country, which, almost uniquely in western Europe, is through clean energy, with our geographical and geological opportunities, as well as our marvellous tech in this country, our science base and our universities. There are the reforms to planning to deliver infrastructure and housing, and the reform to skills to deliver for our workers and for their employers. The investment we have announced in transport, which is so important—the improvements in rail and in buses and the commitment to sustainable aviation fuel—show that this is a Government who actually understand the importance of integrated transport in delivering societal and economic improvements.

Turning to the impact on my constituency, we, like everybody in this House, will benefit from the commitments to take action on NHS and dental waiting lists, and to improve appointments, as well as to recruit additional teachers and to bring in breakfast club places for our children. All of those will make a massive immediate difference, and they are part of the down payment that the Prime Minister committed to during the election campaign and reiterated in his brilliant speech earlier. In my constituency, one piece of legislation announced today above all is of particular significance. I represent many people whose loved ones died at Hillsborough, or who were injured or who attended, so I am very pleased—along with all of my Merseyside and Liverpool city region colleagues, and indeed many more in this House—for everyone who has campaigned so hard for justice for 35 years. The legal duty of candour on all public officials and authorities will now be created, as it should have been so many years ago.

I am thrilled at the announcement about and the commitment to mental health in the Gracious Speech. Maghull health park in my constituency arguably has the most comprehensive array of mental health services in Europe, with medium and low secure provision to go with the well known high-secure Ashworth hospital,

[*Bill Esterson*]

which is the best arrangement on a single location. Mersey Care NHS foundation trust, along with the Liverpool city region combined authority and Sefton council all want to see, as do I, investment in a world-leading diagnostic and research mental health facility on the same site. What we heard in the Gracious Speech gives me great confidence that such investment is likely to be available so that we can make the most of what we are already very good at in this country and make so much more of it. It must be right, as the sovereign said in the other place, that mental health should have the same attention as physical health.

This brings me on to speak in more detail about energy. The Liverpool city region and the north-west of England are supremely well placed to be at the heart of the Government's plans for investment in clean energy and energy security. Contrary to what some Conservative Members have been saying, this is about jobs, cheaper transport and lower energy bills. It is an economic investment as much as it is an environmental one. It is of course essential that we support workers in the oil and gas industry, so that we avoid the mistakes of deindustrialisation, and that there are jobs and training for people to make the transition and take advantage of the lower-carbon future that we all know is coming.

In the Liverpool city region and across the country, it is absolutely right that we make the most of opportunities in fixed and floating offshore wind. I am so pleased that one of the Secretary of State's first acts has been to end the ban on onshore wind, and indeed that he has announced three new solar farms. In the north-west and elsewhere there are plans for hydrogen, for carbon capture and storage, and for nuclear, and uniquely in the north-west, in the city region, we have great plans for the Mersey tidal project. They are all key to growth, to prosperity and to addressing the climate crisis, so I am thrilled that this is front and centre of Labour's plans for government.

There are many other aspects of the low-carbon future, including improvement in insulation in housing and plans for solar for people at home. That is something I have invested in, and I have seen the benefits with lower bills already. I would advocate that for everybody, and it is brilliant that we are committed to giving everybody the ability to make the most of such an opportunity.

The Liverpool city region and the north-west are part of the HyNet project, which is a commitment to a series of green hydrogen generation units. We are also committed to improvements in green transport through the roll-out of EV charging points—something that has to happen much more quickly right across the country—and there are already net zero hydrogen buses in service in the city region. Elsewhere in the city region, Glass Futures is leading the way internationally in decarbonising the production of glass, and we are also looking at battery storage.

Whether in the city region or elsewhere in the country, this really is key not just to Labour's energy mission, but to the mission of sustaining the highest growth in the G7, and whether through investment in energy or improvements in public services, by having growth at the centre we really will see improvements in this country and we really will see a change from what we have seen over the past 14 years. The 14 years of chaos are over, and it is time to turn the page. As the Prime Minister

said, it is time to work together—and he offered to do so with all Members in this House and people beyond this House—to start to rebuild Britain. Today's Gracious Speech is an important down payment in securing Britain's future.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Sir Roger Gale.

6.18 pm

Sir Roger Gale (Herne Bay and Sandwich) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to start by adding my congratulations to both the hon. Members for Bootle (Peter Dowd) and for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi) on their speeches earlier this afternoon. I suspect that you and I have heard quite a number of such speeches, and I think we can probably agree that those were two of the very best we have ever heard.

May I also congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton West (Warinder Juss), who spoke movingly of his football team and of his town, in which he quite clearly has great pride. I have not visited Wolverhampton for over 60 years, and I do not know whether the Ambassador bowling alley is still there, but I recall that Berry Gordy brought the Motortown revue to Wolverhampton, and I actually watched Stevie Wonder playing ten pin bowls in the Wolverhampton bowling alley—think about that.

It is 41 years since I was first elected to this House as the then youngest Member of Parliament for the new seat of North Thanet, and I am delighted that, 41 years later, I find myself elected as the youngest Member of Parliament for Herne Bay and Sandwich. New colleagues on both sides of the House who have not heard these types of speeches before—you and I both know this very well indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker—will find that they will make great friendships right across the House over the coming weeks and months, and that is as it should be. Out there, in the real world, people do not understand that we work so closely together, but we do, and so we should. Jo Cox was absolutely right when she memorably said that there is much more that unites us than divides us. And so it is with this speech today.

I should also place on record my thanks and, I hope, the thanks of the whole House to the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister for the way in which they have managed with great dignity the transfer of power. This country does state openings rather well, and it does democracy even better. There are many who envy us for that, and it is a precious jewel that we should never lose.

This King's Speech has much in it that I trust we can all applaud. It makes clear reference to defence of the realm, which is so vital to our country, and a commitment to NATO. It also commits us to support Ukraine in what is not just their war but our war—a war to defend democracy. There is also a commitment—although not everybody will agree with this—to a two-state settlement in the middle east. Those are all laudable aims, and I trust we can all support them. There are other areas that are greyer and that we shall have to take some issue with. That is the job of the Opposition, as the Prime Minister would expect. The Opposition will hold his feet to the fire and hold him to account when we think that he has got it wrong.

There are three issues that I want to raise very briefly this afternoon. I have grave concerns about the proposed reforms of planning law. Like Many Government Members, I represent a rural constituency and I fear for the loss of farmland. I am not sure—this is a genuine confusion and concern—whether it is the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Secretary of State for Housing who is driving the proposed planning reform policy. I have a very real concern that local democracy will be removed, and that we shall find ourselves with a slash-and-burn policy that will destroy yet more of not only the green belt, but of the land we need to grow the food to feed our country. I trust that the Government will address that issue very clearly and very seriously indeed.

The new Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero has moved very fast indeed to grant planning consents that give me cause for concern. I find it wholly unnecessary that East Anglia and Thanet should have to place solar farms on prime agricultural land—grade 1 land—that generates wheat of bread-making quality. We have acres of rooftops and car parks in public ownership that could and should be used to protect the land that we need.

I have a particular concern about a project that two colleagues from East Anglia referred to earlier. The Sea Link project is designed to run a power cable from East Anglia under the Thames and around the coast to make landfall close to Sandwich. The proposal is to build on marshland immediately next to a site of special scientific interest, having crossed the Pegwell bay nature reserve, a 90-foot high structure the size of about four football pitches. National Grid has got this so horribly wrong that it only now realises that marshland is wet, which means it will have to pour thousands of tonnes of concrete into the land, drill down and pile before it can even begin to build its structure. Viable alternatives have been suggested, so I hope that the new Secretary of State will take this concern on board and use his powers to instruct National Grid to go back to the drawing board and get it right. We all want clean energy and renewable energy, and we all want to hit the net zero target, but not at any price. If we rush into this, we will get it wrong. We owe it to the grandchildren of every Member present to get it right.

Finally, I am concerned about an omission from the King's Speech. Given the comments and publicity, I am sad that the speech makes no mention of animal welfare. I would hope that, at the very least, His Majesty's new Government will reintroduce and ram through the trophy hunting bill that two Members of Parliament—one Labour and one Tory—tried but failed to get through the last Parliament.

With that, in the interests of this United Kingdom, I wish the Government and their programme well. We will hold feet to the fire where necessary, but I trust, as the Leader of the Opposition said this afternoon, that we will not be obstructive. A Government have a right to get their business through.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Patrick Hurley to make his maiden speech.

6.27 pm

Patrick Hurley (Southport) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my first speech as part of this important debate.

First, may I thank the right hon. Member for Herne Bay and Sandwich (Sir Roger Gale) for his contribution? May I also pay tribute to all those who are making their first speeches today? I wish them well today and for the remainder of this Parliament, and I hope that we each manage to repay the trust that our new constituents have placed in us.

I am led to believe that certain conventions apply to Members' first speeches. I wish to assure the House that I will abide by those conventions. Accordingly, I wish to pay sincere tribute to my predecessor, Damien Moore, who diligently served Southport for the past seven years, paving the way for a new Government to ensure that the town's best days lie ahead. I wish him nothing but the best for the future.

I also wish to refer to another of my predecessors as the MP for Southport, somebody already mentioned in today's debate. At the 1865 general election, William Gladstone was elected as one of the three Members for the South Lancashire county constituency, which took in both Southport and my original hometown of Prescott. As I am sure Members will appreciate, this fact helped me somewhat over the past 12 months or so in drawing a link between where I was born and where I now represent in this House.

I expect that I am not alone among new Members in having been rather overwhelmed over the past couple of weeks by the mountain of email correspondence that we have received from constituents and others since being elected.

I can, though, take some comfort in the fact that my inbox refers solely to the much smaller constituency of Southport, rather than to the whole of the South Lancashire constituency that William Gladstone represented. I can only imagine the additional stresses and strains on Members in Gladstone's day if they, too, had had access to a Parliamentary email address.

As well as being part of the same old county constituency, both Prescott and Southport were also within the boundaries of the old hundred of West Derby. This fact was brought further to my attention when the Boundary Commission announced during the last Parliament that the new Southport constituency would, from now onwards, also contain Tarleton and Hesketh Bank, two beautiful villages on the south coast of the Ribble. As a result of this change, I researched at my local library whereabouts the boundary of the West Derby hundred was, hoping that I would be able to say that Tarleton and Hesketh Bank had, many years ago, also been under the same county division as Southport. Alas, this was not to be. After quite some hours of research, I realised that the information I was looking for had actually been staring me in the face all along. It appears that the boundary between the hundreds of West Derby and Leyland lay along—would you believe?—Boundary Lane, and that Boundary Lane is situated in a hamlet called Hundred End. It is a lesson, I think, in not ignoring the obvious when it is right there in front of you.

My predecessors in previous Parliaments have talked about how they have felt that Southport has sometimes been taken for granted or taken advantage of, and so have subsequently sought to discuss and elevate divisions between the towns of the local borough. I wish to assure my constituents that I will take a different approach. Instead, I will work to ensure that our country's new Government will not look to cause divisions with our

[Patrick Hurley]

neighbours, whether they be other countries thousands of miles away or even other towns just a few thousand yards away. Instead, I will work with colleagues to ensure that the Government will look to unite our country in the task of national renewal, because the politics that I believe in is a politics of the common good—a politics where each of us looks out for the wellbeing of the other, rather than tries to do others down.

Many towns and villages in this country have seen better days than over the past few years. Southport is no different. Whereas other areas have had, for instance, much-needed housing not built, or much-needed transport links not implemented—two issues that I am pleased to see the new Government are planning to address—Southport's problems have manifested themselves in the temporary closure of the town's much-loved pier, and in the town centre, whose main streets need more than their fair share of love and attention. I promise to work with colleagues in this House and beyond to fix these issues.

The new Government's priority on economic growth is entirely the right approach. Unless we get the trend rate of growth back to pre-2008 levels, our task in this Parliament of reducing poverty will be much harder. The Government have my full support in their approach. I wish it to be known that I will do my utmost to make sure that Southport's best days lie ahead of it, that the decline of recent years will be arrested and that the town's fortunes will be turned around, and that I will work with good people of good faith to bring that about, no matter what their party affiliation. With that, I would like to thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to make my first speech in this place. I thank the House for the manner in which the speech was received.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): Order. We still have 25 Members who wish to speak, so after the next speaker, Sir Julian Lewis, I am afraid I must impose a time limit of seven minutes. This strict time limit will not apply to maiden speeches, but I am sure that those who make them will also want to keep an eye on the clock and remember the courtesies of the House. If we do not impose this time limit now, and if people do not keep to it, not everybody will get to speak in this debate.

6.34 pm

Sir Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Who would have ever dreamt, Sir Edward, when we first met in October 1981, that so many years later both you and your equally radical and progressive friend, my constituency neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope), would successively grace this House by occupying the Speaker's Chair?

I wish to make congratulations a theme of my short contribution. I want to congratulate in particular the three maiden speakers we have heard so far. It takes quite a bit of doing to make one's maiden speech so soon after entering the House of Commons, and it is greatly to their credit that they made such generous tributes to their predecessors. The hon. Member for Bolton North East (Kirith Entwistle) talked about working

across party boundaries, which I wish to come back to. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton West (Warinder Juss) concentrated on housing issues and the great sports record and legacy of his beloved Wolverhampton. I, too, can remember Billy Wright from all those years ago. The hon. Member for Southport (Patrick Hurley), who has just spoken, showed an intimate knowledge of the local issues affecting his new seat, and I am sure he will be extremely assiduous in attending to them.

I said that I believe congratulations are a theme that is in order, and I wish to echo what my right hon. Friend the Member for Herne Bay and Sandwich (Sir Roger Gale) said about the result of the election and the way in which power was transferred. It goes without saying that whenever we have a general election and one side achieves a significant absolute majority, as has happened in this case, there will be a majority of people in the Chamber who feel self-congratulatory, but I suggest that we all ought to congratulate ourselves and each other on the way in which we have handled the transfer of power. It is a cause for great concern that when we look among modern democracies, both in western Europe and, sadly, across the Atlantic, we see that the cause of democracy in those countries is currently so ragged and threadbare. Let us hope it is but a passing phase.

To those situated on the Opposition Benches, I have to say that, bad though the result was for the Conservative party, those who observe these Benches today should not think it was quite as much of a wipeout as it might appear. I think that two of us at least have had the experience of sitting on these Benches before. I was one of 32 first-time Conservative MPs elected in the Blair landslide of 1997. I had 13 years on the Opposition Benches, and then after that I had five years in a coalition. Which was the worse I am not sure, but I offer a piece of advice to all new entrants to the House, including on the Government Benches: if you want to enjoy your time in this place, ask yourself the following question, and hopefully give yourself the right answer. Would you still want to be here if you knew that you were going to be a Back Bencher for all of your parliamentary career? If the answer is yes, you are in the right place. Cling to it, because then anything else that happens is a bonus. If the answer is no, you made the wrong career decision. Get out at the next possible opportunity, because you will never be satisfied. People who come in with that attitude are disappointed. They may make it to the Front Bench but not make it to be a Cabinet Minister. They may make it to the Cabinet but not get to be one of the top four, or they may make it to the top four but not get the top job. We know what happens even to many Prime Ministers who get right to the top. So enjoy the status that you have got, bank it and look on everything else as a dividend.

I turn to the King's Speech, on which I will make just a couple of observations, because we do not have the time for anything more detailed. On planning presumptions, I am always a little bit worried about presumptions in favour of this and presumptions in favour of that. Let us hope that is not a shorthand for ignoring what people want. In my constituency of New Forest East, the biggest local issue for the first six years of my time in this place was a proposal to build a giant container port on reclaimed land on Southampton water called Dibden bay. Associated British Ports said that, without doing that, the port of Southampton would begin to die. We fought that for six years and we won. Guess

what? The port of Southampton did not die; it found other ways of dealing with the container traffic, which has thrived. Now we have the prospect of a freeport in the area. I like to think that the new people in charge of Associated British Ports will be a lot more sensitive about what they plan for the delicate parts of the constituency. All I would say is: do not trample roughshod over communities' concerns about major infrastructure projects, because sometimes that may not get us the best projects.

On conversion therapy, I just leave a question hanging in the air. Anybody who votes for this change needs to be able to answer this point: what is it that you are proposing to outlaw that is not already forbidden under existing laws? The danger with well-intentioned laws of this nature is that we can end up really talking about thought crime. Seventy-five years after George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" was published—technically speaking, perhaps it is now 76 years—we need to be wary of that.

I have a constituent with whom I happen to disagree about abortion. He is totally opposed to abortion; I am not, and I do not think that there should be demonstrations outside abortion clinics. He wants to be able to stand silently by himself on the pavement and pray internally. If he is asked by the police what he is doing and he says, "I am thinking about my shopping list"—or some other domestic issue—he is fine, but if he admits that he is praying in relation to the abortion issue, he could end up being accused of committing an offence. We should be careful before going down that road too far.

When it comes to modernising the membership of the House of Lords, we must be careful about blanket proposals. A well-informed group led by Professor Lord Norton of Louth have been grappling with sensible ways of trying to modernise and reform the House of Lords for quite a number of years. Such voices need to be listened to. The House of Lords, though some people are appointed to it on the wrong basis, does an important job.

If I may please have a few more moments, I have one last point, which is significant and relates to the Intelligence and Security Committee. This is an essential matter that will need to be incorporated into one of the pieces of legislation that the Government are to introduce. A single amendment to the Justice and Security Act 2013 is required to protect a particular aspect of our parliamentary democracy that is currently being undermined. The amendment would establish an independent office to support the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament—which I chaired until recently—in order to safeguard the Committee's independence.

For the benefit of the newer Members of the House, the ISC is a cross-party and cross-House Committee created by statute. Under the Justice and Security Act 2013, the ISC has the legal responsibility for overseeing the UK's intelligence community on behalf of Parliament. Newer Members will be surprised to hear that the ISC's office—a very small number of staff—belongs to the Cabinet Office, when the ISC oversees large parts of the Cabinet Office. They would be right to be surprised. That is a fundamental conflict of interest. That is why, at the time of the Justice and Security Act, the Cabinet Office was supposed to be only a temporary home but, in the more than 10 years that have elapsed since then, the Committee's office is still beholden to, vulnerable within and unfairly pressurised by the very part of the Executive that it is charged with overseeing.

The Executive should not be able to constrain and control the Committee's democratic oversight on behalf of Parliament by exerting control over the Committee's small team to the extent that the Cabinet Office officials are actually overriding the Committee, as has happened repeatedly in respect of staff assessments in recent years, or starving it of resources so that it is unable to fulfil its legal responsibilities.

The members of the ISC in the last Parliament therefore determined unanimously—across all parties and both Houses represented by its membership—that it was essential for parliamentary democracy that the Committee's office move out from under the control of the Executive and be established instead as an independent body corporate with a link to Parliament rather than the Executive.

In the King's Speech—this is my final point—we heard this morning a programme outlined that gives an obvious vehicle for putting this matter right: the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross Status Bill, which is designed to change the status of those two organisations. That is therefore the obvious place to include a short amendment to the legislation necessary to change the status of the Committee's organisation as well. I hope that we can work across party boundaries to ensure that the resources and the independence of the staff of the Intelligence and Security Committee can now be secured after a difficult time in which the excellent staff have helped to produce many important reports. However, they should not have to be looking over their shoulders with a problem of this sort.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): Order. I must now impose a time limit of seven minutes.

6.47 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): May I congratulate all new and returning Members on their election success? The right hon. Member for New Forest East (Sir Julian Lewis) is right in saying that it is the greatest of privileges to be able to represent our constituents. I certainly pay real attention to my constituents in York Central and assure them that I will do all I can to ensure that their voices are heard, not least with the privilege of being in power. We must make the most of every opportunity, as today's King's Speech has clearly demonstrated for all to see.

First, on stabilising the economy, I say to those on our Treasury Bench that York Central will play its part not only by creating 12,500 new jobs in the York Central development, taking forward advanced rail technologies and biosciences, but through BioYorkshire, with 4,000 green-collar jobs and a green new deal for York and wider Yorkshire. It will be a huge privilege to work with Front-Bench colleagues to see that come to fruition.

It is not just about the economy. We will build the homes and the public services that we longed to see in Opposition. We will overturn the injustice that has crushed so many hopes and so many communities, entrenched now in inequality, and ensure that we build those services in the interests of the people we represent.

Labour's employment rights Bill will be so refreshing to workers. I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests; I am a proud trade unionist.

[*Rachael Maskell*]

I am proud of the work of trade unions: working people, working together for a better future, ending fire and rehire and the disgrace of minimum service level agreements, and giving workers fresh rights from the day they start work. I ask my Front-Bench team to consider my private Member's Bill to outlaw bullying at work, ensuring a legal definition of bullying alongside discrimination and harassment and providing a route to an employment tribunal to seek justice, alongside an enforcement body to improve workplace culture. It could be transformative, reduce absenteeism and increase productivity, and it needs including.

I stand here as a Co-operative MP, of which I am so proud. I will ensure that we embed our values in the Government's agenda, growing the co-operative sector, ensuring community energy alongside Great British Energy, creating those safer high streets and enabling local ownership so that assets in our communities are given back to our communities.

Labour is determined to build the homes that our constituents desperately need. York has a serious housing crisis. Council housing and first homes will show that Labour is on the side of families and communities. With rents out of control and housing disparity failing our communities as the market determines everything, we can once again control the right that people should have to live in a safe home. The renters' rights Bill and the draft leasehold and commonhold reforms will make a difference to my constituents, and I am proud that they were in today's speech.

I am still on the campaign trail on Airbnbs and short-term holiday lets. The last Government said before the summer that they would legislate and regulate, but they did not. I trust that my Front-Bench team will now bring forward not a registration scheme—we know where these things are—but a licensing scheme so that we can control the growth of short-term holiday lets. There are 2,000 of them in my constituency—one in 10 houses. We need to take control of all housing. I gently say to the Minister that we have been waiting 68 years and counting for a local plan. We need York's local plan to be delivered.

It will no longer be like pulling teeth to get action on NHS dentistry. My hon. Friend the Minister is already at work delivering for our future, but we should look at the Health Committee's report from the last Parliament on NHS dentistry. It set out a blueprint to really reform dentistry, to ensure access, treatment and better oral health.

As we know, the NHS as a whole is on its knees. As a former physio, I know the importance of getting it back on its feet again. When we left office in 2010, the NHS was the most efficient health service in the world. Our ambition in government must be to restore those credentials, and not just in health but in social care, too. This must be the Parliament of social care, to complete the deal that people can have security in later life, this Government will take care of them and they do not need to fear those latter years.

There is so much we need to do on health. We have heard today about the Mental Health Act and the tobacco and vapes Bill, and so much more is on our agenda. I will do everything, as I have for over 30 years, to work for a better health service built by that radical,

reforming 1945 Government. I trust that this Government will be as radical and as reforming as that, ensuring the NHS is safe in public hands.

Finally, I turn to education. I say to our education team that we need a new approach. We need to rip up that behaviourist approach that is doing so much harm to our young people, and introduce a nurturing, therapeutic approach to education. I am heartened to hear about the children's wellbeing Bill, which is so needed at this time, and reviewing the curriculum and ensuring that young children leave school not just with good results but as confident young people, whose wellbeing and mental health are as important as their exam results.

I further call on the Government to take action on academy trusts, which have spun out of control. We need accountability, and education funding spent on actual education, not on executive salaries and bonuses, as it currently is. We need education brought back under local authority control, so that the whole system can hold together and work together. Those changes at Ofsted are necessary, but we need to ensure that all our children have access to a nurturing education system that will make a difference to them and their future. I will work with our Front-Bench team to ensure that we are looking after children, no matter what challenges they face at home and school.

6.55 pm

Dame Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): It is an honour to be called in this debate, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let me start by thanking my constituents for putting their faith in me again and returning me to this place for a fifth term.

I want to comment on the previous speeches. There have been some excellent speeches, particularly the three maiden speeches that we have heard. This Parliament is unique, as is every Parliament because each and every one is made up of the Members. We heard today in those maiden speeches that we can have faith that this will be an excellent Parliament, because they showed us that we have some truly great champions for local areas here in Parliament.

I also want to comment on the two opening speeches. The hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) made a wonderful speech to open the debate and propose the Loyal Address. He is one of the kindest Members of Parliament, and it was lovely that he was chosen to be the proposer. I want to pick up on the comments made by the seconder, the hon. Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi), about my very good friend Nickie Aiken. We miss Nickie desperately, but we are so pleased that she got her Pedicabs (London) Act 2024 through. It was an achievement for her, and I know that the hon. Lady is also benefiting from that.

I am struck that much in the King's Speech feels like a process, not an event. I look at many of those Bills, and I go back to when I was a Minister. I think about the work that I did in the Home Office on the violence against women and girls strategy and to strengthen our domestic abuse laws. I am very pleased to see a Bill that we will be working on. We cannot stand still on this issue. We constantly have to keep moving on it, because perpetrators get wise and work out ways to buck the system. I am very pleased to see that that has been included. I am pleased to see a new law on spiking—something that many colleagues were looking to introduce

before the general election. I am also pleased that there will be a mental health Bill—something that many of us pushed for. Again, I pay tribute to a previous Member, Dame Jackie Doyle-Price, who was such an advocate for that and raised it on numerous occasions.

I am pleased we will see Martyn's law introduced. I was the Secretary of State in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport when the Manchester Arena attack happened. It is good to know that from the lessons we have learned from that attack we can take legislative steps to make things safer. I also pay tribute to the progress made from the work of a previous Prime Minister soon to be in the House of Lords, Theresa May. She introduced the race equality audit, which looked closely at what was going on in the public sector and other organisations. Without that work, it would not be possible for a new race equality Bill to be proposed. She was the one who took the issue of Hillsborough seriously. She made sure that we had the full inquiry and have found out the truth. It is quite right that the Hillsborough law will be brought forward.

In the previous Parliament I had the honour of chairing the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I have been heavily involved in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK and I co-chaired the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. It is good to see so many friends from all sides who were involved in those organisations. I would say to any new Members to get themselves involved with these fantastic bodies, which give us an insight into global issues and build connections and links with our friends in Parliaments around the world.

I welcome a new Bill to look at legacy in Northern Ireland. That issue can be tackled only if there is cross-party support on the ground in Northern Ireland. It cannot be imposed from here. We all want a solution to that issue. It was raised time and again at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, so I am glad that it will be looked at.

I am also pleased that there will be a Bill to settle the constitutional status of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We did start that process, but we could not get it finished and it is incredibly important.

Finally, I will just comment on global issues and the middle east. I have seen at first-hand, through the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, just how difficult these issues are to address. There are disruptors in the world who want to do us harm. They are making sure that the views around the world are the views that they want to see. We need to be incredibly careful and take that very seriously, because we need the hostages released, we need a ceasefire and humanitarian aid in, and we need to ensure that international law is observed.

My final point relates completely to my constituency: the status of the Staffordshire Moorlands. We are a very proud and unique area. We are part of the Peak District national park. We have beautiful Churnet valley, which is desperate for area of outstanding natural beauty status. But we face challenges. We are concerned about what might happen with devolution, as we do not want to be in a unitary authority across north Staffordshire. We want to keep our unique identity. We do not want the green belt between our villages and the city built on. We want powers to ensure that locally elected people make the decisions on solar farm development, battery storage development, pylons and other local matters.

I urge the Government: please, no top-down targets; please, no imposition from above. Listen to the people on the ground. This matters to them. Staffordshire Moorlands needs to keep its unique identity.

7.1 pm

Ruth Jones (Newport West and Islwyn) (Lab): It is a real honour to speak in this debate on the King's Speech and to follow the right hon. Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Dame Karen Bradley). I thank her for her thoughtful and considered speech. I commend the three new Members on their maiden speeches. Each was individual and different, but heartfelt and completely appropriate. Well done to all of them. The good news is that they have now achieved that and got it out the way, so they can get on with the rest of the job. It is also a real privilege to speak as the first Member of Parliament for the new constituency of Newport West and Islwyn. As I said in my acceptance speech on 4 July, it is an honour to represent the constituents of the new constituency, which includes the former seat of Lord Neil Kinnock, Don Touhig and, of course, my immediate predecessor the late great Paul Flynn.

I am very pleased that our new Labour Prime Minister set out so clearly that this Government are here to serve the country and not be self-centred or self-serving. We in this House are public servants. We should do all we can to ensure that we represent the people who voted for us, and those who did not, to ensure their voices are heard in this place of power. We must work to ensure the best outcomes for all of them. The King's Speech is full of details of legislation to be laid in the coming months and I am excited to see it unfold. We can start to make a difference to people's lives in Newport West and Islwyn, across Wales and the rest of the UK.

As a former trade union officer, I am so glad to see that the new deal for working people will be brought forward to ban exploitative practices and to enhance employment rights. We need to end the terrible practice of fire and rehire quickly, and the use of zero-hours contracts. It is so important that people are paid fairly and that work is rewarded. But we also need a safety net for those who are not able to work and need support, sometimes for a short time, while others need longer term support.

Legislation to reform rail franchising will be most welcome, especially by people like me who travel on the trains on a weekly basis. We need to ensure that there is fair investment across the rail network, and that passengers get a fair deal on tickets and get to their destinations in comfort and on time. I look forward to the establishment of Great British Railways in due course.

I am also looking forward to the introduction of Great British Energy, a publicly owned clean power company which will be based in Scotland. I have to say gently to the Government that I am sure we could have had it based in Wales, but I will leave that debate for another day!

I also welcome the measures to strengthen community policing, deal more effectively with antisocial behaviour and improve victim support. I have worked with a number of women in my constituency who have suffered domestic abuse for many, many years. I want to ensure the police learn from their stories, and that any potential victims in the future have their issues addressed and their lives made safer as quickly as possible.

[*Ruth Jones*]

I am also pleased to see included a Bill to progressively increase the age at which people can buy cigarettes, and, most importantly, to impose limits on the sale and marketing of vapes. As a former physiotherapist like my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell), I am extremely concerned that people across the UK are still dying from cigarette-related conditions. I have treated patients who had irreversible changes to their lungs and other conditions directly due to smoking. The evidence of the link between nicotine and poor health and premature deaths has been very clear for many years now, but we also know that the longitudinal evidence on vaping has not yet been undertaken fully. We need to be cautious about the use of vapes, in particular the easy way that children and young people are able to obtain them. The addictive nature of vapes is well known. I have spoken to local school teachers who find that pupils are having to leave lessons, or even exams, to vape. That is so disruptive to the individual pupil and the whole class. It would be good to ensure safety and limit access to vapes. That legislation cannot come soon enough.

I must also mention the plans to reform the House of Lords, as my predecessor Paul Flynn spent many years calling for that. He would be delighted to hear this news and would immediately start asking when! He would be gratified to hear that the abolition of hereditary peers will be achieved within the first term of this Parliament. I look forward to learning more about these constitutional reforms and how the other place will continue to scrutinise the work of this Chamber, because that is very important. Its role has been so vital in recent months and years, as we witnessed in the last Parliament.

It would be remiss of me not to mention some areas that were not mentioned in the King's Speech. The right hon. Member for Herne Bay and Sandwich (Sir Roger Gale), and many Members of this House, are very well aware of the importance of animal welfare. I have hundreds of emails on this vital topic every month. I must admit I was disappointed not to read of any animal welfare legislation, such as the banning of hunting trophies or puppy smuggling, the introduction of a kept animals Bill, and the tightening up of the rules around trail hunting in the King's Speech. I gently ask my Front-Bench colleagues to ensure that these important pieces of legislation are brought forward in this Parliament. I am happy to be reassured that not everything makes the final cut in the King's Speech. You can rely on me, Mr Deputy Speaker, to speak out on animal welfare, because animals cannot.

There are so many other aspects of the King's Speech that I would like to commend, but I am very conscious of others wanting to speak. I support the planned legislation and I urge my Front-Bench colleagues to begin their work straight away to bring hope to people across the UK and to make this country a place fit for the 21st century—safe and prosperous, and where people are proud to live and raise their families.

7.7 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind): It is a great pleasure to be able to take part in this debate. I congratulate the new Members on their maiden speeches. I put on record my deep thanks to all the people of the Islington

North constituency for voting for me in the election to be an independent MP. Fighting as an independent was an interesting experience after fighting 10 elections as a Labour candidate. It is a very different experience. You have to have a deep and very honest conversation with everybody on every doorstep as to why you are doing it. I am grateful to the people for their response and for their confidence in me to be their Member of Parliament. I put on record my thanks to them.

This election showed an enormous parliamentary majority for the Labour party. I congratulate all Labour MPs who have been elected and congratulate the Government on taking office, but I think people should be a little bit careful. The total vote for Labour was lower in this election than it was in the last two general elections. A number of independents like me were elected, and there was an increase in Green MPs, an increase in Plaid Cymru MPs and an increase in Sinn Féin MPs from Northern Ireland. There are levels of discontent in our society that were reflected in the election result. We ought to reflect on that.

People in this election were totally fed up with falling living standards, increasing levels of poverty, increasing levels of homelessness, and higher levels of mental health stress and deep unease among many people in all our communities. As the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) said earlier, if the Government do not deliver on improving living standards for the very poorest in our society and deliver on improving the public services that everybody relies on, then the alternative is a turn towards the far right in politics, who will simply blame migrants, refugees or any handy minority for the problems that people face. We need something concrete that sets out a strong message about how we will improve living standards and make for a fairer society.

A good start would be ending the two-child benefit cap immediately. It would cost £1.3 billion, take 250,000 children out of poverty instantly, and be a signal that we are serious. The idea of a commission to look at poverty is no doubt very welcome. I am sure Sir Humphrey thought that one up very fast: "Quick, folks, there is a problem. A lot of MPs are complaining about the two-child cap. Let us set up a commission and just delay this." But why not do it now? Why not say, quite simply, "We are going to end the cap"? It is cruel and nasty to suggest that the third, fourth or fifth child in a family is less valuable than the first two. I hope the Government will listen to that, and I hope that if there is a vote next week, a substantial number will vote in exactly the same way as Members voted in 1997 when the incoming Government decided to cut the lone parent benefit, and were forever marked by that decision. Why not make this decision now?

My constituency, like many others, suffers from serious housing problems. Levels of homelessness are increasing all the time, with not just rough sleeping but overcrowding, and the private rented sector is completely unaffordable. I was interested by the section of the King's Speech about regulation of the sector. Everything in that was fine, and I agreed with it all, but there was something missing: there was no reference to controlling rent levels. That is the fundamental problem. Yes, we want security of tenure and yes, we want decent conditions, but if the private rented sector is not regulated, inner-city communities such as mine will simply suffer further migration as people are priced out of the area. We need a comprehensive

housing strategy that regulates the private rented sector, brings the housing associations under control—because, in my experience, they are not democratic in any way—and, above all, ensures that resources are available for the building of council housing, which is the most secure, permanent form of housing that we can provide. That would help to reduce the level of housing stress: there are currently a million people on the social housing register.

I want to make two more points in the short time that is available. The Thatcher Government from 1979 onwards were beyond obsessed with the privatisation of public services. Whenever they were opposed on that—I was in the Chamber throughout that time, and I am happy to say that I voted against every single one of the privatisations—they said, “It is fine: regulation will take care of it.” Well, we have had more than 30 years of regulation of the water industry, and during that time £72 billion has been taken out of water companies in either profits or dividends rather than being spent on investment in infrastructure. We now have record high bills, a demand for even higher bills from the water companies, and unprecedented levels of sewage disposal in our rivers and also in the sea, which is contrary to the global oceans treaty that we apparently support. Surely it is pretty obvious that the privatisation has failed. Let us bring the industry back into public ownership, and ensure that we have reasonably priced, clean water and investment rather than profit-taking.

My last point concerns a global issue. I will say this very quickly, because I have only a minute left. The war in Gaza has already cost 40,000 lives, and surely now is the time to do a number of things. First, we should demand a ceasefire with all the vigour we can bring to that. Secondly, we should end the supply of arms to Israel: it is our bombs, in part, that are being used to bomb Gaza and have taken the lives of 40,000 people. However, it is also a question of the withdrawal of the occupying forces.

Surely peace can come if we do something about it. I hope that the defence review coming up will be not just about increasing defence expenditure but will look at the global situation and see what we can do to promote a peaceful, sustainable world and defend human rights and democracy in the world. In the last Parliament I was a member of the Council of Europe, and I enjoyed defending the principles of the European convention on human rights and the universal declaration of human rights. We can make a contribution for a peaceful, sustainable world if we want to.

7.14 pm

Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn). May I congratulate all Members who have been returned to the House of Commons, and in particular I congratulate and welcome all the new Members. I wish them every success and happiness in their time in the House.

The Humble Address was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd), a great friend of mine, and seconded by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi). They are both warm, kind people—probably the two kindest I know in the House—and their speeches were very warm, very humorous and very interesting.

That was the highlight of the day, in my view. I must thank, in particular, my constituents in St Helens South and Whiston for returning me once again. It is a great honour to represent the town in which I was born, and in which I hope to die, and to represent those great people who have worked so hard during their lives.

For too long, social care and the needs of elderly and vulnerable patients have not been adequately considered, but social care is just as important as our national health service. Indeed, the NHS has suffered greatly from the lack of appropriate and necessary recognition and consideration of social care within Government. We have heard time and again about record waiting lists, patients being treated in hospital corridors, and ambulances carrying patients having to queue for hours outside A&E. According to a communication from the North West Ambulance Service, 30-odd ambulances had been stuck in Whiston hospital car park. The hospital had already turned a corridor into a ward and was doing everything it could, but the ambulances were still stuck in the car park. This is simply because hospitals are over capacity—and Whiston has been well over 100% capacity on many occasions. It is a very popular and very good hospital, but it is overstretched.

Elderly and chronically sick people are not being given the dignity that they deserve. At times, unsafe discharges have occurred in various hospitals, and that needs to change. There is a new term now: it is not “bed-blocking”, but “accommodation not clinically needed”. Social care must be fixed and properly financed, and it must be truly affordable for people to use. The pressure that the NHS is under will only be fixed if social care is fixed as well. Because of the wonders of modern medicine, people are living longer, but that often brings with it multiple complex needs. Our care system has not kept up with these changes.

Families care, and they also need support. Care staff cannot leave a sick person alone waiting for an ambulance. Often they wait for hours, which has a knock-on effect on shift patterns and, ultimately, on other patients who are waiting for the care and support that they need. Elderly and vulnerable patients should not be left waiting for food, medicine and personal care. The NHS and the care sector need to be better integrated, in order to stop situations like that arising. Care homes and nursing homes are also closing, so, again, there is a lack of capacity leading to unsafe discharges. The sector is in crisis, and patients are suffering.

When it comes to adult social care reform, priority must be given to treating patients at home where they feel comfortable, with their families around them and with their neighbours popping in. That is essential, both to protect hospital bed capacity and to give elderly and disabled people the dignity they deserve and the ability to stay in the homes they love in familiar surroundings. Most of the care, and even some of the medical and clinical treatments, can be given at home—I have witnessed this—and that can free up NHS bed capacity for those who need the beds to receive treatment that they cannot receive at home.

The current system of relying on local authorities whose budgets have been cut for more than a decade is not good enough. Even with the additional social care levy, local authorities are struggling to cope. The levy is based on council tax levels, so the areas with the lowest returns will receive a pittance. It is in those areas that

[Ms Marie Rimmer]

more people need care and support. According to the Local Government Association, 57% of council tax already goes on social care. It is not sustainable, because there is less and less money, and more and more people. We live longer now, and we will continue to live longer in the long term, so the problem will only continue to get worse.

Social care should be financed nationally, and it should follow the needs of patients. We cannot give a quota of money when there are hundreds of people in one borough, and perhaps 100 in another borough, needing support; it needs to follow the needs of the patient. One of the sector's major problems is hiring and retaining care workers, who do an incredibly difficult job. They are absolute angels, who look after our elderly relatives and loved ones with love and compassion. Social care should be promoted as a valued service, and professionals in the sector deserve recognition and respect, yet the pay and terms and conditions need to match the duties we ask of them. The whole sector needs a rework to ensure that it pays fairly and offers progression, so that staff can afford to stay in the job that they love and want to do. They should be valued.

Labour has promised, rightly, to set up a national care service, thereby finally putting care on a par with the NHS, because it needs to be a modern healthcare system. There needs to be sector of social and healthcare professions. The reforms need to look at the funding model, at-home treatment, staffing issues and, crucially, the integration with the NHS.

7.21 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): First of all, may I correct something the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) said? There has not been an increase in Sinn Féin representation following the election, though people might be forgiven for thinking so, given the way the BBC reported on the election in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, may I congratulate the Government on their success in the election? Like others, we wish them every success, because a successful Government means a successful country.

Thirdly, may I say to all those who have made their maiden speeches today that it is a very nervous experience? I can remember my maiden speech. My party's leader at the time, Ian Paisley, took me aside and said, "Sammy, there are three things you've got to do. First of all, you've got to speak nicely about your constituency." Over the years, I have listened to people speaking about their constituencies in their maiden speeches, and I have always thought that they would make great estate agents. Secondly, he said, "Say nice things about your predecessor," despite the fact that I had spent a year knocking on doors, talking to people, addressing meetings and giving out leaflets to tell people why they should not vote for him. Lastly, he said, "Sammy, don't be controversial." Coming from Ian Paisley, that advice really capped it all.

I will say two things about the King's Speech in the time available to me. First, I am pleased that the Government are looking at how they can strengthen the Union and for ways to foster collaboration between the devolved Administrations, because sometimes devolved Administrations can be very divisive for the coherence

of the country. They claim all the benefits and take credit for all the good things that happen, and they blame Westminster for all the bad things, which can cause division. As a Unionist, I am pleased to see that, through the proposed council of the nations and regions, we will hopefully get a greater degree of collaboration, communication and understanding between different parts of the Union.

However, I have to say that this issue cannot be addressed unless the Government seriously look at the damage done to the Union by the previous Administration, which made Northern Ireland a sacrificial lamb in order to get a deal with the EU, leaving us with the economic and constitutional disadvantages and divisions that that has caused. Those are manifested on a daily basis, and the EU seems determined not to address them—whether it is veterinary medicines, which will wreck the farming industry; the recent dental amalgams, which will make dental treatment more expensive and very difficult in Northern Ireland; the latest controversy about funding for the shipyard and whether it contravenes state aid rules; or the disruption of supply chains, which is an issue that has to be addressed.

We cannot have an economic division between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and a Government who profess that they want to strengthen the Union cannot ignore that elephant in the room. Many of the new Members who have been elected came here because they want to have an influence on the laws that govern the United Kingdom. There are 300 areas of law in Northern Ireland that are determined not by this Parliament or by the people elected in Northern Ireland, but in Europe, without any input from anyone in the United Kingdom. That is not democracy, and it has to be addressed.

The second issue I will mention is the Government's commitment to economic growth. In any country, economic growth depends upon cheap energy, and I am fearful that some of the policies that have already been implemented, and the promises made in the King's Speech, will make it difficult to achieve economic growth. In the previous Parliament we lamented, almost on a monthly basis, the loss of energy-intensive industries. It did not matter whether it was Port Talbot, Corby or Grangemouth. Representatives from all over the United Kingdom saw the impact on their local communities, with thousands of jobs being lost because of energy policies and the costs of implementing net zero. If we are aiming for economic growth, we cannot allow the obsession with net zero to stand in the way of jobs in this country.

I notice that in the commitment to net zero in the King's Speech, we are told that we will get lower energy bills over time. Initially, of course, we will have higher energy bills. We want to remove the infrastructure that we have in place and put totally new infrastructure in place—windmills, new lines and all the other infrastructure that is required to bring energy from places where we do not currently produce it to where we need it. We need to strengthen the grid, because we are going to use more electricity. All of that costs, and it will put up consumers' bills. At the same time, of course, we will make ourselves more dependent on the country that supplies all the vital metals required for that. We do not even gain any environmental benefits.

The right hon. Member for Herne Bay and Sandwich (Sir Roger Gale) talked about the impact on his community. In my constituency, I see the Antrim hills being stripped of peat, 3 metres deep, to build wind farms. That is

supposed to be environmental improvement. I look forward, over the period of this Government, to examining just what they do on this issue. We need to make sure that we do not have contradictory policies, whereby we aim for net zero but dip our hands into people's pockets to pay for it.

7.28 pm

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): This is the first time I have ever been able to speak from the Government side of the House, having first been elected in 2015, which was six Prime Ministers ago. In the 2015 general election, Bermondsey and Old Southwark was so far down Labour's target list—it was No. 84, I think—that the rule of thumb was that if I won, we would be in government. I will not ask where everyone else has been for the last nine years, but I will thank them and congratulate them on being here today, especially colleagues who have already made their maiden speeches and those who will make them in the coming weeks and months. It is amazing finally to be on this side of the House, but I cannot say that it has been worth the wait, given what the Tories have done to our country over the past few years.

My constituents' overwhelming sentiment since the election is one of relief, and of shaking off the sense of shame and embarrassment about the previous Government and the country's economic devastation. My constituents are still paying higher bills and mortgages as a result of Tory economic incompetence, but there is relief that the shame of the last Government is over. We saw the Equality and Human Rights Commission have to investigate the Department for Work and Pensions because of its unlawful behaviour towards disabled people. Through political incompetence and maladministration, the second biggest spending Government Department was unable to support disabled people properly. Change in the leadership of that Department could not be more refreshing.

Another cause for relief is that the Rwanda policy is scrapped. It was an unlawful, immoral international embarrassment that was raised with our Foreign Office and raised on every trip I went on with the Foreign Affairs Committee, to the UN, to the US and to Brazil. Wherever we went, countries saw that we were shirking responsibility while others shouldered a greater responsibility. It is also a relief for taxpayers because it was such a colossal waste—a humongous, knuckle-headed nonsense.

I cannot even repeat what Tory Ministers called the scheme when they were in government, because it would be unparliamentary language, but it cost hundreds of millions of pounds at a time when my constituents were being told that the £20 uplift on universal credit was unaffordable, that seeing a doctor or dentist was just not possible and that having enough police was a luxury and somehow not a Government priority, all while millions were poured down the Rwanda drain. And for what? A scheme that sent no one but Tory Home Secretaries to Rwanda at an outrageous cost. For the price of sending one person to Rwanda you could send six people into space, and the electorate gave their verdict two weeks ago when they blasted the Tories into space. And yes, terrible puns were on my leaflets in the election.

The Leader of the Opposition—it feels good to say that—said today that he wished to work with the new Government on certain policies. I say to new MPs that from opposition I was able to improve the laws on

housing rights for women fleeing domestic violence, on some terminally ill disabled people receiving support from the personal independence payment and on support for communities affected by terror attacks. I say to them: take the Prime Minister up on his offer. He said that the door was open, so take him up on that offer to seek improvements that benefit your constituents.

Since the election, I have had constituents come in to Parliament. Two schools have come in: St Michael's college in Bermondsey and the Southwark inclusive learning service from London Bridge. It has been amazing to speak to young people about the new priorities and how the new Government are already beginning to mend and heal the UK with the work done in the first week and announced today in the Gracious Speech. This includes lifting the ban on onshore wind despite Green opposition, boosting UK investment, beginning to fix our NHS, tackling crime and antisocial behaviour and reasserting targets for house building, which is a very welcome priority for my constituency in Southwark, where housing is always the No. 1 priority.

I flag to the new Government and new Ministers that the Bakerloo line extension would bring 20,000 new homes at least, and benefit not just transport infrastructure and homes but jobs across the country, and boost our economy. I hope to see the Bakerloo line extension delivered under the new Government, offering new hope and new ambition for Britain from a Government who finally say to people not what they cannot have but what we are seeking to achieve for our country and for our people's future, including today. Of particular personal importance to me is fixing mental health services. My mum had schizophrenia, a mental health condition, and that was my route into public policy awareness and politics. To have the chance to influence and shape mental health services as we in the Labour party begin to fix them and build out better is an enormous privilege.

I want to end today with a special thank you to the wonderful people of Bermondsey and Old Southwark for giving me my fourth win, including defeating an independent Corbyn candidate; to the Labour members in my constituency who fought so hard, both locally and in other target seats; and importantly, to my local Labour party executive for all their hard work and support, in the last Parliament in particular and over the election period. I look forward to delivering the better Britain they fought for, under this Labour Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): For his maiden speech, I call Graham Leadbitter.

7.33 pm

Graham Leadbitter (Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey) (SNP): It is an honour to have been elected to represent Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey, which is something of an amalgam of a couple of previous constituencies. First, I would like to thank the electorate of the constituency for sending me to this place to represent them and for putting their trust in me for the years to come. On my arrival here, an amazing job has been done by the House staff, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority and others, and I cannot thank them enough for the welcome that they have provided us as new MPs.

I have a number of predecessors that I need to thank, not least because it is nearly two constituencies rolled into one. First of all there is Douglas Ross, who represented

[*Graham Leadbitter*]

Moray for the Conservatives for several recent years. We were not very close on the political spectrum, it has to be said, but there were a number of occasions where we did come together across parties for the benefit of the constituency and the wider region, notably in the achievement of the growth deal for Moray and to maximise the spend that we got on that. I am sure the official Opposition would also want to thank him for his service in the Scotland Office.

My predecessor in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey was Drew Hendry, who was a regular contributor from the Scottish National party Benches. He represented us as an Opposition spokesperson on the economy, trade, foreign affairs, business, enterprise and investment, and transport over several terms as an MP for that area. He was also an assiduous campaigner on energy poverty, which is a particular issue for the highlands and islands and in Moray. I hope that energy regulation is one of the areas that the Government's commission on poverty will look at very seriously.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn), the leader of the SNP in this place, mentioned the two-child cap. I will not go into too much detail on that because it has already been well covered, but energy poverty is a critical issue for many families throughout the highlands and Moray. Bringing in a social tariff, for example, would certainly make a big difference to families right across the highlands.

Other predecessors have included several well-known parliamentarians. Labour Members will, I am sure, be pleased to know that my constituency is the birthplace of Ramsay MacDonald, and it has also been represented very ably by several notable SNP MPs over the years. One of the most famous was Winnie Ewing, who reconvened the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and also represented the area in the Scottish Parliament, in this place and in Europe. Her daughter-in-law, Margaret Ewing, was an assiduous campaigner on poverty issues and will be well known to older members of the House—or longer-serving Members of the House is perhaps more parliamentary. More recently there was Angus Robertson, who led the party in this place for a good number of years and is now a Cabinet Secretary in the Scottish Government.

We can take a quick stroll through Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey. It goes from the white sands of Lossiemouth, Burghead and Nairn right up to the Cairngorms peaks. It has the city of Elgin in it, which has now been established as a cathedral city for 800 years; it is celebrating the 800th anniversary of the cathedral being established there. The constituency has the Speyside towns of Rothes, Aberlour and Dufftown. Dufftown, of course, is built on seven stills rather than seven hills. In the Badenoch and Strathspey towns we get Grantown, Aviemore, Newtonmore and Kingussie among others. We have surfing, skiing and mountain biking. There is a mountain railway, and we have a national park and a major wildlife park with everything from pine martens to polar bears.

Moving back up to the coast, in Ardersier we have the green freeport. The Scottish Government have worked closely with the UK Government on that, and I am sure they will continue to do so. The green freeport is incredibly important to us in Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey.

It is projected to have 3,500 jobs within 10 years, and it will be vital for just transition. That will need careful scrutiny over the coming years.

Tourism, the labour market and affordable housing are major issues, particularly in the Badenoch and Strathspey area. Businesses have difficulty with staffing. They are often open only four or five days instead of seven. There is not really any significant unemployment—it is about 2% to 3%. There may be some room for getting more employment from the local labour market, but fundamentally the biggest impact on the labour market there has been Brexit. Immigration in that part of the world is a really significant issue, in that there is not enough of it. We have difficulty staffing care homes, the NHS and many businesses, which are fighting over the same labour population.

We have iconic food, drink and fashion brands, including Walker's Shortbread and Baxters, not to mention the 49 distilleries that produce malt whisky and the numerous other distilleries that produce gin and vodka. There are also a number of breweries. We contribute extremely significantly to the Exchequer, and it is really important that we get some of that back.

We also have three military bases. Fort George currently hosts the Black Watch—the 3rd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland. Kinloss barracks is home to 39 Engineer Regiment, and RAF Lossiemouth is home to Typhoon, Poseidon and arriving Wedgetail squadrons. The welfare of service personnel and veterans is absolutely vital, and it is something I will raise frequently in the House.

Civilian aerospace and space are the other major emerging sectors. Orbex in Forres employs well over 100 people, and it will be doing vertical launches from Sutherland and the Saxa Vord spaceport. The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) will have to forgive me, but its headquarters are, in fact, in Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey.

Finally there is agriculture. Crofters and hill farmers based in Badenoch and Strathspey in the Cairngorms national park face particular challenges. We also have arable and the pork sector in the laich of Moray, where there are again employment challenges that need to be tackled.

Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey is the fifth largest constituency, and it takes more than two hours to drive end to end, but what a drive it is—I would recommend it to anybody. I look forward to representing the people living and working the length and breadth of my constituency.

7.41 pm

Kim Leadbeater (Spen Valley) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey (Graham Leadbitter), who is almost my namesake.

It is a great pleasure to speak on His Majesty's first King's Speech under a Labour Government. We promised change and, as I look around Parliament, I see an awful lot of change, with people in new places and so many new faces. I am enjoying starting to get to know many of the newly elected Members, mostly from my party, but from other parties too. To them, I say welcome. And to you and your team, Mr Deputy Speaker, I say good luck learning everybody's name and face.

By coincidence, the 4 July general election that put me in this place as the first MP for the new Spen Valley constituency came just three days after the third anniversary

of the Batley and Spen by-election in which I was first elected to this place. It is fair to say that a lot has changed in just three short years. I remember pounding the streets of Batley and Spen in 2021 during challenging times that were full of uncertainty, division and, for many people, fear.

The dark cloud of the covid pandemic still hung over us, many people were struggling with the cost of living, and politics felt worryingly polarised in this and other countries. I think it is fair to say that the Labour party was not in a great place. Many doubted that we would see power again in 10 years, never mind three. If the result in Batley and Spen played its part in turning things around and getting us to where we are today, I am delighted that we were able to help.

Although I was delighted with the result, the Batley and Spen by-election was not a pleasant experience. At times, we saw the worst of politics, including unacceptable behaviour from those who use our precious democracy to divide us rather than unite us. My constituents deserved better, and I hoped passionately that no other candidate would have to go through what I went through. Sadly, that has not been the case.

Although I am relieved that the general election campaign in Spen Valley was mostly conducted in a civilised manner, the same cannot be said elsewhere. Many candidates and their supporters, often women, faced threats, harassment and abuse. None of this should be part of any job, and it is not what our politics should look like. We must not normalise it, and we must all do our bit to change it.

On this, the first day of the first debate in a new Parliament, we all have the opportunity to reset the dial on politics and work towards a political culture that fosters robust, rigorous debate and scrutiny but does not allow fear, intimidation and abuse to become the norm. As His Majesty said, this Government

“will take steps to...rebuild trust and foster respect.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this approach and will work with colleagues across the House in this endeavour.

I am a realistic optimist. I know it is not going to be easy to bring the change that our country needs, but this new Parliament fills me with hope. I see people around me who are determined to be part of the change to a better kind of politics. The Prime Minister rightly describes it as the return of politics to public service, and he correctly says that this can be achieved only through actions, not words.

With so many new faces and so much new energy and commitment, I believe we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity in this place to change not only the Government, although that is certainly welcome, but the whole culture of politics, to restore the business we are all in to one that people can look at with respect. That starts with how we behave in here because, whether we like it or not, this Chamber is the window into our national politics. If we treat each other in here with courtesy, if we listen to the arguments of those we disagree with as politely as we listen to the arguments of those we support, and if we show that we can air our differences passionately but with genuine respect, people at home will notice. It would be the right thing to do even if they did not, but I believe they will.

My constituents want to see change. They sent me here to deliver it, and I will not let them down. It is a wonderful part of West Yorkshire where people have a

real sense of pride in where they are from, whether that is the towns of Heckmondwike, Mirfield, Birstall or Cleckheaton, or the many beautiful surrounding villages—too many to list, but I will certainly make sure they all get a mention over the next five years.

I understand that pride because I share it. It is where I was born and have lived all my life. In Spen Valley, we tell it like it is. We are not easily fooled and we take no nonsense. So my constituents will only believe in change when they see it and when they feel it. This King's Speech sets out the busy but exciting agenda to make that change happen, and the duty falls on us to make sure it does, whether it is affordable housing; safer streets and more police in our communities; tackling antisocial behaviour and violence against women and girls; shorter waiting times and better access to GPs and dentists on the NHS; better education and opportunities for the young—academic and vocational—including for those with special educational needs and disabilities; reliable public transport; support for people with mental health; or social care that offers dignity in old age and for the most vulnerable in our society. I am all for giving local people more power to make decisions that affect their lives, so I welcome the Deputy Prime Minister's pledge to kickstart a devolution revolution, with the economic growth and prosperity that underpins all this and helps to give people a bit more at the end of the month,

Another thing about Yorkshire people is that we do not waste money. We know that you can't spend what you haven't got. So when my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West and Pudsey (Rachel Reeves)—my good friend and fellow Yorkshire MP, and our first female Chancellor—warns that we have to get the nation's finances in good order and it has to be our first priority, people get it.

Politics as public service relies, above all, on trust and honesty. Only if we are straight with people about the challenges we face as a country, and we have honest conversations with our constituents about what we can and sometimes cannot do—or cannot do straightaway—will they start to have faith in politics as a force for good in their lives.

We have in our hands today a tremendous opportunity to begin the transformation of this country into a country that is looked on once again with respect around the world, ready to step up and play our part, whether on tackling climate change, defending democracy when it is under threat, or doing everything we can to end the appalling and devastating conflicts in the middle east, Ukraine and elsewhere—in short, a country of which we can all be proud. There is a lot of work to do, but the time starts now.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Siân Berry to make her maiden speech,

7.48 pm

Siân Berry (Brighton Pavilion) (Green): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me. I congratulate the hon. Members for Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey (Graham Leadbitter), for Bolton North East (Kirith Entwistle), for Wolverhampton West (Warinder Juss) and for Southport (Patrick Hurley) on making excellent maiden speeches today.

[Siân Berry]

I am so honoured to be here in this historic Chamber today as part of a brand-new group of Green colleagues, who I must now call my honourable Friends. We are very pleased today to hear a wide range of new Bills being proposed. We welcome some measures. Some we will seek to improve and some we will seek to change or add to.

Listening to people in my constituency during the election, it was hard not to be affected by the strength of public feeling and distress about the climate emergency and the degradation of our natural environment, and by the huge desire to defend social justice and public services. This Parliament must seek to deliver for them.

This is my maiden speech; I stand here thanks to the votes and values of the fantastic people of Brighton Pavilion. They have put their trust in me and the Green party, and for that I extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. Brighton has always been a truly special place, from its origins as a fishing village and Roman villa complex, to its Regency and railway booms, with its huge sense of spirit and a warm welcome to every visitor to our famous beach.

But Brighton has always been so much more than a seaside resort. The richness and variety of our culture and entertainment is legendary. From Victorian innovation, through the 1960s of my parents and my own decade of youth in the far away 1990s, to the present day, our music, theatre, comedy and literary traditions have always blended with cutting-edge, creative and exciting counter-culture movements to reflect and enrich the modern world. Our cultural richness has survived, strived, struggled and then thrived through many turbulent times, not least the recent pandemic, and I am confident it will continue to do so for many centuries to come.

I am proud that the latest census confirms that nowadays my city is home to one of the UK's largest populations of LGBT+ people, and that we host the biggest and best Pride celebrations, including Europe's largest Trans Pride, which will be this weekend. Brighton and Hove is a welcoming city in so many ways, and I am very proud we are a city of sanctuary, committed to a culture of hospitality and welcome for those seeking refuge from war and persecution.

Brighton Pavilion has a history of dedicated, long-serving MPs. From its first election as a single-Member constituency in 1950, it was represented until 1969 by Sir William Burke Teeling, an Irish writer and self-described "amateur tramp", who walked from London to Newcastle to explore how councils were tackling unemployment. Our MP was then Julian Amery for 23 years and Derek Spencer for five years, before David Lepper served in this House as a highly-respected and hardworking MP for 13 years. And, of course, I have one of the easiest and most pleasurable jobs among new MPs in paying tribute to my immediate predecessor.

Brighton is also a special place because it has been at the heart of the green movement in England and Wales, and that continued when our own, beloved Caroline Lucas won the seat for the Green party in 2010. Caroline held the seat through three further elections, leaving a 14-year legacy that I look up to as a shining mountain to climb, as I take my very first steps here today. As well as being an excellent constituency MP, of the many ways in which Caroline influenced policy, I was most

charmed by her success in working with the nature writer Mary Colwell to win a new GCSE in natural history. Helping to inspire and train up a generation of new David Attenboroughs is a real national service.

Most impressive has been Caroline's steadfast and long-standing opposition to threats to the public's right to protest. Caroline lived that principle and through it played a key role in ending fracking in the UK. I know that all of us sitting here today are humbly aiming to live up to the high standards, values and work ethic that she represented, and to serve here with the same energy and enthusiasm.

It is those principles that will guide my work as an MP, as well as some of my own values and enthusiasms. People who know my work in other places will be aware that listening to and supporting young people is something I feel very strongly about. It is therefore with huge pleasure that I commend to the House the incredible work of Brighton and Hove Citizens, which has just won a huge campaigning victory with a beautiful example of raising up and empowering young people and their voices to make change happen. With schools across Brighton and Hove working with colleges, religious groups, workers, universities and the charity sector, Brighton and Hove Citizens has this year won a big new commitment from the council. After a long and engaging campaign, sixth formers Fi Abou-Chanad and Tally Wilcox presented a 2,000 signature-strong petition and won a pledge for hundreds of young people in Brighton schools to benefit from investment in mental health support and counselling.

That is just one group of young people among many inspiring organisations across our country that I cannot wait to hear more about in this job. They include Green New Deal Rising, the UK Youth Climate Coalition, YoungMinds, People & Planet, the National Society of Apprentices, the National Union of Students and many more. Young people should have a louder voice wherever decisions are being made, not just when they organise. I am therefore disappointed to see no specific Bill in today's list removing barriers to voting for young people, including voter ID and age limits for elections to this House and English local councils that do not apply in Wales and Scotland.

Our 16 and 17-year-olds, and our young people, need a real voice and need those measures in this Parliament. I hope that, when we debate the Bills put forward in today's King's Speech, the voices of young people are sought out and listened to, and that many changes and additions are made where they are needed most, including removing the two-child benefit cap.

I am grateful for the patience of hon. Members in listening to me. I greatly look forward to seeing the impact of the young voices I plan to raise up in this Chamber being granted the same attention and respect.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Mr Luke Charters to make his maiden speech.

7.56 pm

Mr Luke Charters (York Outer) (Lab): Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, Mr Deputy Speaker. I pay tribute to the many hon. Members who have given their wonderful maiden speeches today.

It is an immense privilege to represent York Outer. I would not be here were it not for the wonderful education I received at Huntington school. That education

gave me the confidence and skills to go on and change lives, but there was one stand-out teacher—Robin Parmiter, my wise and compassionate religious studies teacher. I went on to name my son Robin after him, so my son is a continual reminder of the power of a good state education. He is also a constant reminder that, despite humanity's vast medical and technological progress, we still do not have a cure for toddlers teething.

Moving on from religious studies to history, I want to go all the way back to 71 AD, when the Romans are believed to have made York a military base. I appreciate a lot has changed over the many millennia since, but York's role as a military base has not. The Queen Elizabeth barracks is at Strensall, in my constituency, and I am very proud to be the first Labour Member of Parliament to represent there. I am incredibly proud of this Government's unwavering commitment to our armed forces and to our veteran community.

It is important to note that my predecessor, Julian Sturdy, played an important role in protecting and saving those barracks. He was also a forceful advocate for our rural communities; I want to continue that work. I wish him all the very best for the future, after 14 years of service.

As many hon. Members will know, people from Yorkshire are straight-talking and no-nonsense. I have been told many times on the campaign trail, and since joining the House, that unfortunately I live up to that stereotype. But I am not on my own. I have a great cohort of colleagues on the Labour Benches who are representing God's own county. Even better, we have a Chancellor from the white rose contingent, so the best thing is we have the Yorkshire value of frugality as a national policy, ensuring the public get good value for money. How welcome that is after 14 long years of managed decline, as our country finds itself at a critical juncture. Thankfully, the question is no longer who gets to rebuild Britain, but how we will take the mantle on.

We can all learn from colleagues in the York community. Just 40 years ago, on 9 July 1984, lightning struck the roof of York Minster and the south transept was destroyed by flames. I am proud that my dad, an outspoken Yorkshireman if ever there was one, was one of the apprentice joiners who went on to rebuild the Minster after the great fire. The Minster joiners' commitment centres around the values I share: dedication to duty, service and desperation to rebuild.

But there are already groups in York Outer embodying those values. Take BioYorkshire and its 10-year plan for sustainable innovation, which harnesses the green revolution that we so badly need for the years ahead.

We are home to many wonderful small and medium-sized enterprises from Wigginton to Wheldrake that share our ambition for wealth creation. We are a Government who are both pro-business and pro-worker.

It is also fair to say that our heroes on the frontline of the NHS are a perfect embodiment of the Minster joiners' core values, as was the late Frank Dobson, who was born in the village of Dunnington in my constituency. My family have had close encounters with our health service in York, and I come to this place with enormous gratitude to those who serve in it. I pay true thanks to them, but words cannot truly get there. I will be a powerful advocate for them in this place. These vital public services are at the heart of our communities. We value them so dearly, as do our constituents, as they

form the social fabric that allows us all to live rich, happy and content lives. But it is such a shame that so many of these crucial services are evaporating.

I remember setting up my first bank account in the village of Haxby, but that bank branch no longer exists. That is not an isolated case; there are no longer any bank branches in my constituency. As is so often the case in this country, it is vulnerable people who go on to pay the price. The closure of these branches poses a risk to our vibrant communities, which is exactly why I am so proud that this Government are going to bring forward 350 new bank hubs to maintain valuable access to cash. A priority of mine is to campaign to bring one of those hubs to York Outer.

After a short departure from the earlier history lesson, I shall now return to it and skip to 1086 and the Domesday Book. The village of Copmanthorpe in my constituency earns an explicit mention in the text. Its historical translation means "Traders" village. Unfortunately, the good enterprising nature of the people of Copmanthorpe, York and North Yorkshire has been taken advantage of over recent years by fraudsters. After spending years combating fraud at the Bank of England, the Financial Conduct Authority, and in the private sector, this is an issue that is close to my heart. One of the biggest investigations undertaken by North Yorkshire police, concluded in April, found that scammers had targeted £30 million of victims' pensions and life savings, leaving many with nothing.

It was also reported in May that a devastating cryptocurrency scam took an average of £7,000 each from dozens of families. As many Members may have noted, these victims cannot be named, but I dedicate my maiden speech to them. Each one of those people affected by fraud are a loved one, a family member or a friend. Fraud is the biggest crime in the UK, and, under this Labour Government, I want to ensure that there is no safe harbour for fraudsters, no compromise in our pursuit of their schemes and no escape from justice.

On a more positive note, I have been fortunate enough to meet thousands of constituents who share the wonderful community spirit of York Outer. To the good people of York, from New Earswick bowls club to The Island, and from St Leonard's hospice, which lovingly cared for my uncle in his last days, to the Wilberforce Trust, which has supported people with visual and hearing impairments for nearly two centuries, giving back is second nature.

As the new Member of Parliament for York Outer, I will be tirelessly dedicated to my constituents. I shall be a strong national campaigner when it comes to improving financial services and tackling fraud. I am ready and willing to serve the area that has given me so much.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, may I be slightly unconventional and end by thanking the House staff? They have welcomed hon. Members to this place. Their dedication and service is clear and I look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Seamus Logan to make his maiden speech.

8.3 pm

Seamus Logan (Aberdeenshire North and Moray East) (SNP): Thank you for calling me to speak, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to make my

[*Seamus Logan*]

maiden speech during this important debate. Like others, I wish to congratulate all those who have spoken before me, particularly those who made their maiden speeches, not least the hon. Member for York Outer (Mr Charters) whose contribution was very substantial.

I am originally from the village of Dunloy in the north-east of Ireland. I represent the Aberdeenshire North and Moray East constituency in the north-east of Scotland. I paid close attention when the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Sir Julian Lewis) was advising new Members on our ambitions for the future, particularly because I want to share my ambition. I am the first MP for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East and I hope to be the last MP for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East.

This is a coastal area that stretches from the River Spey in the west to Cruden Bay in the south. It is an area noted not only for its industry, but for the industriousness of its people and its communities. Its long-standing economic strengths are in farming, fishing and their associated sectors, including food and drink production, and, in more recent times, in the oil and gas industries and their supply chain. The area makes a substantial and significant contribution to the nation's energy security and food security.

We are now undergoing a new industrial revolution associated with the renewables sector. As the world adapts to new challenges, I believe that it is our duty in this Parliament to capitalise on the opportunities that now present themselves in the north-east of Scotland. It is also a most beautiful area—something of an undiscovered gem—with a developing tourism industry. Members will remember that the next time they enjoy a single malt, an Aberdeen Angus steak, a prawn cocktail or perhaps a fish supper, because the chances are that they came from the industries based in my constituency.

There is also significant poverty—in particular child poverty—in this otherwise prosperous area. Although this is mainly concentrated in larger towns, it is also a challenge in villages and rural areas where it is often less visible. Recent figures suggest that around 5,500 children in this constituency are living in serious poverty—some of them in absolute poverty. To be clear that means that they do not have enough money to meet basic needs for shelter, clothing and food. That is something that we should all remember in our position of privilege, and it is something that we should all work together on to change.

I want to pay tribute to the outgoing MP, David Duguid, who represented the previous Banff and Buchan constituency, which disappeared in the recent boundary changes. Some Members will know that David experienced sudden and significant ill-health before the general election was called. I wish him a speedy and full recovery. David was an excellent MP who did his best to represent everybody in the constituency, but most notably the interests of the energy, fishing and farming industries. His efforts were in stark contrast to the way that he was treated in the end when he was effectively deselected by his colleagues. I wish David and his family well in whatever their future plans may involve. I also wish to acknowledge the work of the last SNP MP in this area, Eilidh Whiteford, who was an outstanding political representative.

Today in the King's Speech, the Government had an opportunity to immediately abolish the harmful two-child benefit cap and the notorious rape clause, which my former colleague, the outgoing MP for Glasgow Central, Alison Thewliss, worked so hard to end. The failure to do this is an early indictment of the Government's policy position. I was encouraged when I heard contributions from the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Dame Meg Hillier) and the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell). But what about the contribution from the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) when he said, "No ifs, no buts, just do it."?

It is simply not good enough for the people of Scotland, an energy rich nation, to pay so much to heat their homes while so many of their bairns are living in absolute poverty. I will be focusing on this issue over the course of this Parliament. I will seek to defend the interests of our farming and fishing industries, to protect our public services and to help realise the potential of renewable energy and carbon capture to deliver jobs and economic growth. But, above all, I shall be a voice for the weak and the disadvantaged. After 14 years of austerity, we need a change of direction, not more of the same. I wish to make special mention of the WASPI women who have been so unfairly treated by successive Governments, and who deserve compensation.

To conclude, I thank the people of my constituency for their support at the ballot box, my colleagues in the SNP and in other parties, and the various members of House staff on the Westminster estate, who have been so welcoming and helpful on my arrival and during my induction.

Finally—and Members would not expect me to say anything less—I will be working hard in this place and elsewhere to press the case for the people of Scotland to be afforded their democratic rights to determine their own future.

8.9 pm

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East (Seamus Logan), after his eloquent and passionate maiden speech. A huge welcome to all new Members; it is the greatest privilege in the world to be here and to be the voice of the place that you love—never take that for granted.

We on the Labour Benches are under no illusions as to the scale of task ahead of us in government. Fourteen years of successive Conservative Governments have ravaged our public services, stifled investment, created gross levels of inequality, and entrenched widespread job and housing insecurity, so the Gracious Speech offered welcome national renewal. Legislation promising to hand power back to local leaders, support for local growth plans, and greater protections for renters were welcome and long overdue. The new deal for working people was also a pivotal step in ensuring that the fruits of our economic growth are shared by everyone, not just a select few.

On child poverty, the Government have pledged to roll out breakfast clubs and to develop a strategy to reduce child poverty, which is very welcome, but such extensive plans will take some considerable time to pass through into legislation. In the meantime, there are immediate measures that the Government must take

now to alleviate the financial strain faced by so many in my constituency. Indeed, on the issue of child poverty alone, we are in a state of what can only be described as national crisis. Research by Loughborough University on behalf of the End Child Poverty coalition reported that a staggering 333,000 children in Greater Manchester and Lancashire alone are now living in poverty. That is an increase of over 31,000 compared with the previous year. The hope that these families place on the new Labour Government is immense, so my first urgent request of our new Labour Government is to lift these children out of poverty immediately by scrapping the two-child limit in universal credit.

My second urgent request of the Government is to settle the debt of honour we owe to women born in the 1950s who suffered pension injustice. The issue now is not whether the women faced injustice; the ombudsman's report earlier this year made it clear that they did, that the Department for Work and Pensions was guilty of maladministration, that the women are entitled to urgent compensation from the Government, and that Parliament must urgently identify a mechanism for providing that appropriate remedy. They need fair, fast, simple redress and an apology from the DWP. There is no excuse for delay. The report was laid before Parliament in March, and at least one woman will die waiting for justice every 13 minutes. They deserve nothing less than justice, so I hope that the Government urgently identify a mechanism for appropriate remedy now.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): I would not normally intervene having just entered the House, but knowing that my friend, the hon. Member for Salford (Rebecca Long Bailey), was speaking, I felt I ought to come and hear her, and particularly to support the remark she has just made about those women so badly affected in the way that she has described. It is critical, as she said, that this matter is addressed speedily—and, actually, that means simplifying the system. That will not please everyone, by the way; some people want a detailed analysis, but that is unfortunately likely to lead to obfuscation. It is very important, as she describes, to have a simple mechanism which delivers justice to these women speedily.

Rebecca Long Bailey: I agree wholeheartedly. The work that the right hon. Member and I carried out throughout the last Parliament is an example of how we can work co-operatively with Members of opposite parties and find those issues on which we can serve our constituents well. He joins us at an opportune moment, as I am about to talk about an issue that is close to his heart.

My final urgent request of the Government is one of moral duty: to recognise, support and compensate our nuclear testing veterans and their families. These are the men who put their lives at risk in dangerous atomic weapons tests to ensure our long-term security. For decades, campaigners, Labrats, veterans and their families, and the indefatigable Susie Boniface have been fighting for recognition for these heroes. They have highlighted scientific studies that show increased rates of miscarriage, increased birth defects, and the same rate of genetic damage as clean-up workers at Chernobyl.

Of course, the campaigners take pride in the fact that the Defence Secretary and the Prime Minister met them when Labour was in opposition, and supported their

campaign to receive the long overdue recognition they deserve. But despite winning the campaign for medallic recognition, the UK sadly still remains the only nuclear power that refuses them adequate compensation, research and support, unlike the US, France, Canada and Australia. Medal criteria are very limited, there has not been a formal recognition event and even access to war pensions has been impeded.

Veterans, and sometimes their wives, widows and descendants, have reported making repeated requests to gain access to their blood or urine testing records from samples the veterans recall being taken during the nuclear testing programmes. Sadly, many confirm that their service medical records frequently do not include the test results, and they just do not understand why. The data is vital for their war pension applications and for understanding the conditions they suffer, but sadly the absence of such records means that many veterans' war pension applications are refused.

I want to place on record my thanks to hon. Members right across the House who have continued to support these veterans, particularly the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes), who has worked closely with me and campaigners in recent years. This week, we have both written to the Defence Secretary and the Minister for Veterans and People, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Selly Oak (Al Carns), requesting that they urgently meet us, veterans and campaigners, and work with us to deal with their concerns. We hope that is made an urgent priority, because ultimately the Government can and should deliver justice for these families, and now is the right time to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): Last and not least from the Opposition Benches, I call Jim Shannon.

8.16 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for calling me and all hon. Members who have made contributions so far; I am glad to see you in your place and I am glad to be in mine. I thank the good people of Strangford for voting for me in the election, and I wish all Members in this House God's richest blessing for this term and the years ahead. I am very pleased to see the Labour party and the Prime Minister in their place. I believe that all of us across the House and out in the nation we represent wish for things to go well—there is good will and a wish to see things in a better way.

I was delighted to hear in the King's Speech the Prime Minister's goal of taking the brakes off Britain, which is a goal that every party can get behind. Yet the Unionist in me would gently remind the Prime Minister and the Labour party that that responsibility applies equally to the whole United Kingdom, not simply to mainland Britain. We need to remove the brakes, wherever they may be, within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. One brake that springs to mind at this moment is that mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson): the one holding back Harland & Wolff from providing jobs and financial stability by not fulfilling the contract promised by the last Government. Security on the loan is critical to prevent the removal of economic growth, and I do hope that brake will be released urgently.

[*Jim Shannon*]

I also welcome the indication that the creation of wealth is to be a Labour party priority, as that is foundational for any nation. I look forward to working with the Labour Government to ensure that it is spread across the whole United Kingdom, of which Northern Ireland is an integral part. There is work to be done when it comes to Northern Ireland's place in the Union. In response to my intervention on the Prime Minister today, he quite clearly committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom is strengthened. If that is the case, it is good news, but I look forward to seeing those words become action. My colleagues and I are anxious to continue the work of ensuring that our constituents have the same treatment as the rest of the UK, from shopping to post, to imports and border controls. I look forward to meeting our new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who is in a position to establish that working relationship to the benefit of all within the United Kingdom. There is work to be done on the remnants of the protocol, and I know that must be a priority for this new Government.

There is also work to be done on establishing an adequate formula for funding, which both my right hon. Friends the Members for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) and for Belfast East referred to. When I was a member of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, along with other colleagues, all parties on the Committee and the Government officials were clear that the funding formula was wrong and had to be addressed. We are £500 million to £600 million shy of what other parts of the United Kingdom are getting, and there was a commitment given to ensuring that that would come through.

My request to the Labour Government, and in particular to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, will be to ensure that that £600 million gaping hole in Northern Ireland's finances is addressed. With great respect, I say this: we do not need a vanity project of Casement Park, at a cost of more than £300 million, when the very basics of life are being neglected.

I was pleased to hear the aim of improving mental health services, which other Members have referred to, particularly for our young people. In Northern Ireland we have the largest prevalence of mental health problems in the whole of the United Kingdom. My request to the Labour Government and to my Prime Minister, as he is, is to ensure that his mental health programme can work in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Assembly so that we can address mental health issues for our young people head-on. Again, there is a way of doing that, if we do it here at Westminster and ensure that the Northern Ireland Assembly are working alongside us in that partnership. I am very keen to ensure that happens.

I also put in a plea for peace in the middle east to be an aim of the Government. I would gently highlight that calling for a ceasefire when hostages remain in unimaginably cruel captivity, and without ensuring that Hamas terrorists can never inflict that kind of savage damage again, must surely be premature. There is a solution, and it can be found; I know that is the desire of all our constituents, as well as our friends in Israel and on both sides of the Gaza strip. I believe that the Government must consider maintaining the previous Government's procedural challenge to the International

Criminal Court's jurisdiction in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories. It is important that the ICC retains its proper role within the law and exercises jurisdiction based on its own statutes and in accordance with the principle of complementarity.

As long as I have been in Parliament, there has always been a plea from both sides of the Chamber for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to be condemned and made illegal. Those pleas came from the Opposition side when the Labour party was in opposition. Now that Labour is in government, I hope those pleas will be answered. The IRGC is the world's most powerful terrorist group, committed to the conversion or murder of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and others it considers to be infidels, and for 40 years it has pursued its repugnant goals through violence on a global scale. It is time for it to be proscribed, and I ask for that to happen as soon as humanly possible.

I am afraid I do not have time to go through all the things I wanted to speak to, but I will quickly mention the issue of conversion practices. I just say this gently. I think the Minister responsible has got it. There will be a consultation beforehand—there has to be—and there are many of us who have Christian faith and beliefs, and who wish to ensure that the beliefs to which we hold fast are considered fully when it comes to making any decisions.

I also make a plea, as have the hon. Member for Salford (Rebecca Long Bailey) and others, for the WASPI women. As you probably know, Mr Deputy Speaker, I led a debate on the issue, and I believe the Government need to deliver for the WASPI women. I have some 5,500 of them in my constituency, and there are 76,000 in Northern Ireland. We have an obligation to everyone across this great United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to deliver.

This is a new Government, with new ways of doing things and new aims, but there are also new opportunities. I, for one, will do all I can, working alongside the Government, to achieve the aims of making this wonderful United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland a wonderful place to live, educate our children, work and thrive. I believe that all of us in this House can work together to see that goal realised and people's lives made better as a result.

8.23 pm

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Wyre) (Lab): After nine years on the Opposition Benches, it is a disorientating experience to find myself on the Government Benches, and things just got a little more topsy-turvy when I found I was speaking after the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon). I do not think that has ever happened before, but it gives me an opportunity to thank him for his friendship and to let new Members know that in this House they will find friends in perhaps the most unlikely places. I thank my hon. Friend for his friendship and support, and I know in that I speak for many on the Government side.

This is my first opportunity to give a substantive speech as the new Member for Lancaster and Wyre, as my constituency underwent some significant boundary changes at this election. I will break with convention slightly by paying tribute to the MP I have replaced, in the sense that most of my constituency was represented

in the previous Parliament by Ben Wallace. He had served as an MP in Lancashire since the 2005 general election, first for Lancaster and Wyre and latterly for Wyre and Preston North. Ben was the MP elected in the first general election I voted in, in Lancaster and Wyre. I confess that I did not vote for the winning candidate, but his assiduous service should be noted, especially his service to the country in his role as Secretary of State for Defence.

This is also an opportunity to acknowledge the change to our electoral map at the general election. The country voted very clearly for change. I am excited to see much of the content in the King's Speech, particularly when it comes to getting Britain building through planning reform. I was pleased to hear talk about both infrastructure and housing; it is clear to me that when we build housing it has to go with infrastructure. I hear loud and clear from my constituents along the A6 corridor, particularly around the Garstang area, that building new houses without infrastructure puts more pressure on our public services, GP surgeries and school places.

I was also pleased to see in the King's Speech that local leaders will be allowed to take control of local bus services. This week, Stagecoach, which runs the bus services in my community, has increased the price of the under-19s DayRider, which has been met with quite a lot of response, shall we say, from my constituents—not only those attending schools and colleges, but their parents, who are often the ones picking up the tab for what is a very expensive and often unreliable service.

As a north-west MP, I am served on the west coast main line by a train company called Avanti, so believe me, Mr Deputy Speaker, bringing rail back into public ownership is something my constituents welcomed. I heard loud and clear on the campaign trail that Avanti is not a fit company to be running a so-called train service down the west coast of our country, right the way from Glasgow into London Euston. It let passengers down on a regular basis and I think it knows its time is up.

Some of my youngest constituents are running campaigns at the moment on sewage dumping. We know that Ofwat needs to have more teeth and more powers to regulate the water companies. I know that some of my youngest constituents will be very pleased to see that part of the King's Speech.

I turn now to the point about strengthening the integrity of elections to encourage wider participation in the democratic process. In the last Parliament I had the privilege of being the spokesperson for the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, so you will forgive me, Mr Deputy Speaker, if this turns into something of a hobby-horse of mine. I am deeply concerned about the state of our democracy and look forward to playing a full role from the Back Benches, supporting the Government in improving the integrity of our electoral process.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that 52% turnout nationally at a general election should concern every one of us. In Lancaster and Wyre it was 58%, but I take no comfort from the fact that we are marginally higher than the national average. That is what keeps me up at night. We need to engage people in our democracy, because the alternatives are unthinkable. I support the idea of automatic voter registration.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): As my hon. Friend is aware, the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee published a report in the last Parliament proposing exactly that. We went to look at the system in Canada, which gets near to 97% or 98% registration accuracy. Some 8 million people could not vote in our election because they were not on the electoral register. We need to address that.

Cat Smith: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work of his Committee in the last Parliament, and I urge the Government Front Benchers to heed that report. Millions of people are missing from our electoral roll. If Members are concerned about the 52% turnout at the general election, they will be even more concerned to note that that figure is probably much lower because our electoral roll lacks accuracy.

However, that is not all. We need to look again at the ID requirements. During the general election, we all came across people who thought that they could not vote because they did not have ID and were not aware of the voter authority certificate. A conversation that I had in Skerton in my constituency stands out to me. A gentleman who had voted in every general election since the 1970s said: "I don't have ID, so I can't vote now." He had been totally unaware that the voter authority certificate was an option, and it was far too late to apply for one a few days from polling day. That was replicated up and down the country. If we are concerned about and want to increase turnout at elections, we need to fix that. Personally, I think that that means scrapping the entire scheme, which was always a solution to a problem that did not exist, but adding more forms of ID, or including polling cards, would make it so much easier for people to take part in our democracy.

I have heard a lot from constituents who have looked at the results of the general election and raised questions about proportional representation. In the last Parliament, the Government changed the voting system for electing police and crime commissioners from the alternative vote to first past the post, and they did so in a statutory instrument Committee. I do not think that is an appropriate way to go about changing our voting systems. The public should be involved in that conversation. The general election results have led to a lot of conversations in Lancashire with people who feel that the first-past-the-post system is regressive and that we can find more progressive ways of improving our voting systems.

The Electoral Commission's strategy and policy statement makes the electorate question the commission's independence. If we want to build trust and faith in our democracy, the public need to believe that the commission is independent and empowered to hold political parties and candidates to account for our conduct in these things, and that it can take on new challenges, including the intimidation of candidates, which has already been mentioned. I associate myself with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Spen Valley (Kim Leadbeater), who is no longer in her place.

Finally, if I may, I will squeeze in an ask of the Government on sodium valproate. There are many victims of that scandal, and they are waiting for a compensation scheme. That should have happened under the last Government, but the chaos that we have had for the past 14 years meant that it did not. I hope that those

[Cat Smith]

who have campaigned long and hard over many years for justice following that scandal will get it under the Labour Government.

I recognise that the Government have hit the ground running. The King's Speech is full of legislation that I look forward to supporting to bring about the change that the country voted for.

8.32 pm

Paula Barker (Liverpool Wavertree) (Lab): In responding to the Gracious Speech, I will focus on just a couple of issues. I welcome all new hon. Members to the House. It can be a lonely place at times, but there is always someone on hand to help, so please reach out, and remember: it is a marathon, not a sprint.

Since I was elected in 2019, I have called for far-reaching measures to address the housing crisis and the worsening homelessness emergency. It will reassure the communities that I represent that they now have a Government who understand the scale of that endemic problem and, crucially, are willing to take action to remedy it. I wholeheartedly applaud the commitment to planning reform that will get Britain building again—building the homes that we need now, and on which future generations will rely to get on in life. It is right for any serious Government to be ambitious in that regard.

I welcome the Chancellor's commitment in her first speech to setting up a taskforce to tackle stalled housing schemes across the country, beginning with a focus on Liverpool central docks. That is a positive sign of things to come. Solving the housing crisis demands that we be bold. Over 14,000 people are on the housing waiting list in Liverpool, so it is imperative that we push the agenda for social and council housing. Homes for social rent must be front and centre of our plans to give every household—every family—the dignity of a home that they can call their own. That would provide a long-term vision to address the burgeoning numbers of households languishing in temporary accommodation, which at the last count shamefully included over 145,000 children.

I ask the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to work with our councils to better regulate the proliferation of houses in multiple occupation in concentrated areas across our cities and towns, particularly in the north of England, where it is commonplace for whole communities to be disrupted. In my own constituency of Liverpool Wavertree, some streets have over 50% of houses as HMOs. With that come environmental issues, such as rubbish and noise, and it has ripped the heart out of communities while landlords—the majority not from the city—make massive profits. Year after year during the last Parliament, we heard repeated promises from the previous Government to bring in their Renters (Reform) Bill. However, the last Conservative Administration shamelessly caved in to the landlord lobby on their own Benches, so it falls to this Labour Government to make it happen.

The private rented sector has lost all sense of proportion. Section 21 evictions must be ended: they pile greater pressure on local councils, and I know through my office's casework that no-fault evictions are worsening the homelessness emergency. I will be urging my colleagues on the Front Bench to make our renters reform Bill as comprehensive a package as possible for a beleaguered

generation of renters who have lived the consequences of the cost of living crisis as much as any. The report led by Councillor Cowan, the leader of Hammersmith and Fulham council, should provide the basis of our plans: a national landlords register to enforce standards, rent stabilisation measures, and a holistic approach that prevents landlords from moving to short-term holiday lets or making a mint from the provision of temporary accommodation. All this will not be easy. The Prime Minister has long talked of smashing the class ceiling, and I very much look forward to supporting him and the Deputy Prime Minister in ensuring that we deliver the bold measures that are required to address the housing and homelessness crisis, and so much more.

As someone who was privileged to be a trade union official before entering this place, and who is still a very proud trade union member—I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests—I am delighted with our plans for workers' rights and a new deal for working people that is long overdue.

As a proud Liverpool MP, I also want to say how delighted I am that a Labour Government will deliver the long-awaited Hillsborough law. I pay tribute to the resilience of the families who lost loved ones, the survivors and my city as a whole; they have never given up their fight for truth, justice and accountability. Of course, I also pay tribute to my neighbour and right hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool Garston (Maria Eagle), who has spent decades in this place fighting to get that law on to the statute books. That shows what tenacity can deliver.

We have heard much this evening about cross-party work, and it would be remiss of me not to also place on record my thanks to the former right hon. Member for Maidenhead, who will go to the other place, Theresa May. She was pivotal in the Hillsborough inquiry as well, and for that I place my thanks on record. Like so many Scousers, I had family and friends at Hillsborough on that fateful day in April 1989; fortunately, they all came home, but 97 innocent men, women and children did not. This law is a valuable step in obtaining justice for the 97.

8.38 pm

Olivia Blake (Sheffield Hallam) (Lab): I associate myself with the comments that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool Wavertree (Paula Barker) has just made about Hillsborough. I am pleased to see this incredibly important legislation being brought forward by this Government, after a long journey for justice.

I congratulate everyone who made their maiden speech today—those speeches have been absolutely fantastic, and show the calibre of the people who have been elected to this place. I also welcome back my fellow returning MPs, some with a larger break than others; it is great to see those people back in this place, with all their depth of experience.

We stand at a pivotal moment. I could talk in great depth about all the wonderful Bills that are in this King's Speech, from the new deal for working people to the English devolution Bill, the education Bill, the children's wellbeing Bill, rights for renters and the updating of the Mental Health Act 1983, which is desperately needed. But the climate and nature crisis is already impacting our lives, so I will focus my remarks mainly on that, and slightly on transport.

Particularly in the global south, but increasingly in the UK, we are living through the consequences of climate catastrophe, and it is the poorest in society who are often suffering the worst of its effects. The new agenda for this Government is a key opportunity to get back on track and prove, as we did once previously with the Climate Change Act 2008, that the UK can be a true climate leader. The measures outlined in the King's Speech underscore the Government's commitment to tackling the climate emergency. They are not only words, but the green shoots of change, ending 14 years of Conservative-led indifference and even hostility to environmental policy—14 years that saw an effective ban on onshore wind, a standstill on solar and little to nothing on tidal or green hydrogen.

While other countries around the world have been racing ahead to capitalise on the jobs and wealth that the clean energy transition offers, Britain has been missing out, but today marks a new chapter. The Government's plan to make Britain a green energy superpower, achieving clean power by 2030, is ambitious and represents a clear commitment to reducing carbon emissions and embracing renewable energy sources. It presents a significant opportunity to stimulate economic growth, address the cost of living crisis and make Britain energy independent, with Great British Energy, owned by the British people, ensuring that families and businesses benefit from permanently lower bills through a zero-carbon energy system. It is right that that will be funded by closing loopholes in the windfall tax on oil and gas companies. They have reaped enormous profits not because of their innovation or investments, but because of the energy shock that has burdened families across the country with higher prices. The Great British Energy Bill will end the Conservative dash for oil and gas, deliver real energy security and put the UK on a path to being a clean energy superpower, with a just transition for workers.

However, we also need to look beyond our energy system. After 30 years of privatisation, Britain's railways are in crisis, with passengers facing late, overcrowded and cancelled services, pushing many commuters on to our roads instead. For many communities, the buses are no better. In Sheffield Hallam, this was one of the issues raised with me in almost all the canvassing sessions I did. There are often reductions in bus services. They are cancelled because the bus fleet is not fit for purpose, or the routes are closed and there are no alternatives. It could not get any worse, really, and that is why the Government's passenger railway services Bill and better buses Bill are vital. I will be pleased to champion them from the Back Benches.

The plan to take train operating companies back into public ownership will end a decade of Conservative chaos, develop the infrastructure we need to green our society and make the transition to net zero, and give people a real alternative to getting into their cars. New powers to allow communities to take back control of their buses will put decision making back into their hands, where it belongs—not with the private companies, but with the people the transport system should be serving.

Greening our transport and energy infrastructure is central to meeting our climate ambitions, but we cannot effectively combat the climate crisis without simultaneously protecting our vital ecosystems, restoring habitats and safeguarding our species. The climate crisis has accelerated

the nature crisis, with the UK now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. We must and can do better. Protecting nature must take equal priority to cutting emissions. For too long, Britain's coasts, rivers and lakes have been polluted by illegal sewage dumping, and it is therefore right that this Government are committed to placing failing water companies under special measures, withholding bonuses from executives who pollute our waterways and bringing criminal charges against persistent lawbreakers. I am very pleased to see that there will be strengthened regulation, which is very welcome to many in my constituency who have campaigned on this issue.

I also look forward to seeing plans to empower local government and communities through the English devolution Bill, especially on how they can play their part in tackling both the climate and nature emergencies, and what local government needs to fully tap into the potential of the green economy and green jobs for our region. Tackling the climate and nature emergencies is not an issue for the future; we are already facing the effects in the here and now. Our role is to act immediately to prevent the most damaging effects, and I welcome the measures set out in this King's Speech. They must be the springboard for a wider debate on greening our communities, revitalising our ecology and building a greener, cleaner and nature-positive economy that works for everyone.

I have one final plea to my Front Benchers on an unrelated topic, which is care for people who have undergone miscarriage. I campaigned very hard on that in the last Parliament, and I will continue to raise it in this place to make sure that there is proper provision for women's health and that everyone gets the support they need.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Siobhain McDonagh): I call Chris McDonald to make his maiden speech.

8.45 pm

Chris McDonald (Stockton North) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Speaking as a new Member, I would like to add my congratulations to those hon. Members who have made their first speech today on the confidence and clarity with which they were delivered. They really have set a worryingly high standard.

The Gracious Speech contained many fine Bills, but for me it was much more about a new way of governing: a Government of service, of change and of action. I know that this will be warmly welcomed by my constituents in Stockton North. The reason for that could be seen quite clearly Saturday last, when I was in Durham playing my cornet at the Durham miners' gala. The village banners of the gala display the pride and hopes of the community. Behind me was an image of the great miners' leader, Peter Lee, and emblazoned on the banner was the slogan:

"The past we inherit, the future we build."

This belief in a positive future, one that we can determine ourselves, has instilled in me the tenacity and determination to stand here. It is also characteristic of the people I represent in Stockton North.

Stockton North is an industrial place, and the people are industrious people. Stockton was home to the world's first passenger railway, opened in 1825 with one of

[Chris McDonald]

Britain's most famous engineers, George Stephenson, driving the engine. The line that he built is now used by the nearby Hitachi Rail factory to transport new locomotives on to the national network. Stockton thrived on industries such as steel and shipbuilding, and whenever I hear the chimes of Big Ben ring out across Westminster, I am reminded that the first bell for the Elizabeth Tower was cast in Stockton North, in Norton.

John Walker, a pioneer of chemical engineering, invented the friction match on Stockton's famous high street in 1827. However, it was in the 20th century, with the dawn of the chemicals industry, that the neighbouring town of Billingham began to boom with the manufacture of ammonia for explosives and fertiliser.

This industrial progress continues, with Billingham and Stockton home to catalyst technologies and life sciences, with new investments planned in sustainable aviation fuel—which also featured in the Gracious Speech—and small modular reactors, carbon capture and hydrogen projects. During the covid pandemic, vaccines were developed in Oxford but manufactured in Billingham. From Wynyard to Port Clarence, we have the skills and expertise to deliver this Government's industrial strategy and attract the private sector investment that our new national wealth fund demands. We know that Britain is great at industry, which keeps us safe, generates fairer economic growth and creates new opportunities for our young people. That is sorely needed in Stockton North, where a third of our children live in poverty. We will seize this chance to help the people who need it most.

It is an honour for me to have the good fortune to succeed Alex Cunningham. Alex is as well regarded in Stockton North as he was in this House, and it has been a joy for me in the last week to meet Members here who know Alex and describe his fundamental decency and fairness as a person—values that we would all like to see more of in political life. Alex has given great service over four decades as a local councillor and Member of Parliament. He held a series of shadow ministerial positions, but his personal priority was always to promote opportunities for young people through education and health. These interests were combined in what I know Alex himself sees as his greatest achievement: the extension of restrictions on smoking to include private vehicles where children are present, a measure that will undoubtedly save the health of so many young people. I am sure he was delighted to see the smoking measures proposed today.

In a slight break with tradition, I would also like to acknowledge the former Member for Langbaugh, the late Ashok Kumar. Ashok and I were both chemical engineers in the steel industry before being elected to Parliament. We worked together at British Steel's research laboratories in Redcar, which I know is why many of my colleagues over the last week have been referring to me as the steel guy. At that time, I was fresh out of school and Ashok was taking a rest between general elections. I recall that he devoted as much of his time at work to political campaigning as he did to steel research.

Ashok was a well-loved colleague, and I took the opportunity a few years ago to re-establish the Ashok Kumar fellowship, which is a collaboration between the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology and the Institution of Chemical Engineers to promote understanding between engineers and parliamentarians.

I believe that I have the privilege of being the first and only fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering to sit here, and bringing together the two worlds of engineering and politics in the area of industrial strategy is something that I hope to do usefully in my time here.

The people of Stockton North recognise the value of service, and we count many service members, veterans and cadets among our number. As a signatory of the armed forces covenant, I welcome the measures to establish an armed forces commissioner. I personally feel a great responsibility of service as a Member of this House, and my concern is to ensure that this Parliament delivers a noticeable improvement in the lives of the people of Stockton North. At the time of my election, I invited my constituents to bear that commitment in mind when they come to judge my performance at the next general election, and I now make that pledge here, again.

8.51 pm

Dan Carden (Liverpool Walton) (Lab): It is pleasure to follow such an accomplished maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North (Chris McDonald) and to have listened to a little bit about the Durham coalfields, which I know well—I am happy to say that I have been to Peterlee numerous times. I think we in this place can all learn from those wonderful words:

“The past we inherit, the future we build.”

I extend my words of congratulations to my hon. Friend to the 300-plus new Members who have been elected to this Chamber. I know it is daunting turning up to this place, but they should spare a thought for some of us who are also overwhelmed by the sheer number of new colleagues we have. It is wonderful to see so many new faces and I look forward to having those individual conversations and getting to know many people.

Finally, a word on good friends from all sides of the House who I have had the privilege to work with over recent years and who have sadly lost their seats. They will no longer be in this place but I will maintain those friendships beyond this Chamber.

I welcome the first Labour King's Speech in a long time. In particular, on behalf of my constituents, and having represented the Anfield stadium for the past seven years, I welcome the Hillsborough law to support bereaved families who fight for truth and justice. It will mean so much to so many people. I also welcome the new deal for workers, the repealing of the Tories' anti-strike legislation and the return to some collective bargaining, which will be a good thing in the social care sector and which I hope to see go further in future years.

I welcome bringing our railways back into public ownership; fixing our national health service; new protections for renters, including an end to no-fault evictions; and the introduction of Awaab's law. I welcome investment in clean energy to create the good, unionised jobs of the future; bringing back community policing; and devolving greater power to communities, cities and regions. After 14 years out of power, I am determined to contribute to the success of a Labour Government in their mission to rebuild and renew our country. I have said for long enough that the only thing that will change the lives of the people I represent is a Labour Government.

I am delighted to have been returned to this place by the people of Liverpool Walton to speak on their behalf. I am grateful for the trust they have placed in me. Our community is one of the most deprived in the UK.

Unemployment and child poverty are twice the national average. Too much of our housing is poor-quality private rented accommodation. The situation is scandalous and worsening, and rents are still rising faster than wages. Those rents must be controlled. Tenants must have greater protections. Streets are blighted by the conversion of homes into multi-occupancy housing and short-term rentals, and landlords can hike up rents on a whim and cast entire families on to the street. Labour must make security of housing a reality for all through council housing, social rents and home ownership. Across Liverpool Walton, our once vibrant high streets have too often turned into rows of boarded-up store fronts. Some of this can be put down to 14 years of Tory failure, but it feels like we have had decades of decline in local communities.

The reality is that the last 40 years have bequeathed greater inequality and despair. There are economic problems that this Labour Government can and will put right, but the challenges will stretch well beyond that. The last 40 years have brought social disintegration and, to put it simply, unhappiness. People are living much more isolated, lonely lives, with rising mental ill health and greater drug and alcohol addiction blighting our communities. Social media is changing how we behave and interact. The bad behaviour, selfishness and criminality of some—which too often goes unchecked—makes the lives of others miserable.

Those are the fundamental issues: a loss of meaning, a loss of relationships, and a loss of love. Those are the social ills that cannot be fully expressed in the cold language of economic indicators. They are the products of a rotten social and economic model, which has eroded our sense of social solidarity and flung us into an epidemic of loneliness, anger and despair, and it's real.

We have ended up with an economic and political approach that focuses almost entirely on the individual, while the family, community, church and trade union are diminished. Society is disintegrated, leaving only the state and the market. I believe that what is valuable is what we do together in society when people come together. That is the treasure that we need to value and nurture. We must accept that the Government—the state—cannot and should not deliver the solution to all of our problems, but it can shape how we live.

Labour in government should limit the worst excesses of market greed. By that, I mean the extortion of the working-class communities I represent by corporations and landlords. People know when they are being ripped off. Labour in government should limit the most damaging elements of the 24-hour global consumer capitalist world that we find ourselves thrust into, with little choice, to give us back what is really important in our lives, whether that is time and space for our families, our friends and social pursuits, dignity at work and dignity at home, or space for local trades, producers and shops to flourish.

Labour in government must also bring about an end to the unaccountable state. With the Hillsborough cover-up and the Windrush, Post Office and contaminated blood scandals, the story is always the same. Liverpool has a rich history of trade unionism and working-class struggle, a fierce sense of independence and a unique character. We know that our community is full of potential waiting to be unlocked. I hope that this Labour Government will do just that.

8.58 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): First, I thank my constituents in Sheffield South East for re-electing me for the ninth time. I sort of remember making my maiden speech many years ago along with the challenges that posed and the nervousness, so I pay great credit to all colleagues on both sides of the House who have done that today so ably and so well.

I was reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Hallam (Olivia Blake), who spoke earlier, that there are now six Labour MPs in Sheffield. I am also reminded that, of those six Labour MPs, I am the last man standing. That is the change of balance in the House, with five women MPs for the city, and that is absolutely great. We will always continue to work together as colleagues on behalf of our city. There have been comments about the famous Sheffield tea room meetings where we come together once a month—that is quite famous.

I want to draw particular attention to issues that were raised when I was Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee in the last Parliament. There are so many issues in the King's Speech that I would like to mention, but the first is the commitment to build 1.5 million new homes. Housing has been a passion of mine ever since I was chair of the housing committee in Sheffield back in the 1980s. Clearly, we have major problems—all MPs can refer to people without homes in their constituency, or who are living with in-laws, in shared accommodation, or inadequate homes with families living in upper-floor flats.

We need to get Britain building again—it is good for the homes that people need and it is good for growth. It is an important part of our growth agenda. It is good that we will make local authorities set targets to be achieved in their local plans—not advisory ones as the previous Government did under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023—and it is absolutely right that targets have to be met. However, if we are to build 1.5 million homes, we must recognise that the private sector and private developers will not build them. We will not hit that target without a substantial contribution from councils and housing associations—that is right in terms of the numbers. It is right also to address the housing needs of those who cannot afford to buy, and who need a decent home to rent.

My passion is to get Britain building, but building social housing as well. In trying to achieve that, it is important to draw attention to a particular development in my constituency. It is right that we build on brownfield sites as far as we can. The idea that the planning changes that the Government are proposing will somehow mean that central diktat determines where houses are built is not the case. Local plans will still determine where houses are built at local level. The Sheffield local plan gives priority to building around the city centre and in the old industrial areas in my constituency.

The first development, called Attercliffe Waterside, will see up to 1,000 new homes built by a private developer Citu. The first 350 have just been given planning permission—credit to Sheffield city council, the mayor of the combined authority Oliver Coppard, and Homes England. First, the development will not create section 106 funding to help with affordable housing. The mayor will have to put in £4 million to build on a brownfield old industrial site. These sites are more expensive to build on—we must understand that. It is right that we

[Mr Clive Betts]

build on them as a priority, but they are more expensive. We need that contribution from the mayor, and he has put it in. Secondly, there will be no social housing on this site, as a purely commercial venture. Homes England has been extremely good; it will provide some subsidy so that a significant number of those homes will be social housing, which a housing association will manage. That is great, but it will cost money.

I hope the Government will listen and work in partnership with the 20 local authorities that have just written to them to ask for a joint agreement on how we build social housing in this country. They are saying, “Look, we are going to have challenges not just about building the homes but about net zero, building safety and decent homes standards. We need the Government’s commitment that the funds will be available to deliver on those homes.” Otherwise, as a Select Committee report said a few months ago, all the money that should be going to build new homes will go on those other priorities, because the first duty of landlords in the social housing sector is to look after their existing homes and tenants. It is important that the Government listen to that and have a long-term clear view of what rent policy will be, because that is where most of the income will come from to fund social house building. It is right that the Government revisit the unfair decision about debt in social housing that was put on councils in the 2010 settlement by the coalition Government, because that burden stops councils from going ahead and doing what many of them want to do. There are issues that I hope the Government respond positively to.

I must mention local authorities. Given my passion for local government and devolution, I welcome what the Prime Minister said about devolution—not just to mayors but to local councils. I welcome his recognition of the current challenges of financing local councils. There have been eight councils with section 114 decisions in the last year. Of those, 19 were given permission to borrow capital in order to fund revenue. That is not sustainable in the long term. Yes, there is a recognition there, but can we really carry on with local government finance based on a council tax system that looks at 1991 valuations and, according to the last Secretary of State Michael Gove, is regressive? I am not sure that a Labour Government can sustain that. I hope for proper discussions with local councils about a new system going forward.

Finally, on my own constituency and going for growth, I want to see early decisions about small modular reactors. We can build those in Sheffield: Sheffield Forgemasters is in my constituency. Hydrogen should be supported—that is in the proposed legislation—and ITM Power, a major hydrogen company, is in my constituency. I welcome the work being done with Boeing by the University of Sheffield on sustainable aviation fuels. Boeing is now developing research into light-bodied frames for aircraft. Again, that is a contribution to jobs, helping to equalise wages and living standards in my constituency, and to net zero. I hope to see those measures come forward as a matter of urgency.

9.5 pm

Sarah Edwards (Tamworth) (Lab): It is wonderful to be here following the first King’s Speech under a Labour Government since 1950. When Labour was elected to

form this country’s next Government, it was on the promise of change. Today’s King’s Speech wastes no time in doing just that. The package of legislation announced today places growth at its heart, with an ambitious plan to raise living standards for working people.

I welcome the announcement of a crime and policing Bill. I know how important it is to my constituents in Tamworth that they feel safe, but under the Conservatives Tamworth’s police front desk was shut down. The very notion of community policing was developed by former Tamworth MP and Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, so it is with great irony that local residents are currently without a public police station. I have written to the Home Secretary since her appointment and look forward to working with her to make that a reality.

I visited the Central England Co-op in my constituency to speak to staff and USDAW—Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—officials about the abuse they face on a daily basis, the consistent threat of violence from shoplifting, and that, as a business, the Co-op lost more than £70 million due to shoplifting last year. I am therefore pleased that the Prime Minister has wasted no time in delivering a Bill that will establish a new criminal offence of assaulting shopworkers.

In Tamworth, the Holiday Inn has been used for asylum purposes for years and the simple reality is that residents want their hotel back. Tamworth benefits from local tourism and, as I have said before in this Chamber, the Holiday Inn should be for holidays. I therefore welcome today’s announcement that the border security, asylum and immigration Bill includes plans to end asylum hotel use. It was great to host the then shadow Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley (Yvette Cooper), in Tamworth earlier this month to brief her on the situation. I look forward to working with her in the coming weeks to discuss the issue in greater detail.

My constituency of Tamworth and its villages is at high-risk when it comes to flooding incidents, but amidst chronic underfunding of the Environment Agency we remain fundamentally unprepared to tackle it. Labour has set out plans for a flood resilience taskforce and I look forward to presenting it with the findings of the flooding summit I hosted in March this year. The summit, which was well-attended, explored new ways of working and key strategic approaches by local, regional and national stakeholders.

All around us we can see that the NHS is struggling. Over a decade of austerity and consistent de-prioritisation by Conservative Governments have seen local people hit hardest. I have had too many conversations with constituents waiting months for appointments or cancer screenings, or in mental health crises and unable to get support. In my own constituency of Tamworth, the closure of the George Bryan Centre means my constituents need to travel many miles to access mental health support. Many constituents will also welcome the children’s wellbeing Bill, which promises to raise standards in education, and requires schools to co-operate with local authorities on special educational needs and disabilities inclusion. It is great to see, on day 13 of a Labour Government, that we are already addressing this important issue.

Many people in Tamworth have had to endure the cost of living crisis that they did not ask for, nor do they deserve. While Tamworth’s incredible network of community groups has gone above and beyond to fill

the gap in support, the reality is that the Conservative Government's mismanagement of the economy hit the most vulnerable people in my constituency the hardest.

We must take action to address soaring rent prices. During the last few weeks, my team has still been supporting people who have been made homeless or who are at risk of being made homeless. It is fantastic to see the Prime Minister put forward a renters' rights Bill that gives greater rights and protections for millions of people who are renting and unable to afford their own home, and that it includes proposals to abolish section 21 no-fault evictions. That should have been done a long time ago.

It was great to open the Business Commission West Midlands event in Parliament last week, along with the chamber of commerce. I will be working alongside businesses, just as I have been over the past eight months, to spearhead investment and the strategic priorities to support the town centre economy and local businesses. Tamworth has a strong entrepreneurial spirit, and it also has huge untapped potential. The Prime Minister's new English devolution Bill will see towns and cities given enhanced powers and duties in respect of strategic planning, local transport networks, skills, and employment support, enabling them to create jobs and improve living standards. That is important to me, because, Madam Deputy Speaker, Tam-worth it!

Ordered, That the debate be now adjourned.—(Gerald Jones.)

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Health Services: Rural Areas

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Gerald Jones.)

9.11 pm

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Let me get my specs on properly, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have a wonky leg that sticks out sideways.

I must say at the outset that I have heard some excellent maiden speeches today. It is a bit worrying to hear such good maiden speeches, because it makes one feel somewhat mundane in comparison. Let me also welcome the Minister to her place: it is a pleasure to see her sitting opposite me.

This Adjournment debate is the first of the new Parliament, and I am grateful to the Speaker for granting it. It concerns a topic that is important not only to my constituents in the highlands, but to constituents in every rural area in the country. I thank the Minister for her attendance, and look forward to hearing what she has to say. I hope that the debate sets the tone for how a Government and an Opposition can work together to meet the needs of every citizen of the United Kingdom, no matter where they live.

I recently had the great honour of being re-elected to represent Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, which is now the largest constituency in the United Kingdom. It measures a staggering 11,798 sq km, more than half the size of Wales. We are here tonight to discuss the adequacy of healthcare services in rural areas, and for fear of being predictable I am afraid to say that the health services in the highlands are not even faintly adequate. I recognise, of course, that health is devolved, but 17 years of centralisation have wreaked havoc on my part of the world. Health services have been stripped back and gutted, leaving my constituents with access to far too few local services.

Let me begin with general practices. In Scotland, we have seen changes in vaccination services because, in an effort to reduce GPs' workload, GP contract Scotland removed their vaccination capabilities. That is of huge concern to crofters in my constituency who might cut themselves on a piece of barbed wire and need a tetanus vaccination as quickly as possible. The same goes for anyone in need of shingles, flu, covid or travel vaccines. They must travel a staggering 70 miles or more to the nearest A&E, where they will face further waits owing to backlogs resulting from heavy workloads.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I want to keep the tradition alive, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is my first intervention during an Adjournment debate in the new Parliament.

I commend the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone) for raising an issue that is very important to me and to my constituency. I also congratulate him on his excellent victory in the polls: he has done exceptionally well. I hail from a rural constituency where my own doctor has to service a huge number of people, and the inadequacy of help for rural constituents is abundantly clear to me. Does the hon. Member not agree that the current postcode lottery must end, and that access to GPs, physiotherapists, nutritionists and mental health services for farming and other rural

[*Jim Shannon*]

communities must be at least on a par with those in cities and large towns? Why should those in rural communities be second-class citizens in their own country?

Jamie Stone: The hon. Member makes his point with his customary charm. It is no wonder that he is so well liked in this place, because he always speaks for his constituents.

I have talked about the delays in vaccinations, which also applies to the lifesaving vaccinations that babies must have. The Scottish Government take a one-size-fits-all approach that, frankly, does not work in remote rural areas such as mine. The retention and recruitment of GPs and other healthcare workers is crucial, but poor wages and terms and conditions, and a lack of proper travel reimbursement, all lead to a general impression that the game is simply not worth the candle. That is why we are missing key workers and doctors, and why we are paying through the nose for locum and temporary staff. Madam Deputy Speaker, can you believe that NHS Highland has spent £21 million on locum staffing in the past year? That is almost 3% of its entire budget—an eye-watering sum. Could that money not have been spent much better, for example on care homes, hospitals or pain clinics that have been forced to close?

Sarah Dyke (Glastonbury and Somerton) (LD): I apologise for coming a bit late to this debate. Primary care is asked to do more in rural areas than in urban settings, piling pressure on GPs, pharmacists and dentists, yet they struggle to recruit staff, as my hon. Friend said. A dental practice in Street, in my constituency, has been without an NHS dentist on its books for 18 months, despite its best efforts. Does my hon. Friend agree that we must explore ways in which we can incentivise healthcare professionals to practise in rural areas?

Jamie Stone: I absolutely endorse that. I am glad that I said in my opening remarks that my experience in a very remote part of Scotland applies to other parts of the United Kingdom. What we have just heard proves that this is the case.

NHS Scotland has halted all new builds and repairs to health centres across the entire country, which is another problem for healthcare. I have said already how big my constituency is. Just by commuting or doing house visits, healthcare staff will rack up 3,500 miles easily, because the distances are so great. At that point, their reimbursement per mile is more than halved, which does not encourage people to get involved. It is, in fact, discrimination against healthcare professionals who live in rural communities. Training is overwhelmingly based in urban areas, and there is very little incentive to get people to come and work in rural areas. Other factors, such as a lack of housing and job opportunities, feed into this problem.

There is another issue I want to raise: the lack of women's health provision, which is pretty severe. In my maiden speech in 2017 I spoke about the need to restore maternity services to Caithness. Seven years later, that is more important than ever. Caithness general hospital used to have a consultant-led maternity service, which meant that expectant mothers could have their babies locally in the far north of Scotland. It was downgraded

when I was my constituency's Member of the Scottish Parliament. At that time, I had more influence and I got it restored. Since then, however, the maternity services have been downgraded again, and there appears to be no movement from the Scottish Government to reverse that. I wish that some Members from the party of the Scottish Government were present today.

Let me give an example of what this situation means: pregnant mothers have to make a 200-mile round trip in the car to deliver their babies. Imagine a trip like that in the middle of winter, and on rickety-rackety roads in the highlands. In 2019, a pair of twins were born—one was born in Golspie, and the other was born 50 miles away, in Inverness. It is a miracle that those children survived, and that neither a mother nor a child has perished. I have been calling for a safety audit all along, but there has never been one. We know perfectly well what the result would be: the arrangements would be deemed unsafe, if not a breach of human rights.

It is not just about maternity services; women's health has been removed from the far north. A routine trip to see a gynaecologist and get a diagnosis for a life-threatening ovarian cyst, or for endometriosis, means travelling the same huge distance—if a woman is lucky enough to get an appointment before her condition has progressed too far for her safety. I wonder what we can do to encourage healthcare professionals to relocate to remote areas, because the health and wellbeing of their wives and daughters must surely be a factor when they consider moving.

For children growing up in the far north, it is no better. The waiting list for child and adolescent mental health assessments is three years. For neurodevelopmental screenings—for the diagnosis of dyslexia, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and so on—it is four years. That is the majority of their time at school. One family I spoke to during the election had waited 13 years for a diagnosis. That is a disaster. Dentistry has already been mentioned, and we know that intervention is crucial for long-term dental health.

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and I apologise to him for being caught out by the early start of this Adjournment debate. Does he agree that it would be really helpful if the new Government achieved a quick win to raise morale in rural areas where services have been so depleted for so long? This applies in west Cornwall, for example, where we cannot call on services from the north or south or west very easily. In those areas, as in others, we have a dentistry desert and the NHS and care services are experiencing their biggest crisis in their history. What we need, for example, is for the West Cornwall hospital to re-establish the urgent treatment centre overnight. Those kinds of quick wins could achieve the lifting of morale within the service and start moving things forward and upward from where they are at present.

Jamie Stone: My hon. Friend makes a good point, and I shall touch upon his sentiments in my closing remarks.

As many in the Chamber know—perhaps new Members do not—I myself am a carer: I am a carer for my wife. So I am very happy that my party has put carers at the top of our agenda. My party leader has spoken about being a carer himself. We desperately need reform, and

I believe that the carers allowance should be introduced at a higher rate. In a way, I am declaring an interest here, in that I am an unpaid carer, but we have to look at this. I was recently informed of a constituent who was moved from one care home to another one 123 miles away in the highlands. That is a three-and-a-bit-hour journey each way for the loved ones to go and visit that old man. We can see why this is not great for morale.

I am from the highlands. I love my native highlands and I care passionately about where I come from, but I think that we need urgent intervention. This is my ask of the Minister. I recognise the nobility of the intent to address these problems at UK level, and I look forward to working with the Government in these endeavours, but the fact is that there is not the delivery under devolution that there should be. I am sorry that no Scottish National party Members are here. I am a committed devolutionist. I was part of the Scottish Constitutional Convention and my name is on the claim of right for Scotland, yet I find it incredibly disappointing that the outcomes are a lot worse than they were.

When I was in government in the Scottish Parliament, in coalition with the Labour party, we saw progress between 1999 and 2007, when the SNP came in. Now we see that things have gone backwards. This was the main issue on the doorsteps in Scotland, so I hope that the Labour Government can work hard at improving things. I ask them in a cordial way to do everything that can be done to improve the relationship with the Scottish Government, and perhaps encourage the Scottish Government to look at best practice in the rest of the UK and adopt that. I am not talking about hypothecation or about unrolling devolution, but by working together perhaps we can achieve something.

Also, it would be great if we could encourage NHS England to work closely with NHS Scotland, because it is complete and utter nonsense that people who could cross the border and get treatment have been prevented from doing so by bureaucracy, sometimes by politics of the not-so-clever sort, or by the computer systems not matching. That is nonsense. If someone living in the south of Scotland can get their operation done in Newcastle, let us just go for it.

I look forward to a Labour Government giving extra money to the health service, and I am sure they will. We will be looking closely at how that happens. There will, of course, be Barnett consequentialists that will put that money into the devolved Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. I hope that the UK Government will look closely at where those Barnett consequentialists go. Will they go where we would hope they would go—namely, to improve the health service, to shorten waiting lists, to sort out the nonsense, and to give the standard of health service that my constituents and I believe everyone in rural parts of the UK is crying out for?

9.24 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Karin Smyth): It is a privilege to be the first Minister of this new Labour Government to respond to an Adjournment debate. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone) for raising this important matter and, indeed, for his kind words.

I hope we can begin this Parliament as we mean to go on, by being candid about the formidable challenges that the NHS faces. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said on his first day in the job, the NHS is broken, and it will be the task of this Government to build a new NHS for the future. That means the NHS in our rural and coastal areas no less than the NHS in our towns and cities. I agree with the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on that point.

Facing these hard truths does not take away from the heroic efforts of the people working in health and care, who have done their utmost in incredibly difficult circumstances. We all owe them, on behalf of our constituents, a debt of unending gratitude.

Instead, we want to focus our attention on what needs to be done, including early action to improve access to primary care, dentistry and dental health services in particular. We await the conclusions of a thorough investigation undertaken by the distinguished surgeon Lord Darzi to properly understand the scale of the problem. The Government will then begin work on an ambitious programme of action—a 10-year plan to put the NHS back on its feet. It is a privilege to be part of a Labour Government who are committed to fixing the NHS and making it fit for the future.

As the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross said, the Department's responsibility stretches only to the NHS in England. Healthcare is devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and it will continue to be so.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on being first out of the traps to secure this debate on behalf of his constituents. As a committed advocate for his constituents in one of the most rural parts of Scotland, he has a deep understanding of matters affecting rural communities, as we have heard this evening. He also has a deep understanding of care, about which I have often heard him speak in this Chamber. It is good to see him back again doing just that.

I cannot speak in detail about the NHS in Scotland, of course, but I can speak about many of the common issues affecting access to care that are relevant to rural constituencies in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. I know how rural the hon. Gentleman's constituency is, and I know the particular challenges that creates in accessing GPs, dentists and emergency care, and in accessing women's health and maternity services—an issue he has been passionately raising for so long. Maternity services are a problem across the United Kingdom, but I accept the examples he outlined.

Few places in England are as remote as the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but I am very aware of similar issues affecting more rural areas near my Bristol South constituency. We have heard from the hon. Members for Glastonbury and Somerton (Sarah Dyke) and for St Ives (Andrew George) about morale and the difficulties we face in the south-west.

I hope that, in the years ahead, we can share and learn from one another across all of our borders. In many rural areas, the challenge of improving access to services is compounded by travel times and by the recruitment and retention of staff. We must recognise the importance of designing services that reflect an area's particular circumstances, which is a growing challenge. As the chief medical officer has pointed out in his

[Karin Smyth]

reports, people are moving out of towns and cities to coastal, semi-rural and rural areas as they age. At the time that people are most likely to need care, they are increasingly living in the places where it is most difficult to provide that care.

In England, integrated care systems will have a key role to play in designing services that meet the needs of local people. To do this, they will need to work with clinicians and local communities at place or neighbourhood level. We know that excellent primary care is an essential foundation for improving access, tackling the root causes of poor health and tackling problems early so that people remain in better health for longer, and hopefully do not need to access secondary and tertiary care at the same level. That is why Labour has pledged, as part of our health mission, to train thousands more GPs and bring back the family doctor, and that applies to all the nations.

We are also doing more to use the transformative power of technology. There is enormous potential in ideas such as virtual wards, which allow care to be delivered in people's own homes. Such models of care can have disproportionate benefit in areas where rurality is a barrier to care.

Equally, we are committed to seeing the NHS app reach its full potential under the new Government. We understand that some people will need support to use that technology and we are aware of the challenges of rural broadband, but we are committed to making the benefits accessible to all.

Andrew George: The Minister has committed the new Labour Government to address those issues, but will she specifically address the matter of the two coroners' reports into avoidable excess deaths as a result of very long waits for emergency services in Cornwall? They were never addressed by the previous Conservative Government. The reports were about not just the hours spent waiting—sometimes elderly, frail people were on the floors for 10 or more hours—but the fact that sometimes 20 or more ambulances greeted patients when they arrived at the emergency department. Two coroners' reports were sent to the then Secretary of State, but there was never an adequate response. I very much hope the new Labour Government will review the failings of the previous Government and address those very serious concerns, which affect many other rural areas.

Karin Smyth: I am aware of the issues facing the south-west and, when in Opposition, I spoke in the local media about some of the ambulance challenges.

I am not aware of those reports, but if the hon. Gentleman writes to me with the details, I will happily look into the issue and get back to him.

We also recognise the additional cost of providing services in rural areas, for example in travel and staff time. That is why the funding formula used by NHS England to allocate funds to integrated care boards includes an element to better reflect needs in some rural, coastal and remote areas.

The NHS faces significant challenges. It needs fundamental reform. The Prime Minister is personally committed to resetting the UK Government's relationship with devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. I echo the Prime Minister's words today about our commitment to rural constituencies across the entire country and I hope we can work with hon. Members from across the House, including the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross.

Jim Shannon: I welcome the Minister's clear commitment to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—and particularly to Northern Ireland. Let me declare an interest: I am a member of the Ulster Farmers Union. I know that the Ulster Farmers Union back home, in conjunction with the NFU here, has been trying to work with the health service and with all those with responsibility in this area on the issue of suicides. Farmers mostly work on their own and suffer from anxiety and depression. They face pressures from finance and pressures from the bureaucracy that exists in farming. I know the Minister is compassionate and understanding—I mean that honestly. When it comes to addressing that issue, does she think that it must be done in conjunction with the farmers unions? Trying to work together to make things better must be a step in the right direction.

Karin Smyth: As ever, the hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. I shall certainly ask my colleagues in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs about that. His point is extremely well made. I know his constituency in Northern Ireland very well. Let me say that we are very committed to working with hon. Members across the House to share ideas. The hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross has put forward more ideas about how that can happen. I do not promise to implement all of those things, but I will certainly look at them. We want to work very closely across all jurisdictions so that we can make progress for all our constituents to improve the health outcomes across the four nations of the United Kingdom.

Question put and agreed to.

9.33 pm

House adjourned.

Petition

Wednesday 17 July 2024

OBSERVATIONS

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Recognition of Peter McLagan MP

The petition of residents of the constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk,

Welcomes that the temporary display “The Pioneers: The First Asian and Black MPs” has been moved to form part of the permanent display that is located in the Admissions Order Office Corridor; acknowledges the permanent recognition of these groundbreaking MPs;

regrets that permanently honouring them has taken so long; and further regrets that Scotland’s first mixed-race MP, Peter McLagan, who served the Constituency of Linlithgowshire from 1865 to 1893 and was the longest serving Scottish Member during the reign of Queen Victoria, is not included in “The Pioneers” display.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to act to ensure the omission of Peter McLagan MP from “The Pioneers” display is rectified at the earliest opportunity.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Presented by Martyn Day, Official Report, 29 April 2024; Vol. 749, c. 120.*]

[P002965]

Observations from The Leader of the House of Commons (Lucy Powell):

Art exhibitions within Parliament are the responsibility of the Speaker’s Advisory Committee on Works of Art. As such, a copy of the petition has been sent to the Committee for its consideration.

PETITION

Wednesday 17 July 2024

	<i>Col. No.</i>
LEADER OF THE HOUSE	1P
Recognition of Peter McLagan MP	1P

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons*,

**not later than
Wednesday 24 July 2024**

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