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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 4 July 2022

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

The Secretary of State was asked—

STEM Teachers: Disadvantaged Areas

1. **Claire Coutinho** (East Surrey) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to attract science, technology, engineering and mathematics teachers to disadvantaged areas. [900832]

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): From this autumn, the levelling-up premium will provide early career teachers in maths, physics, chemistry and computing with a bonus of up to £3,000 tax-free annually if they teach disadvantaged children in disadvantaged schools. That is in addition to tax-free bursaries worth £24,000 and tax-free scholarships worth £26,000.

Claire Coutinho: Maths skills are one of the surest ways to ensure higher future earnings for students, so I welcome this package; it is the right thing to do to try to get high-quality teachers into disadvantaged schools. I also support the specialist maths schools agenda, which ensuring that aim in a different way. Will the Secretary of State update the House on its progress?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the work that she does to promote maths to girls. I believe she was previously a maths captain—we have a lot to learn from her. We have three great specialist maths schools, with some of the best A-level results nationally. We are on track to have 10 regional maths schools by 2025, including one in Surrey.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Secretary of State agree that in order really to deliver this provision, we need partnerships with local and regional universities? Does it disturb him that some universities seem to want to go back to the past and only teach science and engineering, and not the arts and humanities? If levelling up is to mean anything, we need universities to be there for local communities.

Nadhim Zahawi: I know that the hon. Gentleman is passionate about the topic, including through his think-tank's work. He is right that universities, including the Open University, will play a key role. The work that I

have witnessed in the collaboration between further education and higher education—the fungibility of both together—in our institutes of technology is equally important to ensure that we produce different runways from which young people's careers can take off.

Further Education Estate

2. **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to upgrade the further education estate. [900833]

23. **Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the quality of further education buildings in England. [900856]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Alex Burghart): We want all colleges in England to be able to provide a world-class education, which is why we are delivering our manifesto commitment to offer £1.5 billion to upgrade the further education college estate over the next six years. We have surveyed the condition of FE estates—all colleges received their own survey—and we intend to publish a national overview of the results in the next academic year.

Peter Aldous: Significant investment has taken place and is taking place at East Coast College, with the energy skills centre in Lowestoft and the civil engineering and construction campus at Lound. However, a long-term strategic approach is required to ensure that local people have the full opportunity to acquire the necessary skills for the many jobs emerging in low-carbon energy along the East Anglian coast. Will my hon. Friend meet East Coast College and myself to go through its strategy and agree a plan for its implementation?

Alex Burghart: I thank my hon. Friend for his interest in this agenda. I would be delighted to meet him and his college.

Rushanara Ali: The match funding required for major works is unaffordable for colleges such as New City College. We have two of its campuses in Tower Hamlets, and the college no longer has the facilities to provide the education required for the modern workplace because of redevelopment costs. The maximum grant available through the FE capital transformation fund for this one college is £20 million, but the redevelopment work on the college's buildings is estimated at £85 million. Will the Minister meet me and the principal of New City College to discuss a way forward, and will the Secretary of State take a close interest in addressing this major outstanding issue for FE college funding?

Alex Burghart: I was delighted to visit New City College during Education World Forum week. I took a number of Education Ministers from across the world there to see its excellent facilities and the wonderful, world-class education it offers its students. I was pleased that it received, I think, £5 million in phase 1 of the FE capital transformation fund. We continue to be in dialogue with the college into the next rounds. I am obviously happy to talk to the hon. Lady and the principal at any time. We are committed to doing whatever we can to make the necessary upgrades and improvements to the FE college estate.

Mr Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Last week, Scottish schools broke up for the summer holidays, so I am sure that Members across the House will join me in thanking the staff for the work they have done and wish all the youngsters a very happy and safe summer holidays.

The Scottish Government have invested more than £800 million since 2007 on the further education estate in Scotland. An equivalent investment in FE in England would be £8 billion, not the £1.5 billion that the Government have committed. Can the Minister detail how the college estate in England will be brought up to the standard of the world class Scottish FE buildings without a far greater investment?

Alex Burghart: In our manifesto in 2019, we said that we would upgrade the FE college estate. We set £1.5 billion aside to do that. I am afraid that I am not in a position to comment on the condition of the Scottish FE estate. It may well be that the Scottish estate was in a considerably worse state of repair after several years of SNP rule.

Dorset Schools: Quality of Classrooms

3. **Chris Loder** (West Dorset) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve the quality of classrooms in schools in Dorset. [900834]

The Minister for School Standards (Mr Robin Walker): Improving the condition of schools is a priority for the Department, which is why we have allocated more than £13 billion for that purpose since 2015, including £1.8 billion committed this year. Dorset local authority was allocated £2.3 million to invest in maintained schools this year and there were five successful condition improvement fund projects approved.

Chris Loder: I hope I am not giving my hon. Friend the Minister a headache by keeping on reminding him about The Gryphon School in Sherborne, but it desperately needs its temporary classrooms to be replaced. I shall be grateful to hear from him on that. Furthermore, will he help me with Dorchester Middle School? The school, which is nearly 100 years old, has lodged a bid to replace boilers that do not work, and its bid for capital improvement funds has been rejected. Will he help me with expediting these issues?

Mr Walker: I know that my hon. Friend has passionately and repeatedly made the case to Ministers for investment in replacing temporary buildings at The Gryphon School. Nominations to the school rebuilding programme are being assessed, and we expect to confirm up to 300 schools this year. He will understand that I cannot make commitments to an individual school at this stage. I understand that the Dorchester Middle School submitted an appeal to its unsuccessful condition improvement fund application. All appeals are now being carefully considered, and we expect to announce outcomes shortly.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I know that schools in Dorset applied to the schools rebuilding programme. I know, too, that the Minister appreciates the importance of informing schools of their place on

the programme as soon as possible. However, Under-Secretary of State for Education Baroness Barran told me that schools will be informed later this year. Can the Minister say when schools in Dorset and Lydiat Primary School in my constituency will be told whether they will receive the money that they desperately need?

Mr Walker: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has also pressed the case for Lydiat Primary School previously. The Department has engaged with the school and Sefton local authority, and we are aware that it was disappointed not to be included in the first two rounds of the rebuilding programme. All local authorities, including Sefton Council, were contacted about how they can nominate schools for the next round. We do expect to announce schools that were successful later this year, but some of them will be informed sooner.

Affordable and Accessible Childcare

4. **Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that childcare is (a) affordable and (b) accessible. [900836]

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): We are committed to improving the cost, choice and availability of childcare. We have spent more than £3.5 billion in each of the past three years in the Department for Education on both education and tax-free childcare. On the childcare element of universal credit, we spend between £4 billion and £5 billion each year. Today, we have announced further measures to increase take-up of childcare support and to reduce the cost and bureaucracy facing both parents and providers.

Matt Rodda: The Secretary of State has described the Government policy very eloquently, but given the soaring cost of childcare and the enormous pressure on parents and, indeed, on the sector, would it not be so much better to introduce a childcare recovery plan to invest properly in the sector, giving it the resources that are needed and substantially increasing the funds available, rather than cutting costs and looking at staff to child ratios? Will he also look again at the funding of specific parts of the sector, such as the excellent maintained nursery sector; we have three excellent maintained nurseries in Reading. Will he also consider an independent review into this important sector?

Nadhim Zahawi: On the maintained nurseries, the hon. Gentleman is quite right. When I was children and families Minister, I saw the great work they do. We have announced £10 million of additional support for maintained nurseries. We are investing up to £180 million specifically on early years recovery to address the impacts of the pandemic. That includes £153 million investment in evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners, which are equally important for the sector, because, clearly it is a tight labour market at the moment.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State and his excellent Minister for their drive for quality in this sector. Those of us on the all-party parliamentary group on childcare and early education will study carefully the consultation put out today, but can the Secretary of State say what discussions he has had with Ofsted regarding the proposed changes to

staffing ratios in early years settings that we have heard about today, and when the Department might be able to publish further details of the wider package of childcare reforms that the Minister for Children and Families alluded to on Sky News this morning?

Nadhim Zahawi: Ofsted has been central to our work and we are consulting on the ratio issue that he mentions. We are also looking closely at childminders, a market that could do with some tender loving care at the moment, and seeing not only how we can help childminders to come into the sector by helping them with fees, but, once they have registered, how we ensure that inspections are proportionate and that they feel they are well rewarded for the work they do so brilliantly.

Mr Speaker: I call shadow Minister Helen Hayes.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): Instead of delivering meaningful reform of their broken childcare system, the Government have announced a consultation on allowing staff in early years settings to look after more children. Pregnant Then Screwed reports that four out of five childcare providers said that changing ratios would not be of any financial benefit to their organisation, and only one in 12 said that any cost savings would be passed on to parents. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that this proposal will make a meaningful difference to the cost of childcare for families—yes or no?

Nadhim Zahawi: If the hon. Lady reads the announcement and the case study we put forward, she will see that if the cost is passed on to parents, it is about £40. Crucially, however, it is not a silver bullet. This is part of a package of measures we are taking, which includes making sure that the 1.3 million people who are not currently claiming their tax-free childcare, where they can get 20% of their childcare or up to £2,000 paid for them, or the childcare element of universal credit, do so. That will make a real difference to them, as well as the consultation—bearing in mind that the consultation is also about ensuring that we continue the drive for quality that this Government have delivered in the childcare system and that safety is paramount for every child.

SEND Review

5. **Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that the SEND review provides adequate support for disabled children and their families. [900837]

21. **Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that the SEND review provides adequate support for disabled children and their families. [900854]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Will Quince): The special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision Green Paper aims to ensure that the right support is delivered in the right setting at the right time for all children and young people with SEND, including disabled children. To help to achieve that, it proposes nationally consistent SEND standards be set across education, health and care.

Mary Kelly Foy: At a virtual parliamentary event I hosted with the Disabled Children's Partnership a few weeks ago, I heard from parent carers who had to fight tooth and nail to get the right school for their disabled child, one that met their needs. I have also heard those experiences from constituents in Durham. That is why it is so concerning that in the SEND Green Paper the Government are proposing to stop carers' being able to specify a school for their disabled child, making the process even harder. Can the Minister outline how families with a disabled child will still be able to get the right education under this proposed policy?

Will Quince: I thank the hon. Lady for her question and I encourage everyone to take part in the SEND review consultation, which will expire on 22 July. The specific point she raises, on the tailored list of settings for parents in our proposal, is absolutely not about reducing costs; it is designed to support parents and carers in making an informed choice about which setting they would like their child to go to. I would be very happy to set out the policy in further detail in a meeting with her.

Grahame Morris: I commend research carried out by the Disabled Children's Partnership, whose findings are quite disturbing. It is essential that the SEND Green Paper that the Minister refers to improves accountability in the system. I have also consulted with my constituents in east Durham, who say that not only must disabled young people be able to get the support that they need and have a legal right to, but service providers must be held to account when they miss legal targets. What plans do the Government have to directly intervene when service providers do not meet their legal duties in respect of providing health, care and support to disabled young people in their care?

Will Quince: The hon. Gentleman is right that accountability has to be at the heart of our proposals, and everyone who provides support for children and young people with SEND has a responsibility to deliver it effectively. That is why we are creating new national standards, and creating local and national dashboards so that local authorities, organisations and those who provide SEND services can be held to account. He is absolutely right that accountability and redress mechanisms are at the heart of our proposals. This is a consultation, and it is live until 22 July. We are consulting because we genuinely want to hear the views of the sector and all the parents and carers of children with SEND. Of course I would be very happy to meet him.

Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): My hon. Friend the Minister knows my passion for looking after children and young people around the SEND sector. I welcome the Green Paper and the consultation, because this is a debate that we have needed to have for some considerable time. But the issue in Hertfordshire is going to be around capacity, because the special educational needs schools in my constituency, which are brilliant, are full and double-oversubscribed. This is not all about money—it is sometimes about how it is provided—but there are serious financial problems in Hertfordshire, and I wonder if he would look at that seriously for me.

Will Quince: My right hon. Friend has raised this issue with me on numerous occasions. He is a doughty champion for children with SEND and their parents and carers in his constituency. Of course I will look at this very closely. These are not just words: we are backing this up with £2.6 billion of capital funding to build about 33,000 or 34,000 SEND places across our country, including in Hertfordshire.

Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con): I thank the Minister and the Minister for School Standards, who jointly hosted a roundtable on how we better identify children with dyslexia. Can I invite the Minister to support my private Member's Bill, which will have its Second Reading on 16 September, to make sure that we get the data from early screening so that we can identify children's and young people's needs and give them the help and support, and the knowledge that they have that support, to enable them to go on to thrive, flourish and make the most of their lives?

Will Quince: I thank my right hon. Friend for all his work in this area. It was a pleasure to join him at that roundtable. We want all children with SEND to get the right support in the right setting at the right time. At the heart of our reforms is early identification, early diagnosis and early support. Of course I will continue to work with him as we develop our plans as part of the review.

Children who lose Parents to Suicide

6. **Dame Caroline Dinenage** (Gosport) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support children who lose parents to suicide. [900839]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Will Quince): Losing a parent to suicide is a devastating loss for any child. Our covid response provided additional information to schools on supporting pupils with bereavement, drawing on specialist provision where necessary. Senior mental health lead training will help schools to include this in their pastoral support. We are also expanding specialist mental health support, backed by an extra £2.3 billion per year.

Dame Caroline Dinenage: I was really disturbed to learn recently that there is evidence to suggest that children who lose a parent to suicide have a much greater risk of going on to take their own life as they grow older. With that in mind, I really want to put this on to the Minister's radar and ask whether any particular suicide bereavement training, resources or signposting is provided to the staff who work in education settings to help them to support children effectively after they lose a family member such as a parent or sibling to suicide.

Will Quince: I thank my hon. Friend for bringing this to my attention. It is indeed a worrying state of affairs. Senior mental health lead training, which is backed by an additional £10 million this year, supports schools to establish a whole-school approach to mental health and mental wellbeing and provide a supportive environment for children experiencing bereavement. This will also include how to identify where staff need further training to understand children's needs and offer support. However, I understand that we probably need to go further in this area, and of course I would be happy to meet her to discuss it at greater length.

Children's Social Care Services: Reform

7. **Ms Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): What steps he is taking to reform children's social care services. [900840]

20. **Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): What steps he is taking to reform children's social care services. [900853]

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): We will publish an ambitious implementation strategy later this year following three important pieces of work: first, the independent review of social care—the MacAlister review—and then the Competition and Markets Authority study on the children's social care market, and the national panel review of the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

Ms Brown: Many years ago, as a residential social worker, I saw the pain and despair of many children in care, alongside their talents, their ambitions and their amazing resilience. None of this has changed, and we know that the most dangerous and difficult time for a child is the transition into leaving care. Too often services are just cut off and the child is left adrift. Will the Secretary of State promise me today that he will look at what more can be done to provide care leavers with consistent, quality support during and beyond those transitions, enabling them to live with foster families into their adulthood?

Nadhim Zahawi: As the hon. Lady will know—and as she probably remembers from when I was Children and Families Minister—we launched the care leaver covenant, which has made a significant difference to many of our young people in care as they transition out of care. There is also the work we are doing to support those 300,000 families who need that additional support. The work of MacAlister will make a huge difference. The hon. Lady knows that we have “staying put” and “staying close” to help those young people as they transition through, but I give her a pledge that we are serious about implementing the MacAlister review.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): This weekend, as the Secretary of State will have seen, the Swedish Government announced a review into the profit motive in children's education. Can he confirm, perhaps with yes or no, that the profit motive must be taken out of the care of our most vulnerable children?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's question. Part of why I mentioned the Competition and Markets Authority review to make sure that the system is working properly is that it is something I am concerned about. I would focus on profiteering rather than profit, because I think people will want to go into this sector to help children, and I do not have a problem with their making a profit. It is excessive profiteering that I am certainly concerned about.

Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): Councils from across the country continue to send children and young people on out-of-area placements to Blackpool, often with good reason—to keep those children safe—but they do not notify Blackpool Council or Lancashire constabulary that these children are in the area. Often we find out when it is too late and something

has gone wrong. What more can the Government do as part of their review of children's social services to make sure that out-of-area placements made by councils are communicated to the host areas' statutory agencies?

Nadhim Zahawi: My hon. Friend asks an important question, and he will know that we are looking at how we help local authorities to commission and buy places much more efficiently with the regional care co-operatives. There is also the work of the MacAlister review, after which hopefully out-of-area placements will become a rarity, rather than where we are today.

Literature Taught in Schools

8. **Nick Fletcher** (Don Valley) (Con): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the variety of literature taught in schools. [900841]

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): The national curriculum states that pupils should read a wide range of books, poems and plays to appreciate our rich literary heritage and to develop a love for literature, as I did as a teenager. That includes pre-1914 contemporary prose, poetry and drama, Shakespeare and seminal world literature. Schools have freedom to select texts meeting those criteria.

Nick Fletcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that caution is needed with books that encourage a child to question their biological sex and to believe they were born in the wrong body because of gender nonconformity and not conforming to society's stereotypes? Parents should be able to see what is being shared with children, whether in lessons or the school library.

Nadhim Zahawi: I want to be clear: parents should know what their children are being taught in school. There are clear requirements on schools about providing parents with information about their school's curriculum. We appreciate that parents have particular concerns about gender nonconformity, which is why we are developing very clear guidance for the frontline for schools to be able to deal with that issue.

Student Mental Health

9. **Dean Russell** (Watford) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help support students with their mental health. [900842]

The Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan): I have been relentlessly focused on this area, allocating £15 million to student mental health services to support the transition from school to university via the Office for Students. I have worked with the Office for Students to deliver and to keep student space and with the Department of Health and Social Care. I held a summit just last week with the Minister for Care and Mental Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan), investing £3 million in bridging the gaps between NHS and university services.

Dean Russell: During Prime Minister's questions recently, the whole House and the Prime Minister joined in wearing blue ribbons as part of the anti-bullying campaign for the Diana Award. This week I am writing to all

schools in Watford to raise awareness of an anti-bullying roundtable I will be hosting for students and teachers to share their experiences of tackling bullying. Will my right hon. Friend share what other measures the Government are taking to tackle bullying and to support students' mental health more broadly?

Michelle Donelan: My hon. Friend has done an exceptional job of caring for his Watford constituents' mental health, and I am sure that all hon. Members can get behind and copy his first aider programme. Bullying can have long-term effects on mental health. Between 2021 and 2023, the Department is providing more than £2 million to organisations, including the Diana Award, to support schools to tackle bullying.

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): One in six kids in my constituency struggles with their mental health; it is a deeply concerning situation. What plans does the Minister have to increase specialist mental healthcare support in every school, so that all kids in my constituency have access to the support that they need?

Michelle Donelan: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that this agenda is incredibly important, and the Government care passionately about it. As a ministerial team, we are focused on supporting mental health and wellbeing. We are funding training for senior mental health leads in two thirds of state schools and colleges by March 2023 and in all by 2025.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): If I may, I start by offering a warm welcome to students from Myton School in my constituency, who join us in the Gallery.

In a recent survey by the mental health charity HUMEN, 57% of students said that they had access to university mental health services, while the charity Mind reports that one in five students has been diagnosed with a mental health condition. The Minister was appointed two and a half years ago. Can she honestly say that she has successfully dealt with the crisis on our campuses?

Michelle Donelan: We have, of course, had a pandemic in that time. The Government have ensured that we place mental health at the top of the agenda, and we work in partnership with universities to deliver those services. A summit that I held with the Department of Health and Social Care last week shows that we are working in a joined-up way to ensure that no student falls between the cracks.

Technical Qualifications

10. **Gareth Davies** (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to improve the quality of technical qualifications. [900843]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Alex Burghart): We are reforming technical education to ensure that all post-16 students have access to technical options that support progression and meet employer needs. That means that we are creating a generation of technical qualifications designed with employers that will give students the skills that the economy needs.

Gareth Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that robust technical qualifications, together with fantastic new facilities, such as the new institute of technology at Grantham College, mean that we can finally dispel the myth that a degree is the only path to success in our country?

Alex Burghart: That is absolutely right. I was delighted that Grantham College got £3 million to upgrade its facilities. My hon. Friend is right on the button to say that it is not just “degree or bust”, as it was once described by the Opposition. It is now not just about getting 50% into university and 50% into work; there is a third way called apprenticeships, which are the best of both worlds and lead young people into a new way of work.

Colleges and Employers: Collaboration

12. **Jerome Mayhew** (Broadland) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help facilitate collaboration between colleges and employers. [900845]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Alex Burghart): The roll-out of new local skills improvement plans will forge new relationships between employers and the providers of skills to ensure that we have not only the right qualifications but the right qualifications in the right places.

Jerome Mayhew: The Government envisage as many as 600,000 heat pumps being installed every year, yet heating companies in my constituency are struggling to train or recruit sufficient staff for that growth sector. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a real opportunity for further education colleges to collaborate with local businesses and provide that training?

Alex Burghart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Local skills improvement plans, drawn up by employer representative bodies, will start to bring about that collaboration. There are already excellent training options for aspiring heat pump installers, such as the level 3 heat pump engineering technician apprenticeship or the T-level in building services engineering for construction—both of which are backed by Government funding.

Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab): The fantastic Luton Sixth Form College in my constituency is successfully offering BTECs for biomedical science. What is the Department doing to promote that qualification with universities, medical colleges and employers, so that more BTEC students can become the much-needed doctors that we need them to be?

Alex Burghart: I thank the hon. Lady for her question. As she will know, we are currently reviewing level 3 qualifications. The overlap list was published a couple of months ago, and we will be responding to it in the new year. We are going through technical qualifications at the moment to make sure they provide students both with a route into work and with experience while they are studying for their qualification. That is what T-levels are all about.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): Entirely rightly, we are getting more youngsters and young people into training in technical subjects, but at a recent meeting with Warwickshire College CEO Angela Joyce, I learned that

it is a real challenge to find lecturers to teach those subjects. What is my hon. Friend doing to persuade businesses that it is in their own interests to release some of their people into colleges to do some of that training?

Alex Burghart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. These closer collaborations between employers and providers are going to make sure that we have both the workforce and the experience in colleges to give students the skills that the economy needs.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): Nine out of 10 T-level providers have failed to meet even the Government's own modest recruitment targets, and an *FE Week* investigation found that employers' refusal to offer work placements was cited as a key reason for that failure. Labour wants T-levels to be a success, but courses in crucial areas such as digital, health and science have the lowest enrolment, and employers and students are being failed. We know that the Secretary of State wears the T-level badge with great style, but does he actually understand why the policy is failing? Can the Minister assure the House that, in 2022, the Government will meet the enrolment targets that have been set?

Alex Burghart: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support for T-levels in principle. T-levels are going extremely well, and we have very good uptake. The first year of T-levels was conducted in perhaps the harshest circumstances imaginable during covid, but thanks to the hard work of my officials and the hard work of principals, we managed to get almost all students—well over 90% of students—their work placements. If we can do it in the conditions of covid, I think we can do it at other times.

Children with SEND: Provision of Support

13. **Sarah Green** (Chesham and Amersham) (LD): What steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) identification of and (b) provision of support to children with SEND. [900846]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Will Quince): We are currently consulting on the special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision Green Paper. This includes our proposal to establish a single national SEND and alternative provision system, setting nationally consistent standards. It will set out how needs should be identified and assessed, and the appropriate provision should be made available to meet those needs.

Sarah Green: I thank the Minister for his answer. I have spoken to multiple parents in my constituency whose disabled children are entering the summer holidays without knowing where they are going to be in September or whether the support they need will be in place because of a lengthy delay for an appointment with an educational psychologist. While I welcome the Government's announcement about increasing funding for educational psychologists, the 2023 intake is too late to help young people who need this support now. How do the Government intend to tackle the backlog in this support and ensure that the SEND Green Paper addresses the funding gap in disabled children's services?

Will Quince: The SEND Green Paper will go some way to addressing that issue. I thank the hon. Lady for her question; she is right to say that educational psychologists play a critical role in identifying need and advising on appropriate support through their statutory role in the education, health and care plan process. Since 2020, we have increased the number of educational psychologists and the trainees we fund to more than 200 from 160 per annum, and we recently announced that we are investing over £10 million to train over 200 more from September 2023.

Higher Education Courses

14. **James Grundy** (Leigh) (Con): What progress he has made on improving the quality of higher education courses. [900847]

The Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan): For the first time, universities will be subject to stringent minimum thresholds for student outcomes on completion rates and graduate jobs. Boots-on-the-ground inspections have begun, and through our transparency drive to give students all the information that they need and a focus on participation and outcomes, we are driving out the pockets of poor quality in our world-leading higher education sector.

James Grundy: Would my right hon. Friend congratulate Leigh College in my constituency on becoming a campus of the Greater Manchester Institute of Technology, offering the opportunity to study degree-equivalent STEM—science, technology, engineering and maths—courses to local students and bringing £13 million in educational investment to the local borough?

Michelle Donelan: I know how hard my hon. Friend has campaigned for that investment. The Greater Manchester Institute of Technology, once open, will play a critical role in filling the local skills gaps in key sectors such as construction, digital and advanced manufacturing, as well as in getting local people high-paid local jobs.

School Budgets: Impact of Inflation

15. **Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What assessment his Department has made of the impact of inflation on school budgets. [900848]

18. **Holly Lynch** (Halifax) (Lab): What assessment his Department has made of the impact of inflation on school budgets. [900851]

19. **Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): What assessment his Department has made of the impact of inflation on school budgets. [900852]

The Minister for School Standards (Mr Robin Walker): This year core school funding increased by £4 billion, which is a 7% per pupil boost in cash terms. I recognise the pressure that rising inflation has created. We are constantly considering what further support we can provide schools to reduce their costs, and any additional support will sit alongside our range of school resource management tools, to help schools save on regular purchases and reduce non-teaching costs.

Dame Diana Johnson: I recently visited Hall Road Primary School, which was built in the 1920s. It is in a disadvantaged part of Hull, but it provides an excellent education to local pupils. The headteacher told me that rising costs in energy were really hitting his limited budget for the school. Is the Minister willing to meet me to discuss what emergency funding could be given to the school to help it, and also so that I can lobby for a new school building?

Mr Walker: As I have mentioned a number of times, the school rebuilding programme will be making announcements about schools that need that, and of course I would be happy to meet the right hon. Lady and hear about the particular conditions in that school. I recognise that much of our school estate faces the challenges of aging buildings, and it is important that we continue to invest to support schools where they can spend to save.

Holly Lynch: I have spoken to local headteachers who report that due to inflation, staffing costs have increased by 12%, with gas costs increasing by 20%, and electricity by 30%. One headteacher said,

“please ask the Secretary of State what am I supposed to cut in order to meet inflation costs: the mental health first aider we’ve had to recruit because of the backlog at CAMHS, or the resources we’ve had to put into a community kitchen because so many children were going without meals? Should I turn off the heating in the winter, or simply cut teaching staff?”

What would the Minister like me to say to that headteacher?

Mr Walker: It is important that we invest to support schools. That is why we are putting in a £4 billion—7%—increase in the funding of schools. The Department also helps schools to get best value from their resources through a range of resource management tools. Those include recommended deals for energy, and support for schools in switching and entering new energy contracts. I encourage schools to engage with that programme, and of course we all want to ensure that those important priorities for schools can be addressed.

Ruth Cadbury: Schools are telling us that standstill funding, inflation and rising energy costs mean that they are having to limit the numbers of healthy options in schools meals. The Government agree with Labour that good healthy school meals are essential for children to thrive, especially as for more and more children the school dinner is their only hot meal. The Minister for Children and Families said about school meals that it was up to schools to “manage their own” individual budgets. Is that the best the Government can serve up?

Mr Walker: Our increases in school funding have been front-loaded to get money to schools rapidly, so this year core schools funding is increasing by £4 billion—a 7% cash boost per pupil. Our national formula also targets that funding towards areas of deprivation. It includes an FSM factor, which means that all pupils on free school meals will attract additional funding. The total amount allocated through deprivation factors in the national formula is increasing by £225 million, or 6.7%, in the next year, compared with last year.

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): The TS6 postcode area in my constituency is one of the most disadvantaged in Teesside, and there are not enough secondary school places for TS6 children this year, next year or the year

after that, with kids having to travel miles to the nearest school with capacity. While understanding the inflationary pressures on schools, will the Minister work with me to ensure that there are enough school places for young people in the TS6 area in the years ahead?

Mr Walker: The Department provides funding to local authorities in order to provide additional places where they are needed, and I would be happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss that further.

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): Inflation is hitting all schools and colleges hard across my constituency, but unlike academies, councils, schools and other education providers, colleges cannot claim back VAT on supplies and services. Will the Minister speak with officials in other Departments to consider that issue, and to ensure that colleges such as Derwentside College in my constituency are able to do the best they can with the price pressures they are facing at the moment?

Mr Walker: I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister for Skills will be happy to take up that issue on behalf of my hon. Friend. As Minister for Schools Standards, of course I want to ensure that our whole educational estate is able to invest effectively for the future.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): Skyrocketing energy bills are squeezing school budgets. The latest data suggests that prices have almost doubled in the first quarter of the year alone. With cost pressures putting children's learning at risk, will the Minister publish the results of his Department's survey on the experience of schools? When does he plan to bring forward the additional support that schools need to keep the lights on?

Mr Walker: The Department's analysis of the cost increases that schools face is published annually in the school costs note, and it includes the impact of inflation. That was last published in March, and we will continue to publish it annually.

More broadly, it is important to recognise the additional money—the £4 billion that I have talked about numerous times—going in this year on the back of published figures that show that, at the end of the last academic year, 97% of academy trusts were in cumulative surplus or breaking even, and 92% of local authority maintained schools were in that situation. That was, in both cases, an improvement on the year before.

Topical Questions

T1. [900857] **Kate Osamor** (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): On 7 June, day two of Arriva's bus strikes in Leeds, a group of year 10 pupils at the John Smeaton Academy in Leeds faced a dilemma. They had an exam, but their school bus was not running. What is more, they live in a hotel 4.2 miles from the school—that is because they are resettled Afghan refugees. They woke up very early and walked the 4.2 miles to school so that they could sit their exams. Those children are exemplary students.

They are very welcome in Britain, and their example should inspire us all and shame those whose striking has jeopardised young people's futures.

Kate Osamor: The Secretary of State has suggested that it would be unforgiveable for teachers to go on strike. What is unforgiveable is that teachers' pay has fallen by a fifth in real terms in the past 12 years of Conservative rule. At the same time, they have been crushed under an unsustainable workload, hurting mental health and wellbeing. It is no wonder that seven in 10 have considered quitting in the past year. Will he commit to giving teachers the above-inflation pay increase they so richly deserve?

Nadhim Zahawi: I do not think that any teacher would want to strike after the damage that covid did with students being out of school. In my evidence to the pay review body, I talked about wanting to deliver almost 9%—it was 8.9%—for new teachers this year and a 7.1% uplift next year to take their starting salary to £30,000 a year. My recommendation for more senior teachers was 5% over two years.

T4. [900860] **Gary Sambrook** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): The Minister will know that I have been hugely concerned about the state of special educational needs and disabilities services in Birmingham for quite some time, and the recent damning report only confirms the fears of parents whose children are on long waiting lists for education, health and care plans, and concerns about staff being told that they are too busy to respond to emails. Will the Minister assure me and parents and children back home in Birmingham that he will be doing everything possible to ensure that SEND services, which look after our most vulnerable children, are improved in Birmingham?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Will Quince): I certainly agree with the SEND commissioner's recommendations for Birmingham City Council to take responsibility for its SEND provision and rapidly make changes for improvement. I will of course continue to work closely with the commissioner and the council to monitor progress, and the Department will not hesitate to intervene further if Birmingham does not deliver on its plan to implement real lasting change. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will hold it to account.

Mr Speaker: We come to the shadow Secretary of State.

Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): Last week, the Secretary of State's flagship Schools Bill was left in tatters as he pulled 18 out of 69 clauses. Will he explain whether that was because he was bamboozled by his officials, he did not understand his own legislation, or he planned it all along? Or was it just the incompetence that we have all come to expect?

Nadhim Zahawi: At least I am not missing in action. If the hon. Lady had looked at the detail of my White Paper rather than attempted to play politics with it, she would know that I always promised a review of clauses 1 to 18 because we are taking what is in contract with multi-academy trusts and putting it in statute. I have

now launched that review to ensure that we get it right so that clauses 1 to 18 come to this place and the Bill gets through to deliver the outcomes that we all want to see for all children.

Bridget Phillipson: That really is quite hard to believe.

Parents will know that the cost of care is skyrocketing, yet even the Children's Minister himself—the Under-Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for Colchester (Will Quince)—admitted that the changes the Government are considering are

“not going to significantly change costs”.

Labour has already set out how its children's recovery plan would tackle this vital issue and provide immediate help to families now. What will it take for the Secretary of State to find some fresh ideas that actually address this growing crisis?

Nadhim Zahawi: The hon. Lady again misses the point. The package is not just about the ratios. It is about looking at how we encourage and grow the childminder market, how we ensure the 1.2 million parents who are eligible to get tax-free childcare make that claim and, of course, how we support teachers, both in our brilliant maintained nurseries and across the system, to do much more for the children we want to see them deliver for.

T6. [900862] **Dr Neil Hudson** (Penrith and The Border) (Con): Currently, 16 to 18-year-olds must legally continue education or training but are not entitled to transport. That penalises young folk living in rural areas such as Alston Moor, where the nearest college is 20 miles away and public transport is poor. I have started a petition calling for fair post-16 transport. Does the Minister agree with my petitioners that transport should not be a barrier to accessing education? Will the Government address the problem through legislation?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Alex Burghart): I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He will know that it is local authorities, rather than the Department for Education, that have responsibility for transport to education. I understand that Cumbria County Council already provides some support for travel to college for students who are disadvantaged. It is also possible to top that money up with our 16 to 19 bursary, but I am happy to discuss the matter with him further.

Mr Speaker: We now come to SNP spokesperson Carol Monaghan.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): The number of graduates owing more than £100,000 in student loans has gone up by more than 3,000% in a single year, with over 6,500 graduates now having six-figure balances. Next year, with inflation, things could be even worse. Will the Secretary of State detail what urgent action he is considering to tackle the huge levels of graduate debt?

The Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan): As the hon. Member will know only too well, we responded to the Augar report in full a few months ago. We tried to get the right balance in who pays, between the graduate and the taxpayer, so that we have a fair system in which no student will pay back more in

real terms than they borrowed. This Government are focused on outcomes, making sure that degrees pay and deliver graduate jobs.

T8. [900864] **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): It is now over a decade since I worked with the new Conservative North Lincolnshire Council to introduce the Imagination Library free book gifting scheme for all under-fives. Now, with nine out of 10 local children signed up and nearly 1 million books delivered in that period, our year 1 phonics screening shows that children who receive the free books are doing better at school than their peers who do not. Will the Secretary of State, or any Minister, engage with my local council to look at the benefits of the scheme more widely?

Nadhim Zahawi: Indeed, the Secretary of State will engage with my hon. Friend on his passion for this subject. He knows we are investing £17 million in the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme to improve language skills in reception-age children who most need that help. I would just like to also take this opportunity, because I know—

Mr Speaker: Order. Come on, I've got to get through these questions. I call Mike Kane.

T2. [900858] **Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): The brilliant Sale High School in my constituency is in desperate need of refurbishment. To that end, I have been working with local partners to put a deal on the table. With the help of the Minister in the other place, the deal went to the Department's playing field strategy committee in June. Will the Minister please apprise the House of the outcome?

The Minister for School Standards (Mr Robin Walker): I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has been pressing my noble Friend in the other place on this matter. The case for the high school did not go to the playing field panel in June, because queries requiring further information from the applicant were raised by the Department's design team. The applicant has been fully updated on the request and the information required. The case should now be going to the panel in September and I will ensure we update him at that stage.

Mr Speaker: I call Robert Halfon, the Chair of the Select Committee on Education.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I hope my right hon. Friend will see this book I have here, “The Children's Inquiry” by Liz Cole and Molly Kingsley, about the damage to children during lockdown. The number of ghost children is still rising: it has risen by 100,000 to 1.7 million absent children. I know my right hon. Friend set up the Attendance Alliance Group, but the fact is that we need to get those children back to school, and the numbers are rising. What will he do to ensure those children get back to school in September?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful to the Chair of the Select Committee. Those are not just ghost children; they are flesh and blood. We must make sure that we do everything in our power to get them back into school. The national register will identify where those children are, so that we can really focus on that.

T3. [900859] **Abena Oppong-Asare** (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): Many of my constituents who are in the UK legally and have lived in this country for many years are denied access to student finance because of unnecessary and unfair residency rules. Many applicants find it difficult to provide the evidence required, and Home Office delays mean that some people cannot even apply in the first place. Will the Minister please look into that issue and see whether any changes can be made that could help with student finance, particularly when it comes to eligibility rules?

Michelle Donelan: I am more than happy to meet the hon. Member, but at the heart of our system are fairness and ensuring that our policy and rules are straightforward. I am more than happy to explain that to her.

Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con): Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating the team at Penketh High School on its ever improving standards? Ofsted recently improved its rating of the school, there was the sports gold award last week, and year 9 student Leon Stretton has signed for Warrington Wolves—a huge success in the town. However, the school's problem is the poor state of its estate. Will my right hon. Friend look carefully at its recent application to improve the standard of the SEND building?

Mr Robin Walker: I very much welcome the success of the school that my hon. Friend has highlighted and will be happy to meet him to discuss the issues further.

T5. [900861] **Ms Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): Our further education colleges in Newham give real opportunity to children from the second poorest part of the country, but now our colleges face increasing national insurance contributions and skyrocketing utility bills. What is more, pay increases may be essential for the recruitment and retention of school staff. What are the Government doing to engage properly with the Association of Colleges to keep these engines of social mobility and growth going?

Alex Burghart: The hon. Lady is absolutely right that FE colleges are engines of social mobility, and we are well aware of the pressures that they are under. We are engaging constantly with the Association of Colleges, principals and colleagues across Government to make sure that we can help them.

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that improving the quality and depth of technical qualifications is vital to our levelling-up agenda and also to helping everyone improve social mobility?

Nadhim Zahawi: Yes I do. The more runways that we can build from which people's careers can take off, the better.

T9. [900865] **Sarah Owen** (Luton North) (Lab): I am sure that I am not alone in hearing worrying reports of faith-based bullying and sexual harassment in schools. If this week has taught us anything, it is that we need to lead by example. Will the Secretary of State tell us when the Department for Education's own bullying and harassment policies were last reviewed and updated?

Mr Robin Walker: I recently spoke in a Westminster Hall debate on relationships and sex education, and I made it clear that we regularly review our guidance, both on keeping children safe in education and on safeguarding.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Do the Government share my concern at the injection of vast quantities of communist cash from countries such as China and Vietnam into our universities—Oxbridge colleges in particular? Will they set up a taskforce to examine the problem and make recommendations?

Michelle Donelan: We have recently added a further clause to our Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill to ensure that there is more transparency when it comes to the donations that our universities receive.

T10. [900866] **Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): The National Education Union has calculated that teacher pay has fallen by a fifth in real terms since 2010, while average teacher salaries are at their lowest in more than 40 years compared with average earnings across the economy. Despite that, the majority of teachers look set to be offered a 3% rise—a real-terms pay cut. Teachers in Durham deserve a proper pay rise. How on earth can the Secretary of State justify not giving them one?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. We will wait to see the work of the pay review bodies. We have submitted our recommendation, and we will wait to hear what they say about it.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): At a roundtable at Heathfield Community College last week, the Secretary of State's adviser and I heard a number of great ideas from a group of headteachers and governors. One was that there is surely a need for the proposed parents' pledge, to outline not only what parents can expect from teachers but what teachers can expect from parents. Would that idea help us to help teachers teach?

Mr Robin Walker: We want to ensure that every child across the country has a complete and well rounded education, receiving targeted support where needed. We have made the pledge to parents to make that happen. If a child falls behind in English or maths, they will receive targeted support to get back on track and parents will be kept up to date with their progress. We expect parents to engage constructively with schools and to give support in terms of both attendance and behaviour, which will of course maximise their children's opportunities.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): A total of 800,000 children, more than 35,000 of whom live in the north-east, are in poverty and are being denied free school meals owing to punitive, Government-imposed eligibility criteria. Despite cross-party calls for eligibility to be extended to all families on universal credit, the Government have refused. Why?

Will Quince: About 1.9 million children receive benefit-related free school meals, with provision supporting the most disadvantaged. Eligibility has been extended to more groups of children under this Government than under any other over the past half century, and that includes the introduction of universal infant free school meals and further education free meals.

Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con): With the school holidays cantering up to us, can my right hon. Friend confirm that helping parents with the cost of childcare is a key priority for his Department? What impact does he expect the decision to pay up to 85% of the cost of childcare for those on universal credit to have, as opposed to the 70% that was provided under the previous regime?

Nadhim Zahawi: The purpose of the important package announced today is to ensure that parents on universal credit, or the tax-free childcare element, claim what is rightfully theirs. We are spending between £4 billion and £5 billion on helping parents with childcare.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Ministers keep telling us that it is important for parents to claim the tax breaks for childcare. Last year the Government spent just £150,000 on advertising them, saving the Treasury £3 billion. What additional funding has the Department secured for advertising child tax credit spending?

Will Quince: The hon. Lady and I have discussed this before. Today's announcement was all about increasing accessibility, availability and affordability. We want to see an increase in tax-free childcare. There is going to be a big comms campaign, so watch this space.

Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con): At the YMCA young carers festival which was held at Fairthorne Manor on Saturday, I learned that there was no central Government guidance for schools on providing support for young carers. Attendance policies can have a detrimental impact on their education and mental health. How will the Minister bring central guidance to schools to help these vulnerable people?

Mr Walker: We are updating our attendance guidance, and I should be happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss further the specific issue of young carers. Having met young carers groups in my own constituency, I know how important it is to engage with them properly and effectively, and we should do that throughout our school system.

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): On Friday I visited Hartford Manor Primary School in my constituency. Like many schools up and down the country, it is suffering as a result of the escalating cost of energy bills. What are the Minister and the Department going to do about it, as a matter of urgency?

Mr Walker: As I have said many times already, we have put £4 billion in for next year. We want to work with schools to support them. There is support through our school resource management system, and specifically through the "Get help buying for schools" system. We will continue—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Did the hon. Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury) hear the answer?

Mike Amesbury: No.

Mr Speaker: Will the Minister repeat the answer? I could not hear it for the cheering when the Prime Minister came into the Chamber.

Mr Walker: I said that there was support through our school resource management system and "Get help buying for schools", and we will continue to support the sector and help it with the costs that it is facing.

Mr Speaker: That is great.

CHOGM, G7 and NATO Summits

3.33 pm

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement about the NATO, G7 and Commonwealth summits, held in Madrid, Schloss Elmau and Kigali respectively.

In the space of seven days, I had the opportunity to work alongside more than 80 Governments—nearly half the entire membership of the United Nations—and to hold bilateral talks with more than 25 leaders, ranging from the new Presidents of South Korea and Zambia to the Prime Ministers of Japan and Jamaica, demonstrating the global reach of British diplomacy and the value of our presence at the world's top tables.

Our immediate priority is to join with our allies to ensure that Ukraine prevails in her brave struggle against Putin's aggression. At the Madrid summit, NATO exceeded all expectations in the unity and single-minded resolve of the alliance to support Ukraine for as long as it takes, and to explode the myth that western democracies lack the staying power for a prolonged crisis.

All of us understand that if Putin is not stopped in Ukraine, he will find new targets for his revanchist attacks. We are defending not some abstract ideal but the first principle of a peaceful world, which is that large and powerful countries cannot be allowed to dismember their neighbours, and if this was ever permitted, no nation anywhere would be safe. Therefore our goal must be for our Ukrainian friends to win, by which I mean that Ukraine must have the strength to finish this war on the terms that President Zelensky has described.

When Putin claimed that by invading his neighbour he would force NATO away from Russia, he could not have been proved more spectacularly wrong, because the single most welcome outcome of the Madrid summit was the alliance's agreement to admit Finland and Sweden. I hope I speak for the whole House when I say that Britain will be proud to stand alongside these fellow democracies and reaffirm our unshakeable pledge to come to their aid and defend them if ever necessary, just as they would for us. We were glad to smooth their path into NATO by giving both nations the security assurances they needed to apply for membership, and when I met Prime Minister Andersson of Sweden and President Niinistö of Finland last Wednesday, I told them I was certain that NATO would be stronger and safer for their accession.

Before Putin's onslaught, both countries had prized their neutrality, even through all the crises of the cold war, and it is a measure of how seriously they take today's threat that opinion in Sweden and Finland has been transformed. It speaks volumes about Putin's folly that one permanent consequence of his attack on Ukraine will be a doubling of the length of NATO's border with Russia. If anyone needed proof that NATO is purely defensive, the fact that two quintessentially peaceable countries have chosen to join it demonstrates the true nature of our alliance.

Now is the time to intensify our help for Ukraine, because Putin's Donbas offensive is slowing down and his overstretched army is suffering heavy casualties. Ukraine's success in forcing the Russians off Snake Island by sheer weight of firepower shows how difficult the invader will find it to hold the territory he has overrun.

We need to equip our friends now to take advantage of the moment when Putin will have to pause and regroup, so Britain will supply Ukraine with another £1 billion of military aid, including air defences, drones and electronic warfare equipment, bringing our total military, humanitarian and economic support since 24 February to nearly £4 billion.

To guarantee the security of our allies on the eastern flank, NATO agreed in Madrid to bolster its high readiness forces, and we in the UK will offer even more British forces to the alliance, including almost all of our surface fleet. We have already doubled our deployment in Estonia, and we will upgrade our national headquarters to be led by a brigadier and help our Estonian friends to establish their own divisional headquarters. If you follow the trajectory of our programmes to modernise our armed forces, Mr Speaker, you will draw the logical conclusion that the UK will likely be spending 2.5% of GDP on defence by the end of this decade.

Earlier, at the G7 summit, the first full day of talks coincided with a Russian missile destroying a Ukrainian shopping centre, killing at least 18 people. This barbaric attack on an obviously civilian target strengthened the resolve of my fellow leaders to provide Ukraine with more financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic backing for, and I quote the communiqué,

"as long as it takes".

That is exactly the term later echoed by NATO. The G7 has pledged nearly \$30 billion of financial support for Ukraine this year, and we will tighten our sanctions on Russia. The UK will join America, Japan and Canada to ban the import of Russian gold, which previously raised more export revenues than anything else except hydrocarbons.

The G7 will devise more options for ensuring that nearly 25 million tonnes of grain, trapped inside Ukraine by Putin's blockade, reaches the countries that rely on these supplies. Just as the world economy was recovering from the pandemic, Putin's war has caused a surge in global food and energy prices, raising the cost of living everywhere, including here at home. The G7 agreed to

"take immediate action to secure energy supply and reduce price surges...including by exploring additional measures such as price caps."

We will help our partners in the developing world to meet their climate targets and transform millions of lives by constructing new infrastructure according to the highest standards of transparency and environmental protection. Through our Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, an idea launched by the UK at the Carbis Bay summit last year, we will mobilise up to \$600 billion of public and private investment over the next five years.

Many beneficiary nations will be members of the Commonwealth, and I was very pleased to attend the Kigali summit of this unique association of 56 states, encompassing a third of humanity. More countries are eager to join, and we were pleased to welcome two new members, Gabon and Togo.

It is an amazing fact that our familiar legal and administrative systems, combined with the English language, knock 21% off the cost of trade between Commonwealth members. It is because the Commonwealth unites that advantage with some of the fastest-growing markets in the world that we are using the sovereignty that the UK has regained to sign free trade or economic partnership

agreements with as many Commonwealth countries as possible. We have done 33 so far, including with Australia and New Zealand, and we are aiming for one with India by Diwali in October.

It is true that not every member of the Commonwealth sees Putin's aggression as we do, or exactly as we do, so it was vital to have the opportunity to counter the myths and to point out that food prices are rising because Putin has blockaded one of the world's biggest food producers. If large countries were free to destroy their neighbours, no Commonwealth member, however distant from Ukraine, would be genuinely secure.

The fact that, in a week, the UK was able to deal on friendly terms with scores of countries in three organisations shows the extraordinary diplomatic assets our country possesses. As we stand up for what is right in Ukraine and advance the values and interests of the British people, I commend this statement to the House.

3.42 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for the advance copy of his statement, and I welcome him back to these shores. They say that absence makes the heart grow fonder, so I wish him the best of luck in seeing if that works as a party management strategy.

It has been 131 days since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, 131 days of war at the heart of our continent, 131 days of Putin trying to make his neighbours cower and 131 days of brave Ukrainian resistance. I have always said that this House, and Britain's allies, must put aside our differences in other areas and show unity in our opposition to Putin's aggression. And we have done, driven by the inspiration provided by the people of Ukraine and the leadership and courage of President Zelensky.

As this conflict reaches its sixth month and drags on in eastern Ukraine, it is important that we do not think our job is done. Putin would like nothing better than for us to lose our focus, for the grip of sanctions to weaken, for military aid to Ukraine to dry up or for cracks to appear in the unity of his opponents. So I welcome the progress made at the NATO summit last week, and congratulate our good friends in Finland and Sweden on their formal invitation to join the NATO alliance, and of course Ukraine on securing its candidate status to join the European Union. I hope that these processes can be concluded as quickly as possible to send a clear message to Putin that his war has permanently changed the European landscape, but not in the way he planned.

I also welcome the commitment to strengthen our collective deterrent capabilities. I have seen at first hand how British personnel are working with other NATO forces to ensure that the collective shield that has protected us for three quarters of a century remains as strong as ever. So I welcome the agreement on the new NATO force model, ensuring that over 300,000 conventional troops will be at high readiness across Europe. Can I ask the Prime Minister how this agreement will affect British military planning and whether he believes our extra commitments can be met, given his cuts to UK troop numbers?

The commitment made at the G7 of further financial support for Ukraine is also welcome, as are plans to help Ukraine with post-war reconstruction through an

international conference. There can be no clearer case that aid spending makes Britain more secure and prevents the need for military spending in future, which demonstrates the folly in reducing our aid commitments at a time of global instability.

I am pleased that unity was on display at both the NATO summit and the G7 summit, but I am concerned about current unity within the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a valuable and important institution for this country. It is not just a symbol of our past; it is important for our future, providing us with influence in all parts of the world. But in recent years, there have been serious signs of strain. When many major Commonwealth countries abstained at the UN over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the summit should have been an opportunity to widen the diplomatic coalition against Putin. Instead, the Prime Minister waged a divisive campaign against the Commonwealth leadership that ended in a humiliating diplomatic failure, only illustrating his embarrassing lack of influence.

Instead of investing in aid that strengthens the alliance, the Prime Minister has cut it. Instead of upholding the rule of law that should define the Commonwealth, he reneges on treaties he has signed, undermining Britain's moral and political credibility, when we need our word to carry trust. My fear is simple: the vacuum we leave behind will be quickly filled not by those who share our values, but by those who seek to destroy them. We cannot let that happen in Ukraine. We cannot let that happen anywhere.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for the terms in which he, broadly speaking, has addressed the UK's recent diplomatic activity. I have just a couple of points to come back on. He talks about the UK breaking international treaties. I do not know what he is talking about there, but if he was talking about what we are doing in respect of the Northern Ireland protocol, that is not what is happening. We believe that our prior obligation, which I would have thought he supported, is to the balance of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. That is what we are supporting. He talks about the UK's ability to win people over. It was striking in the conversations I had with leaders from around the world how few of them, if any, raised the issue of the Northern Ireland protocol, and how much people want to see common sense and no new barriers to trade. What the UK is doing is trying to reduce pointless barriers to trade and one would have thought that he supported that.

On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's points about the UK's contribution to NATO and to the new force model, and whether that is sustainable, I suggest that Opposition Members should talk to NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg about what the UK is producing and committing—it is colossal. We are the second biggest contributor to NATO and the second biggest contributor of overall support for the Ukrainians, providing £2.3 billion in military assistance alone. We are also ensuring that our armed forces are provided for for the future, with £24 billion in this spending review—the biggest uplift in defence spending since the cold war. Defence spending is now running at 2.3% of our national GDP, which is above the 2% target. That is felt around the room in NATO; people know what the UK is contributing and are extremely grateful.

[*The Prime Minister*]

As for what the UK also contributes to NATO, under the new force model, we will contribute virtually all our naval forces. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman also knows, we are the only country to contribute our strategic independent nuclear deterrent to NATO. I still find it a sad reflection of the Labour party that, at this critical time, when Vladimir Putin is sadly using the language of nuclear blackmail, we are in a situation in which the principal Opposition party in this country still has eight Members on its Front Bench who voted to discard our independent nuclear deterrent, including the shadow Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). Apart from that, I welcome the terms in which the Leader of the Opposition has responded.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I very much welcome the Prime Minister's statement. I ask him: was there general agreement at all three summits that our fragile rules-based order is under threat, and that strategically we have entered a profound era of geopolitical change? I commend his efforts in Ukraine—it is a shame that other NATO countries have not lent as we have—but I encourage him to go further and secure a UN General Assembly resolution to create a humanitarian safe haven around the critical port of Odesa, so that vital grain exports can reach not only Europe, but Africa, to prevent famine there.

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend particularly for his point about grain exports. As he knows, the work is being led by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The UK is doing a huge amount to support but, as I have told the House before, we may have to prepare for a solution that does not depend on Russian consent, because that may not be forthcoming.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I thank the Prime Minister for the advance copy of his statement, and welcome him back from his travels around Africa and Europe. It is perhaps worth reiterating the support of all of us in this House for President Zelensky and Ukraine in their struggle against the war criminal Putin.

The scale and depth of the challenge facing our global community are self-evident: war in Europe, the return of soaring inflation, rising interest rates, and a cost of living crisis that is punishing people in the pocket. We are faced not just with one crisis; this is an accumulation of crises that needs, deserves and demands a collective response. At moments like this, solutions can only come from a co-ordinated effort. Efforts during the 2007 financial crisis and the co-ordination during covid demonstrate just that right across the world, and none of us should be in any doubt that the crisis that we are now in is every bit as severe, steep and deep as anything we faced at the time of the financial crisis.

I regret to say that so far the collective effort—that sense of urgency—has been badly lacking, particularly from organisations such as the G7. The response has been far too slow and far too small. Prime Minister, it is obvious that the G7 outcomes are nowhere near enough to combat the cost of living crisis that we now face. When can the public expect some leadership and action? When will we see a coherent, co-ordinated and credible

plan to increase energy supply, cap prices and drive investment to the global economy before recession becomes inevitable, or is the plan really to delay until the winter, when things will only get worse? Leadership now, in responding to supply shocks, will allow us to fight inflation. A failure to take appropriate action will expose us all to longer-lasting inflationary risks.

On Ukraine, can the Prime Minister go a little further and give us the outlook regarding what we will do to ensure that we can get grain out of Ukrainian ports? Four hundred million people worldwide rely on Ukrainian food supplies. This is now about stopping not just war, but famine.

I am sure the Prime Minister will agree that all these global efforts will work only if there is trust between global leaders. Can the Prime Minister therefore explain, in this moment of many crises, how breaking international law and threatening to start a trade war with our neighbours helps anyone?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should look more carefully at what the G7 produced in terms of the plan to cap prices for oil and gas and particularly to try to stop Putin profiteering, as he currently is, from his illegal war. There is a plan. I will not pretend that it is going to be easy, but we are doing as much as we can. We are certainly taking a lot of other action, for instance, to help countries around the world with access to the fertiliser they need. He is right to raise the issue of the 25 million tonnes of grain currently held hostage in Odesa. There is a plan to get that out. It is not easy. If he looks at the numbers, though, he will see that we are gradually getting more grain out of those Ukrainian silos and into Europe and into Africa, and we will continue to do that.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's final point about the UK and the so-called breach of international law, I repeat what I said to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition: what the countries around the world see is the UK offering consistent leadership in the matter of standing up for the rule of law and standing up against Putin's aggression. I promise him—that is what has been raised with me in the past 10 days.

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the leadership that he has shown in the past week and welcome his commitment to our Royal Navy forces being part of NATO. As the Defence and Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly starts its two-year investigation into the Russian maritime threat, does he see ongoing support of the Royal Navy in the long term, and what conversations has he had with other NATO allies to increase their maritime support for this vital mission?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his work for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, which was mentioned to me at the summit. I can tell him that the UK is leading the NATO alliance in providing for the new force model in our naval commitment, and we are trying to encourage others to do the same.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Further to the question from the right hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), the Prime Minister will know that time is running out to get grain to the hundreds of

millions of people who will be facing destitution and hunger, as the Secretary-General has warned. Can he tell us who will provide the security guarantees to Ukraine? The fear is that, if we open a sea corridor, the Russians will seek to use it to attack Odesa. Can he confirm that it is to Turkey that the world is looking to provide those guarantees, so the grain can get out before the moment is lost?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is completely right: the Turks are absolutely indispensable to solving this. They are doing their very best and I thank President Erdoğan for all the efforts that he is making. It does depend on the Russians agreeing to allow that grain to get out. The UK is offering demining facilities and insurance facilities for the vessels that will be needed to get the grain out. He is right about the urgency. We will increasingly have to look at alternative means of moving that grain from Ukraine if we cannot use the sea route—if we cannot use the Bosphorus.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Does the Prime Minister accept that, before there was a shooting war in Europe in the 1980s, it was right for this country to spend 5% of GDP on defence and, if he does, why does he think it is adequate for us to spend only half that percentage by the end of this decade?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has campaigned on this issue for years. I think we will have to spend more. Logically, Mr Speaker, if you protract the commitments that we are making under AUKUS and under the future combat aircraft system, we will be increasing our spending very considerably. What we want to do is to make sure that other allies are doing the same. That is most important. That is why Jens Stoltenberg is, we hope, going to set a new target and allow the whole of the alliance to increase its funding.

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): While the Prime Minister was talking about British values at three international summits, he was whipping Conservative MPs to vote to trash one of our greatest British values, the rule of law. While he was talking about increasing defence spending, he was ploughing ahead with plans to cut the British armed forces by 10,000 troops. While he was talking about the problem of global price rises, he was raising unfair taxes on millions of pensioners and families across our country. We are facing a domestic economic crisis and a global security crisis, and the Prime Minister is facing his own political crisis. Can he tell the House precisely what his plan is to take our country forward?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to tell the right hon. Gentleman, since he asks, that our plan is to help the people in this country with the cost of living, as we are, with £1,200 coming in to people's bank accounts this month, which we can do because of the sensible economic steps we have taken in coming out of the pandemic, and then to build a stronger economy with reforms to our planning, our housing, our transport and our energy networks. We will take down costs for people up and down the country and continue to make this the best place to live and invest in in the whole of our hemisphere. That is our plan for the country, and I commend it to him.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Western purchases of Russian energy are paying for Putin's war. Will my right hon. Friend redouble his efforts to ensure that we invest in more production and output of oil, gas and electricity here, to make our contribution to reducing western dependence?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I think the UK can be very proud of the way we have moved beyond hydrocarbons in so many areas, but we must recognise the limits and the pace of what we have achieved, and be less neuralgic about using our domestic hydrocarbons, particularly when the alternative is just to import them from abroad.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): It is 3,056 days since Putin started his illegal invasion of Ukraine, and we spent far too long turning a blind eye to what was going on there, so forgive me if I am a little impatient even about what we have already achieved. I want to see a British industrial strategy to ensure we are making enough lethal weaponry to give to the Ukrainians so they can win. I want to see a major diplomatic effort to ensure that Putin does not make further inroads in Republika Srpska and Bosnia. I also want to make sure that we as a country are still as focused on the laundering of dirty Russian money through the City of London as we should have been 10 years ago.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the UK led the way in Europe in supplying weaponry to Ukraine, and the next generation light anti-tank weapons were of great importance. When it comes to sanctions, we have a new economic crime Bill coming in that will help us to clamp down further, but what we have done already is very considerable. The squeeze is being felt by Putin and his economy, and we will continue to apply it. The hon. Gentleman asks for a long-term strategy: what he got from the G7 and NATO was a commitment to stick to the course for as long as it takes, and that is what we are going to do.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): When the Prime Minister's remarks at the NATO summit were reported last week, the commitment to spending 2.5% on defence appeared to be quite solid. His remarks today are less so. Is that a commitment, and how are we going to pay for it? We have to have a credible plan to pay for it. Are we going to put up taxes, or are we going to reduce expenditure in other areas to deliver what is a welcome and important commitment to the defence of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: It is a straightforward prediction based on what we are currently committed to spending under the AUKUS and future combat air system programmes. They are gigantic commitments, which I think are the right thing for the UK, and they will take us up to that threshold. Of course, much depends on the size of our GDP at the time and the growth in the economy. My right hon. Friend asks how we will pay for it: we will pay for it out of steady and sustained economic growth, as I said to the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Ed Davey).

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill and the Bill

[Joanna Cherry]

of rights are all Bills that numerous informed commentators and cross-party Committees of this House have said threaten to breach our international treaty obligations. The Prime Minister indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that last week some of his interlocutors, at least, had raised these issues with him. All of us who have travelled abroad on parliamentary business recently will have had these issues raised with us. So can he tell us exactly what concerns were raised with him over the past week about his Government's disrespect for the international rule of law and human rights, and what he is going to do about it?

The Prime Minister: I can absolutely tell the hon. and learned Lady that not a single person said that the UK was in breach of international law. On the contrary, they said that we were helping the world to stand up against breaches of international law.

Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): The Prime Minister should absolutely be congratulated on what he has done on defence spending. While many in his position previously talked about it, this is actually the biggest increase since the end of the cold war. However, will he confirm that no directive has been issued from No. 10 or the Treasury on numbers of defence personnel, and that that will continue to be the case going forward should the situation change?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks wisely on this matter, which he knows very well. We keep the actual numbers under constant review. The most important thing is that our troops are the best in the world but they also have to have the best equipment in the world, and that is what we are paying for.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): I was relieved to see the G7 recognise that 200 million people now face starvation around the world, along with the pledge to mobilise £100 billion in IMF special drawing rights to help to alleviate the crisis. Last week, however, the Foreign Secretary could not tell us how much the UK has been given in special drawing rights nor what her target was for sharing them back—presumably because it was not on Instagram—so can the Prime Minister help us? Can he reassure us that all £19 billion of the UK's new special drawing rights will be shared to help with this crisis in order to set a good example to the rest of the world?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to the use of special drawing rights. We are supportive of using those for the benefit of people around the world who are currently finding things very tough.

James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): I strongly support the Government's commitment to 2.5% and the Prime Minister's hint in this statement that we may go further than that in the years to come. None the less, although last year's integrated review talked about cutting conventional forces—tanks, aircraft and boots on the ground—one of the lessons of Ukraine is that we must not do that, so will he think again about the commitments we have made to cutting, in particular, our infantry?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend has military experience himself, but what we are learning from Ukraine is the vital importance of having troops with a military operation that has 360° protection and the best possible equipment. That is a lesson that the Russians are learning to their cost themselves.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister will have heard the deep concern on both sides of the House, particularly from the right hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), about grain in Ukraine and the issue of world hunger and poverty. The Prime Minister said in response that he was talking about the possibility of seeking a solution that may not have the consent of the Russians. For the avoidance of doubt, can he confirm to the House that he is looking at breaching the Montreux agreement about larger forces in the Black sea?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is right to raise that. No, we are not looking at doing that. There are alternative solutions that do not involve the presence of UK or other warships in the Black sea, although they might involve a tougher approach. We are also looking at the possibility of using the rivers, particularly the Danube, and the railways to get the grain out in smaller quantities than we would be able to do with a giant maritime convoy through the Black sea. We are looking at all the options, including smaller packets of grain coming out in that way.

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con): My right hon. Friend stated that

"Ukraine must have the strength to finish this war on the terms that President Zelensky has described."

Are we confident that all our allies are as involved and supportive as the UK has been and continues to be for as long as it takes?

The Prime Minister: I think the answer to that is yes, because every time we go to one of these summits and we think that the alliance is friable and that the strength of the pro-Ukrainian coalition is weak, people gravitate towards the centre and towards what the UK is saying because there is no alternative: Putin is not offering any kind of deal, and President Zelenskyy cannot do any kind of land-for-peace deal. There is no other option for us but to continue to support the Ukrainians in the way that we are, and that is why the unity remains so compelling.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): I absolutely understand that the sanctions regime so far has focused on the Russian elite, with travel bans and bans on the export of luxury goods, for example, as well as Russian hydrocarbons, which earn them so much foreign exchange money. As the war continues into the longer term, should we not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) said, look at the Russian money still sloshing around in the UK? If somebody has made a large amount of money in Putin's Russia, should we not assume that the chances are that it is dodgy and start to tighten the domestic sanctions regime?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right that we have to keep tightening the noose the whole time. The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill

will help. It will give us new powers to seize crypto assets and new powers over money laundering. One thing he will have spotted at the G7, which was very important, was the new sanctions on Russian gold worth £13.5 billion, which I mentioned in my statement. That will hit them.

Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): I welcome what the Prime Minister has said about working with other countries to reduce the price of oil and gas, which is critical in this country and across the world. Will he give the House a bit more detail on how we have been working with other countries, particularly in the Commonwealth, on investing in renewable energy, which is clean, safe and secure and reduces our dependence on hydrocarbons over the medium term?

The Prime Minister: The answer is that the UK is making massive investments in Commonwealth countries. In the G7, the partnership for global infrastructure and investment helps developing countries around the world to move forward and to make the leap ahead to green technology, and to take investment from the UK—and not perhaps from others who are busier in getting them to pay their debts.

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Alba): I have listened carefully to the Prime Minister's warm words about the Commonwealth and its relationship with independent countries. In 1941, it was the then Prime Minister Churchill who signed the Atlantic charter with the United States, committing Britain and the United States to delivering people's right to choose their own form of government and self-government. This respect for the principle of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples was incorporated into the United Nations charter in paragraph 2 of articles 1, 73 and 76. In light of that, can the Prime Minister set out what mandate he has won that allows him to breach this UN principle, deny Scotland's claim of right and hold Scotland's democracy hostage?

The Prime Minister: I know that the First Minister has asked for another referendum, and I just point out that we had one in 2014. Right now the priorities of the country should be rebuilding after covid and taking us forward together as a united country, and that is what we want to do.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Ukraine is by far the most important issue facing us, not least in terms of preventing mass starvation in Africa. One cannot help noticing that unlike all the other fluff in the newspapers every day, nobody dares criticise the Prime Minister's resolute leadership on Ukraine. What concerns many of us is that some of our allies do not seem to be as resolute as he. While they will give full support to Ukraine not to lose this war, they are not that keen on Ukraine winning this war, because they do not want to humiliate Putin. Can the Prime Minister make clear that it is the absolute commitment of NATO to defeat Putin once and for all?

The Prime Minister: I agree 100% with what my right hon. Friend said, with just one clarification: it is 100% the objective of NATO, and all our friends and allies, to make sure that Putin fails in Ukraine—it is very important that we frame it in that way—and he can and he will, because the Ukrainians will not have it any other way.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): Rwanda and the UK hosted the “Keeping 1.5 Alive” event in Kigali, but at the same time, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report said that the requirement—the opportunity—to keep within 1.5° had now shifted forward from 2032 to 2025. Given that most major emitters in the G7 are not even meeting the Paris commitments that they made seven years ago, what realistic chance does the Prime Minister believe there is of the G7 stepping up to the plate in the next three years to achieve that turning down of emissions?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman looked at the G7 communiqué, he would see that there was an explicit reference to making sure that anything we did was within our COP26 commitments to keeping 1.5° alive and to the commitments made in Paris.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): I strongly welcome the Prime Minister's statement. In my time in the House, I cannot recall a foreign affairs statement in which the serving Prime Minister could take more personal satisfaction than the one that he has just delivered to the House. His leadership of NATO and the welcome conclusions of the NATO summit only reinforce the fact that, as the Leader of the Opposition said, what Mr Putin wants is for us to lose focus. Will the Prime Minister sustain his focus; get the grain out of Ukraine to meet the desperate need of the rest of the world; and ensure Ukraine's survival as a sovereign state?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. That certainly remains the Government's objective. I stress that what we are doing to support the Ukrainians is not just right in itself, as everyone accepts, but right for the world. That is why it continues to be supported around the world.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): The NATO summit rightly identified that Russia and China challenge our security. China continues to make clear the territories that it disputes in the Indo-Pacific. As war rages in Ukraine, concerns for the west's ammunition stockpiles are growing, and the Prime Minister continues with plans that will see capability gaps in our Navy with fewer planes, tanks and troops. Without a drastic rethink of those cuts, how realistic is the UK's desire in the integrated review to have a presence in both the north Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific?

The Prime Minister: Actually, at the Commonwealth summit, the most interesting thing was the widespread understanding of what the UK is doing in the Indo-Pacific tilt and the moves we are making to engage with that part of the world and strengthen our friends and allies in that region. Hon. Members saw what we did with the carrier strike group—an absolutely astonishing exercise—and know about the AUKUS commitment that we have made. We are in the embassies in that part of the world and are increasing our deployments there as well.

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): The single most impactful thing that we could do now to bear down on the cost of living would be to encourage OPEC, in particular Saudi Arabia, to pump more oil. What will the Government do to encourage our partners, such as

[Robert Jenrick]

Saudi Arabia, to do that? The Saudi Arabian oil Minister recently said that the relationship between Saudi and Moscow is

“as warm as the weather in Riyadh”—

a provocative statement that was probably influenced by our continued negotiation with Iran on a nuclear deal. Could the United Kingdom Government take a lead on that?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is correct about the role of Saudi. There may be some question about how much more the Saudis could pump out at this moment, but there is no doubt that we will need a lot more OPEC-plus oil. As hon. Members know, the UK has strong and productive relations with Saudi Arabia, which need to continue, and we need to make sure that the whole west does as well. We make that point to the Saudis. That is the way forward; they need to produce more oil—no question.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I say to the Prime Minister that there is some good stuff in what he has reported and he should be applauded for that, but there are other things that are deeply worrying and concerning? I come from quite a military family—I saw little of my father until I was six because he was away serving in the Royal Engineers during the war—and I tell you that I take a real interest in the size of our Army. Over the last 10 years, I have consistently said to Ministers and Prime Ministers that dipping below 100,000 serving men and women is dangerous and foolish. Whatever the warm words this morning, the fact is that his Government are still committed to going down to 72,000 men and women, and that is not enough to fully protect our country. Will he think again about the size and power of our Army?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Member very much. I want to say that I perfectly understand why he speaks as he does, but the reality is that the UK Army—the Army alone—will have a whole force of over 100,000: 73,000 plus 30,000 reserves. The key test is: what are they doing and how are they equipped—how are they protected? They are the best in the world, but we also want to make sure that we give them the best possible equipment, and that is what we are doing. If you listen to the Ukrainians, they will tell you that our equipment is the best.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): The Prime Minister has said that the world has seen the United Kingdom

“stand up for what is right in Ukraine”,

and that is standing up for freedom, liberty and human rights. Tying that to the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister has said that some countries in the Commonwealth were concerned about the narrative of what Russia is doing in Ukraine, but at the same time, a number of those Commonwealth countries are listed in the “World Watch List 2022” for their record on freedom of religion or belief. Was there any discussion on that, because tomorrow the United Kingdom is hosting a ministerial on freedom of religion or belief? I had the pleasure to sign that off in my time as the Prime Minister’s special envoy,

and now he is committed to this area. Was there any discussion on how we can advance freedom of religion or belief in the Commonwealth?

The Prime Minister: First, may I thank my hon. Friend very much for everything he did as envoy for freedom of religion or belief? It is at least partly thanks to his energy and efforts that we have a global conference in this city this week on freedom of belief around the world. I can tell him that one of the many things that unite the Commonwealth is a passionate determination to protect that freedom.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): Clamping down on Putin’s cronies and their money—far too little, too late, but nevertheless we are getting there—has I think been one of the positives of this war so far. I am glad to hear the Prime Minister say that he is committed to the economic crime Bill 2 and all the measures in it, but I want to ask him specifically about golden visas. Four years ago, the review of golden visas was promised, but it has not been delivered. Why?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Member. We are doing everything we can to make sure that we restrict access to this country by Putin’s cronies or anybody who supports the invasion of Ukraine, and that is why we are reviewing the golden visa scheme.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): It is clear that the whole House welcomes the strong role that the UK played in driving support for Ukraine. Will the Prime Minister update us on the discussions he had with Prime Minister Kishida of Japan, particularly on the progress of the UK’s participation in the trans-Pacific trade agreement and also on co-operation on science and technology?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend very much for his role as the UK’s envoy for trade with Japan. I can tell him that the opportunities are absolutely immense, and the Government of Fumio Kishida are determined to progress the alliance with the UK to new heights. He is absolutely right to talk about science and technology. As he knows, we have just lifted barriers to trade with Japan, but what we are also looking at is a partnership with Japan in defence technology that I think could be the foundation of immense future progress, particularly on science and technology.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): There is no doubt about the strength of support in NATO and the G7 for this defence of Ukraine and this defence of the legitimate freedom of Ukraine, but there are credible reports that it is now becoming increasingly difficult to get weaponry and ammunition across the globe.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace) *indicated dissent.*

Tony Lloyd: The Defence Secretary is shaking his head, but there are reports. Was this raised at all at NATO, and can we guarantee that the supply of armaments and the supply of ammunition will be available?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. As he knows, the UK began the Ramstein process, where countries commit substantial sums as well as matériel to Ukraine. I am not aware of

any logistical problems that we are facing so far. We are still seeing great progress in getting arms into Ukraine, but there is a lot more to do.

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): Three months ago yesterday, to the day, a refugee mother and a little boy came to live with my family in my home in North Norfolk. Three months seems an incredibly long time now, but it has gone in a shot. The family who came to live with me are terrified about returning to Kyiv. The only hope was the announcement by the Government that we will stand there, at the request of President Zelensky, to champion the rebuilding of their city of Kyiv. That will bring enormous hope to all those refugees who have fled Ukraine. Will the Prime Minister tell me, so that I can give some reassurance to all those families, including the one who live with me now, that we as a country will not give up, that we certainly will not be negotiating with Putin, as some would have us do, and that we will stand firm with the people of Ukraine to ensure that the Russians are expelled from their sovereign country? Then, by golly, bit by bit, we will help those people to rebuild their country.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his kindness to the family from Ukraine. I know that that is being done by many other colleagues around the Chamber, and I thank everybody for what they are doing. It is a great, great scheme, and it is much appreciated by the Ukrainians. Thanks to the support we have been giving the Ukrainians, they are starting to see large numbers going back to Ukraine, and of the 7 million who left, at least 3-and-a-bit million have now gone back, which is good news. We want them all to be able to go back safely, and go back safely to their entire country. Then we want the UK to be in the lead, as we are already are in the Kyiv region, in rebuilding Ukraine.

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): Some very welcome agreements were reached in Madrid, not least the doubling of battle groups on the eastern flank, the massive expansion of the NATO response force, and of course the endorsement of Sweden and Finland as members. Does the Prime Minister agree that our success is underpinned by the maintenance of public support for the war in Ukraine, and can he say how he, and President Biden, plan to ensure that that public support is maintained for as long as necessary?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has served in the armed forces himself, and he understands how difficult it can be to continue to build public support for military expenditure. But it is vital that we do this. The cost of allowing Ukraine simply to fall to Putin, or to be crushed or engulfed, would be immense. And it would not be just a political catastrophe; it would be an economic catastrophe as well, because Putin would not stop there, and the instability and economic damage would continue for generations.

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con): The Scottish nationalists would cut our defence spending to 1.6%, and unilaterally disarm if they were ever to achieve independence. Does the Prime Minister agree that our new ambition to spend 2.5%, and our rock solid commitment to NATO as a guarantor of our security, show why Scotland is better off in the UK?

The Prime Minister: I hesitated to say that to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford)—and he is my friend, Mr Speaker—but that is the fact. The Scottish contribution to our armed services is immense. Everybody knows it. It is a fantastic thing. It helps to make the UK what it is, and it would be utterly tragic for the whole world if the UK armed services were to face a division of that kind, or a loss of that kind.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): When the Prime Minister was in Rwanda, did he meet the leader of the opposition, Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza, who spent eight years in prison simply for criticising the Rwandan regime? Did he speak to President Kagame about his continual policy of criminalising or assassinating his political opponents?

The Prime Minister: I did raise human rights concerns with President Kagame, and I raised issues of freedom of speech. I am sure that the hon. Member has been to Rwanda, so he will know that in 1994 the country underwent perhaps the most catastrophic, humiliating disaster that any country could undergo. Whatever the hon. Member may say about him, President Kagame has brought that country back from the brink and done an immense service to his country in restoring order, which his people value immensely.

Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): The Prime Minister was right when he recently said that 2% of GDP on defence spending should be a floor, not a ceiling. However, some of our allies are still in the basement when it comes to meeting their NATO commitments. Will he therefore outline what efforts were made specifically to rectify that in Madrid?

The Prime Minister: What the UK has been doing is leading by example. It was at Cardiff in 2014 that we set the target of 2% of GDP—a floor, not a ceiling. We were one of the first to exceed it, and eight other countries are now exceeding it. What we are seeing around the table is countries absolutely determined to follow suit and spend more. I will single out what Olaf Scholz has been doing in Germany, where there has been a quite remarkable change of events.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): That was a clumsy attempt to unseat the secretary-general of the Commonwealth. It was hardly good statecraft, Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: It was a great day for democracy, which is one thing among many that the Commonwealth stands for in the world. I think that Patricia Scotland will do an excellent job for the next two years, and she will get every possible support.

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): At recent visits to the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference as well as at the Council of Europe, it has been widely acknowledged that the Prime Minister has been leading not just Europe but world leaders in his response to Ukraine. However, countries on the frontline such as Poland and Romania are also doing a huge amount. On grain shipments, has the Prime Minister had any dealings

[Mr Richard Holden]

with the President of Romania on the possibility of using the port of Constana to protect global food prices?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point and alludes to exactly the solutions that we are trying to find in the event that we are forced into an operation that does not involve the consent of the Russians, as I think is all too likely.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): During the Prime Minister's conversations at the G7 and NATO summits, what was made of the risk of antagonising China through the UK Government's trade talks with Taiwan? Does he agree that the UK must respect Taiwanese sovereignty and show that to China?

The Prime Minister: The discussion at the G7 was probably liveliest on that subject. The G7 feels that China is a gigantic fact of our lives and that we have got to understand that. Everybody has got huge trading relations with China, but, on the other hand, there are lots of areas where we have got to compete, contest and, sometimes, challenge what China does. That was very much agreed around the table at the G7, and indeed at NATO.

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con): My constituents are proud of the actions taken by this country and the Prime Minister in supporting Ukraine, its armed forces and the victims of Russian aggression in Ukraine. However, they are feeling the pinch in their pockets, and the public purse is under severe pressure as well, so they want to know that our NATO allies and immediate neighbours are playing their part in equal measure.

The Prime Minister: On the table of expenditure, the US is way out in front. I really congratulate Joe Biden on his leadership. Joe Biden and the Americans have

really stepped up to the plate—a fantastic effort. We are spending the second biggest amount, and I think that the Poles are in third place. There is then a long tail of others, but everybody is now spending more and more. We agreed that we are in it for the long haul; that is the most important thing.

Mr Speaker: We now bring in Paul Holmes.

Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. That was great exercise bobbing, I can tell you.

The Prime Minister should be congratulated on his international leadership on Ukraine, which is shown by how much people in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Government applaud him for his leadership at NATO. We are now entering a phase where the Ukrainians really need to start to be able to push the Russian lines back. What conversations has he had in NATO about providing heavier land-based equipment to the Ukrainians?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is completely right; that is where the focus now is. The Ukrainians are heroic. They have shown they can push the Russians back. They pushed them from Kyiv. They pushed them back from Kharkiv. What they need is the right multiple launch rocket systems to do it, because the Russians are very good at standing off and using heavy artillery to shell and intimidate. The MLRS are absolutely critical to the Ukrainian fightback. That is what we are giving them now, together with several other allies. What they also need is the training to make sure that those very sophisticated weapons are used to the best possible effect, and we are giving them that training as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement and for answering questions today.

Points of Order

4.36 pm

Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. My constituent is a sponsor for a mother and daughter in Ukraine. They applied for a Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme visa on 10 April. The mother's visa was approved on 10 June, but there is still no visa for her 16-year-old daughter, Maria. Their nearest city is currently under rocket fire and they are desperate to leave for their safety. My team has contacted the Home Office four times, twice in person, but Maria's visa is being held up inexplicably. I seek your advice on how to resolve this matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the hon. Member for giving notice of her point of order and I can understand her concerns as she has voiced them today. They are clearly not the responsibility of the Chair, but she has put her concerns on the record and I am sure Ministers will have heard them. I hope a speedy resolution is forthcoming. I am asking the Treasury Whip to make sure. *[Interruption.]* He is doing that as I am speaking. Thank you very much.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. As you know, in order to get an oral question on the Order Paper, Back-Bench Members have to submit to the ballot process. Every day, hundreds and hundreds of MPs fail—in fact, we nearly always fail. However, just occasionally we have that little moment of joy when an email comes through saying, “Your question has been successful in the ballot”. I got two such emails for this week: one for Justice questions tomorrow, on screening for brain injury in prisons, which one would have thought was the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Justice; and one on Thursday one on artists' resale rights. One would have thought that artists were a responsibility of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Unfortunately, both Departments have decided to transfer the questions, which means that I will not get an oral answer and I will not get an opportunity to ask a supplementary question. I do not know whether that is because they are frightened of answering questions from me, or whether they just want them shunted off to some other Department. Mr Deputy Speaker, can you confirm that Ministers should not be doing that, and that, on the whole, it is best just to let it happen once Members have got through the ballot process? Secondly, can you confirm either that Ministers can overturn the decisions and reinstate the questions for tomorrow and Thursday, or that Mr Speaker could choose to catch my eye—or the other way around?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the hon. Member for giving notice of his point of order. The transfer of questions, as he says, is a matter for Ministers not the Chair. I appreciate that Members may be disappointed to lose their slot—in this case, slots—at Question Time if their oral question is transferred. Where questions relate to matters for which more than one Minister is responsible, or where responsibility is ambiguous, I expect Ministers to be very cautious about transferring oral questions. The Table Office is always able to provide advice to Members on these issues and I am sure that the Treasury Bench will again have heard what the hon. Member has had to say.

Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill

[2ND ALLOCATED DAY]

Further considered in Committee

[Relevant Documents: Oral evidence taken before the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on 7, 15, 21 and 22 June 2022, on Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past: The UK Government's New Proposals, HC 284.]

[MR NIGEL EVANS *in the Chair*]

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Nigel Evans): Members may wish to note that a manuscript Government new clause and manuscript Government amendments to improve the drafting of amendments agreed in Committee on day one have been tabled for consideration on Report. They are now available in the Vote Office.

Clause 33

NO CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS EXCEPT THROUGH
ICRIR REVIEWS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 114, in clause 34, page 27, line 19, at end insert—

‘(2A) But enforcement action may be taken against P to prevent P from seeking to profit from their conduct in relation to that offence (see section (Grant of immunity: criminal memoirs etc)).’

This paving amendment is linked to NC2 which is intended to prevent a person who is granted immunity under this Act from profiting from the from the conduct which they received immunity for.

Amendment 107, page 27, line 19, at end insert—

‘(3) But any sentencing decision in respect of a serious offence committed by P after 10 April 1998 may take into account the panel's findings on any relevant serious Troubles-related offence committed by P’.

This amendment is intended to allow the offences for which immunity has been granted to be taken into account in sentencing for post-Trouble offences.

Clauses 34 to 36 stand part.

Amendment 121, in clause 37, page 28, line 11, at end insert “,or

(d) a file relating to P in respect of an offence is submitted to the Public Prosecution Service.

‘(2A) But if no prosecution of P is directed on the basis of the file submitted to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, the case relating to P should be returned to the ICRIR for investigation in accordance with this Part.’

The purpose of this amendment is to treat as criminal enforcement action the passing of a file to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.

Amendment 122, page 28, line 17, at end insert—

‘(3A) For the purposes of subsection (3), a criminal prosecution of P is to be treated as having begun when a file relating to the criminal investigation into P's conduct has already been submitted to the Public Prosecution Service on or before the day that section 33 comes into force.

(3B) But if no prosecution of P is directed on the basis of the file submitted to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, the case relating to P should be returned to the ICRIR for investigation in accordance with this Part.’

The purpose of this amendment is to treat a public prosecution as having begun when the file is passed to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.

Clause 37 stand part.

Clause 38 stand part.

That schedule 8 be the Eighth schedule to the Bill.

That schedule 9 be the Ninth schedule to the Bill.

Amendment 116, in clause 39, page 30, leave out lines 15 to 42.

This amendment would remove the provisions inserted into the Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) 1959 that require the closure of existing Troubles related inquests in Northern Ireland.

Clause 39 stand part.

Amendment 117, in schedule 10, page 79, leave out lines 4 to 39.

This amendment would remove the provisions inserted into the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 that require the closure of existing Troubles related inquests in England.

Amendment 118, page 81, leave out from line 18 to line 16 on page 82.

This amendment would remove the provisions inserted into the Inquiries into Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths etc. (Scotland) Act 2016 that require the closure of existing Troubles related inquests in Scotland.

That schedule 10 be the Tenth schedule to the Bill.

Clauses 40 and 41 stand part.

Amendment 108, in schedule 11, page 83, line 20, at end insert—

‘(1A) In subsection (2)(a), replace “four” with “five”.

(1B) In subsection (2)(b), replace “four” with “five”.’

This is a paving amendment for Amendment 110.

Amendment 109, page 83, line 21, at end insert—

‘(6ZA) The fifth condition is that the prisoner has been fully cooperative in responding any request for information made under section 14 of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2022.’

This amendment is intended to add a fifth condition for prisoner release under the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 to ensure that prisoners who take part in the reconciliation process are not treated in the same way as those who do not.

That schedule 11 be the Eleventh schedule to the Bill.

New clause 2—*Grant of immunity: criminal memoirs etc—*

‘(1) A person (P) who has been granted under section 18 immunity from prosecution for an offence may not seek to profit from their conduct in relation to that offence.

(2) The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 is amended as follows.

(3) In section 156 (Qualifying offenders), in sub-paragraph (3)(b)(i) at end add “or a citizen of Ireland who would qualify to be a United Kingdom national”.

(4) In section 159 (Relevant offences), after paragraph (1)(a) insert—

“(aa) a serious Troubles-related offence (see section 1 of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2022).”

(5) The Secretary of State may, after consulting the First Minister and deputy First Minister if practicable, make regulations to prohibit the exploitation for profit of Troubles-related offences by any individual granted immunity under section 18.

(6) Regulations under subsection (5) may further amend the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and make any necessary provision to amend any relevant primary or secondary legislation.

(7) Regulations under this section are subject to affirmative procedure.’

The intention of this new clause is to prevent a person who is granted immunity under this Act from profiting from the conduct which they received immunity for, by adapting the exploitation proceeds regime under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

New clause 3—*Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998: repeal—*

‘(1) The Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 is repealed at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations make any necessary temporary, consequential or transitional provision in connection with the repeal of the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998.’

This new clause provides for the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 to be repealed when Part 3 of this Bill comes into force.

New clause 5—*Revocation of immunity (No. 2)—*

‘(1) This section applies if a person (P) has been granted immunity from prosecution for the offence under section 18, but later evidence is submitted to the immunity requests panel established under section 21 which the panel considers to be conclusive evidence that the Condition B in section 18 was not met because P’s account was not true.

(2) This section applies if, after the immunity requests panel has ceased to operate, the Secretary of State considers that there is conclusive evidence that the Condition B in section 18 was not met because P’s account was not true.

(3) Where subsection (1) or (2) applies, the immunity of P under this Act is revoked.’

Clause 42 stand part.

Amendment 120, in clause 43, page 34, line 12, at end insert—

‘(3A) The designated persons have an overarching duty to ensure that no memorialisation activities glorify the commission or preparation of Troubles-related offences.’

Amendment 110, page 34, line 15, at end insert—

‘(3A) The designated persons must take into account the interests and concerns of victims of the Troubles in the preparation of the memorialisation strategy.

(3B) “Victims of the Troubles” do not include any person P who has received immunity under this Act and whose physical or mental harm was caused by Troubles-related conduct in which P participated unlawfully.’

This amendment is intended to ensure that only innocent victims are included as victims in the memorialisation strategy under this Act.

Clause 43 stand part.

Clause 44 stand part.

Amendment 41, in clause 45, page 35, line 22, leave out “of the period of operation of the ICRIR” and insert

“from the date on which this Act is passed”.

This drafting amendment removes a reference to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

Amendment 42, page 35, line 38, leave out subsection (5).

This amendment removes a reference to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

Amendment 43, page 36, line 6, leave out paragraph (a).

This amendment removes a reference to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

Amendment 44, page 36, line 8, leave out “the ICRIR reports and”.

This amendment removes a reference to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

Amendment 45, page 36, leave out lines 18 to 21.

This amendment removes a reference to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

Clause 45 stand part.

Clauses 46 to 48 stand part.

Amendment 93, in clause 49, page 37, line 43, leave out from “regulations” to end of line 15 on page 38 and insert

‘establish an independent panel of experts to make appointments for the purposes of this Part.

(1A) The independent panel of experts must include—

- (a) representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive, the United Kingdom government and the government of Ireland,
- (b) representatives of the British Academy, the Royal Irish Academy or other comparable learned societies, and
- (c) a person of international standing with experience in or comparable to the post of special rapporteur on transitional justice for the United Nations.

(1B) When deciding whether to designate a person for the purposes of this Part, the panel must, in accordance with clear and transparent criteria, ensure that the individual has the necessary expertise in at least one of the following: oral history, academic research, archiving, trauma, gender studies and memorialisation.’

This amendment would remove the Secretary of State’s power to designate persons for the purposes of Part 4 of the Bill and instead provide for the appointment of an independent panel to designate persons for the purposes of this Part, while keeping the provision for financial and other resources to be supplied by the Secretary of State.

Clause 49 stand part.

Amendment 94, in clause 50, page 38, line 20, leave out from “means” to end of line 21 and insert

‘persons designated by the independent panel established under section 49 (1);’

This amendment removes the definition of designated persons in Part 4 of the Bill as persons appointed by the Secretary of State and instead refers to appointments by an independent panel.

Clause 50 stand part.

New clause 4—*Offence of glorifying terrorism: Northern Ireland—*

‘(1) This section applies to a statement that is likely to be understood by a reasonable person as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to some or all of the members of the public in Northern Ireland, to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism.

(2) A person P commits an offence if—

- (a) P publishes a statement to which this section applies or causes another to publish such a statement; and
- (b) at the time P publishes it or causes it to be published, P—
 - (i) intends members of the public in Northern Ireland to be directly or indirectly encouraged or otherwise induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate acts of terrorism; or
 - (ii) is reckless as to whether members of the public in Northern Ireland will be directly or indirectly encouraged or otherwise induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate such acts.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the statements that are likely to be understood by a reasonable person as indirectly encouraging the commission or preparation of acts of terrorism include every statement which—

- (a) glorifies the commission or preparation in the past of Troubles-related offences; and

- (b) is a statement from which members of the public in Northern Ireland could reasonably be expected to infer that what is being glorified is being glorified as conduct that should be emulated by them in existing circumstances.

(4) For the purposes of this section the questions how a statement is likely to be understood and what members of the public in Northern Ireland could reasonably be expected to infer from it must be determined having regard both—

- (a) to the contents of the statement as a whole; and
- (b) to the circumstances and manner of its publication.

(5) It is irrelevant for the purposes of subsections (1) to (3)—

- (a) whether anything mentioned in those subsections relates to the commission, preparation or instigation of one or more particular acts of terrorism, of acts of terrorism of a particular description or of acts of terrorism generally; and
- (b) whether any person is in fact encouraged or induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate any such act or Troubles-related offence.

(6) In proceedings for an offence under this section against a person P in whose case it is not proved that P intended the statement directly or indirectly to encourage or otherwise induce the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism it is a defence for P to show—

- (a) that the statement neither expressed P’s views nor had P’s endorsement (whether by virtue of section 3 or otherwise); and
- (b) that it was clear, in all the circumstances of the statement’s publication, that it did not express P’s views and (apart from the possibility of P’s having been given and failed to comply with a notice under subsection (3) of that section) did not have P’s endorsement.

(7) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—

- (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 15 years, or to a fine, or to both;
- (b) on summary conviction in England and Wales, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both;
- (c) on summary conviction in Scotland or Northern Ireland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both.

(8) In considering sentencing for an offence under this section, the court will take into consideration as an aggravating factor any immunity granted to P under the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2022.’

This new clause, based on section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006, makes having received immunity under this Bill an aggravating factor in sentencing for the offence of glorifying terrorism.

New clause 6—*Opening closed files—*

‘(1) Every Minister of the Crown must review the status and classification of files held or sealed by the Department for which the Minister is responsible which relate to events which formed part of the Troubles with a view to ensuring that relevant information, is duly and truly accessible for the various purposes of information recovery, historical records, memorialisation and academic research provided for in this Act by those mandated to discharge those purposes.

(2) Classified government files for the purposes of this section relate to deaths, injuries, other public harms and miscarriages of justice which occurred as part, or in consequence, of the Troubles.

(3) No later than six months from the date on which this Act is passed, each Minister of the Crown must compile a list of such Troubles-related files which have been sealed from public disclosure for longer than standard periods, showing the previously specified date until which they were to remain closed and indicating, on the

basis of the review referred to in subsection (1), how and when relevant information in those files will be available to bodies or persons undertaking work enabled or mandated under this Act.

(4) The list referred to in subsection (3) must be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

(5) A Minister of the Crown must make a statement to the House of Commons on steps being taken to ensure disclosure of such information in order to afford more truth to those bereaved or otherwise harmed by events related to the Troubles, fuller public awareness and understanding and to assist the cause of reconciliation.’

This new clause deals with opening closed files as a State step towards truth and reconciliation. The duties of the Ministers of the Crown apply to any Minister including the Prime Minister, any Secretary of State (including the Secretaries of State for Defence and for Northern Ireland) as well as to the Lord Chancellor and the Cabinet Office.

Amendment 46, in clause 51, page 39, line 12, leave out subsection (1).

This paving amendment would remove Schedule 12 which amends existing legislation in relation to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery and the limitation of legal proceedings.

Amendment 47, page 39, line 35, leave out paragraph (c).

This drafting amendment removes a provision which would be redundant if Clause 38 and Schedule 9 were removed from the Bill.

Amendment 48, page 39, line 35, leave out paragraph (d).

This amendment removes references to criminal investigations and inquests.

Clause 51 stand part.

That schedule 12 be the Twelfth schedule to the Bill.

Amendment 49, in clause 52, page 40, line 9, leave out subsection (2).

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Amendment 50, page 40, line 11, leave out from “they” to “may” in line 16.

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Amendment 51, page 40, line 11, leave out lines 21 to 28.

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Amendment 52, page 40, line 29, leave out from “procedure” to second “the” in line 34.

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Amendment 53, page 40, line 37, leave out from “Parliament” to the end of subsection (4).

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Amendment 54, page 41, line 9, leave out subsections (6) and (7).

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Clause 52 stand part.

Amendment 55, in clause 53, page 41, line 20, leave out subsection (1).

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Clause 53 stand part.

Clause 54 stand part.

Amendment 56, in clause 55, page 46, line 18, leave out subsection (4).

This amendment removes provision relating to the repeal of the Coroners Act 1988.

Clause 55 stand part.

Amendment 57, in clause 56, page 46, line 24, leave out paragraph (b).

This amendment would be consequential on the removal of Schedule 12 which amends existing legislation in relation to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery and the limitation of legal proceedings.

Amendment 58, page 47, line 32, leave out subsection (4).

This amendment removes provision which is not necessary for the operation of Part 4 of the Bill.

Clause 56 stand part.

Amendment 59, in clause 57, page 46, line 35, leave out “Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation)” and insert “(Memorialising the Troubles)”.

This amendment would change the short title applicable to an Act comprising only Parts 1, 4 and 5 of the Bill.

Clause 57 stand part.

New clause 7—*Compatibility with Article 2 of ECHR*—

‘(1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act, the exercise of powers, the performance of functions and the discharge of duties under this Act, including by bodies or offices created under this Act, may be subject to civil action and judicial review on grounds of incompatibility with Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

(2) Recourse to civil action under this section shall be open to—

- (a) a close family member of a person whose death was caused by conduct forming part of the Troubles; or
- (b) if there are no close family members of the deceased, any family member of the deceased.

(3) The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission may—

- (a) provide assistance to individuals or families who take civil action under this section; or
- (b) bring court proceedings itself in respect of policies, practices and performances of relevant authorities with powers and functions under this Act in order to test their compatibility with Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights or to vindicate that right or others under the European Convention.’

Amendment 72, in title, line 1, leave out from “by” to “providing”.

This amendment would change the long title applicable to an Act comprising only Parts 1, 4 and 5 of the Bill.

While we are in Committee of the whole House, Members should refer to me as Chair or Mr Evans, and not as Mr Deputy Speaker. I call the Minister.

4.45 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Conor Burns): Thank you, Mr Evans; we trust that it will not be too long before that is upgraded to “Sir Nigel”.

It is good to be here for the second full day of consideration in Committee of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill. I am sure that the whole House is grateful to Members for how they dispatched the statement in what must be record time for a Prime Minister reporting on three international summits, to allow us extra time. I am particularly grateful for the pleasure that lies ahead.

I start by thanking the Committee for the tone of our engagement last week on controversial and emotional subjects; I hope that that tone will continue across the Committee this afternoon as our deliberations progress.

I meant to say this properly last time, but I did not. Successive Governments have not engaged in this space, and I want to pay special tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for grappling with these contentious and emotional issues over the last couple of years. This is a Government Bill, but it is very much his Bill—he has steered it through. I also pay tribute to those in the Northern Ireland Office who have supported the work of Bill as it has progressed beyond the publication of the Command Paper last July.

We commence today's proceedings with part 3 of the Bill, which covers investigations, legal proceedings and the release of prisoners. Clause 33 prevents criminal investigations into any troubles-related offence from being initiated or continued on or after the day on which the clause enters into force. That prohibition does not apply to the independent commission for reconciliation and information recovery. The clause ensures that the commission becomes the sole body able and responsible for conducting criminal investigations into troubles-related deaths and serious injuries.

Future prosecutions will remain a possibility for those involved in offences connected to a death or serious injury if they do not actively come forward to seek immunity or do not co-operate sufficiently with the information recovery process. New criminal investigations or prosecutions for troubles-related offences not connected to a death or serious injury will no longer be possible.

The clause places a duty on the heads of each police force in the United Kingdom to notify the Secretary of State of any criminal investigations of troubles-related offences that their force is carrying out on the day before the clause comes into force, enabling the Secretary of State to identify cases that trigger an obligation under articles 2 or 3 of the European convention on human rights, and ensure that those are referred to the commission for review.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister of State for setting the scene. There is one thing that concerns me and, I believe, many DUP Members, but which has not been mentioned very much in any of our debates or discussions about the Bill: the collusion involving the Garda Síochána in relation to the murders of some police officers on the border. There was also collusion involving not just the Garda Síochána but high-level members of the civil service who turned a blind eye to those who carried out the murders across the border. Can the Minister of State reassure me and other hon. Members that there will be accountability in the process for those in the Garda Síochána who were involved in collusion in the murder of Royal Ulster Constabulary and police officers in Northern Ireland, and for those in high levels of the civil service who were also involved in collusion? My cousin was murdered by the IRA, and the people responsible went across the border and lived a safe life there. If that is not collusion, I would like to know what is.

Conor Burns: The hon. Gentleman speaks with great emotion and personal connection to these events. I extend again, from this Dispatch Box, my sympathy to him and to all those in Northern Ireland, in Ireland and across these islands who felt the impact of the brutality and evil of events perpetrated in the name of Irish republicanism, and indeed some in the name of loyalism.

The hon. Gentleman mentions matters relating to the Government of the Republic of Ireland. That Government, on behalf of the Irish state, freely entered into commitments that they would have a process for information to be brought forward for people so that we could find out what happened. I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman that the proposals in the Bill and the information recovery unit would absolutely be strengthened if the Government of the Republic of Ireland came forward with their own proposals, so that we could deal with the issues across the totality of these islands. I very much hope that the commitment that was undertaken will be delivered by the Irish Government in due course.

Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP): Will the Minister give way?

Conor Burns: I will, but I will not do today what I did last Wednesday, which was to take about 40 interventions and detain the Committee for an hour. I want to set the scene for what our debate today will cover and the scope of the Bill's clauses and amendments. However, I give way to the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party.

Colum Eastwood: I am grateful. The Minister mentions that the Irish Government made commitments. I absolutely agree that they need to deliver on those commitments, but they were made in the context of the Stormont House agreement. The British Government made commitments as well, but they are now moving miles and miles away from the Stormont House agreement, stopping any opportunity for people to get access to truth and justice, despite what the Minister might say.

Conor Burns: We believe that the commitment made by the Government of the Irish Republic was a stand-alone commitment to bring forward their own legislation to have a means of resolving some of the unresolved cases to the benefit of all, to aid the process of information recovery and reconciliation across the island of Ireland and the totality of these islands. We could rehearse—although I do not think that it would be particularly helpful, because the hon. Gentleman and I both know the arguments that would be deployed—why we have come to the conclusion that the process around Stormont House and the bodies that are in place will not, in our judgment, deliver what we seek, which is to help those who want to find out what happened to their loved ones. We have been open in saying that this is a movement beyond Stormont House, because the Government believe that this will be a better way of getting that information and trying to aid the process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

The prohibition created by clause 33 will not apply to criminal investigations that are ongoing on the day when the legislation enters into force, where those investigations are being carried out for the purposes of a criminal prosecution commenced before that date. The police will continue to conduct such investigations until the related criminal prosecution has concluded.

Clauses 34, 35 and 36 set out, for those granted immunity, that no criminal enforcement action may be taken against the individual in respect of the serious or connected troubles-related offence or offences for which immunity has been granted, while those who committed crimes should not be able to obtain something for nothing. They will not mean that individuals have immunity

[Conor Burns]

for any other serious or connected troubles-related offences in which they may have been involved. Those who do not acknowledge their role in the troubles-related events and incidents will not be granted immunity, and will remain liable to prosecution should sufficient evidence exist or come to light. If immunity is not granted, criminal enforcement action could be taken in respect of the offence. If the commissioner for investigations thinks there is enough evidence that an offence has been committed, the ICRIR can refer a case directly to the relevant UK prosecutor. The ICRIR will be fully equipped with the necessary expertise and full policing powers so that it can carry out robust investigations for the primary purpose of information recovery, as well as being able to refer cases directly to prosecutors if there is evidence of an offence for which someone has not been granted immunity.

Clause 37 contains general and saving provisions applying to troubles-related criminal investigations and prosecutions. Clause 38 and schedules 8 and 9 state that any new civil claim brought on or after the date of the Bill's introduction will be prohibited once the relevant clauses come into force, two months after Royal Assent. Troubles-related civil claims already filed with the courts before the date of the Bill's introduction will be allowed to continue. We want to deliver a system that focuses on effective information recovery and reconciliation measures, getting as much information to as many families as possible.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): The Minister will know that if a prosecutor has not made a decision on a file prior to the enactment of this law, the prosecutions will not proceed. That has caused huge concern among the families who have engaged with Operation Kenova and the more than 30 live files that rest with the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland. There is an amendment on the table tonight that would allow the Government to accept that the cases that are with the Public Prosecution Service could proceed irrespective of when that decision is taken. Can the Minister confirm that he wants to see a conclusion to the Operation Kenova process, and that he wants to see justice for the families who have engaged so honourably and thoughtfully throughout this time?

Conor Burns: I completely understand why the hon. Gentleman has asked that question, and the view that he takes. I have acknowledged from this Dispatch Box, as has my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that some of these decisions are finely balanced and difficult, but the Government want to see a single body dealing with the cases and with getting the information to families, and that will mean that at some point there must be a date on which we stop other processes and roll everything into this one body. I will talk about that in more detail a little later, but the point is that the powers that this body will have at its disposal will be greater than some of the powers available to other bodies—for example, inquests—and we think that this will be a better way of proceeding.

Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend for his stance. While everyone wants to see finality and an end to this process, some of these prosecutorial decisions have taken three

to four years, during which time the people being investigated have died. My right hon. Friend has to draw a line somewhere. It is painful, of course, and we do not want to undo the work that has been done, but ultimately we need courage when it comes to reaching a finite point and getting these people investigated by a single body.

Conor Burns: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful to him for what he has acknowledged. He has been in the position that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are in, that of a Minister making very finely balanced judgments. We believe that we have got those judgments right, and we are happy to explain the rationale for the decision-making process that we have undertaken. I acknowledge, as my hon. Friend has acknowledged, that this will be difficult for some people to accept, but there must be a point at which the new body becomes the sole body to deal with these matters.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Does the Minister accept that those who are engaged in the Kenova process want not information recovery but prosecutions? They want an outcome that will ensure that those who committed a crime are found guilty of committing a crime. Moving this to information recovery is not doing justice to those who, for many years, have engaged with the process hoping for an outcome. Will the Minister at least encourage the Public Prosecution Service to ensure that it makes a decision on these cases before the deadline on the Bill?

Conor Burns: The right hon. Gentleman makes an entirely valid point. As I think the Committee acknowledged when we talked about these processes last week, there is not a consensus among the families or victims on a single route that they want to take. They want different things: many want prosecutions, many want just to know, and many want a wrong acknowledged. He makes an entirely fair point that I am sure will be heard outside this Chamber and that I know has already been strongly heard by different bodies, lawyers and families in Northern Ireland.

The body will be established after this Bill enters into force. We are only at Committee stage in this place, and the Bill will hopefully leave here this evening and go to the other place, where I am sure it will receive detailed and expert scrutiny. In the meantime, a lot of decisions can be made. The processes can carry on, and we have been very clear that processes that are in train by the time the Bill comes into force will continue. That is why we listened carefully after publishing the Command Paper last year, when we heard the strength of feeling about ending all ongoing inquests. That is why clause 39 sets out that inquests—inquiries in Scotland—that have reached an advanced stage by 31 May next year or by the date on which the ICRIR becomes operational, whichever comes first, will continue to their conclusion. The clause states:

“An inquest is ‘at an advanced stage’ if the inquest hearing to ascertain—

(a) who the deceased was, and

(b) how, when and where the deceased died,

has begun before the relevant day.”

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance): Can I ask the Minister to recognise that there is an in-built unfairness in this process of arbitrarily closing off some inquests

while others will have an opportunity to come to an end? The order in which these inquests have been put together is not based on any rationale, and there is a sense of it being the luck of the draw. Does he not feel it would be better to allow all inquests to finish, even if that means working in parallel with other institutions, flawed though they may well be?

Conor Burns: I say respectfully to the hon. Gentleman that in all these things there has to be a point at which we move to the new process. If we are establishing a new body and we believe that that new body is the right vehicle to bring information to the fore and to incentivise people to come forward, co-operate with it and hand over state information, we have to have such a point. I recognise the challenge of that, but I also recognise that there is an opportunity between now and that body being established for progress to be made. I also say to him that the existing inquests can be rolled into the new body and that their work can carry on in that sense. The new body, the ICRIR, will have more information than inquests do and will have comparable powers to compel witnesses, so it is the view of the Government that the new body will perform many of the same functions, but perhaps even better than the inquest process will. But on his point about the date, no, we have to have a point at which we move to the new process.

Colum Eastwood: It is worth pointing out that we have two days for what is supposed to be the Committee stage, and this is fundamental legislation that needs to be scrutinised. Does the Minister recognise that one of the key victories of the civil rights movement was getting rid of the Special Powers Act? The Act was introduced in 1922, and the architects of apartheid in South Africa looked upon it jealously and stated as much. One of the things they did was to close down access to inquests, but they did not go as far as this Bill, which this Government are just about to introduce in 2022. How in God's name can that be right?

5 pm

Conor Burns: The Government's view is that this body will have more information and more powers than the existing processes and will be able to conduct these reviews faster than the current mechanisms are delivering. I completely accept that there is a difference of opinion between the Government and Opposition Members. Our contention is contested, but the Bill outlines how we intend to proceed.

Part 4 addresses how the vital work of healing and reconciliation, in societal as well as individual terms, will be achieved. Clause 42 makes provision for a new major oral history initiative that, consistent with the Stormont House agreement, will encourage people from all backgrounds to share their experiences of the troubles and listen to the experiences of others. Building on the feedback raised during the Government's legacy consultation and since, the Bill provides for the designation of expert organisations with the requisite experience and trust to deliver this work collaboratively, independent of Government, by working with existing groups and projects as far as possible.

Clause 42 requires any persons designated by the Secretary of State under part 4 to carry out a gap analysis of existing troubles-related oral history collections in Northern Ireland to identify under-represented groups

and communities. As well as collecting new oral history records, particularly from those found to be historically under-represented, the designated organisations must seek to secure the long-term preservation of existing collections by making them more publicly accessible through new digital and physical resources.

To ensure the independence and trust that are vital to success in this area, it is right that a high degree of flexibility is afforded to these organisations in the implementation of this initiative, which is why clause 42 focuses on core objectives and leaves it to the designated organisations to outline key operational details in a published document. This oral history initiative will be complemented by the work of the ICRIR and by wider independent academic research that is underpinned by the Government's unprecedented commitment to disclosure. Taken together, this will add to the public understanding of the troubles in a way that is both inclusive and contextualised.

Clause 43 provides for an expert-led memorialisation strategy to build consensus and lay the groundwork for inclusive new structures and initiatives to collectively remember those who have been lost and to ensure that the lessons of the past are not forgotten. Within 12 months of being commissioned by the Secretary of State, designated organisations must produce an evidence-based report to the Secretary of State that makes deliverable recommendations on the way forward, to which the Secretary of State must formally respond. As part of this work, designated organisations must consider relevant comparators and lessons from other countries, as well as how any new memorialisation activities will aim to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Clause 44 requires the Secretary of State to respond formally to the recommendations of the memorialisation strategy provided for by clause 43 within one year of receiving it from the designated organisations.

Clause 45 makes provision for new independent academic research into the troubles. As proposed in the Stormont House agreement, this thematic research and statistical analysis will use the ICRIR's historical record and family reports as source material. In implementing this initiative, the persons designated by the Secretary of State must use their best endeavours to secure the involvement of all UK research councils to ensure the work is rigorous and to the highest academic standards. The independence of researchers carrying out this work is enshrined in subsection (3). Flexibility is also afforded to designated persons in establishing the terms of reference, although subsection (6) requires the research to include an analysis of gender perspectives during the troubles. The research must be concluded and a report presented to the Secretary of State before the end of the seventh year of the ICRIR's period of operation.

Clause 46 sets out that annual reports are to be published by persons designated by the Secretary of State to carry out the oral history and memorialisation measures.

Clause 47 makes provision for certain requirements relating to the way in which the oral history and memorialisation measures set out in part 4 are implemented by persons designated by the Secretary of State. It is important that the oral history and memorialisation work takes into account the widest range of views possible, not least those of victims and survivors, who should be at the centre of this work.

Stephen Farry: Is there not a danger of this process becoming rather hollow, particularly when the overall legacy institutions are not seen as legitimate across the wider community and therefore people do not take part in the processes? How can the various academics come to any rounded conclusions if they have only partial evidence with which to deal?

Conor Burns: I am slightly confused by that question, given the Government's commitment to hand over pretty much all the evidence—[*Interruption.*] I want to say something to the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party; by the way, I could say this to pretty much any section of political society in Northern Ireland. He says that they just do not believe us, but if everybody goes around telling them not to believe us, there is very little chance—[*Interruption.*] There is a reason, and I have just referred to it: the people who will be asked, tasked and made responsible for this will be independent of the Government. They will be given a huge degree of leeway in how they set this up, so that it gains the maximum possible public confidence and support.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): Unfortunately, the Minister was interrupted in mid flow. He was about to make the point that the Government will give all available evidence to the recovery body. Two children were killed by plastic bullets, and the evidence around that has been sealed for 45 years, but none of us can understand why national security should mean that that is the case. Will he give a direct answer on this? Will that information be available to the recovery body?

Conor Burns: The hon. Gentleman is a distinguished parliamentarian and a former very effective Minister, and he was a police and crime commissioner for a time. He will understand that I cannot possibly comment on an individual case from the Dispatch Box—no Minister could refer directly to that specific example.

Several hon. Members rose—

Conor Burns: No, I will not give way at this moment. What I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that the information recovery body will be given more information than any other comparable body or current institution that is examining these cases.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): I have some sympathy with the Minister's position, in so far as everyone wants to criticise the UK Government on the disclosure of information. Given that 90% of the deaths in Northern Ireland are attributable to paramilitary terrorist organisations who refuse to give any information about any of this stuff, I wish there was a bit more balance from some in calling for truth and honesty, when the leaders of some of those organisations are not even willing to say that they were members—never mind leaders—of them.

Conor Burns: The right hon. Gentleman's point will have great resonance across these islands and with many families whose loved ones were murdered or maimed by the Provisional IRA. Importantly, it will be an undertaking of the British state to pass over information about all incidents on which we have records. My hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) and for South Dorset (Richard Drax) have served in the armed forces and have campaigned vigorously

on this, and they will know that it is absolutely the Government's view that there was no moral equivalence whatsoever between those who were on the streets of Northern Ireland trying to uphold law and order against a brutal, barbaric and evil campaign of republican terrorism, and those who skulked in the shadows and bombed, shot, killed and maimed. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that we have to be careful in our language not to create any equivalence whatsoever.

Several hon. Members rose—

Conor Burns: The final thing I will say—then I will give way a couple more times—is that the information held by the state will be not only information about the actions of the state, but intelligence on other actors, whom the body could then ask to come forward.

Several hon. Members rose—

Conor Burns: In the interests of balance, I am going to take an intervention from the leader of the SDLP.

Colum Eastwood: Let me take this opportunity to make it very clear that every single murder and every single crime that occurred during the troubles was absolutely and totally wrong—I do not care who did it—and that every single bit of truth, accountability and justice possible should be got at. Every single paramilitary organisation should be coming forward with information, but we know that there is lots of information on those paramilitary organisations, because the British Government have infiltrated them—and still infiltrate them—to the very highest levels. We all know that. The information is sitting in the files of the British Government.

As my friend the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd), says, the reason that we do not trust the British Government is this: Julie Livingstone, Paul Whitters, the Bloody Sunday inquiry, the Ballymurphy inquest. At every single turn, the British Government have tried to stop information getting into the hands of the people trying to find out the truth, including victims, who were told that they were at the very centre of this legislation. I have made this point a number of times now: there is a reason we do not trust you. Why not support our new clause 6, which would put on the face of the Bill that this information should be released to the public?

Conor Burns: The hon. Gentleman knows that in the Bill, a legal obligation is being placed on all agencies of the state to provide the body with all the information they have. That is unprecedented; it has not happened before. Given the levels of trust—I understand why he says what he does to the community that he represents in Derry and Foyle—the truth is that the success or otherwise of this provision will be in the actions and outcomes of the body, when it is up and running. It will get information, some of which we understand and know will be very uncomfortable for some people who have been in the apparatus of the British state over the years. A huge amount will also be very uncomfortable for terrorists, who may think that there will not be another knock on the door for them. The success, or otherwise, will be in the fact that the information is passed over, and the body will have independence to act to get that information out there and, hopefully, to get information to the families.

Jim Shannon: Just last week, it was reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* that victims' campaigner Kenny Donaldson—he is well known to everyone in the House, including the Minister and Secretary of State—said that

“if immunity was granted in exchange for information, then terrorists would then be ‘emboldened to wax lyrical’ about their involvement in violence”.

In other words, they would change their whole process.

Unfortunately, what I do not see in this legislation is the victims. It seems that the perpetrators of those crimes are getting off scot-free. The victims are not. That being the case, this legislation does not take us forward in the way that it should. The Government should be bringing something forward that addresses all those issues, but I do not see that yet.

Conor Burns: The current mechanisms are not delivering in a timely way. Time is running out, and we believe that the processes established under the Bill will help to get information to people. Central to the proposal is the fact that the individual who comes to the body, or is contacted by the body, has an obligation to co-operate fully and to give full disclosure. If that disclosure is not deemed by the body to be full or honestly engaged, the body has the absolute right to withhold immunity and pass information to the prosecutorial services throughout the UK.

If hon. Members go back and look at how the body will be constructed—at the expertise of the people who will be on it, at the fact that it will be led by someone from a judicial background, at the police powers of investigation that it will have, and at the fact that this will be the most complete information ever provided to anybody looking at these events—they will see that the chances of somebody coming forward and, in a sense, hoodwinking the commission is vanishingly unlikely. If people do not co-operate—if they withhold information or are not complete in what they tell the body—it is within the body's rights and obligations to withhold immunity.

5.15 pm

Sammy Wilson: In the interests of getting balance in this whole memorialisation process, does the Minister not accept that already in the Bill there is a clear indication that balance will never be obtained? The records that are held are mostly held by the state. The records of state activities are going to be given to the researchers and the body to tell the story and so on. He has indicated that some of the intelligence on terrorist organisations will be given as well, but that in itself is incomplete and the terrorist organisations, we can be sure, are not going to play the same and give the same access as the Government are going to give in this whole process. Therefore, how can the Minister ever hope that this will be other than a one-sided process that will not produce a balance, but will be used and abused to rewrite the history of the troubles in favour of terrorists?

Conor Burns: The right hon. Gentleman is, in a real sense, right to raise those concerns, but the way the process is being set up in the Bill provides more than a possibility that we can find a way of doing this in an inclusive sense—in a way that creates a complete picture of the troubles for future generations to understand—and that will certainly not involve the glorification of acts of

terrorism. He is right—and he is right that I alluded to this—that the state holds not just significant information about what the state was responsible for, but significant intelligence-based information on the actions of others that may not ever have been acknowledged before. That will be part of the oral history—the official history, if you like—of the troubles.

Under clause 48, the cross-community, cross-sectoral advisory panel, which will consist of a range of organisations with a defined interest and expertise in this area, will include representation and voices from the victims' sector. That should provide some reassurance that there will be voices in there making sure that this is not a one-sided account of the history of the troubles.

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP) *rose—*

Gavin Robinson *rose—*

Conor Burns: I will give way to the hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) and then to the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson). I will then finish, and then the Committee can consider the clauses in detail.

Paul Girvan: On the last point, we have a difficulty in that many organisations have been set up to tell the story of victims and to fight on the victims' side, but there are a large number of victims—I can talk personally, from a family point of view—who do not want to engage with anybody because they want to put this sad history behind them: unlike a lot of people who want to keep opening this up, they want to bury it. Where are those people's views ever going to be heard? That is the difficulty that I have. Members of my own family will not engage with any victims' groups. They do not want to be involved with them because they believe they all have an agenda and, for some, it is to rewrite history. We fear that this process will be used as an opportunity to rewrite history and to bring forward a narrative that will suit, primarily, in my case, a republican agenda, which will be spun by those who have a machine behind them set up to do that.

Conor Burns: I entirely understand where the hon. Gentleman is coming from and I entirely understand what he says about the range of views within victims' groups, and even within individual families, about how they want to approach this. In a sense, there is no right or wrong thing to do here. These are matters of judgment, and the view that the Secretary of State and the Government have come to on how we proceed is that this gives a chance for a degree of reconciliation that is not delivered by the existing institutions.

For those who take the view that the hon. Gentleman describes and want to be cut off from the process and freed from thinking about it, often because what happened is so intensely painful to them that the pain of connecting to the events and to the losses is overpowering, we totally and utterly respect that. No one will be compelled to participate in an oral history or a remembrance of an event if they do not want to, but for those who do, it will be there. We will set it up as I have described, involving victims' organisations and the cross-sectoral, cross-community advisory panel, to try to make it as inclusive and as embracing as it can possibly be.

[Conor Burns]

Rather like the information recovery body itself, however, the success or otherwise of the memorialisation process will be judged only when it is up and running. It will be judged only when people can see what is happening and can make a judgment call on whether we have achieved, in the institutions we are creating, the objectives we set ourselves and the chance for greater reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Gavin Robinson: While the Minister took issue with the comment from the hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood), it proved his salvation, because it allowed him to completely ignore the point that the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry) was making: irrespective of whether people believe the Minister or not, they will not engage in the process. We have seen victims' groups say they will not engage in the process. We have seen organisations that represent republican terrorists indicate that they will not engage in the process.

As the Minister concludes his remarks, I say to him that on Wednesday he had the opportunity to accept an amendment that would have removed the pitifully low fine for non-engagement if notice was served—three days of the Minister's wages—for something more substantive and meaningful, and he was against that amendment. He knows there is no encouragement or inducement to engage in this process. He knows there is no consequence for lying as a result of the process. He knows that, even if somebody stays outside the process and is prosecuted, the sentencing regime will be reduced from two years in prison to zero years in prison. On each and every one of those points there is an amendment that the Government could engage with to make sure that the process works, yet still they are against them all. Why?

Conor Burns: I have huge respect for the hon. Gentleman and the points he makes. What I will say to him from this Dispatch Box, from the Government Front Bench with the Secretary of State beside me, is that these points have been made incredibly powerfully by the hon. Gentleman on the Floor and reinforced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith).

The hon. Member for Belfast East is correct that the amendment on the fine for non-engagement was on the Order Paper last week. That question and the question on sentencing are things that—I think I am allowed to go this far—there are active conversations about internally. This is the Committee stage of the Bill, and the Bill will leave the Committee and will go to the other place. We are very carefully listening to the validity and strength of some of the arguments, but we must ensure that we get the Bill technically and legally right.

Mr Evans, you referred at the beginning to the fact that we will return later today to a manuscript amendment, at another stage of this Bill's progress. That manuscript amendment is based on an amendment last week that we worked closely with the Opposition and other parties to get right, and we will table it tonight to achieve that. Just because we are not accepting an amendment as drafted this evening, or indeed last week, it does not necessarily mean that we have closed off interest in considering that in more detail to see if we can build on the ideas that the hon. Member for Belfast East has and improve the Bill further at a later stage.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Conor Burns: This is genuinely the last time I will give way.

Richard Drax: As we have heard, if a terrorist is convicted, they spend a maximum of two years in jail. As I understand it, if a terrorist does not come forward to this body and give information, they could still be investigated judicially. If there is sufficient evidence to bring a terrorist to court and they are found guilty, does that two-year jail term still apply, or can they be convicted for a proper length of time to account for their appalling crime?

Conor Burns: The short answer to my county neighbour is yes. That is why we are reflecting very carefully on the points that the hon. Member for Belfast East, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green, and others, have made as to whether that is the right way to proceed, or whether we might want to have another look at that whole area and the wider context of the Bill as it progresses through its remaining stages.

I have done less today than I did last week, which I think is a good thing for everybody, including me. I look forward to hearing the detailed debate during the afternoon and evening, and look forward to returning to respond on behalf of the Government to the Committee later today.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Nigel Evans): Could I ask anybody who intends to try to catch my eye to stand so that we can get an idea of numbers?

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Second Deputy Chairman: Right—thank you very much.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): I will try to keep my remarks as brief as possible as well. We do not want to end up in the situation we did last Wednesday, where it took three hours before we heard a speech from a Northern Irish Member.

Today, we are going to scrutinise parts 3, 4 and 5 of the Bill, followed by the final stages. This is a major undertaking in such a small amount of time, particularly for legislation on such sensitive issues. The Government's rushing the Bill through has only deepened mistrust in its proposals. Opposition amendments 114 and 116 highlight some of the gaps between the Government's rhetoric and what the Bill actually delivers. I hope the Committee considers the amendments with the same generosity it did amendment 115 last Wednesday, and that once again we can find agreement on how to improve the Bill. The Opposition will be supporting other parties in their attempts to remove clause 39. We will also support new clauses 4 and 5, which are thoughtful attempts at improving how immunity works.

Our amendment 114 is based on exploitation proceeds orders from the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, which stop criminals in our country profiting from their crimes, usually through books or memoirs. Our amendment would allow the Secretary of State to make regulations to ensure that people given immunity cannot then profit from the actions that they have just admitted to. The test

that Labour has set remains that this Bill needs to offer greater benefits to victims than it does to perpetrators of terror.

The Government have repeatedly told us that as a result of this Bill all victims might get—might get—information, yet perpetrators stand to benefit much more. If basic tests are met, they must be granted irrevocable immunity from prosecution. There are no conditions to that immunity. There is nothing stopping people from then using their immunity to write down their own history of their crimes and profit from them. What is more, only perpetrators have to give the immunity panel an account of events that is true to the best of their knowledge. No input from victims is required. Quite simply, the Bill hands perpetrators control over the narrative of their crimes. Indeed, once a perpetrator has been granted immunity, I cannot see any limits on what they can do with it. There is nothing to stop terrorists writing books and seeking to justify the mayhem and senseless killings that they have carried out. Undoubtedly, that would re-traumatise victims. This is not idle speculation but a concern that victims have raised with me directly.

Just after my appointment, I travelled to Northern Ireland and sat with Paul Gallagher. Paul was left in a wheelchair after a loyalist gun attack in 1994 when he was just 21 years old. Paul told me that it cut to the core when he learned that his shooting featured in a book about his attackers. It contains a first-hand account and justification of Paul's shooting by the paramilitaries. No one asked for Paul's consent, or his version of events. This Bill would not only allow perpetrators to live in freedom, but empower them to tell their own version of events in their own names, without fear of prosecution.

5.30 pm

Johnny Mercer: The hon. Member makes an important point, and the whole Committee will be united in agreeing with what he is saying. He is absolutely right. Can he clarify to those of us on the Government Benches where the balance is between the glorification of terrorism offence that exists in the Home Office legislation at the moment and what he would like to see added to this Bill to make sure, as I think everyone would accept, that none of what he is saying comes to pass?

Peter Kyle: There is previous and existing legislation relating to crimes, but when people have served their sentence, they are not given immunity afterwards. This Bill gives immunity from prosecution for crime, and therefore people can go on to tell their version of events without any repercussions in the law. That is what the amendment seeks to tackle. It is a real challenge that simply does not apply to other parts of the criminal justice system. The measure as it stands will enable people to draw a profit from the horror that they inflicted on the innocent lives of others. That the Bill will have these effects is truly chilling. Amendment 114 would mean that perpetrators of troubles-related offences do not enjoy benefits as a result of this Bill which do not exist for other criminals. This is a very low bar that this Bill needs to pass to ensure that it is not deepening divisions, instead of fostering reconciliation. I am glad that the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) has added his name to the amendment.

Our amendment 116 would remove the provisions into the Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) 1959 that require the closure of existing troubles-related inquests in Northern Ireland. The Bill is meant to provide information for victims and promote reconciliation. One way in which victims have received information about what happened during the troubles is through inquests. Only last year, on 13 May 2021, did we have findings from the Ballymurphy inquest. In his statement to the House, the Secretary of State acknowledged the power of an inquest for families. He said that

“the desire of the families of victims to know the truth about what happened to their loved ones is strong, legitimate and right.”—[*Official Report*, 13 May 2021; Vol. 695, c.277-78.]

The campaign for justice in Ballymurphy has reminded us all of that, if we needed to be reminded at all.

On Second Reading, the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Julian Smith) asked the Government to look again at the Bill's proposals on the closure of existing inquests. The Minister at the Dispatch Box, the right hon. Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns), confirmed that he would, but we have not seen anything from the Government about any amendments they are bringing forward on this matter. Indeed, it was not addressed in the speech that we have just heard from the Minister.

Our amendment would simply remove the clauses of the Bill that close existing inquests in Northern Ireland. There are not many. The total figure is likely to be fewer than 20. Last month, Sir Declan Morgan, a former Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, gave evidence to the Select Committee. He summed up why it is unjust to close existing inquests on the basis of whether they have reached an advanced stage by the time the Bill is enacted. For the benefit of those who are not keen followers of the Select Committee, Sir Declan developed the five-year plan for dealing with remaining legacy inquests. It had its first year in 2021 and has been disrupted by the pandemic. These inquests have already had funding confirmed.

Sir Declan told the Committee:

“Of the 56 inquests that comprise the legacy inquests, 20 have been heard so far...A further 10 are already identified as year three cases, which will get hearing dates, other things being equal, between the end of 2022 and 2023. That would leave standing, as it were, 21 inquests. Some of those inquests relate to multiple people. For instance, the Stalker/Sampson inquest relates to four people. That would leave 18 cases to be dealt with.”

What is the justification for ending those 18 cases, when other people who are part of the same five-year plan will have their inquest heard?

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): The shadow Secretary of State is making an excellent speech. He mentioned the Ballymurphy inquiry, which shows what can be achieved even after a long time. Some 50 years on, the families were provided with some truth and justice, and it was shown that the victims were not guilty of any wrongdoing. Does he share my concern that the commission will not be able to investigate in the same way and therefore, in future, families will be denied that same right to truth and justice, however long it might take?

Peter Kyle: My hon. Friend makes the point incredibly powerfully and well. It is true that the information and justice that came out of that inquiry, and others, had a profound impact on the victims' families.

[Peter Kyle]

We should also not forget how long those families campaigned to get the inquest in the first place, which is an essential part of it—some have campaigned and called on Ministers to deliver inquests for decades. Some of those inquests have been granted, so it would be incredibly painful for them to be cruelly snatched away now. This is a process that families have faith in, and as we well know, faith and trust in state practices in Northern Ireland is hard won.

Crucially, the cases are not separated on merit; they are in a list based on a range of practical factors, such as resource availability. Most families who are part of the five-year plan know each other and have supported each other's efforts. It is cruel to allow some of the remaining inquests to continue, but close others based on the order in which they were due to proceed. At a time when the Government need to be reaching out to victims, such provisions only push them away.

Gareth McCord's brother Raymond was beaten to death in 1997 by a loyalist gang. A pending inquest into Raymond's death is one of those that might be closed by the legislation. Gareth wanted me to put on the record how that is affecting his family. He said:

"We are being punished for obeying the laws while those who murdered and maimed will be officially rewarded with an amnesty. Raymond would be 46 years old now. For nearly 25 years our family has suffered on all levels. Hearing this news that inquests are to be shut down I have no doubt will remove what kept us going."

The Government must justify why closing existing inquests is worth the price that they are asking from victims and their families.

Johnny Mercer: I pay tribute to both Front Benchers—the Minister and the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle)—for the manner in which they have engaged with these subjects. I will not speak for long—we have been over much of this ground—but I will cover a couple of things that I heard in the speeches of Northern Ireland MPs last week, which were very good, and a couple of points that have been made today. I will then stay again and listen to all the points of Northern Ireland MPs.

My first point is about homogeneous views and veterans and families. The hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood) mentioned that families involved in Kenova are not interested in criminal investigations and that they just want information. He is a good man and is not misleading the Committee—I accept 100% that that is what he believes—but I have spoken to other families who are not in that position. The problem is that if we present our personal experience as a homogeneous view, we will never get anywhere in this process.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), who is a great friend and represents the same cohort as I do. He said that the military have deep concerns about the proposals, but in my experience, they welcome them, because they bring some conclusion. At the same time, however, he is right. I urge all hon. Members to engage in the debate conscious of the fact that none of those disparate groups, which all have different experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland, has homogeneous views.

Colum Eastwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Johnny Mercer: Of course I will give way in a minute.

That is why this space is difficult for the Government, because there is no clearcut answer to what we are trying to do. Whatever we do, somebody with an absolutely righteous cause, who is absolutely right, will object to it. The difficulty for us as politicians is to try to act in the round. Although we all want the sort of justice that has been talked about, the net result of that is soldiers being in court cases like some of those I have sat through in the last couple of years.

Colum Eastwood: I am very grateful to the hon. Member; we are becoming good friends here now. I agree with him on the issue of homogeneous views. Of course, it is absolutely right that many families internally—within those families—have different views. I have not met too many who do not want to seek truth. I suppose the experience that we have, having dealt with so many of these cases—and the experience of Kenova, which he talks about—is that unless we properly investigate, put people under the cosh and do it properly, we are not going to get to the truth. I think in nearly every family's experience, whether from a paramilitary organisation or the Government, truth does not come knocking at their door. It does not come willingly—it just does not happen—unless they are put under pressure. That is why removing the investigation and removing at least the possibility of criminal proceedings is also, in our strong view, removing the opportunity for many families to get any truth.

Johnny Mercer: I have a lot of sympathy with the hon. Member, and he is right in a lot of what he says in this space around investigations. I have repeatedly stated that I would like the Government, as they have done by introducing amendments today, to continue to be receptive to changes to the Bill as it goes to the Lords. It is not only about the issue mentioned there. The issue of sentencing has also been raised by those from one of the Northern Ireland parties. I think it is absolutely critical that if people choose not to engage in this process, there is a heavier burden and a heavier penalty for not engaging in this process than there currently is, and I would urge the Minister to take that away.

I want to tackle the narrative about collusion, which is an incredibly difficult term. It is a real touchstone for the security forces, and I understand why. The reality is that a lot of these young men and women who went to serve in Northern Ireland did not choose to go to Northern Ireland; it was somewhere they went as part of their duties. While collusive behaviours have been highlighted over the years—things that have caused immense pain to families, which I totally understand—collusion, as a stand-alone term, has never been proved in court.

I will tell the Committee why this is so difficult for members of the security forces. Conflict such as this is never clearcut. We cannot have an honest two-way debate about it in public, with clear rights and clear wrongs, because it is so messy—it is so messy—and that is not the operators' fault. The operators were young men and women making incredibly difficult decisions around incredibly complex scenarios, with lots of different factors affecting the way they made those decisions.

I am afraid—as someone who has consistently asked for the Government to do a better job of holding their own people to account in the military—that I cannot

honestly stand here and allow the collusion narrative to go through without challenge, because these men and women committed everything to try to restore peace in Northern Ireland, while there were those, who have been talked about, who got up in the morning and genuinely thought it was the right thing to do, to advance their political aims, to murder women and children—to murder women and children in the name of politics.

I recognise that Northern Ireland MPs accept that, but I would gently say to them that there is a reason why people feel the narrative has got out of control. The reason is that things have been mentioned about what took place, and of course the military kept loads of records—of course it did—so it was always going to be out of balance. People such as the IRA, Gerry Adams and all the rest of it, never kept records, so of course there is going to be an imbalance.

I would just urge people to think about the young men and women who went to serve there. They never went out there with the intention of ending up on the wrong side of the law or the wrong side of history. I have always accepted that things happened in Northern Ireland that should never have happened and were not investigated correctly, and families have suffered immense pain. However, we must never let this collusion narrative run away to the detriment of the service of those brave men and women in Northern Ireland.

Colum Eastwood: The hon. Gentleman has forwarded the argument about collusion a number of times, and I totally agree that we need the whole picture. If I accept that, will he accept that there are now very few people left who do not agree that there were collusive practices, that collusion was a thing, and that people who were being paid by the state murdered people in Northern Ireland? That is the whole point of the Kenova investigation.

5.45 pm

Johnny Mercer: This is an incredibly challenging place, and I will choose my words carefully. Were people who took public money involved in killings in Northern Ireland? The state undoubtedly ran agents on all sides of the conflict, but the truth is that collusion has never been proved in court. The hon. Gentleman can get frustrated with that, but that is the way the country works.

Colum Eastwood: You're the only person left saying this.

Johnny Mercer: I am not the only person left. That is the way the country works. There are other people who think that collusion existed every day. They are very loud, and they tell everybody about it every day. There is another side, a quiet side, who are getting older now, and who think, "Actually, there wasn't collusion. We did our best in incredibly difficult circumstances, but there was no formal collusion. We did our best to bring peace to Northern Ireland."

Colum Eastwood: Let me ask the hon. Gentleman one simple question: there are countless examples, but has he ever heard of Stakeknife? He has quoted Kenova.

Johnny Mercer: I am afraid I know the Stakeknife case intimately, which is why I said what I said at the beginning of these remarks. Obviously, I am not going

to talk about individual cases, as that would be wrong. I totally understand where the hon. Gentleman is coming from on this issue, but there is a difference in the English language between collusive behaviour and collusion proved in court. To go over that line is a disservice to those who served, but I am sure we will continue this conversation for many years to come.

There was another point about people not engaging with the information recovery body in Northern Ireland

Sammy Wilson: Before the hon. Gentleman moves away from the point about balance, he and I share the view that there must be a mechanism to ensure that the history of the troubles is not rewritten, and that those who stood up against terrorism are not made the equivalent of terrorists, or have their name blackened by the imbalance of information. On disclosure of information, the Bill lists state institutions that can be instructed and given guidance by the Secretary of State about the kind of information that ought to be provided. There is no equivalent—there cannot be—on the terrorist side, and that is where the imbalance will come from.

Johnny Mercer: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right, but as he said, there cannot be an equivalent. So what do we do? The situation is grotesque. There are no winners here at all, but as he said, there cannot be that mechanism on the other side. All I would say to my hon. Friend—Northern Ireland Members probably do not consider me that these days, but they are my friends—is that while I totally understand why they go on to a narrative about "We must have justice for this particular murder, and that one", which everyone agrees, they must also accept that the price of that is the experience of people such as Dennis Hutchings, who they have stood up and spoken against as well. The two things cannot co-compete in this space.

Gavin Robinson *rose*—

Johnny Mercer: I am happy to give way in a moment.

At some point we have to decide where the balance lies. If we constantly go over this saying, "Justice, justice, we will get there in the end"—0.1% chance, and the experience of all these veterans going to court in Northern Ireland has been an absolute joke; I am sorry to say that it has reflected very poorly on everybody in Northern Ireland. These veterans are going through the last 10 or 11 years of their life under this, and dying alone in a hotel room in Belfast. It comes at a price, and my hon. Friends have to be honest about that price and whether it is one worth paying, for the majority view, in getting at the truth and trying to understand what happened at that time, and bringing some sort of peace to the families.

Gavin Robinson: I would love to say that I am enjoying the hon. Member's third Second Reading contribution. He knows full well—he sat on the Defence Committee, as did I—that the consequences and problems that we highlighted were repeated in investigation after investigation. The option was there for his Government to embrace the argument about what is required under article 2 of the ECHR and how the state has discharged that duty through a previous investigation, but his Government did not want to engage with that. They could have

[Gavin Robinson]

embraced that in a way that would have supported veterans and others. That is honesty. That is an honest position to hold, but his Government did not have the bottle to do it.

Johnny Mercer: I was in the Government, and I left the Government. Look, lots of discussions on legacy have taken place over the years. I sat on the same Committee as the hon. Member, and he raises a fair point, but it comes back to the same argument. This is where we are now. If the Government will accept his amendments, they will do and, if not, they will not, but if that means that we do not engage in this process—this is the last chance—that would be a huge mistake.

The last time that happened—this is the problem with what the hon. Member just said—was with the Historical Enquiries Team. I sat in a court in Belfast on the murder of Joe McCann when Soldier A and Soldier C—two soldiers, one significantly older than the other—gave evidence. One of them had a reasonable memory—the other did not—and gave a cohesive account of what happened to the Historical Enquiries Team, under the auspices that it would not be used to prosecute him, in order to bring some peace to the McCann family. Five years later, he sat in court with that evidence being used against him. That is why this process is needed.

Gavin Robinson: They weren't prosecuted.

Johnny Mercer: They were prosecuted. Soldier A and Soldier C ended up in court in Northern Ireland—I was there—and the evidence that was attempted to be submitted was from the Historical Enquiries Team.

Gavin Robinson *rose*—

Johnny Mercer: I will give way, because I am the only speaker on the Government side and I think that we want to have a debate. I do not want to bore anyone, though.

Gavin Robinson: The hon. Member knows that that prosecution collapsed, and rightly so. The court was hugely critical of how what was presented as new evidence had only a new cover letter on top of it—there was nothing new in the evidence—and there was a direction of no prosecution.

Johnny Mercer: That is my point: the fact that it got there and those two soldiers went through that process for nine years of their lives from 2005 to 2014. The wife of one the soldiers died during the process. That is why we need this process. A lot of this could have been done better over the years, but we are where we are.

I have a concern that people in Northern Ireland will not engage with the process and that victims and other groups will not come forward. That is a legitimate concern—I can see that campaigns will be run to try to get people not to engage. The only people who will lose out will be the families in Northern Ireland. For some time, they have been taken on journeys that, at times, were unfair on them. That is not a popular thing to repeat given the side of the argument that I come from, but some of the practices have been unfair on them.

Finally, I turn to glorification, and I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to listen to Opposition Front-Bench Members on that. I know that there are provisions in legislation—[*Interruption.*] Not about crime but specifically about the glorification of terrorism. We must be very careful that those cowards who got up in the morning to murder women and children for their political aims are given absolutely no opportunities to glorify what they did. We must double down and ensure that there is no gap in legislation where those people could take advantage of their crimes.

Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP): Will the hon. Member support the amendment on glorification this evening?

Johnny Mercer: As I understand it, conversations are ongoing about how that objective can be achieved—[*Interruption.*] No, it is not as simple as that. I have been a Minister and seen amendments that, on the face of it, looked like they would improve a Bill, but the reality is that certain things cannot be done because of how other legislation bumps up against them. Legislation must be crafted in the correct way. As I understand it, Ministers are looking at that with the Opposition and they will ensure that there is no gap in the legislation that allows for terrorism to be glorified.

I have sat through all the speeches and every minute of the Bill's passage, and I am afraid that I repeatedly hear things that are not true. We all have a responsibility to deal with this issue not as though we are speaking to our home crowd but as it actually is. If not, ultimately, the people who will lose out are families, victims and veterans. For me, they have always been at the heart of the debate, and I hope that we can continue to hold them there as we progress.

Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP): I will attempt to emulate previous speakers in trying to speak for the shortest possible period, although as I spoke for only 2 minutes and 40 seconds on day one, that might be something of a challenge given the interest in the amendments before us. Nevertheless, I will do my best.

I turn first to amendment 114 and new clause 2, which seek to prevent people from profiting from conduct for which they have been granted immunity. That seems to be, at the very least, the baseline outcome for which we should look from any such process. It is unconscionable at the best of times for people to profit in such a manner from crimes that they have committed, and particularly so when a status of immunity has been granted. On that basis, that amendment and new clause have the SNP's support. As, indeed, does amendment 116, on keeping troubles-related inquests open.

I have been clear throughout that our preference is to allow historical inquiries to continue and for them to be properly resourced, not necessarily with any huge expectation of convictions but simply to allow a police-standard inquiry to continue and to keep hope alive. That seems to be at the heart of what many of the families of victims are seeking most from the process. Flawed though the legislation is in principle, it would be easy for it to resolve the situation of closing down not just investigations but promised investigations simply because of their order in the queue. It would be easy for

the Minister to resolve that, so I hope that he will consider the amendment and incorporate that into the Bill.

I said on Second Reading that I thought the immunity process placed a pretty questionable obligation on those seeking immunity to tell the truth, and that requiring them to do so only to the best of their knowledge and belief is a considerable distance short of being the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. To that extent, the SNP very much supports new clause 5 to the effect that, were evidence later to come to light that someone granted immunity had failed to meet condition B in clause 18, that immunity would be revoked. I do not think that immunity, once granted, should always be forever if it was found to be achieved through someone acting in bad faith. Again, I accept that the bar for that would necessarily be high, but nevertheless that seems to be a baseline output from a Bill being driven by such principles.

I turn to new clause 4 and the aggravating factor of glorifying terrorism. I very much appreciate what it seeks to do—we would all deprecate any attempts to glorify terrorism—but I am less certain about how it might work in practice or how solid it is. However, I look forward to hearing speeches on that. We will listen carefully to the arguments.

Finally, I will briefly address some remarks to new clauses 6 and 7. New clause 6 would be a valuable addition to the Bill. I accept the Minister's good faith on how the state would intend to open up its records, but it would place in legislation a duty of openness on the Government, not just on opening up files but on specifying those that have not been opened and giving some narrative on that. That would be a worthwhile addition to the Bill.

6 pm

On new clause 7, the SNP has very considerable concerns about the Bill's compliance with article 2 of the European convention on human rights. The SNP is also extremely sceptical, and I think with good reason, of the Government's commitments to people's individual civil rights whenever those rights come into conflict with matters the Government find to be politically inconvenient. Therefore, enshrining in the Bill the explicit right for individuals to take civil action, or to seek judicial review on the grounds of compliance with article 2 of the ECHR, would be a very important safeguard that people would welcome.

Colum Eastwood: I very much welcome what the hon. Gentleman is saying, particularly on judicial reviews and civil actions. I think he would agree that it is particularly egregious that the Government are seeking to close down the civil route for victims. The deadline for putting in new civil cases was the day the Bill was announced and published. For me, that was particularly difficult to take. Does he remember the example of when Michelle O'Neill, who was Deputy First Minister at the time, stopped and held up the opportunity for victims to get access to the victims' pension? It was actually the judicial review process that got that position overturned and now, finally, victims have the opportunity to avail themselves of that. We have countless examples of where victims have used JR in civil cases to get a better result than they got from the Governments who are supposed to represent them.

Richard Thomson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. To speak to his wider point, the right of access to judicial review is a fundamental right for any individual against an overreaching Executive or Government. It is only right that that route should remain open to people, notwithstanding the Bill. To incorporate that right in the Bill would provide a very important safeguard for people. I urge the Minister to ensure it is there, so that that right is not in question at any stage after the Bill is passed.

Sammy Wilson: First of all, we understand how sensitive the whole issue of legacy is: we live with it every day in Northern Ireland. We get representations from our constituents about it and there are varying views, but the one thing the Government have to be aware of is just how much opposition there is to the proposals on the table tonight. We have tabled amendments that we believe would improve the Bill. Would they make us vote for the Bill? No, they would not. But at least they would improve the way the Bill operates for victims and how it addresses the unfairness that those who involved themselves in terrorism will now be able to walk away free.

If we look at the terms of the Bill and what victims get out of it, we can see why there is so much opposition to it. We welcome the fact that the Government have now accepted the proposals put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) on ensuring that those who were involved in sexual crimes do not use the cover of the troubles and their involvement in paramilitaries to be granted immunity, but there are other proposals that I believe are equally compelling, and the Government ought to look at them. First of all, from the victims' point of view—this was mentioned in the last point made by the SNP spokesman, the hon. Member for Gordon (Richard Thomson)—those who want to take civil actions can now no longer do so. Those were the only avenue open to many people. Indeed, in the case of the Omagh bomb and others, we saw how people were able to at least try to overcome the deficiencies in the police investigation. What is on offer for those who are victims?

Terrorists who co-operate and tell the truth, at the end of the day, after they have admitted their role, will walk away with no sentence at all—no time in jail. They are free; they are immune. Those who do not co-operate can still be subject to an investigation, but there will be no outcome at the end of it, other than if they are successfully prosecuted. Their crime will be highlighted but they will not pay any price for it.

For those who, laughingly, go into the process and tell lies, and hurt the victims more, there will be no sanction either. One amendment we have tabled will ensure, if the Government accept it, that those who knowingly lie in the process at least know there will be a sanction on them. It is a reasonable amendment, and the Government should accept it. Otherwise, there is no incentive for people to go into the process and tell the truth. The Government may well argue, "Why would you go into the process if you don't intend to tell the truth?" The fact of the matter is that here are people who engaged in murder and terror for so many years. It may well be that simply to avoid the prosecution process, they are prepared to go in, hoping that nobody actually knows and has sufficient information to expose the lies

[Sammy Wilson]

they are telling. But if they knew there was always the chance that, having been caught in those lies, some sanction or penalty would be imposed on them, then we may well get at least some indication. They would know there was some penalty involved at the end of the day.

On the amendment on the glorification of terrorism, this is a big danger. We have seen it already with members of the IRA, some of whom are now MLAs in Northern Ireland. They committed crimes, escaped from prison with a prison officer killed and now go around boasting about it. It is how they pack people into their dinners for fundraising. They write about it in books and make money out of it. The real danger of the Bill is that once they have been granted immunity, they will be totally free to do that without any comeback at all and with no sanction imposed on them.

Johnny Mercer: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, particularly on those seeking elected office who have been convicted of horrendous crimes in Northern Ireland. Does he agree that the converse problem is that we have individuals in the justice system and so on who also have interests on different sides of the argument? They get to a different position, such as a prosecutorial position, and then make a decision based on that. So the whole system has the challenge of individuals within it who hold views on different sides of the debate, and that is why the Government have to act.

Sammy Wilson: I really do not understand the logic. The Government must act to deal with the hurt that victims have been caused, not increase that hurt in the ways I have outlined in my speech so far by making it possible for those who have involved themselves in terrorist activity to walk away with no prosecution. They can lie and still walk away with no prosecution, or they can engage and walk away with no prosecution, and at the same time not even leave a civil remedy open to the victims. Furthermore, once those people have been granted immunity, the Government are allowing them to make money out of it—or worse, allowing them to encourage another generation to engage in the same activities by boasting about what they did, why they did it and the outcome: “And by the way, you can walk away at the end of this process. Here am, able to tell my story and encourage other people to think that I did a good thing, and here has been no impact on me at all.” That is why the amendment about the glorification of terrorism is so important.

There are people who never even lived through the troubles who now think that nothing wrong was done during the murder campaign. Why is that? Because they go to events where they are told, “What we did was the right thing. We are proud of it!” Furthermore, even play parks are named after those who engaged in that. The lesson for children is that the terrorist, sectarian campaign was totally legitimate.

Jim Shannon: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The prison officer who finally died as a result of the breakout from the Maze was one of my constituents. His wife still lives in my constituency, but his son is dead. The grief of such families has not in any way dissipated over those years. Yet prominent Sinn Féin

MLAs and former IRA terrorists glorify those events as if they were part of a great “Roy of the Rovers” story. They were not: they involved the murder of innocent people, who gave their lives for this country. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right: the hurt, pain and soreness that my constituents in Strangford feel will last for all their lifetimes, until the day they die.

Sammy Wilson: The problem is that we do not know how many other Gerry Kellys are there, lurking in the background, who have not yet faced prosecution or got over the whole legal process, been sentenced and had sanctions imposed on them. Once that has happened, of course, he thinks he can go and boast about it, but there are probably a whole plethora of people within the ranks of terrorist organisations who currently fear that if they did that they would be opening themselves up to prosecution. Once they have been granted immunity, of course, they will be free to do so.

I hope that the Government will accept a number of the amendments that have been put forward. I hope that they will not allow a situation to develop in which, having been granted immunity, the terrorist can rub the victim’s face in the dirt by boasting about their actions.

I still have huge concern that the Bill has the seeds of an unbalanced narrative about the troubles. I listened to what the Minister said, but the truth is that when it comes to that narrative, the main source of information—the Bill makes clear the range of public and Government bodies that will be given directives to reveal information—does not have the equivalent on the terrorists’ side. I accept that the Minister says that police intelligence can also be revealed, but the very fact that so many people were not prosecuted and so many thousands of murders were never solved is an indication that the intelligence that the police, Army and state hold about terrorist organisations is incomplete. They are not likely to complete it, yet there will be an obligation on the state to reveal what it knows about the activities of the security forces.

That will, I believe, lead to an imbalanced report of what happened and will leave the door open for the information to be exploited by those who, as we have seen, are masters of the manipulation of public information. That is another huge flaw in the Bill, and one that I think we will live to regret.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene, and I utterly agree with him about the narrative. What sickens me is the fact that when history records what happened—the troubles, all the murders and the terrorism—the narrative will be, in the end, “Well, the Government decided that we did nothing wrong.” That is what really worries me about the Bill. I will vote for it, but I will sup with a very long spoon.

6.15 pm

Sammy Wilson: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He is quite right.

The Minister said that the Bill is not about equivalence between terrorists and those who bravely fought them in Northern Ireland, but the truth of the matter is that it is. The mechanism open to terrorists is the same as the one that those who were in the security forces have to use. There is equivalence here. No matter how the

Government try to twist on this one, I believe that the Bill does a huge disservice not only to victims but to those who fought bravely and sacrificed in Northern Ireland—the very people who many Government Members have rightly sought to defend as constituents, and who have been unfairly dragged through the courts not once or twice but, in some cases, three times. Yet the mechanism open to them is the same as the one open to terrorists. That does those people a disservice.

The victims, the security forces and the people who suffered through the terrorism in Northern Ireland have all had a disservice done to them. If some of the amendments that we are debating were accepted, that at least might ameliorate some of the deficiencies, but it would not make the Bill acceptable.

Gavin Robinson: I follow on from my right hon. Friend's point about the frailties of the Bill. We have been consistent in our position that it is a corruption of justice. For me and my colleagues, one of the most disappointing things about the process is that here we are, on day 2 of Committee, and we should be discussing the merits of amendments that try to do what is in the best interests of people who have suffered through years of conflict in Northern Ireland, but all we get from the Government is that they cannot—or will not—accept amendments; they refuse.

I heard the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) indicate his support for our new clause 3, which looks at sentencing issues, and I have heard warm support from Labour, the SNP and others around the Chamber about the merits of our amendments on glorification. Yet still there is this intransigence. We, the representatives democratically elected to come to this Chamber and make laws that actually work for the people we represent, are told that it is really not our business because the amendment might involve a write-around or bureaucracy, so we should just leave it all to the Lords.

What are we doing? What have these two days of scrutiny been for if our scrutiny amounts to nothing? It is even worse when people in the Chamber accept the very points that we are making but say, "Ah, but our hands are tied. It would be far better if Members of the House of Lords dealt with it."

Bob Stewart: I entirely agree. Please will the Government accept the amendment that would stop the glorification of terrorism? That glorification is wrong, and we should not agree to it. I urge the Government—my own side—to accept the amendment, because it makes absolute sense.

Gavin Robinson: I am very pleased that I gave way to the right hon. and gallant Gentleman. I have appreciated all his contributions on Northern Ireland issues over the years.

The amendments that the Committee is considering were tabled in advance of the sitting last Wednesday. Discussions about legal applicability, drafting and getting it right could easily have occurred over the weekend, exactly as they did with respect to amendment 115, but I am sorry to say that there has been a lack of willingness to engage thoughtfully and productively with the amendments that have been tabled. It is no use telling us that addressing them cannot be done tonight and will have to be done in the other place, when we have demonstrated

over the weekend that it is possible. From listening to the concerns of victims in Northern Ireland and those who represent veterans' organisations, the police and the Army, we know that there are aspects of the Bill that we can improve—and yet, try as we might, all we face is stiff Government resistance.

Johnny Mercer: If some of the amendments are accepted, will my hon. Friend be minded to vote for the Bill?

Gavin Robinson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman has listened to my contributions throughout these proceedings. We voted against the Bill on Second Reading because we believe that it is a corruption of justice. We will vote against it on Third Reading because the same corruption of justice will apply. The hon. Member represents a very bespoke view, or one-sided view, of the issues.

Johnny Mercer: That is unfair.

Gavin Robinson: It is not unfair; I think that it is absolutely appropriate. I do not say it as any criticism or to malign the hon. Gentleman. He and I take an interest in veterans' issues: we have both served on the Select Committee on Defence, and he has been a Defence Minister and has served this country honourably.

I represent victims in my constituency. I represent people who have been blown up, bombed and maimed by their own neighbours in their own community. I represent families who walk the streets of Belfast and know that they are walking past the perpetrators who took their loved ones' lives. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will therefore accept that when we say that the Bill is a corruption of justice, we mean it. When we table scores and scores of amendments, we are trying to make the Bill better, but that does not make it just.

Johnny Mercer: My hon. Friend says that I represent one side. I have never argued for anything other than fairness in this process; it is disingenuous to claim otherwise, and he knows that. I have only ever argued for fairness—and yes, that includes veterans who did the bidding of this House for the freedoms and privileges that Members on the Opposition Benches enjoy. Yes, I want fairness, but I have never been one-sided. I ask him to think again about that.

Gavin Robinson: I listened to the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that he heard what I had to say in response. If he wants to ask me the same question again, I will give him exactly the same response. I am not impugning his character, but I hope that he can accept where we are coming from.

This corruption of justice can be made better, but that does not make it just. This corruption of justice before us tonight can be improved, but that will not unpick the ban on the coronial court system or unpick the ban on prosecutions in this country, and it will not change the fact that a victim would not be able to sue the perpetrator of their crime. That is all in the Bill, and if the hon. Gentleman thinks that the amendments that we have tabled can bring the Bill to a place where we can support it, he is sadly mistaken.

We have raised amendment 112 in earlier exchanges with the Minister. I understand his point about deadlines, but Operation Kenova and the Public Prosecution Service's

[Gavin Robinson]

live cases need to proceed. If we were to have an engaged exchange, we would probably agree that the Public Prosecution Service needs to move on with its decision-making process. However, now that the Government have established Operation Kenova to look into the actions of Stakeknife—Freddie Scappaticci, the head of the IRA's internal investigations unit and an agent of our state—and now that the Public Prosecution Service has 30, 32 or 33 live prosecutions, they need to be concluded. The amendment would allow a conclusion to that process even if the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Surely the Committee cannot be saying that through a process to look at legacy and reconciliation, we will just sweep Operation Kenova under the carpet. After all the years, all the evidence and all the engagement with victims and families, I hope we will not say that the Bill will conclude that process. If the Government are not minded to accept the amendment, I hope that it will be considered in the other place, and I truly hope that the Public Prosecution Service will get on with making a decision.

Amendment 107 is about the practical, simple ability for a court that is considering a conviction to take into account the fact that somebody has been granted immunity through the process. It seems to me very simple: if someone is granted immunity, they will stand before any subsequent court for any subsequent criminal activity and the courts will think that they have a clear record. Surely that cannot be our purpose. There should be a sentencing consequence for somebody who is now a repeat offender, albeit that they have immunity—somebody who has continued to engage in criminal activity post 1998. Should the courts not have access to that information? Should it not be available for the purposes of sentencing? The amendment says that it should.

Amendment 120, to which I hope the Minister will respond comprehensively in his closing speech, is connected to new clause 4. It specifically addresses the memorialisation project. How can we have a memorialisation project and a reconciliation project if there is no preclusion of glorification? The amendment would place a duty on the designated persons compiling the memorialisation project

“to ensure that no memorialisation activities glorify the commission or preparation of Troubles-related offences.”

What practical opposition could the Government have to that amendment? If they want the process to work and if they want it to be about reconciliation, surely they should impose on the people they are engaging to do the work a duty to preclude glorification.

I turn to amendment 110. The Northern Ireland Office and the Government have already accepted that an innocent victim is somebody who has not been harmed by their own hand. There are perpetrators of violence in Northern Ireland who have injured themselves while trying to kill others, but who purport to be innocent victims. We have gained significant traction with this argument; when it came to the troubles-related pension, the Northern Ireland Office accepted that an innocent victim is somebody who did not harm themselves and was not culpable for their own offence. Michelle O'Neill refused to allow the administration of the pension scheme, but the Northern Ireland Office accepted that interpretation of what an innocent victim is, so why is it

not being replicated in the memorialisation project? It is simple—it is a rehearsal of a policy that the Government have already agreed—yet there seems to be some intransigent reluctance to accept it.

Johnny Mercer: I have huge respect for my hon. Friend, but a lot of what he says supports the view that he is his own worst enemy when it comes to getting the Government to accept his points. I, my right hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) and others clearly do not want any glorification of terrorism, and so forth, but when my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) comes forward with arguments that are clearly on one side, that does not deal with the situation as it is—not as we would like it to be, but as it actually is, for example in making sure that the investigations the first time round into people such as Dennis Hutchings were correct. We have to deal with the situation as it is, not as we would want it to be for individuals.

Gavin Robinson: I say to you, Mr Evans, that I have absolutely no idea what that intervention was about, what point the hon. Member was trying to make or whether it related to what I was saying or to his earlier contribution.

Johnny Mercer: I will explain.

Gavin Robinson: I am happy to give way—but I mean, really!

Johnny Mercer: What I am saying is that my hon. Friend is outlining individual cases and is putting across his outrage that they will not be reinvestigated *ad infinitum*. That is the point that he is making, and it is what he has said a number of times. Have I got that wrong? He has said it a number of times. My point is that if he continues down that byway while saying that the process should have been ECHR-compliant the first time round, we end up in a situation where the UK Government have to act unilaterally.

Gavin Robinson: The point that I was making was about the definition of “innocent victims” and the memorialisation project. The point that the hon. Gentleman is making relates to what he said during his own speech. He said that you cannot on the one hand say that there needs to be justice for victims, and on the other hand say that you stand with Dennis Hutchings. He either refuses to accept or fails to grasp a point that we have discussed over a number of years. There should be no repeated investigations when the state has discharged its article 2 compliance. It is as simple as that. The reason there is an investigation, the reason the coroner's court looks at a case again, the reason a prosecutorial service considers evidence again, is that they are being told that there is new and compelling information. There is not.

6.30 pm

We invited the Government—the hon. Gentleman, as a member of the Defence Committee, invited the Government—to consider the proposition that, when the article 2 duty has been complied with, the state has done its job, and there should be no repeat investigations. He will see the arguments once the Bill has passed its stages here—the hon. Gentleman can smile and smirk all he likes but he will see the challenges to this process that again are breaching article 2.

Johnny Mercer *rose*—

Gavin Robinson: No, I want the hon. Gentleman to listen, because he does not seem to understand the point. From 1973, when there was a change in investigations, when the military stopped investigating themselves and incidents were investigated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, those investigations were compliant. We asked the Government to accept that that was the basis on which we could move on in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Gentleman does not like that analysis—the one with which he agreed when he was a member of the Defence Committee—he could look at the Stormont House agreement that all the parties in Northern Ireland sat down and discussed and then accepted. So there is a second view.

Johnny Mercer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Gavin Robinson: No, I will not give way at this point. When the hon. Gentleman stands up and says that there is no point in talking about what has been, and that this is all we have in front of us, I hope he genuinely recognises—and I say this not in fury but in sorrow—that this is not the way to deal effectively with the trauma of legacy and our past.

Johnny Mercer: My hon. Friend talks about compliance with the European convention on human rights. The critical point is that some of these specific allegations and prosecutions, which have been tested in court, came after 1973, and have been tested on the basis that those investigations were not ECHR-compliant. Conservative Members would love all of them to have been ECHR-compliant; the problem is that what my hon. Friend has just said—that from 1973 onwards they were all ECHR-compliant—has been proved in court to be untrue.

Gavin Robinson: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman failed to heed the necessity for the House to grasp the argument and to legislate on the basis of that argument: to legislate on the basis that, when an investigation has occurred in the past and was compliant at the time, we should move on. That is why we would have been legislating. There were some who did not like that because it would apply equally across the board, and the hon. Gentleman will remember that argument as well, but the Government never grasped it.

I am grateful for what Members have said about new clause 3, and I listened carefully to what the Minister said about it in his opening speech. He will recall from Second Reading that both the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) and I mentioned this proposition, which concerns sentencing. Members who had the patience to listen to all our contributions will have learned that the passing of the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act meant that anyone who had been convicted previously was to serve only two years in jail, and that anyone who was subsequently convicted, but convicted of a pre-1998 offence, would only ever have to serve a maximum of two years. It did not matter how many people you shot, or how many people died as a result of your explosives; you would serve no more than two years in prison.

Buried in this Bill, in schedule 11, is the provision that those two years required to be served in jail should be reduced to zero. That would mean zero for anyone prosecuted after the passage of the Bill, irrespective of

whether they refused to engage in this process or honestly offered victims' families the truth. We have been told that we need to swallow this process so that victims get the truth, yet if someone engages in this process dishonestly, or refuses to engage at all, the maximum consequence will be zero time in jail. There is no consequence for snubbing families. There is no consequence for snubbing victims. There is no consequence for lying through your teeth, or avoiding the process altogether.

If we can accept that the run of this process is that those who engage honestly and honourably could be granted immunity, surely the opposite has to be that for those who refuse to give families the answers, those who refuse to help them with reconciliation, there should be a consequence. That is why we are saying, 25 years on from the 1998 Act, that it needs to go. If someone has been offered an open door and the prospect of immunity through this process and giving the truth, surely there must be a consequence for lying or abusing the families of those who lost their lives.

We never supported the Belfast agreement for this very reason. I know that that is not a view shared unanimously by Northern Ireland representatives, and it is not something that we need to fall out about this evening, but we did not support it, while others accepted it as a price worth paying. However, 25 years on, if people are not prepared to give, through this process, truth and justice to families who need it, and to be honest about it, there must be a judicial and sentencing consequence.

Conor Burns: The last few moments have demonstrated the truth of what I have said on both days on which we have discussed these provisions: these are contested and very difficult proposals for some people in Northern Ireland and, indeed, throughout these islands.

I just want to emphasise to the hon. Gentleman what I said earlier, with the Secretary of State sitting next to me on the Front Bench, and to make two very brief points. The first is this. We believe that, when the body is created, the fact that it will be led by an experienced judicial-style figure and will be complemented with a team of people who are expert in investigations makes it highly improbable that someone could come forward with a false account, because it will also have access to the vastest array of information available to any body operating in this area hitherto. However, we accept the hon. Gentleman's point about incentivisation for people to come forward and engage with the body, which is why I gave the undertaking earlier that we would look at the question of the financial penalty for non-engagement.

As for the question of why we are simply not accepting the amendments as they stand today, I think we demonstrated over the course of last week, and over the weekend, that when we think that the intent is sincere and it meets the objectives of the Government in the Bill, and also, critically, can command the greatest possible consensus across the House, the Secretary of State and I, and the Northern Ireland Office, will engage with Government lawyers to look at that. Let me make it absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman in relation to the specific amendment that he is currently discussing that we are committed to going away and talking to legal teams to see where we can achieve some movement. We want to have a constructive dialogue with parties across the House to see how we can address this as the Bill progresses.

[Conor Burns]

I also understand the hon. Gentleman's point about the other place, but we act as one Parliament, and the objective for the Government is to secure the right outcome wherever we may do it in the course of the Bill's journey.

Gavin Robinson: I am grateful to the Minister for that clarification. I hope he accepts the point that I made earlier—that all the amendments that I am speaking to this evening were available last Wednesday, and that the same thrust and energy that were dedicated to amendment 115 could have been engaged in respect of a number of these as well. I recognise that that has not happened, but I hope that the fact that we are not focusing on them this evening does not mean that attention has been lost on the issue of the notice requiring the provision of information. These are not the same rigorous powers that the police have. There are no powers of arrest, for example. However, there is this notice, and provision for a fine of up to £1,000 if it is not complied with. A £1,000 fine is pitiful for someone who was an active terrorist, who tried to destroy peace and democracy in Northern Ireland, who has never engaged with truth and justice and who does not want to comply with this process. They could be fined up to £1,000—it really is so inconsequential.

There are amendments that were discussed throughout last Wednesday and this evening, and I hope the Government will engage with them. I have mentioned amendment 120, which would place a duty on people involved in memorialisation to ensure that there was no glorification. New clause 4 deals with those who are granted immunity and then go on to glorify terrorism. We accept that section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006 provides an offence of glorification of terrorism, but that is not what the amendment proposes. The amendment not only replicates section 1 but indicates that, if someone had previously benefited from immunity through the ICIR process, new clause 4 would make it an aggravating feature if they had immunity and then ultimately glorified terror.

We will support Labour's amendment 114 on this, although we do not think this should be solely confined to profit. Labour Members like to focus on profit sometimes, and their amendment is very much focused on profit from glorification. There is more to this than just making money; it is about the ruining of lives and the retraumatising of individuals in whatever guise, and profiteering could be one of those.

I shall turn now to new clause 5. Mr Evans, you will note that I did not start my contribution by saying I was not going to say very much. I can be accused of many things, but hypocrisy is not one of them. New clause 5 deals with revoking immunity, and I want to thank other Opposition leaders and Members for indicating their support for this. It would be hugely controversial and hugely damaging to the reconciliation spirit of what is proposed in the memorialisation strategy if, having assessed somebody, we gave them immunity from prosecution for their heinous crimes, only for it ultimately to be shown that they had lied throughout the process. If there is no way to revoke immunity, the whole system will collapse. There will be a crisis of confidence in the system. There needs to be a mechanism,

whether through the panel during the five years it is in operation or through the Secretary of State thereafter, whereby immunity can be revoked. In the same way, when people were released on licence after 1998, licences could be revoked. It would be anathema to anyone who believes in reconciliation to allow a situation where individuals were granted immunity for their heinous crimes on the basis of a subsequently demonstrated and proven lie.

I know that others will wish to contribute on the range of amendments that we have tabled. I have highlighted just seven of them this evening. We have had engagement from the Minister specifically on new clause 3. I am grateful and welcome that. I hope that he will have something more positive to say about new clauses 4 and 5 and some of our other amendments when he sums up the debate.

Stephen Farry: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson). It is not often that the Alliance party and the DUP find agreement in this Chamber, particularly in the current context, but there was certainly a lot I would concur with in his remarks. I would also concur with a lot of the interventions from the hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood). There is an important lesson in that, which is that, despite everything else that is happening in Northern Ireland, there is at least a degree of unity across the Northern Ireland political parties in expressing significant concerns about this legislation.

Before getting to the other points I want to make, I want to start on a more positive note. The shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), mentioned Paul Gallagher, who was shot and partially paralysed in a loyalist gun attack in 1994. I want to put on record our congratulations to Paul Gallagher on achieving his PhD at a ceremony at the weekend, not least because his research involves legacy. He has been both living it and researching it for almost 30 years.

The first point I want to make is about the word “reconciliation”, which appears in the long title of the Bill and is referenced throughout it. Reconciliation is very much in the DNA of the Alliance party; it is what we are fundamentally about. That said, we are concerned about the way in which the term “reconciliation” has been used in the Bill. Reconciliation was a core principle of the Stormont House agreement, and the implementation and reconciliation group was set up as a separate structure that was envisaged under Stormont House. Reconciliation was taken seriously in that process.

6.45 pm

I think we have a problem if we are saying on a top-down basis that families should be reconciled and that this is the process by which they will be reconciled. That is a determination for them to make; they have to live the experience and feel the reconciliation and engage with it. There is no one single definition of what that reconciliation will mean. It might evolve organically in different ways, but there is a danger in our automatically assuming that because this Bill is about reconciliation, it will achieve it.

The Minister of State referred to the fact that some people—I do not know if he was referring to me, the hon. Member for Foyle or anyone else—were saying that it was almost a self-fulfilling prophecy that families

would not agree to engage with the process, and that we should be showing leadership in that regard. Let me be clear: as elected representatives from Northern Ireland, all we are doing is reflecting what we are hearing on the ground directly from those families. This is not something we are recommending to people directly; it is what they are saying to us. They are deeply concerned about the nature of the process itself.

Conor Burns: On that point, I made the point strongly earlier that, whatever we say in this House or in the other place, and whatever is written in the media, the ultimate judgment on this body and its success will be how people engage with it and how it builds trust by the work that it does and the reviews and investigation processes that it undertakes. We believe that, over time, when people see how it is functioning and delivering and see that it is robustly and soundly based, it will win that public confidence. All I ask is for the space for it to be created and allowed to begin that work.

Stephen Farry: I will be generous in accepting what the Minister says about his intentions, but we have to be honest and say that the nature of how we got here has, in many respects, been extremely bad and flawed, which hampers that aspiration. Who knows, people may well engage with the process in due course, but at the moment there is a lot of suspicion around it and people do not feel that it will address the needs of their families.

That brings me to the wider concern around the use of the term “reconciliation” and how it could well be used to almost legitimise the process around immunity—or, as many people see it, a *de facto* amnesty. There is an expectation that down the line many measures in this legislation could be challenged through the courts, including the European Court of Human Rights, which is not part of the European Union, as we keep saying. The key piece of case law in this respect is *Marguš v. Croatia*. The broader lesson I take from European law, and wider international law, on this is that there is a general tendency to move away from the concept of immunity or amnesty. It might well have been in vogue at certain times in the 1980s or ’90s, but it is certainly not in vogue in the contemporary approach to the issue of justice in conflict societies or divided societies.

If there is to be a chance of immunity getting some degree of acceptance or being seen as legitimate, it would need at the very least to meet one of two tests: the process would either have to be agreed as part of an overarching peace process or agreed subsequently by the key stakeholders and other parties in the society. Where we have a Government unilaterally imposing an outcome on Northern Ireland, it is hard to see how either of those tests could be met if we found ourselves in a legal challenge down the line.

My second broad point relates to civil cases, which have been mentioned by other hon. Members. I am not going to labour this point, but I want to stress that the notion of an arbitrary cut-off is incredibly unjust, particularly when it is linked to the timing of the Bill’s First Reading. Many people simply did not have the opportunity to lodge the papers they were working on at the time. Some people were able to lodge papers and some solicitors were able to act very quickly, but others were not, which creates a hierarchy in what happens in those civil cases.

In a similar light, we have touched on the inquests themselves. These proposals go back to my dear friend the Lord Chief Justice back in 2016. The process was not fully formulated until 2019, but we now have the prospect of some cases being taken through to conclusion and others being arbitrarily dropped because they are not at a so-called advanced stage when this legislation becomes active. I think this will create a real sense of grievance among families, particularly when they have been given hope of seeing their loved one’s case go through that process.

Although the Minister referred to the ICRIR potentially providing a process that encompasses legacy inquests, the reality has to be clearly understood. The level of interrogation that will take place as the ICRIR looks towards the immunity process is nothing close to the coronial system’s interrogation of evidence. They are fundamentally different concepts, so the fear is that the interrogation will be lost.

The Minister referred to the six months, nine months or a year before the knife falls and said that people can get on with it, which belies the reality in two respects. First, there is not the resourcing to accelerate the process any faster. Obviously, we would like to see more resources, which is something the Government could deliver.

Secondly, we have to acknowledge that the Government have not always been as co-operative as perhaps they could have been—I put it as diplomatically as I can—in how these inquests were taken forward. People express frustration that the Ballymurphy inquest only reached its conclusion 50 years after the event, but there were many battles beneath the surface, particularly with the Ministry of Defence, on co-operation. Things could have happened a lot quicker. In that respect, there are still ongoing battles and disputes on full Government co-operation with these inquests. If they are genuine about accelerating the process, they should reflect on that.

Finally on inquests, beyond what has been set out by the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, if this Bill is passed, any inquest anywhere in these islands in relation to what happened in the past will be cut off, but there may well be circumstances in which those inquiries should take place.

The oral history, memorialisation and academic research is an important aspect of the legacy process that perhaps does not get the same attention as others, but it has always been regarded as a core element. In some respects, it could stand on its own two feet but, in practice, it is tied to what happens with the other institutions as part of the wider legacy framework.

Although I certainly trust the academics who would or could be involved in this process to do a great job, we have to recognise that a number of hurdles will be set in their path. One of those hurdles is the power of the Secretary of State to make appointments. I believe the appointments should be delegated to another body so there is no perception of political interference.

There also has to be a concern that the evidence to the ICRIR will be piecemeal. There are fears about both ends of the process. First, there is a fear that the perpetrators themselves will not be incentivised to engage with the process until the knock on their door is about to happen and they feel a self-interest to do so. A very select group of people will come forward in that respect.

[Stephen Farry]

Secondly, which families will engage with the process? Again, it may be a very select group, so the evidence base may be piecemeal. There are also issues with the documentary evidence that comes forward and whether it will be properly opened up. There is scepticism or cynicism about how effective that will be. Again, this evidence may well be partial and piecemeal.

It is worth sticking with this process, even if it is outside the Bill. We have to learn important lessons and listen to the practitioners from Northern Ireland, such as Dr Anna Bryson from Queen's University Belfast and others, who have expressed concern about how this has been set up.

It is my intention to support both the amendments on which the Labour party seeks to divide the Committee, and both the DUP amendments, too.

Carla Lockhart: The Government and the Committee are very aware of my party's reasons for opposing this Bill, as so eloquently outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson).

This Bill, at its core, is about injustice, evading justice and denying justice, which makes it very, very wrong. Through amendment 107, we seek to ensure that those who engage with the panel and receive immunity will, at least, have their crime considered if they are in the dock for a post-1998 offence. Surely this is a fair ask. Surely this Committee and the Government acknowledge that, by not agreeing to this amendment, they would be erasing the past from our legal process.

If a terrorist is granted immunity for carrying out a murder and commits murder again, he or she ought to be considered for sentencing by the court in the knowledge that he or she has clearly shown neither rehabilitation nor regrets for the act of taking a life. He or she should therefore be sentenced as such.

New clause 4 and amendment 120 touch on the issue of glorification, and they would be a vital addition to this Bill. We tabled these amendments with victims at the forefront of our mind and because we desire a society in which glorification of terrorism is not seen as normal, and in which those who planted bombs and killed men, women and children are not venerated as some kind of heroes.

I sometimes wonder how many Members are aware of the perverse activity of some of our elected representatives in Northern Ireland and how they regularly glorify terrorism. If the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition attended the unveiling of a memorial to three terrorists, it would be headline news and would be raised in this House—there would be a media and press outcry, and their position would be untenable—yet in Northern Ireland the leader of Sinn Féin brazenly attends events celebrating IRA activity. It is a reflection on our society and our media that such activity, in the main, goes unmentioned and, more disturbingly, goes unchallenged.

If an MP from any other party named their constituency office after a terrorist, it would be dealt with by this House, but nothing was done when the Sinn Féin Member for South Down named his constituency office after IRA terrorists.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: I thank both my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) for their work on this Bill.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart) agree that not only has the Member for South Down named his constituency office after IRA members from that part of Northern Ireland—I grew up there and know many of the families who lost loved ones as a result of the South Down Provisional IRA's activities—but, even more concerning, this House funds that constituency office named after two IRA members who committed murder on a large scale in that constituency? Does my hon. Friend also find that objectionable?

7 pm

Carla Lockhart: I thank my right hon. Friend for his intervention and agree entirely with what he is saying. It is abhorrent that this House funds an office that is a cold house to all members of the constituency that that individual represents. Every day, it retraumatises the victims of the terrorists after whom that office is named. I raised this point in this House in an Adjournment debate and have consistently raised it with Mr Speaker and a number of Ministers, asking them to take action. I will continue to do so until we have that dealt with appropriately. If we are to educate our future generations about the futility and evils of terrorism, we need to ensure it is never sanitised and never celebrated. That is why we ask Members to accept our amendment.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Amendment 107 is, of course, about addressing whether serious offences should be excluded, for example murders that occurred after 1998. Would it not be appalling if the people who murdered two soldiers at Massereene barracks in the South Antrim constituency and seriously wounded two civilians in the same gun attack walked away free if the case ever came again before a court? Surely that is not what this Bill should be doing.

Carla Lockhart: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. It is well made and has been noted.

New clause 4 seeks to ensure that terrorists receiving immunity cannot proceed to laud their evil activities; it is about ensuring that the book deals do not follow, and the fundraising tours and storytelling events cannot happen. Vitally, it is about protecting victims, for whom such events cause huge hurt and distress. The terrorists gave no thought to the victims and survivors before they made them such, and the activities of terrorists and their political proxies to this day show that they still have no regard for victims and the trauma they continue to inflict upon them. This Bill would be plunged to even deeper depths of moral despondency if it were to facilitate the further glorification of terrorism by those granted immunity in this process. I hope the Government will consider whether this is an outcome they would allow in England and, when they answer that question, act accordingly to amend this Bill to eradicate this extolling of evil in Northern Ireland.

Let me touch briefly on new clause 5, which stands in my name and those of my colleagues. The Bill is lacking in many areas, but it certainly lacks in the whole sphere of the revocation of immunity. It is vital that this Bill does provide for situations where new evidence emerges

showing that condition B in clause 18 was not met because the terrorist has lied. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that such instances will occur, given the types of people we are dealing with. Let us not forget that for many years senior members of the IRA have denied ever being members of the IRA; the truth is very much secondary to the cause. The granting of immunity is in itself abhorrent, but just how abhorrent would it be if someone had been granted immunity on the back of a tall tale and then the appropriate mechanism was not in place to revoke that ill-gotten immunity on the back of new evidence? This must be addressed, and we ask that the Government consider it carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East covered our other amendments in his contribution, passionately setting out why we believe they can at least make the Bill more robust. I reiterate his remarks, especially on the need to cut off at the pass any idea that immunity will give terrorists a platform to revel in their deeds and inflict more pain on victims who are already hurting so much because of this Bill.

Tony Lloyd: Let me begin by saying that this is an astonishingly important Bill and this is an incredibly incompetent way for this House of Commons to deal with it: to have had two days, in which we have been unable to get into the detail of the Bill, is frankly no way to deal with legislation of this import. The Minister is making valiant attempts to move a little with the mood of the Committee, but he must realise that we have not had the opportunity to get into the level of detail that we ought to on a Bill of this import.

I establish that because, interestingly, people from every party represented from Northern Ireland have spoken, at one stage or another, strongly against what this Bill seeks to do and indeed against individual parts of the Bill. That reflects the mood not only of victims and victims' groups—I have talked to many of those over the years—but the opinion across the piece of the north of Ireland. It is important that we establish that because one problem with that the position is that it plays into different parties' existing concerns. We have heard DUP Members say that they see this as a get out of jail free card for those who committed acts of terrorism, and I understand why. Those from the nationalist community will see this, again, as simply another attempt to gloss over the action of the state and the collusion that took place. In that context, the real danger is that rather than being something that moves us towards reconciliation, the Bill will establish in people the rectitude of their own views of the injustice of the situation. That is very, very dangerous.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying in relation to the nationalist community, but I am sure the hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood) would agree that the sense of injustice on the part of that community is not just related to the state; there are many, many victims in the nationalist community of paramilitary terrorist organisations who are also looking for justice and who join other innocent victims in regarding this legislation as very harmful to them.

Tony Lloyd: I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman on that. I have spoken to many victims, from all quarters, and to hear the pain that still exists all these years on is

a measure of the intensity of their grief. It is not just individual familial grief; it is about how communities are seeking to grapple with this, and that applies across the different communities. Bizarrely, there is a common bond that ties people together that goes way beyond individual families—it is societal. That is why this Bill is so inadequate and so dangerous, and that is the central issue we have to grapple with.

Let us look at some of the issues that have been raised today and pick up on the point about collusion, which touches on the role of the state. It would be seen as collusion were Operation Kenova now simply to be wiped from the face of the troubles, as the investigations under it have been so important in trying to establish truth, place it on the record and bring to prosecution those who were involved. In all quarters that would be seen as a form of state collusion. It would lead to the suspicions that already exist. We know that when Dr Michael Maguire was police ombudsman and he was looking at the investigation of what happened at Loughinisland, he discovered references on documents from the security services saying, "This is a slow waltz"; this was about slowing down the pace of investigation. All those things feed into the paranoia that collusion took place.

Then there was the Ormeau Road bombing, about which there is very little doubt. Again, the ombudsman was not provided with evidence by the PSNI; it came out through a civil case. The capacity of discovery through that court process meant that it was seen clearly that an agent of the state—I think it was Brian Nelson—provided weaponry to those who took part in those killings. The question of collusion is real. It does not go away because we skim over it through this new legislative framework.

Johnny Mercer: Will the hon. Member give way?

Tony Lloyd: I will, although I am reluctant to, because the hon. Member has monopolised a lot of this debate.

Johnny Mercer: I apologise, but we have to be fair. The hon. Member is talking about collusion. If we dealt with different groups all over the world, they would all have their views about what have been termed collusive behaviours. Unless we get to a point where we actually prove stuff in court, what have we become?

Tony Lloyd: If the hon. Member had listened to me, he would know that the reference I made—the case of the Ormeau Road killings—was precisely that: a civil court process that revealed that collusion had taken place. *[Interruption.]* Well, it was a court process that led to the discovery; I am not sure where we go beyond that.

Ian Paisley: In the debate about the difference between murders that have occurred, and whether they have affected one section of the tribe in Northern Ireland or another section, I often remember often the words of John Hume, speaking from the Bench in front of us, when he once said that Irish Republicans killed more people in the name of Ireland and Irishness than all the other groups on our island put together. I think, whenever we get things into proportion, we see where the real killing fields were, and we should not allow any piece of legislation to distract us from getting those people to justice.

Tony Lloyd: I agree, particularly for this reason: killing is killing. We do not have a statute of limitations for murder more generally. It is hard to understand in this most brutal of backgrounds—when a whole society has been traumatised and continues to be—that we are now moving on. I agree with the hon. Gentleman entirely. I refer to the issue of collusion not because the state is any more guilty than others, but because every murder deserves the same proper and complete investigation, and we will not see that under this Bill.

I will make a couple of other points. I am seriously concerned that the new independent commission for reconciliation and information recovery simply will not have the powers of an inquest or the capacity of civil cases. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State is not intervening, but I think he is assuring me from a sedentary position, “Yes, it will.” Let me tell him this: if we go back nearly 20 years, the British Government—a Labour Government at the time, by the way—were taken before the European Court of Human Rights, and one of ways in which the Court concluded that our country’s actions were incompatible with article 2 of the European convention was on the inability of the process at the time to lead from investigation and inquest through to prosecution. That is a significant issue, because there is no capacity in which the new body can deliver that prosecutorial process. Therefore, in the same way we will be in default on our article 2 obligations here. That is a serious point about which we should be very worried.

Colum Eastwood: The hon. Member is making an important speech. I wonder whether he has heard that the Council of Europe commissioner for human rights has today said that the Bill

“raises serious questions about the extent to which the proposed mechanism...is compliant with ECHR standards on independent and effective investigations. The possibility to grant immunity...on a low evidentiary bar raises concerns that this could lead to impunity.”

7.15 pm

Tony Lloyd: The only thing that I would disagree with there is “could”; the reality is that it will lead to impunity for people from many different backgrounds. This is not where we ought to be at this stage in our society.

Although I clearly support my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) in amendment 116, which is a serious attempt, I wish we could recognise that the inquest process provides something valuable. The five-year inquest process that the former Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, Declan Morgan, laid out was a very time-limited, credible process that itself was originally frustrated by the refusal to provide the finance to make it work. Had that been done, we would be massively further on than we are today. If we look across the piece at the obfuscation, and the sometimes deliberate attempts in the past to stop the justice process taking place, we can see why people are cynical.

The Minister said to us some moments ago, “Give these new processes a chance to work.” There are two problems with that. First, the real danger is that wiping away the existing mechanisms will mean that there really is no chance of getting properly to the truth that he seeks, with good intent, to create. That is why it is so fundamentally difficult to accept this legislation. Were the inquest process—the continuation of that which

Declan Morgan set out in his five-year plan—to be completed, it would go a long way in taking us away from that concern. Secondly, the fact that civil cases are taken out from day one—not day one when the Bill becomes law, but day one when the Bill is published—is quite astonishing. We claim that we do not have retrospective legislation, but this comes desperately close.

I hope the Minister will think about that, because I can see he is moving in the direction of wanting to offer some concessions, whether in the Lords or elsewhere. I agree with the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) that even with those improvements, the Bill will still be bad legislation, and, as bad legislation, it will do nothing to move the reconciliation process further in Northern Ireland.

Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab): I rise in support of the amendments in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Peter Kyle).

As a member of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, I have sat through countless evidence sessions and have heard evidence from victims’ groups across the communities, and what comes through above all else is a genuine desire for healing and reconciliation. People will naturally have different ideas about how we can get that, and it will be far from easy. However, there are common themes: people want justice, truth and closure. Those are the criteria against which we should measure the Bill, and, sadly, it is clear that it just does not measure up.

We have already debated how clause 18 will provide a virtually unconditional and completely irrevocable immunity for perpetrators of serious troubles-related crimes. Once immunity has been granted, any hope of justice for the victims vanishes. The review process under the ICRIR is completely inadequate and offers little hope of learning what truly happened to many victims, and much of what would be gathered would simply be the word of a murderer, who could gain immunity for the thinnest account possible. We cannot, as the Bill stands, have any confidence that this body will be fit for purpose.

Despite that, today we must now debate clauses that seek to end almost all other investigations into troubles-related crimes and force victims and their families to pin their hopes on the ICRIR as the only forum for investigation. One justification for that is that the current system of inquests and investigations is broken and offers little value, but that is simply not the case. Yes, those inquests and investigations might be imperfect. They can be slow, expensive and generally have little prospect of securing a prosecution, but there have been successes. These investigations have gathered enormous amounts of information that is of great comfort to the victims’ loved ones. As we have heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) and for Hove, the Ballymurphy inquest demonstrates that perfectly. Joan Connolly, whose mother was wrongly declared an IRA gunwoman, spoke of

“the joy and the peace and the mixed emotions that my mummy has been declared an innocent woman.”

John Teggart, whose father was killed, said:

“We have corrected history today.”

That is the value of these inquests.

In her evidence to our Committee, Alyson Kilpatrick, chief commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, was clear that while there may be

concerns with the current system, it is at least underpinned by the rule of law and is largely working as it should. She pointed out that most victims are getting a lot from the current system and that, if we want it to be more successful, we could better fund the existing processes and allow them to work.

Sadly, rather than helping communities heal, part 3 of the Bill will do the opposite. Let us take the case of Patrick McVeigh. Patrick was 44 when he was gunned down by the military reaction force. He was an innocent civilian who was murdered in the street by agents of the British state. His daughter, Patricia, has said that

“truth and justice mean so much to us.”

The clauses that we are debating today could end his family’s hopes of an inquest. Similarly, the Denton review, which was scheduled to be completed in 2024, could now be prevented from finishing, leaving the 127 Denton families uncertain as to whether they will ever get justice.

It is my belief that the Bill cannot be fixed. However, I shall support amendments 116, 117, and 118 as they seek to protect the valuable inquests that are already under way. Similarly, I want to voice my support for amendment 114, which seeks to prevent a person who is granted immunity under this Bill from profiting from their crimes. From speaking to victims’ groups, I know that many are worried that their loved one’s killer will not only be granted immunity under the Bill, but, as we have heard, be able to write a book or exploit other ways to make a profit from someone else’s pain. Supporting amendment 114 would be a compassionate gesture from the Government, and I wholeheartedly urge them to make this concession, as they did on the issue of crimes of sexual violence.

Before I finish, I wish to register my opposition to clause 38, which, if allowed to stand, will retrospectively ban any civil action that was not begun before the First Reading of this Bill—a measure that makes a mockery of our legal system. As the human rights group Liberty has said:

“Another form of scrutiny cut off, another route to justice denied.”

I understand that the troubles are a difficult issue for any Government, and, indeed, it is an enormously difficult matter for the people of Ireland to deal with. However, although it is frustrating, it feels to me as if this Bill is the Government trying to force a conclusion with an incredibly blunt instrument. The healing process has not been prioritised as it should have been. We believe that this will only cause more hurt in the communities in Ireland, so I cannot support it.

Sadly, the Government seem intent on ripping up the rights of people in the UK—from our right to take industrial action to our right to protest, and now our human rights—and destroying the Good Friday agreement in the process.

Ministers should be ashamed that they are attempting to destroy the very backbone of the UK, and presiding over the destruction of our values and our access to truth and justice. Rather than giving families the answers that they have been waiting for for years, this Bill, in seeking to end almost all other investigations into troubles-related crimes, removes all possibility of them ever getting the full truth. Those who have unlawfully killed or committed torture will be handed immunity from

prosecution in return for almost nothing. This is not a healing process. There is no justice, no accountability, and no closure for the victims of the troubles and their families.

I wish to end with the words of Alyson Kilpatrick, because they have stuck with me:

“When people say that things have been tried and failed, I struggle to see what has been tried. I see many things that have begun but not been allowed to complete”.

The Bill is being presented to us as a choice between this or nothing, but that is simply not the case. Let us work to improve the current system, or keep trying to find a better solution, because what is before us today will achieve little other than to let murderers sleep a little easier in their beds at night and ensure that their victims’ families get a little less rest.

Jim Shannon: I have spoken at some length on this matter. On the first occasion, I spoke about family members and illustrated the issues with the Bill. I have spoken in the past about those who have served alongside, and about the iniquities of a system that seems to let those who carried out the crimes get off scot-free. Tonight, I will do some of that again, but I also want to take an angle that perhaps I have not taken in the past, although I touched on it in an earlier intervention on the Minister of State. Members will know that I have spoken passionately on these matters, as all in this Chamber have done. The passion comes off the back of those we know, those who have given their lives and those who still seek justice across the Province.

I wish to make it abundantly clear that I am not speaking simply because I have been personally touched by the loss of loved ones and friends, although that is very important. I speak because I get phone calls to my office from serving personnel, highlighting the fact that matters are complex in Northern Ireland and extend further than many would think. Many Members have referred to the truth of the debate, but the IRA would not know the truth if it bit them on the end of their nose and hurt them. Indeed, they could not be hurt enough. The fact is that they have no morals and no understanding of the hurt they have inflicted on the people.

I have been asked to raise the question of whether this legislation extends to protecting those in the Irish Government who are accused of colluding to hide and protect murderers and bombers who sought to run and find refuge in the Republic of Ireland. I mentioned earlier that my cousin Kenneth Smyth and Daniel McCormick both served in the Ulster Defence Regiment, one as a serving member and the other as a part-timer. One was a Protestant and one was Catholic, but they were both murdered by the IRA. The people who carried out those murders ran across the border and took sanctuary there, and they were never made accountable for their crimes. You can understand, Mr Evans, why I feel quite aggrieved that this legacy Bill does not give us, as a family, the justice that we seek.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson) has raised the matter of collusion on a number of occasions. Last Friday, a gentleman came into my office and asked me to raise it again in the House, and I am doing so today. When we think about the Garda Síochána, the RUC inspectors who were blown up on the border and the people who

[Jim Shannon]

murdered in Northern Ireland and then ran across the border, it becomes clear why I want justice not just for those—for example, in the IRA—who perpetrated crimes, but for those who colluded with them in the Republic of Ireland and the Garda Síochána.

Some 25 years ago this November, Raymond McCord's son was murdered by the UVF. I represented my party, the DUP, at a cross-community group of victims—I would say it was probably a unity of victims—and we remembered that Raymond has not had justice for his son, almost 25 years on. I have not had justice for my cousin Kenneth or Daniel McCormick, 50 and a half years on.

7.30 pm

When we look at the Garda Síochána and the collusion with that police force, with high-ranking civil servants and with some political figures in the Republic of Ireland, we think about all the murders of the ex-UDR men, the RUC officers who owned farms along the borders in Fermanagh, in Londonderry, in Armagh and in South Down, who were murdered by the IRA in a genocidal campaign, not just because they served in the security forces, but because they happened to be landowners. Again, the genocidal campaign carried out was very clear; it was to target those people specifically and rid that area, as the IRA and republicans saw it, of those who were involved in serving our Queen and country in uniform, as I also did for 14 and a half years.

Hon. Members will understand, when those families left those farms, leaving their farmhouses in wreck and ruin, their machinery lying in the field and their land untilled for years, that I want justice on those people in the Garda Síochána and those in positions of power in the Republic of Ireland who gave sanctuary to those who carried out murders across all of Northern Ireland.

Gavin Robinson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is making a strong point. When he talks of people who committed crimes in Northern Ireland and fled our jurisdiction, he will know that on Wednesday amendment 98 was put before the Committee and tested by the Committee. He will also know that we said that for this legislation to allow somebody who ensured no justice for their victims to come home and retire with a level of dignity would be abhorrent. However, 271 Members of this House voted for that. What would he say to that?

Jim Shannon: I share my hon. Friend's disappointment over the amendment that he put forward. It grieves me deep in my heart when I think of those things, and I thank him for reminding us all in this House—those who are here and those who are not—of what it means.

There is an undoubted element of apparent collusion of those who were then, and possibly are now, in power. The question must be put: will the Garda Síochána and the Republic of Ireland Government be under an obligation to finally do the right thing when it comes to the victims—both Protestants and Catholics, including my cousin Kenneth and his friend Daniel McCormick—and release the information they have regarding the murders, disappearances and the alleged active role of the security forces in the Republic of Ireland in protecting and giving sanctuary to perpetrators and murderers?

Many of those people have hidden there for years. The murder of Lexie Cummings is a supreme example of that, because the person who did it ran across the border and is now an accepted politician in a certain party in the Republic of Ireland and holds a fairly high position. How does the Bill address that disgraceful element of the troubles, which people are all too quick to forget?

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: My hon. Friend is making a strong point. Of course, the UK Government cannot legislate for matters in the jurisdiction of the Irish Republic. Nevertheless, he mentions a number of incidents of a cross-border nature. Many murders occurred in the border areas and those operations were carried out on a cross-border basis. I am reminded, looking at our right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Benches, of the incident at Narrow Water in Warrenpoint. I remember as a child sitting in my back garden and hearing the explosion at Narrow Water, because we lived not far from Warrenpoint. I remember the awful news coming through afterwards, and the failings in the Garda Síochána investigation to find, identify and prosecute the perpetrators of that horrendous act of murder against soldiers serving with Her Majesty's forces. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that, whatever the UK Government do on legacy—and we do object to this particular approach—it must be balanced by the Irish Government bringing forward their proposals to deal with legacy cases on their side of the border?

Jim Shannon: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I am glad that that has now been put on record. In an earlier intervention on the Minister of State, I think there was some indication given that perhaps it is time that the Republic of Ireland looked at the role it had to play in legacy stuff. I'll tell you what: there will be busy people down there looking after all the things they have been involved in, all the things they have disregarded and all the injustices they are responsible for. I look forward to that happening.

I am also minded, as others have said, of the glorification by some across Northern Ireland: the McCreesh play park in Newry is named after an IRA member and those in Gaelic Athletic Association clubs across the whole of Northern Ireland, while very few of them were involved, named their clubs after hunger strikers and IRA terrorists. Then they wonder why we get angry when we see those things happening. The issue of glorification needs to be sorted, because it will anger us all.

I mentioned in an intervention a recent piece quoting victim campaigner Kenny Donaldson in the *Belfast Telegraph*, but I will quote the paragraph in its totality this time. It reads:

"if immunity was granted in exchange for information, then terrorists would then be 'emboldened to wax lyrical' about their involvement in violence, which would be painted as 'some form of romanticised resistance against tyranny'."

Yes, they would glorify it—they would make it into almost a "Boy's Own" story and make the rest of us, the normal people, sick as a dog when we think about it.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) was speaking, I remembered James Ferris, who was injured in the Maze breakout and died as a result. His wife still lives in my constituency; James Ferris, his son and his family were among my

constituents. Today there is just a wife left and the family are all away, but Mrs Ferris looks for the justice that was never given for the Maze breakout, and I do not see it.

At the same time, we have the glorification of what took place by certain high-level members of Sinn Féin and those who were at one time active in the IRA. I remember being made aware of something about a year ago, where ex-IRA members were going to bring themselves into a fantastic old boys' club, where they could live and talk and have a drink and tell over the good times—their good times, when they were murdering people in these streets. Hon. Members will understand why we just get a wee bit annoyed by glorification. That is why amendments 107 and 120, put forward by our party, are so important.

I am aware of the abuse of the legal system and legal aid to rewrite the history of our Province. We need to stop the republican PR team from making it seem as though the La Mon bombing was only an atrocity because it did not kill the RUC men it was intended to kill, while the aim of killing the RUC men was legitimate, as they were evil, according to the republican IRA. Twelve innocent victims were murdered that night in La Mon.

Republicans often try to rewrite history, claiming that the Shankhill fish shop bombing was a mistake not because it took lives, but because the loyalists they had aimed at were not there—though the children, who were there every Saturday, were there whether or not the loyalists were upstairs. That cannot be excused because loyalists were bad and colluding with the army or whoever else.

The point I am trying to make, hopefully in a strong and firm way, is that those people carried out terrible atrocities against people across the whole United Kingdom, and particularly across the whole of Northern Ireland. Seeking to portray soldiers who made a difficult call and pulled the trigger as villains, and claiming that that makes it justifiable for three Scottish soldiers to be murdered in a honeytrap in north Belfast, is the aim of this relentless propaganda machine pushed by Sinn Féin, using publicly funded avenues and ably assisted by people in positions of authority. I understand that soldiers and service personnel await a knock on their door with dread as their PTSD has enabled them to block out days or weeks at a time and we pick at the scab of their healings. This needs to stop and I advocate for them, too. I understand this, and I can stand against it with my friends across the Chamber.

However, my issue is that good, honest people—my constituents in Strangford, the citizens of Belfast East, South Antrim, Lagan Valley, Upper Bann, East Antrim, North Down and everywhere else, including Foyle—want to know when justice is coming for them. They have waited their time for their investigation and are again treated as less worthy because they are not as good at PR as the shiners—as the IRA. They do not have a biased media slanted to producing documentaries based on supposition and connecting dots where there never were any, relying on the years that have passed and the deaths of witnesses to perpetrate a false narrative. They do not have the resources—my constituents and those across all of Northern Ireland—to push these cases. They have patiently waited for their time, over all these years—my family for 50 and a half years, for others

longer and for others sometimes shorter—and now their time will never come, according to the Bill that we have before us tonight. That is disappointing. I speak for those people and family members among my constituents—the victims who are disregarded.

I understand probably more than most, with respect to everyone in the Chamber, the complexities of this awful predicament we are in. I thank right hon. and hon. Members across the Chamber for what they are doing, but this must be got right. There are hon. and gallant Members here who have served this country—have served Northern Ireland and I appreciate that very much. I see them on both sides of the Chamber tonight. I ask Members to agree the DUP amendments. My hon. Friends the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) and for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart) have taken the time to bring forward amendments—to engineer ideas to capture a way forward and not to bring forward legislation that does not help us. I would hope that tonight, by agreeing the DUP amendments, we will make the Bill better and more acceptable. I believe that we can protect service personnel without dousing the hope of victims. Let us send the Bill back for more work. Let us not put it through tonight unless the amendments that we, and other parties, have put forward can make sure that this is done in the right way. Let us get it right—not perfect, just right. Perfect is something that none of us in this Chamber are. Only one person is, probably, and that is the man up above, but nobody here. As that is the case, let us get it right, if not perfect.

Conor Burns: I thank all hon. Members from across the Chamber who have participated in this second day of the Committee.

As was said at the outset on both days, these measures are contentious and contested, but I hope that all hon. Members who spoke will agree that two reasonable people can perfectly reasonably reach opposite conclusions based on the same set of facts without each surrendering their right to be considered a reasonable person. As I said earlier, these measures are the fruits of two years' work by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. They are an attempt not to draw a line or move on, because we cannot draw lines or move on from the hurt, harm and distress that have been done to people over the years of the troubles in Northern Ireland, but to try to help Northern Ireland to move towards a place where it is a society that accepts a past but does not live in a present defined by something called "the past".

As the two days have gone on, and the Government have rightly been subject to scrutiny on the detail of the Bill, certain facts are emerging about what is in the Bill that perhaps were not as clear to Members in all parts of the Committee as when we began. The body that will be set up has the very simple aim of helping families to obtain information as soon as possible. The ICRIR will have access to more information than inquests and comparable powers to compel witnesses. It will be led by a chief commissioner of high judicial standing who will be able to preside over the findings in a manner similar to a coroner. It will conduct investigations for the purposes of providing answers for those who want them. It will provide immunity to individuals in exchange—transactionally in exchange—for providing truthful information about their role in the troubles and showing a genuine willingness to co-operate with it. We believe

[Conor Burns]

that that will create the incentive. It is worth saying that all the incidents that took place after 10 April 1998 will remain the investigative responsibility of the relevant police force and all potential perpetrators will remain liable for prosecution should sufficient evidence exist.

7.45 pm

The Bill does not prohibit investigations into those troubles-related incidents that might engage the UK's obligations under the ECHR. We have included various measures to ensure that the body is equipped with the necessary powers to secure information and conduct through article 2-compliant investigations. We are confident that these measures fulfil our article 2 obligations. Individuals who wish to challenge a decision taken by ICRIR will be able to do so by means of a judicial review.

Turning to new clause 6, the Bill already includes a provision that goes further than ever before in statute in terms of requiring relevant authorities, including state bodies, to release any material to the ICRIR that they may reasonably require for the purposes of its investigations. On amendments 108 and 109 and new clause 3, the Government understand and sympathise with the principle that lies behind the new clause. We recognise the importance of ensuring that individuals are sufficiently incentivised to co-operate with the commission both financially and, potentially, in terms of sentencing, and that the removal of early release provisions for those who do not participate could indeed act as such an incentive. I reiterate to hon. Members who have raised this that we are willing to look at it, but it is vital that in considering any amendment of this nature we look at the potential legal implications, and I commit from the Front Bench, on behalf of the Secretary of State and myself, to doing so. The Government remain absolutely open to constructive dialogue with all parties about how this might be reasonably and appropriately addressed as the Bill continues its passage.

Tony Lloyd: I have a lot of sympathy with what the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) is trying to achieve in his amendment. If I were to lie before a court in a murder case and that was discovered later on, I would of course be brought back with the charge of perjury. Is it not possible to look at whether the same concept can apply to the ICRIR?

Conor Burns: Clause 20(2) makes very clear the obligations of the body to look at the totality of the information available to it, not solely to rely on the testimony—the account—of the individual who is appearing before it. As I just reiterated, it will be led by a judicially experienced figure. The team that that person will assemble will comprise people who are expert and professional and have had careers in investigation and information retrieval. They will be able to look at biometrics and other things as well. We therefore think it is highly unlikely that the commission could be duped by somebody who has come forward, particularly given that, as I said, there is an obligation in the Bill on institutions of the state to provide full information.

Gavin Robinson: The Minister is making a fair point, but it is not the right one for what we are considering. He is talking about the process of assessing the veracity of what is said, and neither I nor the hon. Member for

Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) are saying it would be incapable of assessing the veracity of what is put forward. We are asking him to consider the consequence for lying. Just as people lie to judicial figures in every court throughout the land, what is the consequence for lying? It is not about whether the assessment of whether they are telling the truth is right, but what is done when somebody does lie.

Conor Burns: The consequence for lying, as the hon. Gentleman knows, in the first instance is that if the body determines that the account is false, the body will not grant immunity. I was referring to the amendments he has tabled to incentivise people to come forward and participate with the process, both in terms of the sentencing and the financial stuff, and I reiterate to the hon. Gentleman that we have undertaken to take that away and look at it.

Sammy Wilson *rose*—

Conor Burns: I think we need to make some progress. We have talked about this extensively, and the Bill will move now beyond this place to the other place, and then we will have an opportunity. [*Interruption.*] We do not need any facetious remarks from my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger). We are dealing with very serious matters indeed.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood), the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party, said that unless we investigate properly, we will never get to the truth. The point is that the commission will have full police powers and will be able to carry out article 2 compliant investigations. It has the power to compel witnesses. In response to something else that was said, it has the power to arrest and detain under clause 6(3). It has the right to use biometrics, but the primary purpose of these investigations will be to get information to the families.

Amendment 114 and new clause 2, tabled by the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) regard individuals profiting from the conduct for which they received immunity and the point around glorification. It is our view that the Terrorism Act 2006 already makes it illegal for the encouragement or glorification of terrorism, whether in the past, future or generally. Nothing in this Bill will prevent the prosecution of individuals deemed to have committed an offence under the 2006 Act, and it is incorrect to say that an individual gaining immunity through this body for a specific troubles-related event would then have immunity if they went on to commit a separate offence under the 2006 Act. It is very clear that section 1(3)(a) refers to any act that

“glorifies the commission or preparation (whether in the past, in the future or generally) of such acts”.

That is clearly an offence under the law of the land, unaffected by the legislation before the House tonight.

We have had two days of intense scrutiny of the legislation so far. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have shown a willingness, a determination and a desire from the Front Bench to engage with parties across Northern Ireland. I accept absolutely that there are deep reservations about the Bill, but we have been clear in legislating that we will listen, and we are open to constructive ideas that improve the potential for this Bill to have a positive impact on the people of Northern Ireland. I note that there was some criticism

at the beginning that we were not giving sufficient time for scrutiny in Committee, and I note that we look likely not to use the allocated time in full tonight. I thank the Committee for the courtesy and intelligence of the debates we have had.

Bob Stewart: I thank the Minister for allowing me to intervene. May I remind the House that actually, although we have not talked about it much, some of our soldiers who served in Northern Ireland, and who have repeatedly been dragged back to court, will sleep easier in their beds as a result of this Bill? Although I totally understand that people are really unhappy about aspects, that is one good thing about this Bill, which I fully support.

Conor Burns: My right hon. and gallant Friend makes an important point, and it might be the appropriate point on which to conclude the Committee's examination of the Bill today. Thousands of people, like my right hon. Friend, served on the streets of Northern Ireland. They served with honour, and we express our deep gratitude to all of them and to the families of those who lost their lives. They were there on the streets of Northern Ireland, trying to uphold law and order as the IRA and others waged a vicious, evil, indefensible campaign of terrorism within Northern Ireland and within our United Kingdom. I hope that the measures in this Bill, when this body is up and running, will help the people of Northern Ireland put those dark, dark days firmly in the past and point the way to a reconciled, inclusive Northern Ireland that is focused on the future and delivering for the young people of Northern Ireland that bright, generous, optimistic, reconciled future for Northern Ireland.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 33 accordingly ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 34

GRANT OF IMMUNITY: PROHIBITION OF CRIMINAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Amendment proposed: 114, page 27, line 19, at end insert—

‘(2A) But enforcement action may be taken against P to prevent P from seeking to profit from their conduct in relation to that offence (see section (Grant of immunity: criminal memoirs etc)).’—
(*Peter Kyle.*)

This paving amendment is linked to NC2 which is intended to prevent a person who is granted immunity under this Act from profiting from the conduct which they received immunity for.

The House divided: Ayes 209, Noes 282.

Division No. 23]

[7.55

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie	Bonnar, Steven
Ali, Rushanara	Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Ali, Tahir	Brennan, Kevin
Amesbury, Mike	Brock, Deidre
Anderson, Fleur	Brown, Ms Lyn
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Beckett, rh Margaret	Bryant, Chris
Benn, rh Hilary	Byrne, Ian
Betts, Mr Clive	Byrne, rh Liam
Blackford, rh Ian	Cadbury, Ruth
Blake, Olivia	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Blomfield, Paul	Carden, Dan

Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Hussain, Imran
Chamberlain, Wendy	Jardine, Christine
Champion, Sarah	Jarvis, Dan
Chapman, Douglas	Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Charalambous, Bambos	Johnson, Kim
Cherry, Joanna	Jones, Darren
Clark, Feryal	Jones, Gerald
Cooper, Daisy	Jones, Sarah
Cooper, rh Yvette	Kane, Mike
Cowan, Ronnie	Keeley, Barbara
Coyle, Neil	Kendall, Liz (<i>Proxy vote cast</i>
Crawley, Angela	<i>by Mr Pat McFadden)</i>
Creasy, Stella	Khan, Afzal
Cruddas, Jon	Kyle, Peter
Cryer, John	Lake, Ben
Cummins, Judith	Lammy, rh Mr David
Daby, Janet	Lavery, Ian
David, Wayne	Law, Chris
Davies-Jones, Alex	Leadbeater, Kim
Day, Martyn	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
De Cordova, Marsha	Lightwood, Simon
Debbonaire, Thangam	Linden, David
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Lloyd, Tony
Dodds, Anneliese	Lockhart, Carla
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Doogan, Dave	Lynch, Holly
Doughty, Stephen	Madders, Justin
Dowd, Peter	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Eagle, Dame Angela	Mahmood, Shabana
Eagle, Maria	Maskell, Rachael
Eastwood, Colum	Matheson, Christian
Edwards, Jonathan	Mc Nally, John
Efford, Clive	McCabe, Steve
Elmore, Chris	McCarthy, Kerry
Eshalomi, Florence	McDonald, Stuart C.
Esterson, Bill	McDonnell, rh John
Evans, Chris	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Farry, Stephen	McGovern, Alison
Ferrier, Margaret	McKinnell, Catherine
Fletcher, Colleen	McLaughlin, Anne
Flynn, Stephen (<i>Proxy vote</i>	McMahon, Jim
<i>cast by Owen Thompson)</i>	McMorris, Anna
Foord, Richard	Mearns, Ian
Fovargue, Yvonne	Mishra, Navendu
Foxcroft, Vicky	Monaghan, Carol
Foy, Mary Kelly	Moran, Layla
Furniss, Gill	Morgan, Helen
Gardiner, Barry	Morgan, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia	Morris, Grahame
Gill, Preet Kaur	Murray, Ian
Girvan, Paul	Murray, James
Green, Kate	Newlands, Gavin
Green, Sarah	Nichols, Charlotte
Greenwood, Lillian	Nicolson, John
Griffith, Dame Nia	Norris, Alex
Hamilton, Fabian	O'Hara, Brendan
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette	Olney, Sarah
Hanvey, Neale	Onwurah, Chi
Hardy, Emma	Oppong-Asare, Abena
Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Osamor, Kate
Harris, Carolyn	Oswald, Kirsten
Hayes, Helen	Owatemi, Taiwo
Healey, rh John	Owen, Sarah
Hendrick, Sir Mark	Paisley, Ian
Hendry, Drew	Pennycook, Matthew
Hillier, Dame Meg	Phillips, Jess
Hobhouse, Wera	Phillipson, Bridget
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Pollard, Luke
Hollern, Kate	Powell, Lucy
Hopkins, Rachel	Qaisar, Ms Anum
Hosie, rh Stewart	Qureshi, Yasmin
Howarth, rh Sir George	Rayner, rh Angela

Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark

Thewliss, Alison
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Jessica Morden and
Mary Glindon

NOES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote
cast by Scott Mann*)
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James

Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishty, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben

Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Griffith, Andrew
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi

Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherylyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Dame Maria
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Perence, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Poulter, Dr Dan
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robinson, Mary
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant

Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael

Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Steve Double and
Andrea Jenkyns

Question accordingly negated.

Clause 34 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 35 to 38 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedules 8 and 9 agreed to.

Clause 39

INQUESTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND INQUIRIES

Amendment proposed: 116, page 30, leave out lines 15 to 42.—(Peter Kyle.)

This amendment would remove the provisions inserted into the Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) 1959 that require the closure of existing Troubles related inquests in Northern Ireland.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 211, Noes 283.

Division No. 24]

[8.12 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam

Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Daby, Janet
David, Wayne

Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debonnaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote cast by Owen Thompson*)
Foord, Richard
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lillian
Griffith, Dame Nia
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Hanvey, Neale
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian

Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lightwood, Simon
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorris, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Allyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris

Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian

West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Jessica Morden and
Mary Glindon

NOES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote
cast by Scott Mann*)
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke-Smith, Brendan

Clarkson, Chris
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter

Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Griffith, Andrew
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherylyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit

Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Dame Maria
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, James
Morrisey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Poulter, Dr Dan
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James

Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warman, Matt

Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Steve Double and
Andrea Jenkyns

Question accordingly negated.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Committee divided: Ayes 282, Noes 211.

Division No. 25]

[8.22 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote*
cast by Scott Mann)
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria

Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine

Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Griffith, Andrew
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon

Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherylyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Dame Maria
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryl
Neill, Sir Robert
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Poulter, Dr Dan
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Chloe

Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig

Trott, Laura
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Steve Double and
Andrea Jenkyns

NOES

Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Daby, Janet
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint

Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote
cast by Owen Thompson*)
Foord, Richard
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Dame Nia
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Hanvey, Neale
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark

Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast
by Mr Pat McFadden*)
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lightwood, Simon
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan

Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jessica Morden and
Mary Glindon

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 39 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 10 agreed to.

Clauses 40 and 41 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 11 agreed to.

New Clause 5

REVOCATION OF IMMUNITY (No. 2)

‘(1) This section applies if a person (P) has been granted immunity from prosecution for the offence under section 18, but later evidence is submitted to the immunity requests panel established under section 21 which the panel considers to be conclusive evidence that the Condition B in section 18 was not met because P’s account was not true.

(2) This section applies if, after the immunity requests panel has ceased to operate, the Secretary of State considers that there is conclusive evidence that the Condition B in section 18 was not met because P’s account was not true.

(3) Where subsection (1) or (2) applies, the immunity of P under this Act is revoked.’—(*Gavin Robinson.*)

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Committee divided: Ayes 218, Noes 282.

Division No. 26]

[8.34 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Daby, Janet
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha

Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote*
cast by Owen Thompson)
Foord, Richard
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furmiss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Dame Nia
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Hanvey, Neale
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera

Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast*
by Mr Pat McFadden)
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lightwood, Simon
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi

Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owen, Sarah
Paisley, Ian
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

Liz Twist and
Taiwo Owatemi

NOES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah

Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Scott Mann*)
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, rh Jake
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Carter, Andy
 Cartlidge, James
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Choqe, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Simon
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Dinage, Dame Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Donelan, rh Michelle
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David

Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Firth, Anna
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Griffith, Andrew
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth

Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Neill, Sir Robert
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quince, Will

Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richardson, Angela
 Robinson, Mary
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
 Alan Mak and
 David T. C. Davies

Question accordingly negated.

Clauses 42 to 50 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 4

OFFENCE OF GLORIFYING TERRORISM: NORTHERN
IRELAND

‘(1) This section applies to a statement that is likely to be understood by a reasonable person as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to some or all of the members of the public in Northern Ireland, to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism.

(2) A person P commits an offence if—

- (a) P publishes a statement to which this section applies or causes another to publish such a statement; and
- (b) at the time P publishes it or causes it to be published, P—
 - (i) intends members of the public in Northern Ireland to be directly or indirectly encouraged or otherwise induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate acts of terrorism; or
 - (ii) is reckless as to whether members of the public in Northern Ireland will be directly or indirectly encouraged or otherwise induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate such acts.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the statements that are likely to be understood by a reasonable person as indirectly encouraging the commission or preparation of acts of terrorism include every statement which—

- (a) glorifies the commission or preparation in the past of Troubles-related offences; and
- (b) is a statement from which members of the public in Northern Ireland could reasonably be expected to infer that what is being glorified is being glorified as conduct that should be emulated by them in existing circumstances.

(4) For the purposes of this section the questions how a statement is likely to be understood and what members of the public in Northern Ireland could reasonably be expected to infer from it must be determined having regard both—

- (a) to the contents of the statement as a whole; and
- (b) to the circumstances and manner of its publication.

(5) It is irrelevant for the purposes of subsections (1) to (3)—

- (a) whether anything mentioned in those subsections relates to the commission, preparation or instigation of one or more particular acts of terrorism, of acts of terrorism of a particular description or of acts of terrorism generally; and
- (b) whether any person is in fact encouraged or induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate any such act or Troubles-related offence.

(6) In proceedings for an offence under this section against a person P in whose case it is not proved that P intended the statement directly or indirectly to encourage or otherwise induce the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism it is a defence for P to show—

- (a) that the statement neither expressed P's views nor had P's endorsement (whether by virtue of section 3 or otherwise); and
- (b) that it was clear, in all the circumstances of the statement's publication, that it did not express P's views and (apart from the possibility of P's having been given and failed to comply with a notice under subsection (3) of that section) did not have P's endorsement.

(7) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—

- (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 15 years, or to a fine, or to both;
- (b) on summary conviction in England and Wales, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both;

- (c) on summary conviction in Scotland or Northern Ireland, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both.

(8) in considering sentencing for an offence under this section, the court will take into consideration as an aggravating factor any immunity granted to P under the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2022.’—(Gavin Robinson.)

This new clause, based on section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006, makes having received immunity under this Bill an aggravating factor in sentencing for the offence of glorifying terrorism.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Committee divided: Ayes 220, Noes 283.

Division No. 27]

[8.46 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Daby, Janet
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.

Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote
cast by Owen Thompson*)
Foord, Richard
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Dame Nia
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Hanvey, Neale
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan

Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)
 Khan, Afzal
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lightwood, Simon
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owen, Sarah

Paisley, Ian
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qaisar, Ms Anum
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Wakeford, Christian
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Taiwo Owatemi and
Liz Twist

NOES

Adams, rh Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Anderson, Lee
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Scott Mann*)
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Baynes, Simon

Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, rh Jake
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Simon
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Dinéage, Dame Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Donelan, rh Michelle
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura

Fell, Simon
 Firth, Anna
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
 Graham, Richard
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Griffith, Andrew
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Fay
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward

Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Neill, Sir Robert
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richardson, Angela
 Robinson, Mary

Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
David T. C. Davies and
Alan Mak

Question accordingly negated.

Clause 51 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 12 agreed to.

Clauses 52 to 57 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.

Bill, as amended, reported.

Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Committee
(Order, 29 June)

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):
 Government manuscript new clause 1 and Government manuscript amendments 1 to 4 have been selected. They replace amendment 115 and new schedule 1, relating to sexual offences, which were agreed in Committee on Wednesday last week.

Manuscript New Clause 1

NO IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES

- ‘(1) This section applies if under section 18—
- (a) a person (P) has requested the ICRIR to grant P immunity from prosecution,
 - (b) conditions A to C are met, and
 - (c) some or all of the identified possible offences are Troubles-related sexual offences.
- (2) If all of the identified possible offences are Troubles-related sexual offences, the ICRIR must not grant P immunity from prosecution.
- (3) Accordingly, section 18(1) and (7) to (16) do not apply.
- (4) If some of the identified possible offences are Troubles-related sexual offences—
- (a) the immunity requests panel must not decide under section 18(7) that P should be granted immunity from prosecution for—
 - (i) any identified possible offence that is a Troubles-related sexual offence, or
 - (ii) a description of offences that includes any Troubles-related sexual offence; and
 - (b) the ICRIR must not grant P immunity from prosecution for any Troubles-related sexual offences.
- (5) Accordingly, section 18(7) to (13) have effect subject to subsection (4).
- (6) In this section “Troubles-related sexual offence” means any Troubles-related offence that is—
- (a) a sexual offence, or
 - (b) an inchoate offence relating to a sexual offence.
- (7) For the purposes of this section “sexual offence” includes—
- (a) rape;
 - (b) any offence committed by—
 - (i) sexual assault,
 - (ii) sexual activity, or
 - (iii) causing or inciting another person to engage in sexual activity;
 - (c) any offence relating to indecent images of children.
- (8) For the purposes of this section “inchoate offence relating to a sexual offence” includes an offence of—
- (a) attempting to commit a sexual offence;
 - (b) conspiracy to commit a sexual offence;
 - (c) incitement to commit a sexual offence;
 - (d) aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the commission of a sexual offence.
- (9) The Secretary of State may, by regulations, make provision about the meaning of—
- (a) “sexual offence”, or
 - (b) “inchoate offence relating to a sexual offence”;

for the purposes of this section (including provision specifying offences which are to comprise, or to be included in, that definition).

(10) Regulations under subsection (9) are subject to negative procedure.’—(Conor Burns.)

This new clause provides that immunity from prosecution cannot be granted for sexual offences. It replaces the amendments made on day 1 of Committee of the Whole House by amendment 115 and New Schedule 1.

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 2THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR RECONCILIATION
AND INFORMATION RECOVERY

Manuscript amendment made: 1, page 3, line 20, after “offences” insert

“other than Troubles-related sexual offences”.—(*Conor Burns.*)

This amendment reflects the exclusion of Troubles-related sexual offences from the immunity provisions by New Clause 1.

Clause 18

IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION

Manuscript amendments made: 2, page 17, line 7, at end leave out subsection (12A).

This amendment leaves out subsection (12A) inserted on the first day of Committee of the Whole House by amendment 115. It is replaced by New Clause 1.

Manuscript amendment 3, page 17, line 24, at end insert—

“() This section is subject to section (No immunity from prosecution for sexual offences).”—(*Conor Burns.*)

This amendment provides that clause 18 has effect subject to New Clause 1 (which provides that immunity from prosecution cannot be granted for sexual offences).

Schedule 4A

EXEMPT OFFENCES

Manuscript amendment made: 4, page 66, line 26, leave out Schedule 4A.—(*Conor Burns.*)

This amendment leaves out the Schedule inserted on day 1 of Committee of the Whole House by New Schedule 1. It is replaced by New Clause 1.

Third Reading

9 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I mirror the comments of the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns), in thanking our officials and all those with a role in bringing the Bill to this point. I particularly thank my right hon. Friend for his work in Committee.

This Bill will help the families of victims and the survivors of the troubles to get the answers they desperately seek, it will help Northern Ireland to look forward and it will deliver on our manifesto commitment to the veterans of our armed forces who served with such honour in Northern Ireland.

The establishment of a new independent information recovery commission capable of carrying out robust and effective investigations will provide as much information as possible to the families of victims as well as to the survivors of the troubles. Those who do not engage will remain indefinitely liable to prosecution. A major oral history initiative and memorialisation strategy will collectively remember those lost and ensure that the lessons of the past are never forgotten. It is important to understand where we come from when we make decisions about our future. I am grateful to the many stakeholders who have engaged with these proposals, and who have helped me, the Northern Ireland Office and my right hon. Friend to shape the Bill.

As has been said this afternoon, this is a difficult, complicated issue, and I recognise that it is still painful for so many. The Government have listened, and we are grateful for all the contributions made by Members of this House. I particularly recognise the heartfelt and powerful contributions that the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has made throughout proceedings on the Bill. I thank all Members who have contributed with such dignity in Committee.

I hope colleagues are reassured by the commitments made from the Dispatch Box by my right hon. Friend, and by the manuscript amendments made on Report to ensure it will not be possible for the ICIR to grant immunity for troubles-related sexual offences. This is an example of an improvement made in Committee that the whole House is able to get behind.

As a Government, we remain open to constructive dialogue with all stakeholders, both in this House—including the Opposition and all the Northern Ireland parties—and across Northern Ireland, as we prepare for the passage of the Bill in the other place. We are resolute in our commitment to providing legislation that does all it can to deliver for those impacted by the troubles. The troubles were a painful period of our history, and they are still painful for so many in Northern Ireland. This Bill delivers a way forward and delivers on our manifesto pledge. In that spirit, I commend this Bill to the House.

9.3 pm

Peter Kyle: I echo the Secretary of State's comments in congratulating everybody who has taken part in our debates and thanking them for their commitment to all stages of this Bill. We have had vigorous and sometimes difficult conversations, and we have heard some heartfelt explanations of how these issues have touched so many people's lives.

However, the grinding reality is that, following Second Reading and the hours in Committee, the Bill still has no support from any Northern Ireland party, and it still has no support from any victims group in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, a statutory body established as part of the Good Friday agreement, says the Bill is still unlikely to be compliant with human rights law. How can Ministers bring forward a Bill that fails stakeholders so comprehensively?

The Opposition have been responsible in trying hard to propose workable solutions. I hope Ministers will acknowledge that even when, last Wednesday, the Government could not carry the Committee of the whole House on a key amendment, we acted responsibly and worked constructively to try to solve that challenge with the workable manuscript amendments that are now part of the Bill.

Even though we have done our best to improve the Bill, we cannot agree with it as it stands on Third Reading. Our concerns are simply fundamental. The amnesty that the Bill gives to those who committed crimes during the troubles is too easy to earn. Amnesty is set above investigations, and the investigations are downgraded to reviews. Most fundamentally of all, the Bill gives more rights to people who committed crime during the troubles than it does to their victims. For those reasons, we will be opposing it on Third Reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call SNP spokesperson Richard Thomson.

9.5 pm

Richard Thomson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I, too, thank everyone who was involved in the passage of the Bill, both those behind the scenes, such as the Clerks and the researchers who have kept everything moving, and everyone who has contributed to the debate on the Floor of the House. I was struck by what the Minister said just now—that he hoped that the passing of the Bill would help to put the dark, dark days firmly in the past. I certainly hope that as well, but from what we have heard in the House during proceedings on the Bill, and from what we have heard from the victims and their representatives, I fear that is a forlorn hope. I certainly commend the Minister for the amendments that he did feel able to accept, but I remain of the view that this Bill is wrong in principle and cannot be amended into acceptability. Fundamentally, the Bill lacks support across Northern Ireland and it will leave many feeling that justice has been denied, without the prospect of truth coming to the fore. Although I have no doubt that the Bill was well-intentioned, I do not believe it will live up to the hopes the Minister has for it. Sadly, it did not have to be like this.

9.6 pm

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: On behalf of the DUP, I thank everyone who has taken part in our debates in Committee. As I did earlier, I pay particular tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) and for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart), who have worked hard to hold this Bill to account, scrutinise it and table more than 20 amendments, four of which were taken to a Division. I thank them for their efforts. I echo the Secretary of State's comments and thank my other colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who spoke powerfully, as did others on this side of the House, about the impact this Bill will have on the victims and survivors of our troubled past.

The Bill is described as the “Legacy and Reconciliation” Bill. As I said in this House when the Secretary of State first introduced the concept of the Bill, my fear is that the path to reconciliation is not made easier when we dispense with justice. I pay tribute to both the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for the work they have done in reaching out to victims and survivors groups. I know that that engagement has taken place, and the Secretary of State has referred to it. However, the Government will have heard a very clear message from many of those victims and survivors that they do not feel that the proposals are consistent with their desire to pursue not just truth and information, but justice.

As someone who served in the armed forces during the troubles in Northern Ireland, I have much sympathy with Conservative Members in their desire to protect the veterans of our armed forces from prosecutions that have been brought late in the day, after previous investigations have taken place. As my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East explained, we have been active on this issue and pressed hard to ensure that where article 2-compliant investigations have taken place, there is no need to reopen those cases. He explained it very well in his exchange with the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer).

I say to the Government that our responsibility extends way beyond veterans, many of whom are themselves victims and survivors. It extends to the entire community in Northern Ireland—a community that was left traumatised by those 30-plus years of violence. I stand with the hon. Members for Foyle (Colum Eastwood) and for North Down (Stephen Farry) in this House in representing parties in Northern Ireland that recognise that achieving reconciliation—we all want to move towards reconciliation in Northern Ireland—requires healing. My fear is that if we proceed with this process, it may get more difficult for many, although not all, victims to achieve the healing they need to move towards the reconciliation that we desire for our society. Therefore, having tabled our amendments and the Government not having accepted them, we cannot support the Bill on Third Reading.

We want to see an outcome on legacy and we recognise the Government's desire to move the process forward, but we disagree with the proposed method and process. Although it has some merits in terms of seeking information and truth from people about whose capacity to tell the truth we may be sceptical, the Bill fundamentally falls down when it comes to justice, as the hon. Member for Belfast East said clearly. It is our strong view that a legacy process that sets aside justice will make the journey to peace and reconciliation more difficult. What we need is a process that grapples with justice, takes it head-on and seeks to deal with it in a way that commands broad support across the community in Northern Ireland.

As we have said in respect of other matters in Northern Ireland, the Belfast agreement sought to introduce a new era in Northern Ireland that was based on consensus. Although I accept the criticism that has been made of all of us—that we have so far failed to take forward proposals that would bring about an outcome on legacy and put in place a process that commanded the support of people across the community—I do not believe that the consensus exists in Northern Ireland to support the measures proposed by the Government. As such, we will vote against the Bill on Third Reading.

9.12 pm

Colum Eastwood: While a few MPs have had to sit through a few hours of debate about this issue, many victims have had to sit through decades of trying to comfort their loved ones after what happened to them. Only last week, we saw victims in Derry achieving a modicum of truth through the inquest process. That victim, Kathleen Thompson—a mother of six—was murdered in 1971. Those victims and families got some truth last week through the current system, as imperfect as it is.

What we are doing today is utterly shameful. It is a whitewash on a grand scale. It is an opportunity for impunity and would not be allowed to stand in any other part of the United Kingdom. It says an awful lot about the state of this state that we are quietly and coldly walking through the Lobbies to bring this about today. I, for one, will never support immunity for the soldier who murdered 12-year-old Majella O'Hare—shot her on her way to chapel. Equally, I will never support immunity for the IRA team who blew up Patsy Gillespie and killed five soldiers in the city of Derry in the early '90s. That is what we are doing.

[Colum Eastwood]

Somebody has to tell people what is happening. The way this Government have voted today has given a licence for impunity for what happened in our part of the world over many decades. If anybody really believes that this legislation will bring about truth or reconciliation, they are lying to themselves and to the victims out there, who are deeply, deeply disappointed and dismayed today. I will absolutely vote against Third Reading.

9.14 pm

Stephen Farry: I join others in paying tribute to all the staff who have worked incredibly hard behind the scenes in processing this Bill.

I join my colleagues from two other parties in Northern Ireland to emphasise the simple point that the Bill does not have the support of the entire community in our region. Indeed, it does not have the support of victims' groups themselves. Independent experts, including the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, have looked at the Bill and are very clear that it is not consistent with our human rights commitment and, in particular, with article 2 of the European convention on human rights.

I fear that this Bill will be a very expensive white elephant that will not be used by either victims or perpetrators, but it will make the process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland that much harder. People are holding out for some sense of justice, even though achieving that is incredibly remote. We still have structures that are working, albeit in a very piecemeal manner. We can do far better than this. The process behind the Bill has been flawed, and, indeed, the Bill itself is unworkable and, in a broader sense, unamendable, and I fear that it will be counterproductive.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 217.

Division No. 28]**[9.16 pm****AYES**

Adams, rh Nigel	Bhatti, Saqib
Afolami, Bim	Blackman, Bob
Afriyie, Adam	Bone, Mr Peter
Aiken, Nickie	Bottomley, Sir Peter
Aldous, Peter	Bowie, Andrew
Anderson, Lee	Brady, Sir Graham
Andrew, rh Stuart	Braverman, rh Suella
Argar, Edward	Brereton, Jack
Atherton, Sarah	Bridgen, Andrew
Atkins, Victoria	Brine, Steve
Bacon, Gareth	Bristow, Paul
Bacon, Mr Richard	Britcliffe, Sara
Badenoch, Kemi	Browne, Anthony
Bailey, Shaun	Bruce, Fiona
Baillie, Siobhan (<i>Proxy vote</i> <i>cast by Scott Mann</i>)	Buchan, Felicity
Baker, Duncan	Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Baker, Mr Steve	Burghart, Alex
Baron, Mr John	Burns, rh Conor
Baynes, Simon	Butler, Rob
Bell, Aaron	Carter, Andy
Benton, Scott	Cartlidge, James
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cates, Miriam
Berry, rh Jake	Caulfield, Maria
	Chalk, Alex

Chishti, Rehman	Hands, rh Greg
Chope, Sir Christopher	Harper, rh Mr Mark
Churchill, Jo	Harris, Rebecca
Clark, rh Greg	Harrison, Trudy
Clarke, rh Mr Simon	Hart, Sally-Ann
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Hart, rh Simon
Clarkson, Chris	Hayes, rh Sir John
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Colburn, Elliot	Henry, Darren
Collins, Damian	Higginbotham, Antony
Costa, Alberto	Hinds, rh Damian
Courts, Robert	Holden, Mr Richard
Coutinho, Claire	Hollinrake, Kevin
Crosbie, Virginia	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Crouch, Tracey	Holloway, Adam
Davies, David T. C.	Holmes, Paul
Davies, Gareth	Howell, John
Davies, Dr James	Howell, Paul
Davies, Mims	Huddleston, Nigel
Davies, Philip	Hudson, Dr Neil
Dinenage, Dame Caroline	Hughes, Eddie
Dines, Miss Sarah	Hunt, Jane
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Donelan, rh Michelle	Hunt, Tom
Dowden, rh Oliver	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Drax, Richard	Jenkinson, Mark
Duddridge, James	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Duguid, David	Johnson, Gareth
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Johnston, David
Dunne, rh Philip	Jones, Andrew
Eastwood, Mark	Jones, Fay
Edwards, Ruth	Jones, Mr Marcus
Ellis, rh Michael	Jupp, Simon
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Kawczynski, Daniel
Evans, Dr Luke	Keegan, Gillian
Evennett, rh Sir David	Knight, rh Sir Greg
Everitt, Ben	Knight, Julian
Fabricant, Michael	Kruger, Danny
Farris, Laura	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Fell, Simon	Latham, Mrs Pauline
Firth, Anna	Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Fletcher, Katherine	Levy, Ian
Fletcher, Mark	Lewer, Andrew
Fletcher, Nick	Lewis, rh Brandon
Foster, Kevin	Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Francois, rh Mr Mark	Loder, Chris
Frazer, rh Lucy	Logan, Mark
Freeman, George	Longhi, Marco
Freer, Mike	Lopez, Julia
French, Mr Louie	Lopresti, Jack
Fuller, Richard	Lord, Mr Jonathan
Fysh, Mr Marcus	Loughton, Tim
Gale, rh Sir Roger	Mackinlay, Craig
Garnier, Mark	Mackrory, Cheryllyn
Gibb, rh Nick	Maclean, Rachel
Gibson, Peter	Mak, Alan
Gideon, Jo	Malthouse, rh Kit
Glen, John	Mann, Scott
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert	Marson, Julie
Graham, Richard	Mayhew, Jerome
Gray, James	Maynard, Paul
Grayling, rh Chris	McCartney, Jason
Green, Chris	McCartney, Karl
Griffith, Andrew	McVey, rh Esther
Grundy, James	Menzies, Mark
Gullis, Jonathan	Mercer, Johnny
Hall, Luke	Merriman, Huw
Hammond, Stephen	Metcalfe, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt	Millar, Robin

Miller, rh Dame Maria
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, James
Morrisey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Poulter, Dr Dan
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry

Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Steve Double and
Andrea Jenkyns

NOES

Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth

Cameron, Dr Lisa
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex

Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote
cast by Owen Thompson*)
Foord, Richard
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Glendon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Dame Nia
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Hanvey, Neale
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast
by Mr Pat McFadden*)
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben

Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lightwood, Simon
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorris, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owen, Sarah
Paisley, Ian
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn

Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek

Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Taiwo Owatemi and
Liz Twist

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

CONSTRUCTION

That the draft Construction Contracts (England) Exclusion Order 2022, which was laid before this House on 11 May, be approved.—(*Amanda Solloway.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

MODERN SLAVERY

That the draft Slavery and Human Trafficking (Definition of Victim) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 23 May, be approved.—(*Amanda Solloway.*)

The House divided: Ayes 280, Noes 217.

Division No. 29]

[9.28 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Scott Mann*)
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake

Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishty, Rehman

Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Graham, Richard
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Griffith, Andrew
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca

Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cheryllyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Dame Maria
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie

Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Neill, Sir Robert
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richardson, Angela
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Solloway, Amanda

Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Matt
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Wiggan, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Andrea Jenkyns and
 Steve Double**

NOES

Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth

Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh

Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Doogan, Dave
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farry, Stephen
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote
 cast by Owen Thompson*)
 Foord, Richard
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanvey, Neale
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mr Pat McFadden*)
 Khan, Afzal
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma

Lightwood, Simon
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qaisar, Ms Anum
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Stephens, Chris

Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Stringer, Graham
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Wakeford, Christian
 West, Catherine

Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

Liz Twist and
 Taiwo Owatemi

Question accordingly agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (5 JULY)

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding Standing Order No. 52(1)(b), at the sitting on Tuesday 5 July, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to bring to a conclusion proceedings on the Ways and Means resolution relating to the Energy (Oil and Gas) Profits Levy Bill not later than two hours after commencement of proceedings on that Motion; those Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Mark Spencer.*)

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Ordered,

That Sir Edward Leigh be discharged as a member of the Public Accounts Commission under section 2(2)(c) of the National Audit Act 1983, and that Jerome Mayhew be appointed.—(*Mark Spencer.*)

COMMITTEES

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):

With the leave of the House, we will take motions 6 to 8 together.

Ordered,

EUROPEAN SCRUTINY

That Andrea Jenkyns, Marco Longhi and Anne Marie Morris be discharged from the European Scrutiny Committee and Mr John Baron, Adam Holloway and Gavin Robinson be added.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

That Barbara Keeley and Sarah Owen be discharged from the Health and Social Care Committee and Mrs Paulette Hamilton and Rachael Maskell be added.

COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

That Kate Osamor be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Olivia Blake be added.—(*Sir Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

Medieval History in Schools

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Amanda Solloway.*)

9.41 pm

Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con): I rise to argue that we need to consider the teaching of medieval history in schools. As every historian knows, when starting an essay we have to define the topic, so what is medieval history? At my university, I was in the last cohort to study so-called modern history, which was defined as everything after Diocletian split the Roman empire in 286 AD. In fact, I was in Diocletian's palace in Croatia only last week, but I take a newer version of medieval history. More traditionally, medieval history is seen as the period following the fall of the western Roman empire in 476 AD to the start of the Renaissance and the age of discovery—a period spanning over 1,000 years. This period was one of the most important and turbulent times of human history, but this period is woefully neglected in our schools.

It is worth reminding ourselves about some of the key events, such as the settling of the barbarian invaders, the reconquest of the west under Justinian, the black death, the rise of Islam, the Viking invasions, the Reconquista of Spain, the east-west schism of 1054, the crusades, the travels of Marco Polo, the medieval warm period—the list is endless. However, our education system barely touches this, and when it does, it is only in the briefest of ways. How many people in England know of the initial defeat of the Viking invaders under Alfred the Great, the conquest of the Danelaw and the reunification of England under his grandson, the first ever King of England, Aethelstan? Where is the focus on the ultimate clash between east and west, the crusades, during which Edgar Aethling, the last Anglo-Saxon king, supported the first crusade, and Richard I led the third crusade successfully, or even the huge Anglo-Saxon component of the Byzantine Varangian guard? Why do we never hear about the triumphs of England in the late middle ages or the Angevin empire, when the kings ruled England, half of France and parts of Ireland and Wales in personal union—an early forerunner of our great United Kingdom of today?

Medieval history is all around us, in every single constituency and in most towns and villages, yet we do not readily recognise this fact. I look at my own constituency of Rother Valley, where we are rightly proud of our mining heritage. However, we rarely hear about our area's medieval history, though I must say that local groups such as the Aston-cum-Aughton history group do a sterling job of writing it. If any area wants to stake a claim to mining longevity, it must surely be my area of Rother Valley. In Whiston, the mining of white stone was attested to in the Domesday Book, and many of our villages, such as Dinnington and Harthill, stretch back to Domesday and beyond. The owner of Firbeck Hall, Henry Gally Knight, was a Member of this House and a source of inspiration for the novel about the medieval knight Ivanhoe. Interestingly, Maltby in Rother Valley boasts Roche abbey, a medieval monastery that was later suppressed by the tyrant Henry VIII. Laughton-en-le-Morthen is home to Castle hill, the remains of a motte and bailey castle on lands granted by William the Conqueror. Anston also appears in Domesday as Anestan,

for North Anston, and Litalanstan, for South Anston, potentially referring to a local feature known as “one stone”. The local limestone was perfect for use in buildings and nearly 1,000 years later it was used to construct the very building in which we are currently debating—the Palace of Westminster. Nearby Lindrick Common is suggested by some as the possible site of the battle of Brunanburh, when King Aethelstan overcame the Danes and became Lord of all Britain.

Elsewhere in Rother Valley, Aston was settled by Saxon invaders in the 5th century, with the village name meaning “the settlement among the ash trees” or “the eastern fortification”. Before the Norman conquest, a man named Lepsi had a manor at Aston. After 1066, William the Conqueror gifted Aston to his son-in-law, William de Warenne. In 1317, the village fell into the possession of the Archbishop of York, who held several leading positions in Government—Lord Privy Seal, Controller of the Royal Household, and Treasurer of the Exchequer. The villages of Ulley, Aughton, Treeton, Brampton-en-le-Morthen, Todwick, and Thurgroft were also all Saxon settlements in Rother Valley. That is just one constituency. There are so many constituencies across England. We all have medieval history in our bones and in our soil—including you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

However, we should not fall into the trap of teaching medieval history purely through the lens of England. We need to look at our wider place in the medieval world and at the wider impacts. I cannot think of a better example of the most important moments than the reign of the East Roman—some say Byzantine—Emperor Justinian the Great from 527 to 565 AD. His long reign exemplifies the beauty and importance of the teaching of medieval history, with which so many parallels can be drawn through the ages. Of peasant Illyrian stock. Justinian rose to become the most powerful and important man on earth—a lesson we can all learn from. He is remembered for building huge edifices and buildings that last and dominate to this day.

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con): I was listening with enormous interest to how medieval history surrounds us all. That got me thinking about architecture, which is one of the great examples of history coming to life. My hon. Friend mentioned the medieval period starting with the reign of Diocletian. Of course we see Diocletian windows in classical entablature. But more recently, we have the gothic and the neo-gothic—an example of which we are lucky enough to be in today. I am interested in his views on where we see the accents of medieval history in modern architecture.

Alexander Stafford: My hon. Friend makes an important point about the beauty of architecture. We can look at some of the finest medieval buildings across this land. Westminster Hall itself was built under William Rufus, which shows the longevity of medieval architecture. How many buildings nowadays could last 1,000 years, as Westminster Hall has done, or 1,500 years, as Hagia Sophia has done, which Justinian himself rose up in praise of God?

But Justinian did not just raise up the Hagia Sophia, and many other buildings across the empire. He also did other great works, such as introduce the institutes of Justinian—the great codification and rationalisation of Roman law that, to this day, influences legal systems

across the world. Perhaps above all, Emperor Justinian is rightly celebrated for his tenacious nature in refusing to accept decline, and successfully reconquering large parts of the western Roman empire: north Africa, Italy, Spain—not only was his reconquest vast, but it lasted for hundreds of years. The Byzantine empire, the East Roman empire, did not lose parts of Italy until well into the late 11th century. That shows the longevity of his conquests. Some historians claim that they were ephemeral—they were not; they were long lasting.

Throughout his reign Justinian was supported by his wife Theodora, who is one of the most inspirational female figures in all history, from whom we can all learn. Under his reign, there was the first recorded outbreak of bubonic plague, which is estimated to have killed about 40% of the population of Constantinople. The reign of Justinian clearly had it all, yet like so many other hugely important moments in medieval history, it is being forgotten and is not taught in our schools. Indeed, I think the lack of teaching about Justinian in our schools is an absolute travesty.

There is clearly an appetite for this history, as we have seen with the recent runaway successes of “The Last Kingdom” on Netflix, and “Game of Thrones”, which some say is inspired by the war of the roses. History bestows on us an understanding of the society, country and world that we live in. It explains why things are as they are today and provides a guide for where we are going. History is also wonderful for inculcating transferable skills, including the ability to reason critically, analyse, cross-reference, absorb and remember large amounts of complex information, and to write coherently.

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): I am enjoying my hon. Friend’s contribution and his emphasis on the importance of history. Is he aware that the Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart), who recently entered the Chamber, hosted an event over the road at Westminster School—it was due to be held upstairs under a big painting of Alfred the Great but it had to be moved because of one of the many lockdowns—at which Professor Michael Wood explained the importance of Aethelstan’s assemblies? I for one had no idea that a strong case could be made that the parliamentary system in this country began not with Simon De Montfort in 1265 over the road in the Westminster Chapter House but more than 300 years before that with Aethelstan’s assemblies. Of course, Aethelstan was a grandson of Alfred the Great. Are those not things that we should be teaching our children?

Alexander Stafford: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I completely agree. That is exactly what we should be talking about. We should be talking about the witans to which he referred and the coming together of great Anglo-Saxon kings. I commend the Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart), for his work on promoting that. I am glad to see him in his place listening to the debate—I hope that he will contribute.

There is no doubt that the lacuna in our collective knowledge of medieval history is largely due to how it is taught in schools and the national curriculum. For maintained schools, history is a compulsory subject only until the age of 14. Proper teaching of medieval

[Alexander Stafford]

history only really starts from the age of seven, when students are only briefly introduced to Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons, and the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for England. For key stage 3, the Anglo-Saxon period, which is 500 years or so, is completely excluded.

For the optional GCSE in history, it is clear that medieval history is being treated inadequately by exam boards. For example, AQA offers 16 topics in history, but only two directly address the medieval period and three do so tangentially. For Edexcel, of 17 options available, only six touch medieval history and only two directly so. But the problem does not stop there—it gets worse. A-level students are again being deprived of medieval history modules. AQA and Edexcel combined offer 70 history modules, but only seven are exclusively focused on medieval history. Students sitting WJEC papers have it worse as only one module—less than a 20th of the total—is given to medieval history, compared with nine modules on European history.

The options for history at both GCSE and A-level are a lot more complex than they look at first sight. Many of the papers on offer are so-called theme papers—for example, “Migration to Britain over 1,000 years”—which do not meaningfully address events in medieval history. Finally, many options cannot be sat together, yet again restricting genuine choice and the opportunity to study the period.

Exam boards and history departments have always seemed to have a drive to curtail medieval history, and especially the early medieval period. In the late 1990s, both AQA and OCR proposed a new syllabus starting at about 1066, cutting out hundreds of years of English history. Luckily, there was a huge effort by lecturers and teachers to save that history, including by my own former history teacher, Robin Nonhebel, who led the charge in defence of Anglo-Saxon history in schools. I am pleased to say that that was a success and I had the opportunity to study medieval and Anglo-Saxon history at A-level, but most schools do not teach that, and most pupils do not have the opportunity to learn about those key events. That is clearly madness.

The medieval period is pivotal for England, but the focus tends to be rather on the Tudors and Nazis: the so-called Henry and Hitler version of history. Children are taught more about Stalin than about English historical characters. They are even taught more about the civil rights movement in the USA than about the unification of England under Aethelstan.

Mr Bacon: Disgraceful.

Alexander Stafford: Indeed.

Looking through the papers offered by exam boards, I was dumbfounded to find topics such as “Migrants in Britain: Notting Hill 1948 to 1970” and “Changes in entertainment and leisure in Britain, c.500 to the present day”. Those papers show the absurdity of the situation. The study of history should not be reduced to bizarre themes, modern niche events over very narrow timespans, or huge topics covering over 1,500 years of history. We cannot learn something like that.

I praise my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), who during his time as Education Secretary insisted that more medieval A-level courses

became available so schools could teach them if they so wished. The problem, however, is that most schools will not teach medieval A-levels because they do not have teachers with the relevant knowledge. The situation is self-perpetuating: as most universities do not have compulsory medieval sections, few history graduates have experienced the delights of medieval history. Therefore, each year, fewer and fewer teachers know any medieval history as older teachers retire and are replaced by younger ones. And the latter, of course, only studied modern history at university.

The teaching of medieval history can therefore be saved in schools only if universities play their part. Prospective graduate history teachers will want to teach material they are familiar with. If the universities they attended did not teach medieval history, or only provided options which few chose to take, they will not choose to teach it. If medieval history is to flourish again in schools, it needs teachers who have the knowledge to develop courses. We must start this at the latest in year 7. When we talk about the teaching of medieval history in schools, it cannot simply begin in 1066 as if England beforehand was in some dark age miasma.

Therefore, the study of medieval history must begin with Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Danish rule, include key figures and moments such as King Alfred's salvation of Wessex, Aethelstan and the formation of the Kingdom of England, and Aethelred the Unready and the long build-up to 1066. We must teach about the roots of Parliament, first under Aethelstan's Witan, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk (Mr Bacon) said, but also under John, Henry III and the first three Edwards. We must teach the wars of the roses, the black death and the peasants' revolt, and the important relationships between England and the Celtic nations. We must include the formation of Europe alongside key events such as the crusades, and even international figures such as Justinian, Genghis Khan and the history of the papacy.

Why is this so important? First, studying medieval history is fun. Vikings, the Norman conquest, and the crusades are obvious in this regard, but so is the religious dimension of King Alfred's leadership, the battle of Brunanburh in 937, which confirmed the rule of England by the house of Wessex, Charlemagne's coronation as Emperor in 800 AD, and the rout of the Byzantines when the fourth crusade turned on their allies.

Secondly, it is often claimed that modern history is more relevant to today's pupils. Why? Why is the political rivalry between Gladstone and Disraeli any more relevant than the rivalry between Aethelred and Cnut for the control of England, or between Henry II and his rebellious sons? Politics 1,000 years ago encompasses the same ambitions and the same successes and failures as today. It could be said that the modern relations between the Christian and Muslim worlds are more moulded by the crusades than the present relations between France, Britain and Germany are by the second world war. Key moments such as the harrying of the north in 1069 began the pattern of inequality that exists between the north and the south to this day, and the red wall's rejection of the European Union elites is strikingly similar to the north's refusal to bow to the very same European elites who occupied this country 1,000 years ago.

Thirdly, the study of medieval history can be more testing and interesting than modern history because of the relative paucity of sources. Medieval historians and their students have to read between the lines, because there are far fewer lines. And medieval chroniclers were just as adept at spin doctoring or propaganda as Goebbels in the Nazi Reich.

Fourthly, everyone should know something about the roots of their civilisations. Modern political relationships and civic institutions can only be properly understood by reaching back to study their origins. People should not be allowed to wallow in ignorance about why pilgrimage is important to religion, why Magna Carta helped to frame modern day freedoms, why there are two Houses of Parliament and, most importantly, who the first king of England was—Aethelstan.

Fifthly, I believe that visiting medieval sites such as Hastings, the Bayeux tapestry, Kenilworth, Bodiam castle and the ruins of Glastonbury are often more interesting and bring history more to life than the battlefields of the world wars.

I have argued the merits of medieval history, but what can be done to ensure its future in our educational institutions? First, the curriculum must be changed to make history compulsory at GCSE. Secondly, medieval history must be a requirement throughout history education, from the beginning to the end.

Jerome Mayhew: I am lucky enough to have a daughter who has just completed her history A-level. One observation might be that—

10 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Amanda Solloway.)

Jerome Mayhew: I was about to suggest that an argument may be made that there is insufficient time in the curriculum to accommodate medieval history. The experience of an A-level student in my family—I hope she passed last week—has been to have studied the origins of the first world war as well as the second world war to death. She has done more German history than history of the United Kingdom. Does my hon. Friend agree that there will be plenty of space for medieval history if we tweak the curriculum?

Alexander Stafford: I completely agree: there is plenty of space in the curriculum. Earlier, I mentioned that the “Hitler and Henry” version of history is often done to death. Children often study the Nazis and the Soviets at GCSE and then do the same course, just in more depth, at A-level. There is plenty of scope to make room for medieval courses; I have even suggested some papers that could be removed from the syllabus to make even more room for medieval history.

I turn back to the solutions. Thirdly, medieval history must be taught with sufficient depth and breadth, ensuring that an array of events and figures are covered, including pre-1066. Whistlestop drive-by tours of the battle of Hastings alone must be a thing of the past. Fourthly, we must prevent the teaching of medieval history from being stymied by being included as part of a broad, intangible theme such as “Sports from 1000 AD to 1950

AD”. Fifthly, universities must be told to include compulsory medieval history options on their courses, so that we have a strong and steady stream of teachers with specialisms in medieval history imparting their knowledge to the historians of the future.

The schools White Paper of March 2022 said that the Government would not make any changes to the school curriculum for the remainder of this Parliament. However, I urge the Minister to heed my policy asks in the next rewrite of the curriculum. I also call on teachers, schools, universities and exam boards to provide a more comprehensive medieval history offering right away. They do not need Government intervention to make that happen; teachers do not need the Government to tell them to take the courses already on offer.

Medieval history is in our blood; it is our past but also our future. It explains why we are the way we are and why we live the way we live, but it also gives us a guide for what lies ahead. It teaches respect for our heritage, values, and culture, and instils critical reasoning and academic rigour. By teaching medieval history, we are not only preserving the past for future generations, but ensuring that millions more Britons in coming centuries will experience the pleasures of studying such a fascinating and rewarding discipline.

10.3 pm

The Minister for School Standards (Mr Robin Walker):

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Alexander Stafford) on securing this debate. He has shown his great passion and knowledge of medieval history as well as his deep understanding of how history is interconnected—a crucial part of the work on a model history curriculum, which we are about to launch.

I am also passionate about history. I studied medieval history at GCSE and went on to read ancient and modern history at university—including, my hon. Friend will be pleased to hear, an extended further subject on the near east, from Justinian to Mohammed; I know that he is a big fan of the great law giver. I share his interest in that individual and in the great clash of civilisations that followed him.

I firmly believe that pupils in our schools should receive high-quality history teaching that helps them understand different periods in history and the links between them, and to engage critically with knowledge about the past. The capacity that teachers have to help pupils to really think about the past, even when it seems far away, is always inspiring; bringing alive history through great teaching can lead to a lifelong love of the subject for all pupils.

Our knowledge-rich curriculum is a key tool to help teachers develop a greater understanding of history among their pupils. The knowledge-rich approach focuses on knowledge and understanding; it is not about teaching a dry list of facts or dates, but about giving pupils a deep and rich understanding of history, making it meaningful through the use of stories and inquiry questions based on the latest scholarship. That is all the more relevant for the sometimes marginalised period of medieval history, because we know that there are sweeping myths about its many time periods and peoples. It could be argued that some popular conceptions of the medieval period are mired in stereotypes and reductive tropes,

[Mr Robin Walker]

even among some pupils. It can be reductively typified as an era of war and plague, especially for England, and of castles, oppressed serfs in hovels, dungeons and widespread ignorance—the “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” version of medieval history. Even the word “medieval” is sometimes used as a term of denigration.

The teaching that we support in our curriculum and the great examples that I will share show how such reductive and misleading myths can be tackled through informed and informative teaching. In the history curriculum, we expect that high-quality history education will help pupils to gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain’s past and the wider world’s. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people’s lives, the processes of change, the diversity of societies and the relationships between groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time. All those aspects can be taught through medieval history from key stage 1 to key stage 3.

Teaching the early medieval period, pre-1066—the late classical period, as it is sometimes defined—lays foundational knowledge for teaching at key stage 3 and beyond. I reassure my hon. Friend that the history curriculum already refers to many of the interesting pre and post-1066 examples that he raised, whether as a requirement or as examples of what can be taught, such as the Anglo-Saxons, the Viking raids, the struggle for the kingdom of England at the time of Edward the Confessor and—as the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart), will note—Aethelstan, the first king of England. In particular, the Anglo-Saxons are an important part of teaching at key stage 2, which is why their history is not, I accept, repeated at key stage 3, but it is further built upon. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley that medieval history before 1066 is an important part of our knowledge-rich curriculum.

In key stage 3, as part of the required theme of the development of Church, state and society in medieval Britain from 1066 to 1509, we set out some non-statutory examples, including the Norman conquest, the crusades and Magna Carta; society, economy and culture; feudalism; religion in daily life, including parishes, monasteries and abbeys; farming, trade and towns, especially the wool trade; and art, architecture and literature. Teachers can teach other examples at key stage 3 than those suggested, and can cover many of the themes that my hon. Friend referred to.

Local history is also a key requirement in the curriculum. My hon. Friend referred to some fantastic examples from his Rother Valley area, including its mining history, which I knew about, and its contribution to the fabric of this building, which I have to say I did not. As the Member of Parliament for one of England’s great Norman cathedrals, which hosts the tomb of King John, I am well aware of how local buildings can inspire students of medieval history. I agree that medieval history is all around us. Much of the infrastructure of the period still survives—Westminster Hall, which my hon. Friend mentioned, castles, cathedrals, windmills, bridges and, indeed, some of our ancient universities. Teachers can use local history, combined with wider storytelling, to bring the period alive and inspire the interest of children and young people in history.

Although I have mentioned castles as a dominant part of the stereotyping of the medieval age, they are also wonderful physical examples that children can visit as part of learning about the era. Many types of building were seen as castles in the period. The variety in their use helps to teach about the complexity of medieval life—not just their military use, for example, but their importance as living communities and as places of court.

We also require that at least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments be taught as part of the curriculum. The non-statutory examples that we give are mainly beyond the medieval period, but teachers and schools can determine their own. The medieval era from 500 to 1500 is required to be taught as part of GCSE history; it can also be studied at A-level. At GCSE, there is a requirement to

“study significant events, individuals, societies, developments and issues within their broad historical contexts”,

which must be taken from the period from 500 AD to 1500 AD,

“demonstrating both breadth (through period studies) and depth (through studying of a narrower, more specific topic)”.

My hon. Friend expressed concerns about the extent of medieval history in exam specifications and papers, but the period’s inclusion in GCSEs and A-levels can further develop pupils’ understanding of it and can further develop knowledge taught at earlier key stages.

Inspiring stories are an important tool of teaching. Used in the right way, they can enable teachers to help children and young people to really understand, engage with and remember history. Key stories from medieval history help to define our national culture, and I hope that they are not neglected: Alfred and the cakes, Lady Godiva, Robin Hood and Prince John, Henry II and Thomas à Becket, Henry V at Agincourt and—for our friends in the north, who sadly have not come to this debate—Robert the Bruce and the spider, to name but a few. Some of these stories also act as a conduit into history, and remain an inspiration for people today.

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): My hon. Friend has mentioned King John’s tomb, around which I used to play as a child, because I went to the school next to Worcester cathedral for 10 years. He has also mentioned Aethelstan. I do not know whether he is aware that Aethelstan was half West Saxon and half Mercian—otherwise known as Angle—and that he was placed in Mercia with, I think, his mother’s family to keep him safe, because not everyone wished him well in west Saxony. When he eventually became king, he was able to ally the Mercians—or Angles—with him in the battle to defend what became England against a combination of marauding Vikings and marauding Scots. Does it not surprise my hon. Friend that no one from the Scottish National party has turned up, given that the creation and the strength of England are largely down to the Scots?

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend has brought an extra touch of medieval history knowledge to the debate, for which I am extremely grateful. I am always pleased to celebrate the contribution of a fellow Worcester man. Of course, the Scots have come off badly in Worcester on a number of occasions, not all of which fit within the medieval period.

Let me give an example, which is connected to our shared home city, of medieval history's relevance and importance today. Within the next few weeks, I will be taking part in the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the eviction of Worcester's medieval Jewish community in the 13th century—a precursor of the wider expulsion of Jews from England under Edward I, and a reminder that the events of the past too often have echoes in the issues of today, or of more recent times.

Teachers have access to a strong community of expertise within history, including the fantastic work of the Historical Association and its resources and publications, all of which help to support high-quality teaching. Teachers can also draw on the heritage schools programme managed by Historic England, which offers continuing professional development and resources to schools to support the teaching of local history. Wider resources from English Heritage and other organisations are also available. Oak National Academy now offers resources and lessons on, for example, Vikings and Anglo-Saxons, medieval monarchs, the crusades, Baghdad and the Normans, to name only a small selection.

The good practice and examples that I now want to describe show the range of teaching that is already offered to pupils. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley said that teaching should cover the breadth and depth of medieval history, and I hope I can demonstrate to him that that is happening in some of the best schools in the country. He spoke about the importance of teaching expertise, and I agree with him about that. The strong community of history experts within schools supports such teaching, and acts as a forum for sharing good practice through, for example, the Historical Association and its publication *Teaching History*, whose special issue dedicated to the teaching of medieval history, published in 2018, went to all state secondary schools. Ian Dawson edited that edition, drawing on research on pupils' attitudes to the medieval period and making the case for reviewing and renewing teaching in this area in order to challenge myths and stereotypes. Since then, *Teaching History* has featured many more articles by teachers and other experts on teaching medieval history.

The special edition took an approach to the middle ages summed up by three words: sophistication, respect and representation. Its aim was to display the sophistication of life and ideas in the middle ages, and to help to explain why the people of the period deserve greater respect than they are often accorded for the ways in which they dealt with the issues and dilemmas that they faced in all aspects of their lives. That approach helps to illustrate to pupils how many of the aspects of the medieval period developed from the preceding historical periods, and also developed further into institutions, systems and ways of life that are still important today. As John Gillingham has said,

"It is in the Middle Ages, after all, that crucial early stages of many things can be found: above all, of course, the languages of England, Scotland and Wales, but also some central political and educational institutions: parliament, monarchy, schools, universities, the law and the legal profession, as well as our freedoms, think Magna Carta".

Elizabeth Carr, Head of History at Presdales School, makes clear that laying the foundations of knowledge about the medieval period proves essential for pupils to be able to make sense of later periods. For example, understanding the Reformation requires secure knowledge

of medieval Christian culture and the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church. Similarly, Parliament in the medieval period was very different from Parliament today, but the evolution of Parliament in later periods makes sense to pupils only when they have an understanding of its origins and role in the medieval context.

In Ark schools, pupils study wide-ranging medieval history in Year 7, including 11th-century Constantinople, the Normans in England and in Sicily, the crusades, the Angevin empire, the influence of Muslim scholarship on medieval and renaissance worlds, the north African empire of Mali and its connections with wider worlds, and the role of the silk roads in linking differing medieval worlds. They also study detailed stories of political change throughout England's medieval centuries, culminating in late medieval political instability and the long-term effects of the black death on the medieval economy and society in rural and urban areas. They draw on wide-ranging historical scholarship in shaping their curriculum and introducing pupils to contrasting interpretations of medieval pasts.

Elizabeth Carr set out in another article published in *Teaching History* in September 2021 how she uses the biographical stories of Empress Matilda and Eleanor of Aquitaine to explore the concepts of power and authority and the relationship between England, France and the Holy Roman Empire. In doing this, she sets English medieval kings, particularly the much-studied John, and Magna Carta into a much broader geographical and political context. I do not want to detain the House too much longer with endless examples—

Alexander Stafford: I agree with everything the Minister is saying. I know that he wants to end soon, but does he agree that we should not just be teaching medieval history as a stand-alone subject and that it should be imbued in all other subjects? For instance, when we are talking about geography and climate change now, we should look back to the medieval warming period and discuss the implications of that. We could also link medieval history to sociology and religion. It can be included in every single subject, including maths. It should be in every aspect of life, and not just in history subjects.

Mr Walker: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend that a full understanding of history can contribute so much to that broader understanding. In the case of climate change, as he has mentioned, we can refer back to the late medieval warm period. We should absolutely take into account the longer view that medieval history can give us. I wholly agree with him on that.

I have endless examples that I could give the House, but I think that people have probably heard enough of them. What I would say is that we have an important opportunity before us. My hon. Friend rightly referred to our White Paper and the fact that we are not changing the curriculum at this time. That is because the curriculum is a framework that allows for some very rich, broad teaching. Indeed, the changes made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), which my hon. Friend praised, are in the curriculum that we are preserving.

It is important that we exemplify what can be done within that curriculum, particularly at key stages 1 to 3. That is why we are developing a model history curriculum to support the teaching of this time period across key

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stages 1 to 3. I am delighted today to have published on the Department for Education's website the names of the expert panellists who will lead this work. I am delighted that Michael Kandiah from King's College London is the chair and that Christine Counsell is the lead drafter. We will benefit enormously from Christine and the wider panel's expertise in the development of an exciting, broad and knowledge-rich exemplar curriculum, which will demonstrate the breadth and connectivity of what can be taught at primary and key stage 3.

The exemplar of the model history curriculum will also demonstrate the principles of a well-sequenced curriculum. As my hon. Friend has highlighted, knowledge builds upon knowledge, and learning about key events, figures and themes pre-1066 is a basis for understanding the later medieval period. In turn, developments in medieval times in politics, government and society help to develop greater understandings of later periods including the history of the 18th and 19th centuries, the development of this Parliament and the understanding of American history. There is expertise about the medieval period among the panellists. They include Professor Robert Tombs, professor emeritus of French history at the University of Cambridge, and Professor Toby Green of King's College London.

The model history curriculum will draw on the best that already exists in the history community and act as a further stimulus to great curriculum design. It will help teachers to teach our history national curriculum, which already offers breadth and depth of teaching on medieval history. We also hope that the breadth, depth and geographical span will inspire more teaching of different periods of history across wider geographies. Although it is an example for schools, it could even inspire our universities to teach broader spans of time, as my hon. Friend suggested. As he has demonstrated, medieval history has a vital role to play in the sequencing of history that all children should learn. I am sure he will agree that the examples I have shared about good practice in schools show that there is wonderful teaching on this subject in our schools today, all of which helps our children and young people to develop a strong knowledge-based understanding of history. Once again, I commend him for bringing forward such an important and historical debate.

Question put and agreed to.

10.19 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Monday 4 July 2022

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

Assisted Dying

4.30 pm

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): Before I call Tonia Antoniazzi to move the motion, I need to make a short statement about sub judice. I have been advised that there are ongoing cases relating to the subject of today's debate, which, for the sub judice resolution, have not been waived. All Members must refrain from making reference to any active court cases. The Chair, whether it is me or my successor in the Chair, will call you immediately to order should you seek to raise any individual case. I have to make that point very strongly and clearly.

After the opening speech, it is already apparent that we shall have to confine speeches very rigidly indeed. As a courtesy to all colleagues, given that there will inevitably be some interventions, we had better start from the premise that we will limit all speeches to five minutes only. I am sorry about that, but I wish to accommodate as many people as possible for what is clearly a very important debate. I call Tonia Antoniazzi.

4.31 pm

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 604383, relating to assisted dying.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger.

Assisted dying is an emotive issue that I have thought about long and hard. I was grateful to the Petitions Committee and also to the creator of the petition, Sarah Wootton, for arranging a meeting with some of the families who have been through traumatic and upsetting experiences. I was really pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Liz Carr, who has long campaigned against the introduction of assisted dying. Both meetings were very emotional, but I was able to get a much better understanding of the situation by having those important conversations, so I am extremely grateful to Emma from the Petitions Committee for organising them.

My role today is to present this petition on behalf of the Committee, but I hope that I will be able to represent fairly the views of those I met. It was a real honour last week to meet the families who are here today in the room. Hearing their stories was emotional and informative. They spoke with dignity about their loved ones' final days and weeks, and I am glad to see them here today. I hope that when making interventions in this debate Members will be mindful that this is a very real situation for many people here today. I also hope that Members will allow me the time to tell their stories without interruption. I understand that colleagues will want to make their own points, but plenty of time has been put aside for the debate this afternoon.

Opinion polls have shown that there is wide support for a change in the law to make assisted dying legal in this country. Research commissioned by Dignity in Dying in 2019 showed that 84% of Britons supported

assisted dying for terminally ill people. That is a huge proportion of people who would like to see a change in the way we deal with this situation.

We have not had a debate on this issue in this place for two and a half years, and there has been no vote on it for seven. A lot has changed in that time, including a pandemic that has shifted the conversation that the country is having about death. There has also been a change in attitudes in other countries and in other parts of the United Kingdom. Jersey, Scotland and the Isle of Man are all looking at changes. Australia, New Zealand, Spain and others have all introduced measures around assisted dying.

In our meeting, we spoke to Jan and her daughter Sarah. Jan is currently planning for the end of her life after receiving a terminal diagnosis. She explained to me that she has three options: going to a hospice, ending her life in a hospital, or receiving hospice care at home. Jan is worried that hospice at home care will cause untold problems for her family. Not only will it mean that her loved ones are largely responsible for her care in her final days, but there are long-term effects of the trauma that her dying at home will cause. Jan is worried that hospice care will not be appropriate and there will be limits on the number of people who will be able to visit her at the end of her life. Jan said that it would not be a good place for her to die. All she wants is a choice of a peaceful end surrounded those she loves.

With no other viable option, Jan has signed up to Dignitas, so that when it comes, she has a choice about her end of life. That in itself causes problems, as she would probably have to do it before she is ready because she needs to travel independently. Jan and her daughter both spoke of the anxiety that it has caused them and their loved ones. The worry and anguish that the decision causes for many families was a theme through all the stories that I heard.

I spoke to Carol, whose sister Alison died just over a year ago. Alison had head and neck cancer. She was only 63 years old. Her sister went through lots of treatment—radiotherapy and chemotherapy—and was given lots of opiates to deal with the pain. Alison was persuaded to go to a hospice for the end of life care that she needed, but only after her pain and anxiety became unmanageable. At the hospice, Carol noticed that the care that Alison was receiving was governed by strict protocols that were not appropriate for Alison's needs.

As a retired doctor, Carol thought that she would be able to advocate well for her sister, but that did not turn out to be the case. Alison saw eight different doctors in two months while she was at the hospice. She was given different information by different people. Some agency staff were not sufficiently trained in palliative care to look after Alison as well as they could. Protocols dictated that pain relief medication could only be increased by 25% in every 24 hours, but Alison had built up a tolerance to opiates over the course of her illness and was in an incredible amount of pain. All those things culminated in what Carol described as a horrible death, which left everyone traumatised—Alison's husband and children, and Carol, too. Alison's family stayed with her 24 hours a day in the last couple of weeks because she was so anxious about a lack of medicine.

I also met Gareth. Gareth's dad had prostate cancer. He lived for 10 years on hormone treatment. When he was given his diagnosis, as a military man who always

[*Tonia Antoniazzi*]

had guns, he said, “I’ll just shoot myself.” No one thought he was serious, but Gareth said that it gave him an element of control. As his illness got worse, Gareth said it was like his dad was “dying in front of our eyes.” He had no quality of life.

Finally, Gareth’s dad said that he was ready to go into a hospice, but that did not seem to be his intention. One day, Gareth’s dad rang him to say that he could not deal with another night like the last one and said, “I’m going to shoot myself. See ya.” Gareth immediately rang his dad back, but his dad did not speak. Gareth rang the police. He spoke to his sister, who lived close by, and she rushed to her dad’s house. Gareth’s sister went in, hoping that she would be in time to stop her dad, but he had already shot himself in the head.

Gareth’s sister’s husband was also, at the time, terminally ill with brain cancer. She and her daughters then had to watch her husband die at home after he stopped all his medication. That took a week. Gareth’s sister now suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, and his nieces are traumatised by the experience. Gareth wants people to be more open in their conversations about death. Speaking about death and not being afraid to discuss it can only lead to better decisions for everyone.

Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): The examples my hon. Friend is using powerfully make the case. Does she agree that now is the time to legislate so that the end of life care issues she mentions can be accommodated? As she points out, there are people in circumstances where all quality of life is gone, yet the legal situation is, at best, muddy and unclear; at worst, it works against the interests of people whose quality of life is completely gone.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank my right hon. Friend for his contribution, because that is often the case. Clearly, Gareth wanted people to know that he does not think what his dad did was actually suicide, but bringing an end to his suffering.

Susan’s husband, Duncan, was diagnosed with motor neurone disease, which we all know has no cure. Susan described Duncan as a very strong character who, after researching MND, determined straightaway that he was going to be in control of his own death. Until he had a plan in place, he was distressed and unhappy, but once he had a plan, he could start to live again. Three years after his diagnosis, Duncan took his own life at home with help from Susan. He left information for the police about how and why he had done it. Although his intention had been to do it when Susan was not at home, Susan said that, after 42 years of very happy marriage, she could not not be there for him at the end.

Despite the information that Duncan left, it was six months before the Crown Prosecution Service deemed that it was not in the public interest to prosecute Susan. She was interviewed for six hours under caution by the police, which, after the death of her husband, was obviously very distressing. I cannot imagine how it must feel to have something like that hanging over you when you should be grieving the loss of a loved one. Susan had the means to fight these charges and her solicitor eventually got her arrest removed from her record. What happens to someone who does not have

the money to stand up to a criminal justice system that demonises people who find themselves in this invidious position?

Susan also believes that because Duncan made his intentions clear, the doctor seemed reluctant to give him drugs to help him sleep, which exacerbated his problems. Ultimately, Susan takes comfort in the fact that Duncan got the death he wanted. However, it is a tragedy that his death was not within the law. We know that people falling foul of the criminal justice system is not uncommon in situations where someone ends their life, but empathy and sensitivity are required in these situations—not the heavy-handed approach we have seen too often.

Tim was a carer to his friend, David, who also had motor neurone disease. Within two days of his diagnosis, David had signed up to Dignitas. It was more than two and a half years before he died, after travelling to Switzerland. There is only one end to a diagnosis of MND, and David was not willing to be trapped in his body while his brain was still functioning. By making the decision to join Dignitas, David had some peace of mind. However, even with his membership, the process was not always easy; information was not forthcoming until certain points in David’s illness, and the full picture was not available until they reached Switzerland.

It would have been so much easier if David could have done it at home. At home, the only option David was given was to be sedated for three weeks while his body shut down—as Tim said, prolonging the suffering. When Tim spoke about the inevitability of David’s death, he said that doctors were willing to prolong his life to the extent where the consequences were not worth it. Pain was not really an issue for David, but the suffering that he went through—not being able to sleep due to choking; having to be fed through a tube in his stomach—was unbearable.

Throughout this process, all participants have spoken of the anxiety that they faced because they or their loved ones did not have the option of assisted dying. As Jan said in her contribution, knowing that there is an option for assisted dying is an insurance policy: it may not be something you decide to do in the end, but having it there is a comfort. We have to consider the impact on the families who are left behind. Having to watch a loved one die is never easy, but prolonging the suffering can lead to trauma and PTSD for families and friends. I have already spoken on the record about my father dying.

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): My hon. Friend is representing the Petitions Committee superbly and speaks on behalf of the families we have met outside.

I think we all appreciate how difficult it is for people to come to us to talk about personal experiences. My hon. Friend has spoken about her father before. I know he would be very proud of her. We all know how strong her support is for this cause.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention to save me from a few more tears. I wanted to say that the PTSD my brother suffers as a result of my father dying is something we will all have to live with as a family. I think that is worth mentioning.

Tim said that palliative care can mitigate some of the pain, but it can never mitigate the suffering. This seems to be so true. Even the best palliative care cannot make

it easy, and it never is going to be easy, but we could do a lot more to make it better. Research has shown that where assisted dying is an option, palliative care improves. I truly believe that everyone in this debate can get behind that. We must do better for those at the end of their life.

I am also grateful to Liz Carr for taking the time to speak to me on Friday evening. The worries that Liz and other campaigners have need to be heard, and I believe we have a duty as Members of Parliament to open up this debate and listen to all sides. There are so many debates where people are very polarised in their arguments, particularly in this House, and I feel very strongly that both sides should be heard and that we should listen to everyone.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for giving way and for the way in which she is leading the debate. I voted for reform several years ago. I am really glad she has mentioned palliative care. There seems to be a misconception that those who support an avenue that people do not currently have unless they go to Switzerland are somewhat not supportive of good-quality palliative care. It is possible to have different paths for different groups of people, and I support everything the hon. Member has said so far.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank the hon. Member for his contribution. He is right that palliative care is important for everybody. We must have a conversation about death. Dying will happen to us all and we must talk about it. Palliative care is something we need to improve.

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con): The hon. Lady is right that dying is not about ending life. It is about shortening death. She makes a point about the importance of Parliament. My constituent Phil Newby, who was diagnosed with motor neurone disease—a disease that has blighted my family very cruelly—went to the High Court and asked it to make a judgment about assisted dying. It said that it would not and that it was a matter for Parliament. Would the hon. Lady support my belief that it is vital we move past Westminster Hall and have a meaningful debate and vote on the Floor of the House, which will allow the people of Britain to have their say on this, since the judiciary will not?

Tonia Antoniazzi: The hon. Member makes a very valid point. It is one of the points I will make in this debate. We have not had a debate on this issue on the Floor of the House for a very long time, and the vote was seven years ago. I concur that that needs to happen.

Liz talked about Daniel James, a rugby player who was paralysed from the chest down in a rugby accident. Liz is disabled and a well-known actress and campaigner. She explained that, without exception, the press coverage said that Daniel had been brave, stressing how tragic it was that this man had been cut down in the prime of his life. Liz wanted to make the point that there was another side to the story that had not been told. People with a disability are seen as something to be pitied and as people who will never live a full life. I want to make clear today that I do not believe that. There are people with disabilities who make invaluable contributions to British life, and we should listen to them and their concerns.

Being disabled does not mean living a second-class life. I cannot even begin to understand how being considered in that way would make somebody feel. There are bigger problems in the health service, however, including dehumanising treatment—such as when someone waits hours for a carer to visit to take them to the toilet—and insufficient pain relief because the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made an economic decision about someone's worth versus the cost. That is what we faced as a family—I have experienced it.

Liz also raised concerns about trust in the healthcare system. She said:

“The NHS has both saved my life, and destroyed my life.”

If we want to have a grown-up conversation about death, we need absolute commitment to properly funding end-of-life care and hospices. Some on the Government side will say that they are campaigning for “dying well”. They are in a position to make that happen, so I say to them: please do so. The palliative care system has been underfunded; rather than talking about dying well, please do something about that. As Liz said, it is outrageous that hospices are mainly charity funded. If we want people to be able to die well, let us fund palliative care, give people options and make everyone feel valued at the end of their life.

One word that I have not yet used in my speech is “autonomy”—deliberately so, because I had it explained to me in a way that I had never previously considered. I have always been a great believer in the idea that it is my body and I will do I want with it, thank you very much, but Liz said that disabled people can embody what most people are afraid of: a lack of autonomy and a loss of dignity. That understandably frightens many disabled people. When you think society does not value you, or that it considers you a burden, you must fear that society will find a way to rid itself of that burden.

I thank everyone who has spoken to me. It is amazing to see Westminster Hall packed with people who care about their death and the deaths of their loved ones, however they wish for it to end. The petition is very important to me and many others. We need a calm and clear conversation. Will the Minister find a way for the Select Committee to hold an inquiry on it, and will he take the time to meet some of the campaigners who took the time to speak to me? Their voices have to be heard, and the least we can do is hear them and make informed choices about where we go from here. Most importantly, it is for parliamentarians to debate and discuss future legislative opportunities.

In conclusion, I thank everyone. I understand the strength of feeling that this issue evokes, and I look forward to listening to a meaningful discussion this afternoon.

Several hon. Members rose—

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): Order. May I invite any Members who are standing and who have not taken a seat to come and take one if they wish to do so? We do not stand on ceremony on occasions like this; you may well want to sit.

4.53 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I draw Members' attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and to the fact that I am

[Mr Andrew Mitchell]

co-chair—with the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth)—of the all-party parliamentary group on choice at the end of life.

I speak today as a convert to the campaign for the legalisation of assisted dying. My mind has been changed over the years, principally because of the number of constituents to whom I have spoken who have faced terrible suffering at the end of life, or who have witnessed loved ones dying in painful and undignified circumstances. I want the change for my constituents, for myself and for those whom I love.

Last Friday, in the royal town of Sutton Coldfield, I met Lyn Ellis, a constituent from Wylde Green whose husband died from prostate cancer. During covid, he was told that he had three to six months to live, and he died not long afterwards. Lyn told me:

“Until you’ve been through something like this, you don’t realise how hollow the argument is that there is a palliative answer. As John died, he shrank to nothing; he couldn’t eat; he was in pain; suicidal. I felt we’d been cheated. What could be a better way to go than a glass of champagne and saying goodbye to each other?”

Those last few weeks of his life were incredibly painful; he shut down, wouldn’t speak, and we’d always had such a close and loving relationship. I feel the state let me down. A good and decent country would not have put us through this.”

We in the Commons have not been asked to vote on assisted dying for almost seven years. A great deal has changed in that time: California, Colorado, New Jersey, Maine, and even the District of Columbia have legislated for choice at the end of life. In just the past five years, every state in Australia has passed laws on assisted dying; New Zealand, too, legislated on assisted dying following a referendum that showed 66% support for the proposal. Other jurisdictions have gone further than the proposals that I support, including in Canada and Spain, and change is on the cards in Italy, Portugal and even Ireland. Proposals are under consideration in Scotland, Jersey and the Isle of Man that could be voted on before the end of next year.

Our hospice and end-of-life care in this country is superb, but nobody—not even the most ardent defenders of the palliative provisions that are in place—can claim that every person who dies in their care does so without pain, in peace and with dignity. For those facing even the prospect of a traumatic death, knowing that they had the option of choosing the moment and manner of their end would offer so much reassurance.

Right now, some people with terminal illnesses feel they have no other option than to take their own life into their own hands. They do so privately and alone so as not to incriminate their loved ones, and they often do so in violent and distressing ways. The Office for National Statistics published data in April demonstrating that those with severe health conditions are twice as likely to end their own life as those without. Estimates suggest that every week, between six and 12 people with terminal illnesses choose to die in that way.

We have evidence of the harm caused by our existing laws, and growing evidence of the reforms we could adopt from overseas. New polling from YouGov shows that three quarters of the British public support an inquiry into assisted dying, including 80% of Conservative

voters, 77% of Labour voters, 80% of those who voted remain and 79% of those who voted leave. It is refreshing to find unity in our politics at the moment, and it is clear from every opinion poll on the subject that assisted dying is a unifying issue for people across the country. I understand that the Health and Social Care Committee is considering conducting an inquiry into the subject, including looking at the experience of countries that are ahead of us on the issue. I very much hope that it will do so, and that its report will inform the thinking of the Government and the House.

In closing, I ask that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, he acknowledges the enormous changes that have taken place over the past couple of years, both internationally and in UK jurisdictions. We cannot continue to let dying people’s suffering go unanswered; it is time for dignity, for compassion, and for a choice at the end of life.

4.58 pm

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger, and to follow my fellow chair of the all-party parliamentary group on choice at the end of life, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell).

I am not a convert. I have wanted to change the law on assisted dying since I became a Member of Parliament, following my experience 14 years ago working with clinicians on how to communicate with patients about how to live and die with respiratory disease. That is not terminal, but the work opened my eyes to how we talk about death—how we do not prepare for the inevitable and, although we seek to have choice, agency and freedom throughout our lives, we have no power at the end. There will be many people listening to the debate who are facing death or the death of their loved ones. As we debate this issue, we must be mindful of the personal circumstances and experiences of those people, and of all of us in the Chamber.

End-of-life care has improved since my work in the health service 14 years ago, but there is still a contrast between how we talk about dying and how we attempt to talk about other care, which is indicative of the problem. In all my years working in the planning and commissioning of services in the NHS, it was all about co-production—the importance of patient voice and choice—but the co-production partnership disappears at the time we can least fight: the time we die. However, the reality is that a person can have choice—if they have an average of £12,000 spare. We can debate all we like, we can pretend this is not an issue, and the Government can turn an eye, but if a person has the money, they have the choice.

For campaigners, that is a really frustrating position. As we have heard, poll after poll suggests that we as MPs are far from our constituents on this issue. I have been humbled today by meeting families and friends who have travelled to speak to us and share their stories. It is absolutely right that, if Members of Parliament have not previously engaged with this subject, they should engage with it, they should be properly informed, and they should have the opportunity to scrutinise all the proposals and to be convinced that change is better and safer than what we have now. We seek parliamentary time to do just that.

First, we must understand that the current situation is not safe or sustainable. Secondly, we want to learn from those who have safely operated an assisted dying law for over 20 years. Thirdly, we want to ensure that we address all the concerns expressed, especially about safeguarding.

We have heard some shocking examples of people taking their own lives. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) spoke movingly about that three years ago, and we see it in the ONS data. Currently, there are no up-front safeguards to stop people taking their own life or refusing food, water or ventilation. There is no regulation on people choosing not to have treatment. People live in fear of accompanying their loved one and getting that knock on the door from the police—that happens. Additionally, as I said, there is choice for those who can afford it.

We need to scrutinise the proposals and learn from Oregon and from recent debates in Australia and New Zealand. Since we last debated the subject, as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield said, six states in Australia have legalised assisted dying, as have several states in the United States, New Zealand, Canada and many other countries. I have had the pleasure of talking with parliamentarians from across those countries about the debates they have had. We can learn from them. The concerns raised by opponents have not come to pass. Medical opinion has shifted dramatically, and new evidence has been published that demonstrates how unsafe our current law is. That is why I am confident in these proposals.

We need time to go through the arguments and the safeguarding concerns. I have spoken to several MP colleagues and I understand those concerns, but they have not come to pass elsewhere. The rights of people in different parts of the United Kingdom are dominating our politics. In fact, in the main Chamber, Members are currently talking about Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. With proposals coming through in Jersey and Scotland, the United Kingdom Parliament and the United Kingdom Government will have to engage with assisted dying here in the United Kingdom. It is useful to have debates like this one, but what we need is Government time. I hope the Minister will take the Government's head out of the sand and respond positively to the request for just that.

5.2 pm

Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con): It is an honour to serve under you, Sir Roger, and I welcome the debate. I should declare that I am chair of the all-party parliamentary group for dying well.

Let me start by saying how much I recognise the good faith, integrity and powerful arguments of the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), all hon. Members speaking in support of the petition and all the campaigners who support it. I recognise the extreme distress and anxiety felt by families who have been through the agonising death of a loved one who experienced suffering that no human being should go through. I will address the issue of bad deaths in a moment, but first I want to look at the implications of assisted dying as I see them, and what would happen if we did it in this country, based on our experience and that of other countries.

I do not have a suite of powerful personal stories, although I recognise the enormous moral value of them all; I invoke the nameless and numberless people who will be affected if we introduce this law. The main argument for assisted dying is the simple one of autonomy. I think a lot of the support for assisted dying comes from the simple and natural resentment that anybody should try to stop people doing what they want, especially about something as important as this—literally a matter of life and death. But in this case, things are the other way around for many people. In my view, we need to keep assisted dying illegal because, as a matter of practical fact, for many people, it would narrow their autonomy. It would reduce their freedom substantially, because it would put them on a path with only one destination. That is because of the incentives that assisted dying would introduce.

The first incentive would be in our healthcare system. The simple, blunt fact is that it is cheaper for the system to help people end their life early than to care for them for weeks, months or years. That is not an argument we hear for assisted dying, but it is compelling. The cat was let out of the bag rather when the Member of the Scottish Parliament who is trying to legalise assisted dying in Scotland cited research from Canada showing that the health service there has saved hundreds of millions of dollars in care costs. We see, in contraction to a point made by the hon. Member for Gower, that where assisted dying is introduced, investment in palliative care stalls or recedes in comparison with countries where assisted dying is illegal.

Meanwhile, in Oregon, we see people being refused palliative care on cost grounds and then choosing assisted dying because there is no other option. I know we pretend that we do not have rationing in the NHS, but obviously, with finite resources, we do. Do we really imagine that assisted dying will not become an option that doctors and medical managers will not tacitly—even unintentionally—encourage?

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): My hon. Friend is making some very interesting points, although I am on the other side of the argument. With such controversial issues, we tend to point to facts on either side of the argument. Would it not be sensible to have an independent inquiry, by the Health and Social Care Committee or otherwise, to look at the points that he raises and the points that others would raise on the other side of the argument?

Danny Kruger: I recognise the force of that point, but the fact is that Parliament has debated the topic repeatedly over the last 20 years. We have devoted considerable hours of parliamentary time to it already.

Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con): We had the opportunity to vote on the matter in 2015, but that was a great many years ago and many people who are Members of Parliament today were not present. Does my hon. Friend agree that “repeatedly” was perhaps the wrong word to use in that context?

Danny Kruger: As I understand it, we have had 14 hours of parliamentary time devoted to the topic in this Parliament alone. I suggest that there are other topics that we could address. I recognise that assisted

[*Danny Kruger*]

dying is worth discussing, but there is something that we should do first, before we consider it. I will come to that point in a moment.

Members who think we can prevent people from being put on the pathway to assisted dying by good drafting, or because doctors are good people—obviously, they are—should think about the “do not resuscitate” scandal we had during the pandemic, and about the Liverpool care pathway, and then suggest there is no risk. I think there is a risk. I know that doctors are good people who want the best, but if we force them to make utilitarian decisions about the best use of resources, will they not push people in this direction?

As well as the pressure on the healthcare system to take this route, I worry even more about the pressure on patients themselves to request assisted dying if it is an option. It will be an option for almost everybody approaching death—that is the proposal. Clinical guidelines for many terminal or chronic illnesses will likely require doctors, at an early stage of planning treatment, to ask patients whether they would wish to have assistance in taking their own life. What a question to ask. Whatever the guidelines, every family will be required to have the conversation, in whispers or openly. In some families, we know how that conversation could all too likely go.

Over half the people in countries where assisted dying is legal choose it because they feel they are a burden to their family. Tragically, a lot also say that they are lonely. Is that not terrible—people getting the state to help kill them because they do not want to be a burden on a family that never visits them? Talk to any hospice manager about relatives and they will quietly confirm it. There are a lot of people who want granny or grandpa to hurry up and die.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): The hon. Member is making a number of points. Like the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake), I am on the other side of the debate. Is it not the case that many of the people who are being characterised as wanting granny or grandpa to hurry up and die, are in fact simply wanting their pain to end, and want a compassionate way to bring that to an end? They do not want them to die; wanting them to die is the furthest thing from their mind. However, they are going to have to die, and they want to make it a better death.

Danny Kruger: I really do thank the hon. Lady for that intervention. She is absolutely right, and I thank her for allowing me to make it abundantly clear what I hope I made clear earlier: I recognise the enormous power of the campaign, and that the overwhelming majority of people want it for the best of intentions. All of the people campaigning for this, and the overwhelming majority of the people who imagine making use of this law, do so for the absolute best of intentions. Please can we not have a deliberate misunderstanding of the points I make? I represent a lot of people who think this way, and I am making the point in all sincerity.

I challenge Members, many of whom must visit their hospices and know what is acknowledged as the fact of elder abuse. Tragically, we have a rising epidemic of elder abuse in this country. Half of elderly people who are victims of financial crime are victimised by their

own adult children. It is not just the elderly we need to be concerned about. It is no surprise that no disabled organisation supports the proposal. It is the most vulnerable people, who by definition rely on the support of other people—their families and professionals—who are most at risk of assisted dying laws being misapplied, which is what I fear would happen. Suddenly, every controlling and coercive relative, every avaricious carer or neighbour, every overstretched or under-resourced doctor or hospital manager would have the means to cut their cost, and I do not believe it is possible to design out the risks.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a compelling case. We have heard a lot about quality of life, but who are we to judge what a quality life really is? Is someone who is profoundly disabled without quality? Is someone with profound learning difficulties without quality? Why do we assume that the only lives worth living are those that are perfect or of high quality in the eyes of others?

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): Order. I fear that we shall never hear the answer to my right hon. Friend. We have to stick to the five-minute limit, and you get injury time only on the first occasion that you give way, I am afraid. That is a message for all Members.

5.10 pm

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Each of us has personal experiences of our closest, our nearest and dearest, dying—if we do not, we one day will. I watched my father die, I watched my father-in-law die and I watched my brother-in-law die. One was in a hospice, one was at our family home and one was in a hospital, and the experience is shocking. That is life: in the midst of life, we are in death. Here we have no continuing. This is not our final resting place.

As a nation, we need a national conversation about death. The hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) mentioned that briefly, but we need to focus on it. It was said during the last debate that that should happen, but no one bothered their backsides doing it; no one took it forward. This House really should have a proper conversation about death, and let us put into that conversation real palliative care.

My dear friend, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), who I oppose, said that our hospice care in this country is superb. Indeed, there is an element of it trying to be superb, but let us be clear: our palliative care and hospice care system in the United Kingdom is struggling. It does not have the resources it requires. Hence, people say, “Let’s give hope to someone in a different way. Let’s try to find a way of ending pain.”

When we were faced with the coronavirus, did our Government give up hope, or did they put massive resources into funding a way to find a vaccine? That vaccine gave hope. When our country was struggling with the AIDS epidemic, did we give up hope? Did we say, “That’s a life sentence. Tough luck”? No, we put money and resources into medication and medicines that now ensure that it is not a life sentence.

What more can we do if the Government, with our help, put resources into cancer care and cancer research, incurable diseases and care, and palliative care? If we do

that, we will achieve so much more, and as a Parliament we will give hope to people. Today, I am afraid we are giving hopelessness to some and saying, “This is the only way out. We can’t do anything more.” We can do more if we find the courage to do so. I appeal to the Minister: if there is a national debate—a national conversation about death and dying—will he make sure it is also a conversation about palliative care, faith, spiritualism and all the things we need a conversation about? If we have that conversation, we will find that we can give people hope.

Mr Mitchell: I hope I can just nail this point about palliative care. Both sides of this debate are strongly in favour of increasing palliative care. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that all the jurisdictions that have gone down the route that I and many of my colleagues have proposed have also prioritised palliative care and increased spending on it?

Ian Paisley: I am not for one moment saying, and I do not think that I can be accused of saying, that those who look at assisted dying do not care about palliative care. I do not think anyone is—are we really that heartless?—but I think we have to give hope to people. We need to turn this debate around into a debate about palliative care and helping people when they are at their lowest.

It is a fact that our health service is struggling; it is a fact that our cancer waiting lists are the worst in western Europe; and it is a fact that we need to do much more when it comes to giving care and carrying out research into rare and unique diseases, so that people can find a way out.

It is also very important that the statistics are not with this blasé view that says, “This is where Britain stands. They want to see a law change.” First of all, in the Republic of Ireland the assisted dying law was rejected overwhelmingly by Dáil Éireann, because it did not believe that it was a way that could bring satisfaction.

The threat to the disabled and the vulnerable has been raised by Disability Rights UK, Scope and the United Kingdom’s Disabled People’s Council, all of which say that this debate on assisted dying causes them great concerns. The British Medical Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians do not support moves towards assisted dying.

I think there has been some—

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Ian Paisley: No, I do not have injury time.

The hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) touched upon the issue of Oregon. It is not a debate that is widely discussed and we should say that within 10 years we could see times fifteen—I repeat: times fifteen—the number of people wanting to explore and use assisted suicide. There is something seriously wrong when that is where this debate takes people.

We need to focus on things that will give people hope and the opportunity to find a better way. When we walked into this Chamber today, we walked under a portrait of Moses. That portrait carried with it a biblical and, indeed,

faith inspiration that we can make good laws. We can make the best laws. Changing the law on this would be the wrong choice, and if it ever comes to a debate on the Floor of the House, I will vote against it.

5.17 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), who introduced this debate. I will not go through my list of family members, friends and constituents whose deaths I have been present at, or who I saw just shortly before their death; we can all do that and do it with sincerity. I am aware that my parents agreed to my brother’s life being ended after an accident when he could not live.

What I want to do is briefly to pick up two points about hospice end-of-life care and death on request—which is my neutral way of describing what we are talking about. In the Netherlands, people are not allowed to have death on request in or from a hospice; they have to ask to leave the hospice to have their life ended by euthanasia. Incidentally, the Dutch distinguish between euthanasia and assisted suicide, and nearly all are by euthanasia; they are not assisted suicides. The proportion of people and the number of people in Dutch hospices who ask to leave so that their life can be ended is very, very low; it is less than one in fifty.

Secondly, I have heard people say that people often commit suicide because they want their life to end and they cannot find another legal way of doing it. The Dutch rate of euthanasia—death on request—and assisted suicide is between 6,000 and 7,000 cases a year. The Netherlands has a population of about 17 million. If we translated their numbers to this country, we would have well over 25,000 people a year. How many suicides a year do we have in this country that we know about? Obviously, some are not classified as suicides, but the conventional figure is about 5,000 to 6,000. We are in effect being told, “Everything’s all right, because it’s been all right in the Netherlands. And by the way, expect death on request and euthanasia figures to be four times the level of our known suicides.” I do not sign up for that.

The last thing that I want to say is that some people say that two out of three suicides may be because people want to end their lives early because of some medical condition, or whatever. We are not talking about the depressions or the other things from which people often recover. I just put it on record that for every person who successfully commits suicide, there are probably 20 people who may have tried, one way or another.

If we seriously want to believe that bringing in legal euthanasia or assisted suicide—death on request—will drop the suicide rate, look at the Dutch. While their numbers of assisted deaths have gone up significantly—the law was passed in 2001 and enacted in 2002—from 2003–04 onwards, there has been a pretty consistent rise in the number of suicides in the Netherlands. The idea that changing the law will drop the suicide rate, or act as a substitute for effective end-of-life care, is, I believe, wrong.

The more often we debate this in the House of Commons, the better, as far as I am concerned. I am willing to acknowledge some points that people make, but most of my friends—not all—who had motor neurone disease did not ask for death on request. Most of the people who told me in advance that they were going to end their lives if they were in the last days of a terminal

[*Sir Peter Bottomley*]

condition did not end their lives. We ought to be far more careful about the way we debate this. It is not a one-sided debate.

5.20 pm

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I pay tribute to the 155,000 people who signed the petition prompting today's debate and to my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for the way she introduced it.

It is an extraordinary coincidence, but today is the 11th anniversary of my father's death—more extraordinary, because the last time the Commons debated assisted dying on the Floor of the House was the eighth anniversary of his death. Like an estimated 300 people in the UK every year, he took his life after a terminal diagnosis. Although I still find it difficult to talk about, I want to share his story today, because he would have wanted me to, and because his experience echoes that of so many others and informs a central issue in our discussion. Inevitably, the debate on providing choice at the end of life often focuses on the impact of the change that is being proposed, but I think we should start from a different place: by looking at the existing law and recognising the pain it causes, and the way it forces so many into desperate and premature deaths.

Eleven years ago today—also a Monday—I got a phone call here: he had been found dead in his garage. I had spoken to him the previous night on the phone as I walked through St James's Park. An ordinary conversation that gave me no inkling of his plan. But later he obviously tidied up his belongings, left some small piles of money to settle bills with—with the newsagent and one or two others—and wrote some final notes. He then walked to the garage, connected a hosepipe from his car exhaust into the car, took an overdose and switched on the engine.

I was shocked and clearly still struggle with it, but I should not have been surprised, because he had always believed that the law should be changed to allow assisted dying. And let us be clear—we should be very clear about the terms we use—my dad was not suicidal. He loved life; he was 87. But at that age he had inevitably watched many of his friends go, often miserably—horrific deaths. He talked with me about their last days and he had always been clear that he would rather end things than face a lingering and degrading death, but I still was not expecting it.

He was somebody who had made the most of life. He had a tough east-end upbringing, became an RAF pilot during the war and built a successful business career. He had had his share of health problems, but he faced them all positively, until a terminal diagnosis of inoperable lung cancer clearly led to his decision to take his life. He could not talk to me or his partner about it, because he would have made us complicit. The current law forced my father into a lonely decision and a lonely death. And he died prematurely, because I am sure that what drove him to end his life at that point was the fear that if he did not act when he was still able to do so, he would lose the opportunity to act at all.

Karin Smyth: My hon. Friend is making a very powerful speech. I am grateful to him for sharing his story with us again. What he exemplifies is the wider impact on the

family. Families are loving places to be for most people, and the impact goes on for a number of years. The inability to have those conversations with family is one of the things that my hon. Friend is highlighting for us today. The current law inhibits honest conversations in families to help a more supportive situation to go forward. I think that is something we should all take with us this afternoon.

Paul Blomfield: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. She is absolutely right, and I appreciate the breathing space that she has given me.

Some people have already said in this debate that we simply need to improve end-of-life care. We should, and I say to the hon. Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger), contrary to his comments, that many of those states, for example in Australia, that have introduced assisted dying have, at exactly the same time, substantially increased the amount of money spent on palliative care. We should do that, but it would not have changed my dad's decision. He supported our local hospice. I have raised funds for it. It does a great job. But no hospice can enable everybody to die with the dignity that they would want.

Indeed, for my father, it was soon after his appointment with the palliative care nurse, where together they talked about his last months and how that would pan out, that he took the decision to end his life. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) alluded to the fact that, if the law had made it possible, he could have shared his plans with us. And knowing that he could, with support, go at the time of his choosing would have enabled him to stay longer. If the law had made it possible, he would have been able to say goodbye and go with his family around him, not in a carbon monoxide-filled garage. He deserved better and many others like him deserve better. And we, here, can make that possible. We simply need to change the law, as the overwhelming majority of the British people want.

I appreciate that there are those whose personal belief makes my father's choice unacceptable. I respect those beliefs. Live your life by them. But do not impose them on others. Let people have the choice at the end of their lives. Allow them the dignity in dying that we would want to give them during their life.

5.27 pm

Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con): I think that the sheer number of us in this room today and the power of the testimony from so many is itself the strongest possible case for the motion that Parliament must have an informed, compassionate debate on assisted dying. We know and have heard that the vast majority of people support choice in how they die. Indeed, we know that an even higher proportion of people who live with disabilities support having choice in how they die. And I think we all agree, on both sides of the debate, that the debate should be informed and compassionate.

It is seven years, as many have mentioned, since we last had a substantive vote on this subject. Since then, out of the 650 Members of Parliament, more than 200 have changed. The composition of Parliament has changed. Many Members have not had the opportunity to consider this question and express their view. The issue is not only that changes have been brought in in other countries. The Royal College of Nursing has

dropped its opposition to assisted dying. The British Medical Association has removed its opposition. I can speak as a former Health Secretary and say that the medical movement as a whole is also changing its view, and I think it is appropriate that we raise these questions in a votable manner on the Floor of the House proper once again.

I have a few personal reflections. As Health Secretary, I found this area of policy bereft of data. I found that there had been a muddle in the way Government think about it. Because this has been a conscience vote for parliamentarians—and rightly so—the Government felt that they had to step back from the debate as a whole, so I wrote to the Office for National Statistics to ask it to investigate this area, as it does so brilliantly in every other area of life. That is how we now know that twice as many terminally ill people take their own life as people who do not have a terminal diagnosis. That is a striking fact. We should encourage the Office for National Statistics, and every other part of Government, to publish data to inform this debate in exactly the way that it would for any other area—for most of which, of course, there are whipped votes.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): It is really good to hear from my right hon. Friend, given his experience. I know that this is a very difficult debate. I lost both my parents when I was 46. I watched both of them pass away—with dignity, I have to say. Does my right hon. Friend, with whom I served in government at the Department, recognise the problem that, although this debate has moved on and we have seen great progress in survival from the acute episodes that some of our loved ones face, that has not been matched by the development in pain relief? I wonder whether that is why so many people, including myself, who voted against the Marris Bill seven years ago, are on a journey and listening intently today.

Matt Hancock: Yes, I think there is a lot in that. As Health Secretary, I met people on both sides of the argument. I admire so much those who give palliative care. I took the opportunity to put more funding into palliative care, although I also support the mixed model of funding because I think that the funds raised through voluntary efforts and philanthropy are important—I have raised money for my brilliant local hospice, St Nicholas Hospice in Bury St Edmunds. But the truth is that even the best palliative care in the world cannot stop the deep pain and trauma that comes with some diseases, especially but not only cancers, at the end of life. Medicine simply cannot stop the pain in every case.

As Health Secretary, I also heard from supporters of change. I want briefly to mention two examples. The first is Sir Paul Cosford, the former medical director of Public Health England—my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) will have worked with him—who gave enormous and great service during the pandemic. Everybody in this Chamber will have heard him on Radio 4. What most people will not know is that he was living with cancer for the entirety of the pandemic. The work from home provisions allowed him to keep serving right up until very shortly before his death. A month before his death, he asked for some time with me, one on one, and he explained to me that he was nearing the end. As a doctor, he had seen many, many patients go through what he was about to go through,

and he did not want to go through that. He said to me, “The end, when it comes for me, will be brief, but others do not have that choice.” He asked me this question: “Would you want the choice of how to die?” I ask everyone in the Chamber that same question.

As a local MP, I was honoured six weeks ago to meet David Minns, who has terminal myeloma. He told me a heart-rending story about how he saw in recent years his daughter die of a very painful cancer without successful pain mitigation, and he does not want to go through that. Nor does he want to go to Switzerland; he is a proud, patriotic man. He could potentially live longer if he knew that he could be assisted in his death, as we have heard from so many others.

Nine countries now allow assisted dying in a highly specific form. There are reasonable arguments on both sides, so there are constraints in place. We can learn from the experience overseas. There are countries with our common law tradition and parts of this United Kingdom that are considering assisted dying.

Danny Kruger: Does my right hon. Friend not acknowledge that in every single country where measures such as assisted dying, assisted suicide or euthanasia have been introduced, there is only one direction of change, which is towards more progressive liberalisation of the law? It always goes towards more liberalisation, including in Canada, where euthanasia is now being proposed.

Matt Hancock: I heard that argument, so I looked into it. In Oregon, for instance, which is the originator of the proposals that many people support, that is simply not the case. There was one change made many years ago and the law has now rested. There is essentially agreement about it.

I cannot see how the Minister can argue for anything other than an informed, compassionate debate on the Floor of the House. For 50 years we have had a legal choice over who to love. For a decade we have had a legal choice over who we can marry. Let us have an informed debate about, when the end is inevitable and the pain insufferable, how we die.

5.35 pm

Sir Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for the very sensitive way she opened the debate. I also commend the powerful speeches we have heard so far.

I oppose the view expressed in the petition, essentially for the following reason: if we were to legalise assisted dying, we would impose an awful moral dilemma on every conscientious frail person nearing the end of their life. We have probably all known a number of such people. They have a lot of anxieties at that stage of their life. They worry very much about being a burden on their children, needing care from them and consuming resources that their children would otherwise inherit. If ending their life early were legally permissible, many who do not want to end their life would feel under great, probably irresistible, pressure to do so. There is no way to stop that happening.

Sir George Howarth: Knowing my right hon. Friend as I do, I know he is sincere in his views. He talks of the group of people who are at the end of their life and might feel under pressure to conserve the inheritance of

[Sir George Howarth]

their children or not to be a burden on them, but there is another group, rarely talked about, who put pressure on their parents or loved ones to stay alive. They do so out of love. Would he accept that both sides, more often than not, act out of love, rather than for venal reasons, so does not one argument cancel out the other?

Sir Stephen Timms: I accept wholly the point my right hon. Friend makes. I think a lot of the people I am concerned about, and expressing a worry about, are deeply loved by their children but do not want to put an undue burden on them. I am not saying that those children want to hasten their death or anything like that. I do not think that is often the case, although occasionally it might be.

I do think that conscientious and frail elderly people will feel that they ought to avoid being a burden, and they will feel a pressure to end their lives prematurely as a result. I would say that we ought not to impose such a burden on vulnerable people nearing the end of their lives. The penalty that would come from doing so would be significantly greater than the considerable benefits we have heard set out in the debate.

Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): Will the right hon. Member give way?

Sir Stephen Timms: I will make a bit more progress.

In setting out this view, I am mindful of the stern instruction we all received last week from the National Secular Society, which wrote:

“Dire warnings about the coercion of disabled, elderly, sick or the depressed can mask true motivations for opposing a change in the law...disguising religion objections as secular concerns, rather than seeking ways to mitigate potential risks of legalising assisted dying, opponents can exaggerate the risks, weaponising them to spread fear.”

The National Secular Society will probably regard me as one of the guilty parties here, but I do not think the concerns I am expressing are apparent only to religious people. Disabled people’s organisations have been very clear—in the interests of all the people they represent, and certainly not on any religious grounds—that legalising assisted dying would be a deeply damaging change. I think they are right.

Matt Hancock: I have heard that argument made a couple of times, and I respect the associations involved, but how would the right hon. Member reflect on the fact that, according to polls, 86% of people living with a disability are in favour of a change? That figure is greater than in the population as a whole, so I do not understand the point he is making.

Sir Stephen Timms: I have not seen the polls that the right hon. Member refers to, but I think it is the case that all the major organisations representing disabled people in the UK oppose this change in the interests of their members.

There are good and compassionate arguments—we have heard a number of them—in favour of the change that the petition calls for. I do not agree with those arguments, but let us be clear that they are not the only arguments for the change. In some minds, they are clearly not the decisive arguments either. As we have

been told, in some countries where the change has been made, it is explicitly about saving the health service money.

My party introduced the national health service, which is our proudest achievement. It needs to be adequately funded. The fact that it is not being adequately funded at the moment must not become an excuse for giving up and accepting that painful deaths are unavoidable. Instead, as all right hon. and hon. Members have agreed so far in the debate, we need to invest in palliative care, where there have been big advances and where there could be many more, and to ensure that adequate care is provided to everybody who needs it.

I agree with the organisation Care Not Killing that we want

“a funded policy for comprehensive hospice, community and hospital specialist palliative care services across the country with a duty placed on NHS trusts to ensure these services are made available to all who need them.”

I visited my local children’s hospice on Saturday—we have heard from a number of Members who have made such visits—and it had a fête to raise funds, because it is struggling for cash. In my view, it should not have to do that.

“In Place of Fear” was how Nye Bevan summed up what had been achieved in founding the NHS. Let us not give up now and decide that we can no longer afford the relief from fear that he rightly promised.

Danny Kruger: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Stephen Timms: I cannot give way again.

We should renew our determination not to impose fear and an awful moral dilemma on frail and conscientious elderly people approaching the end of their lives, and insist on modern palliative care for those who need it and a properly funded health service that supports living.

5.42 pm

Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I welcome today’s important debate on what is undoubtedly an evocative issue. As I am sure will be the case for many Members present, I have been contacted by many of my constituents.

Both my parents died of cancer. My mother had a very short and aggressive illness, and my father had to switch off her life support machine. For my father it was rather more prolonged, but he died peacefully, surrounded by his four daughters. He chose when to die, and it was a natural death. It was very difficult to witness, but the comfort comes from witnessing someone who died in peace, surrounded by love.

There are many areas in need of thorough consideration when it comes to potentially legalising assisted dying, and each person suffering deserves heart-felt compassion, as do their families. Given the great number of speakers in the debate, I will focus my comments on one aspect that is at risk of being overlooked. As has already been mentioned, there are now a number of countries, territories and jurisdictions where assisted dying has been legalised. Evidence from these places—particularly surrounding the negative impact on doctors—is a legitimate cause for concern, and such evidence suggests that the practice

of assisted suicide or assisted dying has a severe and detrimental impact on medical professionals and the provision of palliative care more generally, as has been highlighted.

Emotional, medical and practical problems faced by doctors have grown in countries where legalisation is already in place, and these issues should not be taken lightly. A review of the official data by Living and Dying Well found that between 30% and 50% of clinicians describe an emotional burden or discomfort resulting from participation in assisted dying, assisted suicide or euthanasia, and that 15% to 20% experience a lasting adverse psychological or emotional impact.

More specifically, turning to the example of Canada across the pond, Living and Dying Well also found that clinicians reported five specific issues surrounding legalisation, including that it complicates the management of pre-existing symptoms; adversely impacts the important doctor-patient relationship; causes tension for families during what is often an already deeply challenging period; diverts resources away from crucial palliative care services; and confuses patients as to the nature and purpose of palliative care. When considered as a whole, those issues reported by practising clinicians in Canada are not something that we as lawmakers can or should overlook, and I believe that the highlighted impacts on palliative care provision are of particular concern.

This discussion is no longer solely theoretical or philosophical. The countries, territories and jurisdictions where assisted dying or assisted suicide has already been made legal can be used as real-world case studies of its impacts, and that which has already been recorded by clinicians—for example, those in Canada—should make us all pause for thought.

We all want to see the best support available for those people who are nearing the end of their lives, as well as for their families. Looking at the evidence that I have highlighted today, I remain convinced, as many are, that palliative care and support for people physically, mentally and spiritually—and it is the latter that must not be overlooked—remains the most appropriate and ethical approach.

5.46 pm

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Sir Roger. I thank all Members who have spoken so far for their bravery. The hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) in particular was incredibly brave, and I am sure that his father must be very proud of him.

The petition has 185 signatories from the Glasgow Central constituency. I have had 236 cases, both for and against, raised with me as an MP since 2015, and that is despite this not being an issue with which I would usually get involved, because it is a matter for the Scottish Parliament. I am mindful of Liam McArthur's Bill in the Scottish Parliament, picking up from where Margo MacDonald, Patrick Harvie and Jeremy Purvis have previously led the debate on assisted dying. As we have heard this afternoon, this is an all-party/no-party issue. There are a range of views among members of all of our parties, and I wish Liam McArthur very well in his endeavours in the Scottish Parliament.

I want to reflect on the views of a few constituents who have been in touch with me, because their words really are more powerful than anything I could say. Bryony got in touch with me in remembrance of her mother, Jenny Randall:

"She was an extraordinary, brilliant woman, and a wonderful mother",

but she

"spent most of her final months in terrible pain, indignity and discomfort".

Bryony says that

"had assisted dying being legal in the UK, it would have provided her with immense comfort in her final weeks, and might have enabled her to draw her suffering to a gentle and humane close sooner than was the case."

Karris reflected the story of her father, who died of motor neurone disease in 2016. She says:

"My dad was a proud man, an intelligent man and one of the strongest people I know. He was sound of mind and heart and I know, because he told me whilst he still could, that he did not want to prolong his suffering. Or the suffering of his family, who had to watch him live out his dying days unable to move or communicate, with oxygen pumping into his mouth through a mask that had he taken off, he would not have survived. In fact—I'm fairly sure that had he been able to he would have ripped that mask off himself. He would have made that choice, had he been allowed, to pass peacefully before he reached those...end stages."

Lillian has experience of a family member wanting to die after suffering from systemic heart failure. She also has experience as a bereavement counsellor, which is an important perspective to bring to this debate. She says that, as a bereavement counsellor for many years, she has spoken to many people

"who struggle to deal with the end of life experiences of their loved ones who have died in pain, feeling the loss of all dignity and choice at the ending of their physical life."

She says:

"Some of my counselling clients have been left suffering from trauma with flashbacks having witnessed the horrendous and prolonged suffering of a loved one, in some cases where the sufferer has begged to die quickly."

We need to think about the burden that that clearly puts on other people—the people who carry on after their loved one has passed away. We have a responsibility and a duty to them, too, in trying to find a good death.

I want to mention the names of some of the people who got in touch with me, because I want them to know that I have read all of their emails and that they matter very deeply: Barbara, Lynne, Andrea, Georgia, Lynn, Dave, Archie, Jo, Hugh, Naomi, Sian, Elizabeth, Lucy, Jane, David, Mary, Simone, Wendy, Edward, Gabriel, Charles, Ann Ellen and Brenda. They all have strong views on assisted dying, and some of those views are very different. They reflect the wider debate about how we get to a place where everybody can be satisfied that the end people will face will at least be fair, and one that they would choose for themselves.

I will finish with the powerful words I received from Joyce.

"Assisted dying should be the right of every citizen facing a terminal illness. Of course high quality end of life care should also be the right of every citizen. However, it is foolish to imagine that every dying person can be made comfortable. And even if that were possible, all of us should have the option to end our lives at the time of our own choosing."

[Alison Thewliss]

It should be a choice for all of us, not to impose what we believe on other people, but to have a good death—a death that will leave us with memories of the people we loved, rather than memories of the suffering of their last dying days.

5.51 pm

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): My father's last six months were horrible and frightful. Yes, I did want him to die more quickly, to end his suffering. However, he did not. He wanted to come home. I would therefore not change the law.

We have heard much about the polling, but the fact is there is nothing new there. Ever since we started polling on this question, there have been large majorities in favour of changing the law, so there is nothing new in that phenomenon. However, a poll is not an argument. The Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland believes that the polling is driven by reports in our newspapers of the awful deaths that some people experience, without giving proper consideration to the advances in palliative care and the fact that many people with terminal illnesses die a peaceful death with their family around them. It is not as if that case is presented fairly and equally.

We have also been told that the medical profession is changing its view, with the Royal College of Physicians changing its position from being against assisted dying. I understand that in a vote by its members, 43% voted to retain its opposition to the proposals, 31% wanted to support assisted dying and only 25% wanted to adopt a neutral position. The Royal College of Physicians is now in the absurd position of having adopted the position that was voted for by the fewest of its members.

We have also heard about the impact on palliative care. Obviously, there is a difference of views. However, I have sat in this Palace and heard clinicians from Canada tell us in terms that palliative care budgets were being squeezed to provide for the new service of assisted dying.

We have to be clear on both the implications for the medical profession—the way the nature of the medical profession will change when doctors can bring death as well as life—and the scale, which my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) touched on. My figures are rather different from his. I understand that about 400 people a year take their own lives in this country as a consequence of a terminal diagnosis. I understand that if we were like Holland, the figure for deaths assisted by the medical profession would be 21,000, taking account of the different size of population and all the rest. As many as one in six deaths in Holland may be accounted for by deaths assisted by the medical profession. Once we normalise that as a way of death, I think we would definitely be dealing with dangers—

[STEVE McCABE *in the Chair*]

Kevin Hollinrake: Clearly, it would depend on how we drafted any legislation brought forward, but my right hon. Friend mentioned 16%—in Oregon, 0.7% of deaths are through assisted dying. It depends on us.

Sir Desmond Swayne: I was speaking about the Dutch figures, not Oregon, but my hon. Friend is right that it depends on us.

I last debated this issue at Durham University earlier this year against Baroness Meacher. She wanted to confine the debate clearly and specifically to the terms that she had set out in her Bill, with all the provisions and the safeguards, such as that it has to be within six months of the end of life prognosis and all the rest. Unfortunately, she was rather undermined by the seconder of her motion, who was a psychiatrist and, I understood, represented an organisation called *My Life, My Death, My Choice*. There was no question that this was a service that should be available for us all at whatever stage of our lives. Once we open the door and go down that road, it is a one-way street. We have certainly seen that in the evidence from Canada.

Mr Mitchell: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Desmond Swayne: I have given way enough and my right hon. Friend has had his say.

I accept entirely that people are put in a dreadful position if they have a terminal diagnosis. They have the capacity to end their lives but they want to live a bit longer and are worried about the loss of that capacity to end their lives, putting their friends and relatives in a difficult position. But it is a mistake to believe that for every one of life's horrible dilemmas there is a lever that we can pull to make things better. My fear is that we will make things so much worse for those elderly and infirm people who will feel under pressure to do the "decent" thing and not consume resources.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Steve McCabe (in the Chair): To get everyone in, I will have to reduce the time limit to four minutes. If there are interventions, not everyone will have a chance to make a speech.

5.57 pm

Sarah Green (Chesham and Amersham) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe, and to hear such powerful contributions. In 2003, John Close, the brother of my constituent Lesley, became the seventh Briton to travel to the Dignitas clinic for help to die. Lesley is sitting in the Public Gallery. Since she lost John, hundreds more have taken the same journey to Dignitas that he did.

Sadly, the financial cost of such a trip means that many terminally ill, mentally capable Britons who want that do not have access to what Lesley described as the "gift" of medically assisted dying. Too many of them take things into their own hands, often in far more distressing ways, as we have heard. It is clear that our country's current blanket ban on assisted dying is failing. That creates additional torment and suffering at an already painful time for those who have decided to die, along with their loved ones.

Many Members will be familiar with the case of another of my constituents, Ann Whaley, and her husband Geoff. Some may have even had the privilege of meeting Geoff when he visited the House of Commons before his passing. Ann is also sitting in the Gallery. In 2015, the police arrived on Ann and Geoff's doorstep to investigate an accusation of domestic abuse—something that shocked them both, given they had shared a loving

marriage for 52 years. Ann was put in a police car, driven to the station, locked in an interview room and interviewed under caution.

Having never committed a crime in her life, Ann found herself the subject of a criminal investigation for booking flights and organising an appointment at Dignitas, according to Geoff's wishes: he had been unable to take those actions himself after motor neurone disease had robbed him of the ability to operate his iPad or hold a phone. Having already suffered so much as a result of his illness, Geoff and his family faced further suffering as a result of UK law—our law. It was Ann's arrest that prompted Geoff to come here to speak to parliamentarians and explain his choice in his own words.

Ann was never prosecuted, but that did not mean that she did not suffer. Director of Public Prosecutions guidelines give some indication of when it is likely that someone will be prosecuted, but that is not enough. While the law imposes a blanket ban, there seems to be an acknowledgement that it will be broken, and even encouragement to break it, as an untidy compromise. That is not good enough. It did not stop Ann, Geoff and their family from going through a horrendous ordeal with the police during the final weeks of Geoff's life.

Allowing assisted dying would permit terminally ill people to leave this world in the way they have decided to, without the additional pain of knowing that they risk criminalising their loved ones for assisting them in the ultimate act of compassion and love. Last week, Lesley told me that knowing he would have some control over the end of his life was like a weight lifted off her brother's shoulders. In his open letter to MPs, Geoff described it in the same way, yet for Ann and Geoff, that relief was cruelly marred by anguish and uncertainty over the future legal consequences for Ann. It is clear that our law on assisted dying is broken, and we must be allowed to re-examine it.

6.1 pm

Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I am pleased that we have the opportunity to debate the issue of assisted dying, and I am grateful to every single one of the people who signed the petition—it is a healthy part of our democracy. We need to recognise that public feeling on this issue is strong, and people want us in Parliament to consider it. It would be wrong to shut down debate or pack it up as too difficult. We cannot ignore this issue, and we cannot simply look away.

When terminally ill people have taken their cases before the courts, as in the case of Shropshire resident Noel Conway, the courts have repeatedly affirmed that assisted dying is a matter for Parliament. We cannot shirk that responsibility. As we have heard today, assisted dying is happening, whether that is the DPP exercising discretion after the event, a compassionate doctor giving a little more morphine than he perhaps should, or people travelling to Dignitas. It is time for reform, and for legal clarity on this vital issue.

As a member of the Health Committee, I very much hope that we have the opportunity to hold an inquiry into the issue of assisted dying. There must, in any event, be a full inquiry, and I beg the Minister to listen to that plea and for legislative time to be made available,

because our role as legislators is to find a solution to this—to allow the terminally ill the right to determine the manner of their own death, as well as providing the necessary safeguards for the vulnerable and, as many people have said, improving palliative care for all those at the end of life. It is not for Parliament to deny someone at the end of life the option of a peaceful death. As parliamentarians, we all want to improve the lives of our constituents, and as we have heard today, the prospect of a good and peaceful death is something that improves the lives of those facing a terminal illness. The debate needs to be about giving people that option, even if most terminally ill people never take it up. That peace of mind helps them to face death.

I deeply respect the religious views of others on all subjects, and it is their right to express their views and live them out. However, in a liberal democracy, the religious views of some do not restrict the rights and freedom of others, and so it is with this issue. When we debated assisted dying in Parliament in 2015, it was done with great respect for differing views, and it has been disappointing to see that polarisation is creeping into this debate. Instead of debating the arguments, we have seen attacks on campaign groups and a determination to conflate the tragedy of suicide with the right of the terminally ill to decide the manner of their death. We must choose our words with care and have the humility to understand that those who disagree with us are not motivated by malign intent, or are somehow less virtuous.

I want to end with the voice of my constituent Sarah. She said:

"My beloved husband Steve was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2011. What a day that was. It was like a tsunami had hit us. Steve was so brave—a true warrior—but MND is not a fight that can be won. To watch the man I loved, the father to my three children, lose every single scrap of dignity for so long was completely heartbreaking. In truth I was never ready to say goodbye to him, but watching him suffer in that way was so cruel. Steve deserved the right to choose, the right to say when enough is enough."

Who are we to deny Steve and others like him that freedom and that choice?

6.5 pm

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): I rise to speak on behalf of my constituent David Denison. Mr Denison is a resident of Southsea and one of 264 people from my constituency to have signed this important petition. Six months ago, Mr Denison went to his GP with a persistent cough. Following some tests, he was eventually diagnosed with an aggressive form of pancreatic cancer. He has been given just six months to live. He was offered a Whipple procedure, which involves removing some of the pancreas, some of the small intestine, the gall bladder and the bile duct. It is complex, invasive and would provide only a very slight improvement to his overall prognosis. At 77, he understandably does not want to endure that. Having discussed it with his family, he will instead accept his prognosis and will live out the rest of his life as comfortably as possible.

Of course, Mr Denison does not want to die, but he knows he is dying and he wants control. He has made a practical assessment of his options, but he knows that his decline will sadly be steep between now and his passing. He will experience great pain, nausea, anxiety, agitation and even confusion. He will also likely experience

[Stephen Morgan]

urinary and bowel problems. There will be little that his family or doctors can do but manage his pain. Having discussed it with his partner and sons, Mr Denison is clear that he would prefer to end his life on his own terms, yet the law prohibits him from doing so. In fact, he explains that in some cases people feel it is taboo to discuss the concept because they do not want to upset their families or appear ungrateful for the medical care they have been offered and are receiving.

I completely understand the sensitivity of this topic, but it is a matter of conscience. With 300 dying people ending their own lives every year, and almost half of people saying they would break the law and risk prison to help a loved one, burying our heads in the sand is no longer an option. Mr Denison would like legislation to allow for assisted dying for terminally ill, mentally competent adults like him. He has been working with the charity Dignity in Dying to raise awareness and restore the choice and control that ugly terminal diseases take from us. That is something that the majority of adults and GPs now support.

I pay tribute to Mr Denison for his openness and frankness about such a difficult issue. I wish him and his family the very best. It is time for a national conversation about this sensitive issue—one that respects the sanctity of life and, importantly, the choices of those who are living it.

6.8 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Those who favour assisted dying will get their wish: there will be a debate on the Floor of the House of Commons, and if there is one more debate, there will be others. They will go on through the years, and the majorities against assisted dying will get smaller and smaller, because of course we are up against it. Overwhelmingly, the economics are against us—[*Interruption.*] It is about economics. We have a vast, ever-growing population of people who are very frail and very elderly, who are a burden on society and know it. Therefore, I predict that, sooner or later, the House of Commons will debate this issue and, sadly, pass a law as so many other countries have done.

This is not a debate about assisted dying. We all want to help people to die peacefully and painlessly. It is a debate about assisted suicide—helping people to kill themselves.

Lucy Allan: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Steve McCabe (in the Chair): I would rather the right hon. Gentleman did not, actually.

Lucy Allan: My right hon. Friend says that this debate is about suicide, but I wonder whether he has a family member, as I have, who took their own life through suicide, and whether he understands the difference between that and what we are talking about today?

Sir Edward Leigh: I have not had a family member do that, but we have all encountered friends and relatives who have been under intolerable pressure. Hon. Members have cited examples, and I can do so too.

I simply take a very pro-life point of view. It is not from my religious conviction or my belief that everybody is beautiful and wonderful, however small, however tiny in the womb, however old or frail, how much of a burden they are, whether they are a convicted murder or whether they are one of our military enemies. I take a pro-life view, and I think so much of the misery in the world in the last 100 years has been because people are casual about taking life. Many of the arguments that we hear in favour of assisted dying are based on very appalling, horrible and extreme cases. They are similar arguments to what we heard when we had the initial debates on abortion, with foetal abnormality, rape and all the other things. Then we had abortion on demand, and now we are going to get death on demand. That is what it is all about. All the pressure, particularly on the frail and vulnerable, will be about that.

I want to make a theological point. A friend of mine died in the first months of covid. He died in agony. He died in a part of the country where he was sent out of hospital because the medical profession was panicking. He was not given adequate palliative care and he died in agony. It was appalling. We are all agreed that we are still not doing enough about palliative care. We have to do much more. We have to tell everybody that they have the right to go into a hospice—a right that so many people are not given—and receive the full benefit of modern medical technology to die peacefully and painlessly. For the overwhelming majority of people, if they are given palliative care, it is an option they can enjoy.

I actually watched another friend of mine die. He was my best friend and former colleague in this House. He was dying of terminal cancer; I was sitting beside him and I could see the morphine pumping through his wrists. He died peacefully and painlessly, but I have no doubt that it was the morphine that killed him. Theologically, morally and legally, there is nothing against a doctor helping me to die by pumping morphine into me, even if that is the immediate cause of my death. [*Interruption.*] I can see people shaking their heads, but I have actually seen it happen. Is there anyone in this room who would blame a doctor who helped someone to die if they were in agony? The doctor was not trying to kill them—they were trying to ease the pain. And in easing the pain by delivering that amount of morphine, that might have hastened their demise.

Let us be realistic about it. Let us try to take a pro-life view, and let us remember—

Steve McCabe (in the Chair): Order. I call Wera Hobhouse.

6.12 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I want to thank the tireless campaigners, especially Pauline Carroll from our local Bath branch of Dignity in Dying, who has taken me on a journey over the past five years. Due to her courageous campaigning—she never let go—I gradually changed my mind over this difficult and complex issue, and Pauline is in the Public Gallery today.

The Government have amended the Health and Care Act 2022 so as to fully fund palliative and hospice services in the future. That is very welcome, but it is not enough. Our current law needs to change. One approach should not exclude the other. It is disappointing that no

time was given to debate Baroness Meacher's Bill and that Conservative peers were whipped on 16 March to vote against Lord Forsyth's proposed assisted dying amendment to the Health and Care Act. It is time to apply honesty and justice to the debate. Constituents of mine have campaigned for years for a safeguarded assisting dying law for mentally competent, terminally ill adults with a six-month prognosis. I do not accept that this is the thin end of a wedge.

Whatever might otherwise be heard, it is a fact that palliative medicine and care has its limitations, even at its most excellent. Figures from the Office of Health Economics in 2019 show that every year, 6,400 terminally ill patients in hospices have horrendous deaths. One of my constituents wrote to me:

"I watched my mother being tortured to death with care, she was in extreme pain and was given the maximum level of pain relief. This only works for a time and between doses she was in agony."

Those who suggest that palliative care can manage pain are ignoring what happens. In too many cases, pain cannot be alleviated. We should not hide that truth.

It was disappointing to learn in 2021, in a piece of research on end-of-life preferences by my local hospice, that assisted dying was not to be included. The reason given was that it is not legal. We cannot leave out the most pressing topic for end-of-life preference. Some people wish for assisted dying. Discounting it as a patient's preference from the start is ideologically blinded and suggests that blanket opposition to assisted dying is supported by the hospice movement, for which I otherwise have the greatest respect.

In a BMA survey, 4,500 doctors voted in support of assisted dying legislation, whereby they could assist patients who can voluntarily take life-ending prescriptions under very clear and defined legislation. Recent evidence from a Royal College of General Practitioners survey shows that opposition to such legislation has fallen from 77% to 46%. Here in Parliament, we are falling very far behind public and medical opinion. We continue to force people to suffer a protracted death against their wishes, to spend £10,000 to go to Dignitas at a rate of one a week, or to add to the horrific new suicide statistics from the ONS.

Some terminally ill people will not choose palliative care but will opt for the choice of a safeguarded, doctor-assisted death, and that should be their right. I have gone on a journey to believing truly that prolonging an agonising life is not what I should stand for, and I speak as a Christian. Instead, we should allow for a compassionate death when that is what the dying person wishes for.

6.16 pm

Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) on leading today's debate and on her carefully considered speech. I also thank the 262 people of Darlington who signed this petition. In addition to those signatories, I have also received correspondence from constituents with views from both sides of this debate.

I am not in favour of assisted dying. At the age of 14, I witnessed my own father die at home, suffering from cancer. Although it would be simple to form the view

that it would have been "better" or "easier" for him to have been able to choose his time of passing, it never once entered our family's minds that that should be done while medication could eliminate the pain he was suffering.

As a high street solicitor handling the affairs of many clients who were sick, infirm or suffering from terminal disease, I regularly attended upon those who were contemplating the end of their lives and often took instructions in a nursing home or at a hospital bedside. This was a deeply personal and private role in speaking to people about the most intimate of family matters. This role also often allowed me observation of those closest to them. Although the overwhelming majority of families I met in such circumstances had their loved one's comfort and wellbeing at heart, I have seen the most rapacious of family members seeking to manipulate. I fear that even with all the safeguards possible, such individuals could exercise the most sinister of coercion were we to permit assisted dying.

The death of my father could have led me to change my view about assisted dying, but it actually cemented a firmly held belief in the choice of the individual to die at home and of the importance of the hospice movement in ensuring that such deaths are good deaths. Hospice UK has estimated that since the beginning of the pandemic, more than 100,000 people have died at home without receiving the care and support they needed.

I declare my interest as a trustee of a hospice and as the co-chairman of the APPG on hospice and end-of-life care. When discussing matters relating to death, it is important that we listen to those in the hospice sector and understand that one in four people do not receive the appropriate palliative care.

With an ageing and growing population, we know that more people will die at home. Hopefully, they will die in their own bed, surrounded by their loved ones, just as we would all want. However, in order to ensure that such good deaths happen, as a society we must commit to ensuring that our hospice sector is properly funded and resourced.

The Government rightly provided massive support to our hospices during covid. I see my right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock) here, and I thank him for his engagement and the support he provided to our hospice movement during covid. I believe that now is the time to ensure that the postcode lottery of hospice and palliative care is ended, with a long-term plan to support our hospices.

I fear that if assisted dying is legalised, terminally ill people may feel pressured into ending their lives. I do not believe that we should place anyone in that position. Such a change in the law would have a profound impact on the relationship of terminally ill patients with their doctors. While I have every sympathy with those who, for the best of intentions, seek this change, I do not support a change in the law.

6.20 pm

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab): It is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for leading this debate and for the emotion she put into her speech.

[Rachel Hopkins]

The blanket ban on assisted dying has resulted in unacceptable failings in patient safety. As we have heard, dying people are forced to matters into their own hands without sufficient protection or support for them, their families or the clinicians who care for them. Through the APPG on choice at the end of life, of which I am a member, I have heard from families who have seen family members have a difficult and undignified death not of their choosing. As a humanist, I believe that people are fundamentally good, so I struggle to accept some of the caricatures of people being cynical with their loved ones at the end of life.

Assisted dying reform is a matter of freedom of choice at the end of life. Assisted dying laws can be introduced with robust safeguards. The current system is broken. Research from the Assisted Dying Coalition found that more than one person per week is forced to end their life abroad. This demonstrates an inbuilt inequality in the current system, as only those who can afford the high costs are able to go abroad to do so. If someone is rich, they have a small amount of choice, but if someone is poor and of limited means, they have no choice.

Looking at examples of legislation abroad, we see that all six states in Australia have legalised assisted dying, joining an ever-expanding list of states in the USA, New Zealand, Canada and many countries in Europe that give their dying citizens choice. I want to make one thing very clear: there is no credible evidence from jurisdictions that have legalised assisted dying that vulnerable people will be pressured to end their life.

As has been said, this debate is not about choosing between assisted dying and palliative care. International evidence shows that assisted dying does not harm access to palliative care. A report by Palliative Care Australia concluded that there is no evidence to suggest that the palliative care sectors were adversely impacted by the introduction of the legislation. If anything, in jurisdictions where assisted dying is available, the palliative care sector has further advanced. Evidence shows that the current law is not only cruel but dangerous, as there is little oversight of death by suicide linked to terminal illness or Dignitas deaths, and no formal monitoring. We need transparency and upfront safeguards in legislation, not a continuation of lonely, secretive deaths, with oversight occurring only afterwards.

We have heard how medical opinion supports assisted dying. The British Medical Association decided in 2021 to end its opposition to assisted dying, following a survey of its members. The BMA survey found that half of all doctors personally support legalising a right to die for those who are incurably suffering or are terminally ill.

Thanks to increasing public awareness, the public mood is changing. The petition to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill and mentally competent adults gained more than 100,000 signatures, 120 or so from constituents in Luton South. Public support for assisted dying is unwavering, regardless of age, class, gender or political persuasion.

Whether through an inquiry, a commitment to parliamentary time from Government, or the Government simply recognising that the current law in England and Wales fails dying people and their families, the UK needs to explore whether current laws are fit for purpose.

The public need action from the Government and from us, their representatives. It is my opinion that the status quo is failing the public. This is not about either/or. It is about different pathways at the end of life and the right to have a choice.

6.24 pm

Robin Millar (Aberconwy) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under you, Mr McCabe. I have been contacted by many constituents eager for me to engage on this matter, but I make my contribution also as someone who has experienced the loss of a loved one through suicide and as someone who has witnessed at first hand his mother wrestle with a chronic degenerative disease, Parkinson's, which ultimately claimed her life.

It seems to me that already in this debate clear positions are emerging. A summary, which I offer humbly for colleagues to consider, is the saying, "We shape the law and the law shapes us", because on one side I hear arguments for the former, and on the other for the latter. On one side, I hear story after moving story of suffering—not least from the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), whom I thank for introducing the debate—and on the other, I hear concern for the impact that these laws would have on others.

I want to start by just thinking briefly about the importance of language, because today's debate is looking at the e-petition relating to "assisted dying", but that is an undefined term, without clear meaning. It does have the attraction of a blank canvas, in that we can ascribe to it whatever meaning we may desire, but it should also give us cause for caution. The proactive ending of one's own life, by consent or otherwise, in law is suicide—in this case, presumably, by the self-administration of lethal drugs. The House of Commons Library's own briefing note adopts the term "assisted suicide" in order to reflect the law. Therefore, another title for this debate, which would reflect where we actually start from, might have been, "Debate on e-petition relating to assisted suicide". I think that this is an important place to start—not to cause offence or distress and not for any obstacle that it may present, but simply because it is where we are. We cannot start in some place yet to be defined, where some may wish us to be one day.

There are many terminally ill people—those without name and number, as my hon. Friend the Member for Deizes (Danny Kruger) said—who want to live and who need to know that society wants them to live. They want and need to feel valued. They need to feel safe. A move towards an assisted suicide society risks introducing an obligation on an individual who is terminally ill to seek or consider an assisted death through lethal drugs, and suggests that it may even be their moral duty to do so. We cannot simply dismiss that unintended consequence. Assisted suicide legislation has the potential to create exactly that powerful counter-narrative of a duty to society or family and loved ones to remove the inconvenience, the burden and the cost. That is not a message I believe we should send or have bound into the fabric of our society through law; nor is it a duty that should bind those in the caring profession, which is driven by the preservation of life.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock) that the 2020 survey of BMA members that he referred to showed in fact that the majority of those licensed to practise and closest to

terminally ill and dying patients—those in palliative care, geriatric medicine and oncology, and GPs—do not support legalisation. As it stands, the best that can be argued is that the BMA's position is one of neutrality.

It is worth mentioning, in the context of other countries—for example, Belgium and the Netherlands have been mentioned—that there was in fact no growth in services per 100,000 of population in Holland from 2012 to 2019. That must be a concern for all. It is also important to note the context, and the context must include reference to the fact that Holland has approved plans—

Steve McCabe (in the Chair): Order. I call Joanna Cherry. [*Interruption.*] Sorry, I mean Christine Jardine. My sincere apologies—I will get these glasses fixed. I call Christine Jardine—my apologies.

6.29 pm

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Accepted, Mr McCabe. It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship—although Joanna may have something else to say about it.

In today's debate, one thing has jumped out at me: the remark from the right hon. Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock), who said: "What would you do?" The truth of the matter is that I do not know what I would do in this situation. I know that I do not know what I would do because I have sat with relatives—I sat with my mother, who struggled to breathe but struggled to keep going. I do not know what, in that situation, she would have wanted, because she did not have the choice. That is where I think the crux of this argument is. This is not about what any of us want or might want, or the kind of death that we would like. It is about allowing that choice for other people—allowing them to have a say over their final hours or days. That is the message in the petition, which 273 of my constituents have signed, and many more have written to me. They want Parliament to take the time to listen, debate and lead a national discussion on a topic that affects us all. In Scotland, my colleague Liam McArthur is bringing a Bill to Parliament there. As has been mentioned, it is not the first time the issue has come to the Scottish Parliament. I hope he will be successful—not because I want everyone to choose an assisted death, but because I want everyone to have the choice.

It is not an either/or on palliative care. We need better palliative care as well. People should be able to choose between better palliative care or an assisted death. We have seen across the world what has happened. There is no rush to change. There are 11 states in the United States where terminally ill patients have the right to choose. I am not aware that any of the six Australian states or any parts of Canada, New Zealand and Spain—other countries that have taken this difficult choice—saying publicly that they regret it. I may be wrong, but I am not aware of any great movement to reverse the decision.

On the point of elderly people feeling pressured to accept an assisted death for the sake of their family, life is precious and I believe it is at its most precious when we know we are about to lose it. The thought that anyone would say, "Well, I have to do this because my family wants it" is astonishing. I do not believe for a minute that that is what this debate is about. It is about those people who are faced with death being able to choose. I know that I would like to die at the point

where I am still able to walk along the beach with the dog and enjoy a laugh with my friends and family—to end my days with a smile on my face and know they will have happy memories of my last few moments. I also know that as the law stands, I will never have that choice. I will never be able to have the death that I choose, and that is why this is the moment where we need to find compassion and listen to what the public want.

6.32 pm

Jill Mortimer (Hartlepool) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I have heard from lots of sides and have walked a tightrope on this issue for quite a long time. One thing I would like to say is that in this country, there is a choice—a right to die—for some people: those who decide to have treatment withdrawn, but they die horribly. They suffocate, starve or die of dehydration, but doctors are allowed to withdraw that care, so they are allowed passively to intervene. Is it such a great step to allow people in that position to have drugs—modern medicine—that allow them to slip away?

We have heard my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson) talk about coercive abuse from relatives. That could already exist because of DNR. How many times are relatives sitting round hospital beds deciding whether to put a DNR order on their relative? It does not stop us having it because it is the right thing to do. People have a choice to say, "If I go, don't bring me back." Even if modern medicine could bring them back and extend their life for many weeks, we do not do that to them. All we have heard in this room today is the need for more debate. We need to talk about this issue properly and have a proper vote. We need to ensure that if someone has a right to life, they should have the right to a dignified life.

6.34 pm

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Mr McCabe, you and many of the Members in this room will know Frank Field. We are debating today whether to have a debate, and there was a debate in the House of Lords on 22 October, at which Baroness Meacher spoke for Frank Field, who could not be there because he is in a hospice. In that debate, he said:

"I changed my mind on assisted dying when an MP friend was dying of cancer and wanted to die early before the full horror effects set in, but was denied this opportunity."

People we all know are changing their mind in the light of real circumstance. Frank Field went on to say:

"It is thought...that people will be pressurised into ending their lives. The number of assisted deaths in the US and Australia remains very low—under 1%—and a former Supreme Court judge in Victoria has concluded about pressure from relatives that 'it just hasn't been an issue'."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 22 October 2021; Vol. 815, c. 394-395.]

So there are legitimate fears, but they have not been borne out empirically.

A senior consultant surgeon who has served in Swansea for 30 years wrote to me and said:

"I know that terminal care services here are inadequate", which is of course something we need to change. The surgeon went on to say:

"Even in the best areas, several conditions cannot be successfully managed. In all other areas of healthcare, the patient's wishes are paramount. So it should be here. The new proposals are modest

[Geraint Davies]

and in line with current national survey reports. Think for a moment of what your personal view might be if you were diagnosed with a condition like motor neurone disease.”

The question is whether the state should be allowed to force people into a condition of escalating physical and mental trauma, and of debilitation and pain, as with motor neurone disease. Should it have that right? I do not think the state should have that right because it is worried about the slippery-slope effect, which has not been borne out empirically in Australia and the United States.

Palliative care must be an option and we need to invest more in it. People may have palliative care and then turn to assisted suicide in a planned way—if they have the money to do so—without being forced by the current system to die prematurely. The truth is that people should not be forced against their will, and against the will of the families who look on in sadness and who want to move forward in the light of what is being said, into growing trauma and indignity. At the minimum, we need to have a proper debate on this issue. My position is clear: there should be safeguards, constraints and adequate palliative care but, ultimately, if somebody is dying in an appalling, debilitating and chronic way that cannot be reversed and if we can avoid that, we have a duty to do so.

6.37 pm

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for opening the debate in the way that she did. I understand how difficult this issue is, and I ought to say that I am a member of the APPG for dying well and that I chair the APPG on brain tumours, although I speak for myself this afternoon. I have sat at the bedside of people as they have neared the end of their lives, and I have met many constituents who mourn the loss of loved ones and who are distressed by the manner in which they died. I am really grateful to all those who have taken time to speak to me.

My own personal story is that my mum and dad travelled up to London to watch a parliamentary debate—I think it was in 2016—on assisted dying. At that time, my mum had been given a terminal diagnosis. She lived on after the debate, and my parents were absolutely opposed to assisted dying at the time. She suffered quite horribly at times, and she had fantastic support from the hospice to help her. My dad went through all of that journey, sometimes providing all the care she needed, but at no time—even since my mum passed away—has he changed his view about this issue, and I agree with him.

We must do something to change the status quo, but if the answer is to introduce assisted dying, as the petition proposes, it is my belief that this would mean the Government and the NHS admitting failure in the way we care for, support and treat people at the end of their life. The tragedy that this debate has highlighted once again is that, despite making tremendous efforts and improvements in end-of-life care, we have consistently failed to provide the best and most appropriate end-of-life care at the right time and in the right place.

Today my constituents do not have the right or opportunity to choose the best palliative care, because it just is not available to them. The sad truth is that much

of the suffering that has been described this afternoon could have been managed and eased—much of it, not all—with higher standards of end-of-life care. That must be much further up the agenda. The workforce challenge in health and social care must be addressed and advances in pain control must be available to everyone who needs it. On that, I believe there is a consensus in this room.

I fully accept that if excellent palliative were readily available, it would not bring an end to suffering for everyone. I suspect that many of those who signed the petition we are considering today would have had a very different experience in the loss of their loved ones had the palliative care that we have all described been available. I suspect that many signed the petition because they lack confidence in the current availability and quality of end-of-life care.

We have made significant improvements in the way we care for those at the end of their life. I have seen the tremendous care and expertise of those in the hospice movement, and of the care staff and others such as community nurses and organisations such as Macmillan. However, despite that knowledge, we do not make palliative care available wherever and whenever it is needed. Even today there will be people—patients—in need of palliative care in an acute hospital setting, rather than at home or in a hospice. It is right that we have a grown-up conversation about death, not least because we plan end-of-life care far too late in many cases, which means that care treatment and support is not available and not in place when it is needed. I support the call for a proper parliamentary debate in the Chamber, but in the meantime the Government must get on and improve the palliative care available for all.

6.42 pm

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Alba): I thank my 267 constituents who reached out to me and signed the petition, and also the many other constituents who contacted me with other views. The hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) mentioned that assisted dying is a devolved matter, but I hope to be able to represent my constituents who have taken an interest in this debate, which is why I agreed to speak. I also want to pay tribute to Margo MacDonald, who was very much the face of this debate in Scotland for many years, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) on her sensitive introduction.

This is a deeply personal situation for me. It is something that I have been immersed in in my professional career. I have been present at many, many deaths, and each of them has been unique and different and personal. Some of them have been very peaceful, some have been different or less successful, and some have been very distressing. To answer the point that the right hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) made about being pro-life, I say that being pro-life does not necessarily help us avoid the ultimate endeavour of death. We cannot sidestep death.

The most distressing case that I can recollect was someone who was very pro-life—a young man of 19 who did not want to die. His lungs were full of disease and he pleaded with me to find a way to help him breathe so that he could continue to live. Having a good death is not always possible, but I add my voice to the concerns

around palliative care and funding. If we want to provide an effective and efficient service, supporting good quality palliative care is essential.

I want to pick up on other points, particularly around capacity and the presence of coercion, which can exist in many different ways. It is not just family members who want to get their hands on the assets of parents, although that is a realistic fact, unfortunately; it is also the coercive effect of pain. Pain can push people to make decisions that they otherwise would not make, and if they are not getting good-quality palliative care, they might not have had access to the correct pain pathway to manage their symptoms.

On a purely personal level, this is a conversation that we have had in my household. I am steadfastly ambivalent about the issue, despite all my experience, because I listen to points made on both sides of the argument and think, “Yeah, great point—great point.” To me, that illustrates the need for a mature and honest discussion, and a deep consideration of the many challenges that exist in this debate. That is not about being on one side or the other; this is a complex, deeply difficult issue. We must address every single point that has been raised, including safeguarding—which is a real concern of mine and something that I feel very strongly about—and not just through this lens, but through the lens of the rights of women and girls. If we want to deliver something whereby choice is available, we must be clear whose choice it is.

6.46 pm

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I, too, have had many emails from my constituents, all of which I have read carefully. I fully respect the strong feelings on both sides of this issue, and this has been a respectful debate today in the main.

One of my constituents, an ex-police officer, writes:

“I have an elderly mother who sometimes worries about being a burden and once said it would be better if she died and I didn’t have to look after her...As an ex-police officer I have dealt with people who have been manipulated into doing completely awful things...I do not think you can legislate against the very real possibility of some people being manipulated into that death is their only option.”

She is not alone in that view. I understand from polling that twice as many people feel concerned about people being pressured to end their own life so as not to be a burden as are not concerned about it.

I do not think, amazingly, that we have had reference so far in today’s debate to the fact that under the Health and Care Act 2022, for the first time ever, palliative care will be a core service in the NHS. We have only just done that, and everyone here welcomes it, whatever their view. We should perhaps just give that a little time to bed in and see what it actually means.

My experience is that my dear mother-in-law died at the end of March. I was very close to her, and I thought the provision of morphine was slow and it was difficult to get hold of. I drove to a number of GPs at weekends to get the paperwork signed for her. We always seemed to be chasing the tail a little bit. If we could have been ahead of the curve and got it more easily—perhaps some people do not have families that are as engaged to help them—that would have been better. Perhaps that is something we can do that we would all be supportive of.

Our hospices do an amazing job. We have Keech Cottage Hospice, which the hon. Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins) will also have supported, and my children have volunteered at local hospices. Hospices are struggling and we need to support them properly, as they do absolutely amazing work. I do not think there is anyone here who would disagree with Dame Cicely Saunders, who really founded the modern hospice movement and said:

“You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.”

I think probably all of us could unite around that quotation.

I worry about disabled people. My mother was in a wheelchair her whole life, and I understand their vulnerabilities. Baroness Campbell in the other place has said:

“I am fearful that any change to the current law prohibiting assisted suicide may adversely affect how I, other disabled friends and the wider community of disabled people are treated in the future”.

Whatever our views on this, we need to respect the very real worries of disabled people, who think somehow that they will matter less.

I will provide a few facts on the CPS. I understand the horror of being prosecuted. I do not minimise that at all, but I looked at the figures on the CPS website this morning. Of the 174 cases between April 2009 and this year, 150 were not proceeded with, 33 were withdrawn, four were successfully prosecuted and eight were referred for prosecution for homicide or another serious crime. I do not know the details of the last eight, but it might be worth looking at that further with the CPS.

I want to make two brief final points. We have not talked a lot about mental health today, but there is no health without mental health. Are we going to get a psychiatrist to certify whether people are medically competent to do this? That is a pretty awful job to ask a psychiatrist to do, as was raised with me at the weekend, so we need to think about the pressures we are putting on clinicians. However, there is probably some progress we could make that we would all agree on.

6.50 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I support a change in the law—a change that will impact only a few of those who are terminally ill. It is not normalising assisted dying: it is giving choice and some element of control to those of sound mind. Many terminally ill people will not make that choice, but I and 200 of my constituents who signed the petition support a law change with a full set of safeguards. On the issue of palliative care or assisted dying, a useful statistic is that 86% of people in California and 82% of people in Victoria who had assisted deaths—two jurisdictions that have changed their law—were already enrolled in hospice and palliative care.

As many speakers have said, some people with terminal illnesses across the UK are currently being forced to make awful decisions about the end of their life—decisions that also have an impact on their loved ones. Some people may think our current, outdated laws stop those appalling issues from arising, but they do not. People

[*Ruth Cadbury*]

with funds are forced to travel to Switzerland, often before they would need to if they did not have to travel. Those people often travel alone, as they risk their loved ones being arrested. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) described how too many people are not only making the choice to die alone, but have to plan their death alone, in secret. His speech brought home to me the fact that those people and their loved ones could not say goodbye to each other. The ban on assisted dying is causing those traumas. This is an issue of personal choice, and we as legislators must ensure that the law reflects the need for that choice.

To provide some history about legislation, the ban on abortions until the 1960s did not stop abortions; it simply banned safe abortions. That ban sent women to the trusted aunt, the neighbour, or the doctor running a backstreet clinic—too often in unsafe and dangerous conditions, too often while terrified or alone. Similar feelings have been expressed today. We cannot prevent assisted dying from happening, but we can condemn decisions and actions to take place in darkness, alone; to involve journeys abroad while in pain; or to risk criminalising loving family members or friends. We place those issues out of mind and pretend they do not happen here, but they do.

Only by reforming the law and introducing safeguards to address the concerns that hon. Members have raised can we address this situation, which is about personal freedom and morality. Only by doing so can we step out of the darkness, and only Parliament can make that change. The significant majority of British people support a change in the law on assisted dying. Our history of law change on issues of personal conscience or moral issues shows that Parliament is too often behind the curve of public opinion. The laws on divorce, on blasphemy and obscenity, and on homosexuality and same-sex marriage are just some of the examples that occur to me. We are beholden to the people to respond to that change in public opinion, and change the law to give people who are terminally ill a choice about whether they end their life—if they want that choice—and control over when, where and how they do so. Seven years ago, I voted to change that law. I hope we get another opportunity to do so before too long, but after thorough consideration, including that of the Health and Social Care Committee.

6.54 pm

Laura Trott (Sevenoaks) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I thank the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for introducing today's debate on this most difficult of topics. Both sides of the debate have been informed, compassionate and courageous.

With the permission of her friends and fellow campaigners, I want to share the story of my constituent, Dawn Voice-Cooper, who died in November last year after travelling to Switzerland. She came to see me in a surgery before she died, and it was one of those surgeries, which all Members in this room will have had, that will stay with me forever. Dawn suffered from a long-term, degenerative and incurable medical condition. By her mid-30s it was affecting all her joints, including her

neck and spine. After several years of anti-inflammatory medication, she was left suffering with internal damage as well as battling with balance problems.

Over the years, Dawn's quality of life steadily declined. She told me of the increasing pain that she was under and the challenges she faced with reduced mobility. She was losing the feeling in, and the use of, her left arm. Due to increased brain haemorrhaging, she was finding it increasingly difficult to find the words when writing and speaking. She lost her autonomy and she was worried about her ability to manage areas of her life. She worried about what the future held: loss of independence, more pain, less mobility, and worsening health. Due to that outlook, Dawn decided that when the time was right, she wanted to end her life with dignity at a centre in Switzerland. Sadly, in November last year, that day arrived.

As with other cases we have heard about, that day was earlier than would have been the case otherwise because Dawn knew that she needed to have full competence in order to travel. Having saved the money, she travelled to lifecircle clinic with friends and fellow campaigners. She spent her final moments listening to her favourite music and enjoying a glass of champagne. Her bed had been positioned in front of the window so she could look out at the trees.

Let us be clear: Dawn had that choice because she had money. Other people do not. I am immensely proud that the UK is a fair and compassionate society, but we must now uphold those values. As overseas evidence continues to grow, our own reasons not to legislate in some form are becoming less and less convincing. To use Dawn's own words,

"There is no escaping death. And as things are in the UK at the moment; there is no escaping pain, lack of dignity and total deterioration in life."

We have heard many moving stories today. I encourage the Minister to take forward some of this work, because there may be some areas that all of us can agree on. We need an informed conclusion on this issue. We need to debate it. It is time.

6.57 pm

Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott) and to speak in the debate. The opening speech from the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) was extremely sensitive. I speak not on behalf of the all-party parliamentary humanist group, of which I am a secretary—I draw the House's attention to that—although I note that its position is not only to support this motion, but to extend assisted dying legislation to those who are incurably and intolerably suffering. I put that out there for further discussion, perhaps at a later date. I also speak, not on behalf of the 189 of my constituents who signed the petition, but in sympathy with them, and I have also had many people write to me from the other side.

I spoke in the debate on 23 January 2020, which was secured by the hon. Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine), in one of my first contributions in this place. I still support a Government-backed inquiry, but perhaps we need to be moving a bit quicker, because it was two and a half years ago when we had that

debate. This House should always proceed carefully, but we should also be careful not to get too far away from the public.

In time, I believe a change in the law along the lines as the one proposed in this debate will come to be seen as natural as previous changes of law on other moral topics, whether it is universal suffrage, gay sex or equal marriage. Those things are now things we accept and take for granted in this place and this country; in due course we will come to think of assisted dying in the same way. There will be some who are never reconciled to it, but I believe that is where the country is headed. I note, as I did in that debate two and half years ago, that the existing law is profoundly unsatisfactory for those dying, their families, the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions alike.

This is fundamentally about bodily autonomy, and about the pain and suffering that my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer)—who was not even here two and a half years ago—drew to our attention. It is not as rare as people think. It is not unique. We hear about those cases because people are brave and they talk about them, but there are lots of people who have painful and unpleasant deaths. There is still an *omertà* about death in this country. The more we talk about it, the more we will open up and move forward as a society. The reality is that our constituents are having to go abroad. There is more than one person per week going to Switzerland, often without their relatives, for the reasons we have heard. There is an inequity there based on the cost of going to Switzerland—not everybody can go—and it is earlier than they would like. We need to move forward urgently on this, in line with the shifts in professional medical opinion that we have also heard about.

Turning to arguments about faith, which we have not heard too explicitly today, I do respect the sincerity of people who make faith-based arguments here. However, many of us do not have faith. Increasingly, that is the case for many of our constituents. We can see that in the census. Many people who do have faith, such as the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), do not necessarily feel the same way.

As I say, do as you wish by yourself and your God, and vote accordingly, but recognise that those of us in the opposite position are motivated also by the deepest humanity and love. I heard that point most profoundly from the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield). I heard his speech three years ago, before I was a Member in this place. It is still clearly as painful an issue for him today as it was then. That goes to show that we can do so much good by addressing it.

Finally, people going through this issue now do not have the luxury of time. We have taken too much time already. The public interest in this topic in both senses of the word is clearly obvious. The interest in this House is obvious. It is time to look at what more we can do. We must dedicate time in the House to actually debating what a new law could and would do, and at some point—very soon—we should have a vote on it.

7 pm

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con): In my family, there is a history of cancer, heart attacks, multiple sclerosis, strokes and a whole host of other genetic nasties

that I would prefer not to dwell on. It makes a terminal diagnosis a pretty good bet. There is one thing I do not understand: if I were to get ahead of myself now, I could plan the good death that I might want, but this House tells me I cannot wait until the terminal diagnosis to do what I would hope is the right thing. It tells me that I must not do that. I ask myself, who do we think we are to make that personal choice a matter for Parliament? I do not want to make assisted dying compulsory, but I do want to make it a choice. So I ask: who do we think we are?

When I voted seven years ago for assisted dying, I thought of my own mother dying of cancer in the brilliant North London Hospice. Without picking a fight, let me tell you that I have never been more in favour of female bodily autonomy than I was when watching what she was going through. This is about autonomy. I hope I can try to address some of the arguments that have been made.

We have heard that doctors will think about the cash in the health service when they look at these choices. I humbly suggest that the GMC would have something to say about that. I would also say that we should not patronise doctors. I am married to one; it ends badly. Doctors already routinely and regularly assess coercion. They look at what is going on in the background of a patient's life. They look at what the right thing to do is, and under the piece of legislation we are being asked to think about today, they would only be doing so in cases of a terminal diagnosis with six months to live. Let us not get ahead of ourselves.

The British Medical Association has moved to a position of neutrality. There is a clear majority of the Royal College of Physicians that has moved to a position of neutrality. The Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Psychiatrists is neutral on this. There is a clear majority and a clear direction of travel. We should acknowledge that and have a debate on that issue. I very much welcome the news—it seems to be increasingly obvious—that the Health and Social Care Committee will be looking at this issue, and I strongly urge the Minister to work as closely as he can with the Committee and provide it with as much information as possible.

Finally, we have heard a lot of arguments today about standing on a slippery slope, and we do stand on a slippery slope. It is our job in this place to stand on slippery slopes. It is our job to look at what the right difficult position to take is. I say simply to the Minister: right now we are standing in the wrong place on a very tough slippery slope. We know from the polling that we have a duty to our constituents to look at this, and I hope he and the Government will facilitate that as rapidly as they possibly can.

7.4 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): That was a very good speech. I thank the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for securing this debate. I thought that her speech was excellent; it was incredibly touching and very sensitive. It was a perfect opening on this very difficult subject.

Of the public, 74% want their Member of Parliament to vote for a law on assisted dying. I did that in 2015 and I would do it again, given the chance, today. By a

[Kevin Hollinrake]

remarkable quirk of fate, in that vote in 2015, 74% of Members of Parliament voted against bringing in a law on assisted dying, which I think is entirely unsustainable. It is not holding back the tide; it is holding back a tidal wave of support for this.

We have heard so many times in recent years that we must trust the public. I absolutely agree with that, and I trust the 350 people in my constituency of Thirsk and Malton who wanted this debate. I do not agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) on this. I agree with him on many topics—he is a man of great common sense, normally—but this is not about economics. This is about the people and what the people want. I say to the very well-behaved members of the public in the Gallery that I guess that the percentage who want assisted dying is much, much higher, because this is such a sensitive subject.

Sir Edward Leigh: Will my hon. Friend allow me to intervene?

Kevin Hollinrake: I will look to the Chair—who says no; I apologise. We will talk about it afterwards.

As has been said any number of times this afternoon, this is about choice. Of course, all of us in this country are so lucky to have this free society we live in. This is about freedom of choice, but it is not about freedom of choice over anything; it is about freedom of choice about the thing we fear most in life: death.

I would say today that I do not actually fear death; I might think differently in a few years' time—that point in time is getting closer—but I will tell you what I fear, Mr McCabe. I fear a painful death. I absolutely fear a painful death. I may have options. Some of us are lucky enough that we could plan ahead and say, "Well, we'll make that trip to Zurich", or we might take the terrible path that the father of the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) had to take. People have a choice, of course, to do what they think is right and not to take that option, but instead to take the natural path. However, I think it is wrong to remove from people the choice, a choice that other countries and other places allow and that we can choose to have, as well—the ones who are lucky enough to have that choice.

There is one thing that we have probably not discussed in this debate. It is not just about the fear of dying; it is about the fear of what might happen. There is a quote from Dr Sandy Briden, who died of a form of cancer that is rare in the UK:

"Knowing I had the option of an assisted death when things get too much would allow me to live now, without the constant fear of what might happen at the end. For me, assisted dying isn't about dying; it's about living."

It is about living that last time we have, knowing we have the choice—away from that anxiety, which must be terrible for people nearing these situations—and it is certainly something that I would have wished for my mother when she passed away at the end of 2019. The palliative care was there, but still it was, for all those around her, a traumatic experience.

I do not get the slippery-slope argument. We have seen that in Oregon, which has not changed its law in 25 years, a very low percentage of people—0.7%—take this path of death through assisted dying.

However, I understand that there are really cogent arguments as to why we would not have this law, which is why I support an inquiry. I just do not see what the argument against an inquiry is. We could look at best practice around the world and decide what is best practice for the United Kingdom.

Steve McCabe (in the Chair): We have got 31 speakers into this debate. We have had to squeeze the Front Benchers a little bit to do that, so if they could confine themselves to nine or 10 minutes, the mover of the motion might just get a last word.

7.9 pm

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair today, Mr McCabe.

I start by thanking everyone for their contributions to today's debate. Members have spoken with personal sincerity and faithfully represented their constituents' views on a very emotive issue. We have heard passionate speeches this evening, proving that the topic of assisted dying is a compelling one for those on both sides of the argument.

I am sure that Members will forgive me if I do not mention everyone who has spoken, but I must acknowledge my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), who opened the debate with a dignified, moving and well-researched contribution. Although 31 Members spoke, I think around 50 Members were present at the beginning of the debate. My maths is not brilliant, but there were about 20 on one side and 11 on the other, which may be interesting given the vote the last time this matter was debated.

Seven years ago, I wound up for the Opposition—that shows how far my career has progressed—on Rob Marris's Assisted Dying (No. 2) Bill. That is not the last time that this issue was debated—there was a Westminster Hall debate a couple of years ago, and the other place has debated it even more recently—but in 2015 there was a five-hour debate in the main Chamber, which ended with a vote.

Perhaps today is an opportunity to review how things have moved on in this contentious area. The answer is in some ways substantially, and in others hardly at all. It is clear now, as it was clear then, that—in the words of the noble Lord Faulks, who spoke for the Government in 2014—

"any change in the law in this emotive area is an issue of individual conscience. In our view, it is rightly a matter for Parliament to decide rather than government policy."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 July 2014; Vol. 755, c. 919.]

That must be right, but it is also right that for Parliament to decide properly requires the Government's co-operation and consent. I will come to that in a moment.

As a number of Members have mentioned, the higher courts have been consistent in their view that this is squarely a matter for Parliament. However sympathetic they may be to the harrowing cases that have come before them, they look to us to set policy in this matter.

Let us look at some of the areas where change has happened. Many more jurisdictions have legalised assisted dying: all six Australian states, seven more US states, New Zealand, Canada and Spain. Over 200 million people in those and other democracies are covered by such legislation. That shows not only the direction of

travel but allows more evidence to emerge of the effect of legalising assisted dying, and whether the fears surrounding it—especially those around coercion, the so-called slippery slope and the challenges for the medical profession—have been proved well founded. On the whole, those concerns have not materialised.

One of the biggest arguments against assisted dying is concern about the possibility of coercion. Vulnerable adults nearing the end of their life could be at risk of pressure from family members who feel incapable, for whatever reason, of providing care and support for a terminally ill person. We must be alert to such possibilities. If Parliament is to decide on this matter, it is essential that there is a plan for robust safeguards against that, backed by evidence that they work. Again, we are in the fortunate position that other countries have walked this path before us and we may be able to use their knowledge and experience to our advantage. The petition makes it clear that such safeguards are essential.

The opinion of significant parts of the medical profession has moved to a neutral or more supportive view of assisted dying, with the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Physicians joining the Royal College of Nursing and several other royal colleges in adopting a neutral view. More evidence has emerged of the traumatic effect of the current restrictions, including travel abroad to die for those who can arrange and afford it, high suicide rates among the terminally ill, and many people dying without effective pain relief and in distressing and degrading circumstances.

Public opinion is overwhelming and clear, with over 80% supporting assisted dying. This is an issue where the gap between opinion in this place and in our constituencies has been at its widest. I wonder if it is now narrowing. When 5,000 people were polled on the subject, 84% of respondents were supportive of assisted dying, with strong support across all demographics. This petition, sponsored by Dignity in Dying, received over 155,000 signatures in support of legalising assisted dying. It proposes the narrowest form of assisted dying, for those of proven mental capacity nearing the end of their life. Some jurisdictions permit assisted dying in cases of chronic suffering, but that is not proposed here.

Some 75% of the public support a parliamentary inquiry into assisted dying. That perhaps tells us where we should be heading. An inquiry would allow us to learn more about the subject, hear from people with first-hand experience of the scenarios we have been discussing and look at the data from the countries that have legalised assisted dying to get greater insight into how it is working.

Sir Edward Leigh: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, once we have assisted dying in this country, it will change the whole nature of the debate between GPs and old people? At the back of every GP's mind, and for every old person, there will be that question: "Should I end it?" That is not a burden that we should place on GPs.

Andy Slaughter: I not only do not accept that; I find it the most appalling scaremongering. I have never met a GP who I do not think has a duty to their patients. They may vary in their competence and skills, but in their duty to their patients there is a very honourable tradition among general practitioners, and indeed the whole of

the medical profession in this country. To throw such comments into this debate is not helpful to the right hon. Gentleman's own side, let alone anyone else's.

It is right that recently, under the former Health Secretary, the right hon. Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock), who spoke earlier, the Government undertook research, but they have so far not found the time or resource for a proper investigation and debate, potentially leading to legislation. I am a supporter of good local palliative care, and for several years I have been fighting to retain it for my constituents against attempts to restrict it. We should strive to provide the very best palliative care to all those who are nearing the end of their lives. For many families, palliative care and respite care for family members is essential, but in order to offer the very best palliative care, we need the tools, the people and the money to sustain it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) has recently spoken about Labour's plan for a national care service. To offer people real dignity in dying, we need a focused approach to care and end-of-life care, which a national care service could provide. Pembridge Hospice and Palliative Care in North Kensington served my constituents for many years until, several years ago, the in-patient unit was closed because it could not recruit a consultant. That is where we should look for problems. Assisted dying is not an alternative to palliative care; the two complement each other.

Danny Kruger: Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the Health and Care Act 2022 included the amendment proposed by my noble Friend Baroness Finlay of Llandaff to ensure that palliative care becomes a commissioned service in the NHS for the first time in its history? Does he welcome that?

Andy Slaughter: I heard that from one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues earlier and I absolutely welcome it. However, as I said, we need not only a policy commitment but funding—and that includes workforce planning, because palliative care consultants are in short supply.

This should not be a debate only between different attitudes, religious practices or medical treatments; it should be a debate about ensuring that the needs of the terminally ill are met in the most appropriate and compassionate way. I understand the strongly held views of those who oppose assisted dying, but I am a firm believer in freedom of choice and bodily autonomy—issues that have come to the fore in the wake of the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, and not just in the US. This is a matter of conscience. It is one of the most sensitive that we have to deal with, but we must not shirk our responsibility on those grounds.

I agree with the petitioners' request for the Government to grant the means to debate and, if there is the will in Parliament, to reform the law in the interests of those who find themselves at the end of their life and in a perilous position. Whatever our difference of opinion here, we all agree that those nearing the end of their life deserve our compassion. There is more that we can do, not just in the debate on assisted dying, but in how we care for those who are terminally ill.

As the world changes around us, we cannot stand still. We have a duty to bring this matter before Parliament again and allow it to decide. How we begin that process is down to the Government. I hope the Minister agrees that,

[*Andy Slaughter*]

if the necessary time is made available in Parliament, we should be able to debate, vote and, if there is the will, legislate on this issue. It would be perverse if Scotland, Jersey and the Isle of Man had legislated on this matter before we have even had a chance to discuss it in a meaningful way. This has been a very good and measured debate, but the next stage must be to allow the voices of our constituents, which are very strong on this matter, to be heard—not just this in Chamber, but the main Chamber, and therefore through legislation.

7.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (James Cartledge): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I congratulate the Petitions Committee and the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) on securing the debate. Introducing a debate on a matter like this means speaking at a very pressured moment. I thought she spoke with bravery and set the tone for what has been a very moving, powerful debate with high-quality contributions on both sides. It has shown Parliament at its best, as is often the case when we are freed from pre-set whipping, Government positions and so on.

I am grateful to the more than 155,000 people who signed the petition. Obviously, we must not forget the role of our constituents and the public in this matter. This debate is a welcome opportunity for the House to debate, for the first time in this new Session, an issue of such profound sensitivity and importance. We all experience the death of people we care about and, wherever one stands on the underlying issue, we must surely all want dignity and compassion for those in their final phase of life.

Before turning to the Government position and contributions from colleagues, I want to start with a note on the language, as referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Robin Millar). Some people draw a distinction between assisted dying, which they see as allowing dying people to have a choice over the manner and timing of their imminent death, and assisted suicide, which they see as helping people who are not dying to choose death over life. To be clear, the criminal law currently makes no such distinction; under section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961, the offence is “encouraging or assisting” suicide, and my use of the term “suicide” reflects that. It does not indicate prejudice either way, and it is not an indication of the Government taking one side over the other.

The Government’s view remains that any relaxation of the law in this area is an issue of individual conscience and a matter for Parliament to decide. To be clear, that does not mean that the Government do not care about the issue at hand—far from it. It means that the ultimate decision on whether to change the law is for Parliament to decide, in the tradition of previous matters of conscience that have come before the House.

While I note the petition’s call for the Government to bring forward legislation to allow assisted dying for adults who are terminally ill and have mental capacity, our neutral stance means that such a change would have to be made via private Members’ legislation. If, at a future date, it became the clearly expressed will of

Parliament to amend or change the criminal law so as to enable some form of assisted dying, the Government would of course undertake the role of ensuring that the relevant legislation was delivered as effectively as possible.

Turning to the many contributions made by colleagues today—I apologise if I do not cover all of them—I think it is fair to say that there is a strong consensus on the need to ensure that we have high-quality palliative care. Those on both sides of the debate agree strongly on that. As my hon. Friends the Members for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) and for Devizes (Danny Kruger) mentioned, the Government have shown in recent legislation the importance that they attach to the matter.

I can confirm that NHS England is developing an ambitious programme focused on transformational approaches for the next five years. The programme will build on the work of the palliative and end-of-life care strategic clinical networks, which sit across the seven regional footprints. The Government recognise that high-quality palliative and end-of-life care should include the opportunity for individuals to discuss their wishes and preferences so that they can be taken fully into account in the provision of their future care—also known as advance care planning.

Of course, resources matter. Many Members made that point, including the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) and the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), who has NHS management experience. Obviously, the Government strongly agree. We are providing £4.5 billion of new investment to fund expanded community multidisciplinary teams providing rapid, targeted support to those identified as having the greatest risks and needs, including those at the end of their life.

On hospices, my constituency neighbour and right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock)—the former Health Secretary—made a point about the joint funding model. Most hospices are independent charitable organisations, and they receive around £350 million of Government funding annually to provide NHS services. As part of the covid response, which my right hon. Friend of course oversaw, more than £400 million has been made available to hospices since the start of the pandemic to secure additional NHS capacity and enable hospital discharge.

Turning to some of the core issues raised today, a number of colleagues referred to what is happening in other jurisdictions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) and others made the point that change is happening in many other jurisdictions and argued that we should be reflecting that. Equally, however, my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Sally-Ann Hart) made the point that some evidence from those jurisdictions may be negative. I think she referred to the experience of the medical profession in Canada. Clearly, whatever we do and however we move forward, we should always be cognisant of what is happening in countries and jurisdictions where the law has changed.

Perhaps the key point of principle here, which is where this becomes a matter of conscience, is choice—choice versus the risk, shall we say, of abuse, and the need for safeguards and so on. Many colleagues spoke about choice, including my hon. Friends the Members for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) and for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman), the hon. Member for Brentford and

Isleworth (Ruth Cadbury), and my right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk. The hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) said it is about the right to choose “a good death”.

I was particularly moved by the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield), who said that we should consider the choice not just of the individual but of their family, who, because of fear of the criminal situation, may feel that they cannot discuss the matter. His was one of the most moving speeches I have heard in my time as an MP, and I hope that people on all sides respect the fact that he spoke under great duress, shall we say, but added much to the debate.

Equally, there is a concern that choice is restricted by income, particularly when we are talking about Dignitas. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott) and others. However, against that—we must remember this—the right hon. Member for East Ham (Sir Stephen Timms), whom I support, spoke eloquently about the risk of pressure on those who may feel that they have to take an action that they would not have felt they should take before any change in the law. That is an incredibly important point. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson) made a similar point, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes, who said that it could be argued that that actually restricts choice because of the pressure it implies. My right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) spoke about the proposed change implying death on demand.

On the position of the public, polling does seem to have shifted. My right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk and the hon. Member for Gower both referred to what is happening with the opinion polls. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) made the point that a poll is not an argument and we are, after all, a representative democracy. Ultimately, it will be for this House, through a private Member’s Bill or another mechanism, to make the change.

As there are only three minutes left, I will rattle through my remaining points. There was much talk of the slippery slope from the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) and others. I just say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough that if a doctor were injecting drugs with the aim of ending life,

that would not be assisted suicide or assisted dying; that would be murder under common law. *[Interruption.]* I am afraid that, because of the time, I will finish with this point.

I think that colleagues on both sides are calling for a national conversation and, if not an inquiry, then certainly an investigation by the Health and Social Care Committee, for example. Obviously, if any of those steps go forward, the Government will do their best to assist, within the constraints of their neutral position, which I take very seriously. The matter was recently debated at length in the House of Lords. It is for hon. and right hon. Members, if they wish, to bring forward private Members’ Bills or debates in the usual way, such as through the Backbench Business Committee.

Wherever we stand, I think we can all say that this has been a very passionate debate that has moved forward the public’s understanding of the key positions on both sides. We should all be proud of the way in which the Petitions Committee has allowed the public to see all the arguments, and I am grateful to all hon. Members who contributed to the debate.

Steve McCabe (in the Chair): I call Tonia Antoniazzi—you must conclude before 7.30 pm or the motion will lapse.

7.28 pm

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank everybody in the Chamber, including the people who came to watch the debate, and all the petitioners. This has been a very moving and important debate. I hope that the Minister will agree to meet the people here today from Dignity in Dying who have lived experience, and I hope that we can have a proper inquiry and Government time to take this matter forward. I thank everybody for the way in which the debate has been conducted, because it is very important for everybody.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 604383, relating to assisted dying.

7.29 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 4 July 2022

TREASURY

Depositing Framework Documents in the House Libraries

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Simon Clarke): Framework documents constitute a core constitutional document of arm's length bodies, and it is imperative that accounting officers, board members and senior officials are familiar with them, ensure they are kept up to date and use them as guide to govern the collaborative relationship between the arm's length body, the sponsor Department and the rest of Government. It is also important for the purposes of scrutiny that Parliament is familiar with these documents, and has ready access to them as they are agreed and updated.

It has long been a requirement under the rules as set out in Managing Public Money for framework documents to be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. In order for the Libraries to receive documents for deposit a ministerial commitment to deposit must be made in the House. To facilitate transparency and ease the process of ensuring these important governance documents are made available to Parliament I am making a commitment on behalf of Government that all framework documents of all central Government arm's length bodies and public corporations shall be placed in the Library. This commitment should allow Departments to meet their obligations to Parliament more easily and promptly.

I have also asked the Treasury Officer of Accounts to write to all accounting officers to ensure that all existing framework documents have been properly deposited. The public will continue to be able to access these documents via www.gov.uk or the relevant body's website.

In addition to framework documents transparency is served by Parliament having the opportunity to scrutinise the summaries of accounting officer assessments of major projects. I also make a commitment on behalf of Government that copies of summary accounting officer assessments for projects on the Government Major Projects Portfolio should be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons in line with existing HMT guidance.

[HCWS176]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018: Second Post-Implementation Review

The Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez): Today I am publishing the statutory post-implementation review of the Network and Information

Systems Regulations 2018 on the Government's website. This is the second review of the regulations since their implementation.

The regulations came into force in May 2018. The objective of the regulations is to improve the security of network and information systems which are critical to the provision of essential services and digital services which, if disrupted, could cause significant economic and social harm to people, businesses, and critical national infrastructure.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has assessed the impact, costs and benefits of the regulations, how effective the regulations have been in achieving the original objectives, and whether those objectives remain appropriate for the UK four years on.

The review is clear that the regulations have acted as an accelerator for improvements to the security of regulated organisations. Regulated organisations have shown an increase in the prioritisation of cyber security at senior level, increased investment in cyber security from boards, the introduction or improvement of cyber security policies, improved incident response management, and a greater awareness of aggregate risks.

The review concludes that the regulations are an effective tool to drive good cyber security behaviours. As such, it recommends that the Government retain the regulations to continue to incentivise organisations in scope to make security improvements.

The report also makes recommendations for changes to strengthen and future-proof the regulatory framework, so that it can adapt effectively to the rapidly evolving landscape. These changes were included in my Department's public consultation on proposals for cyber security-related legislation in January this year. The outcomes of this consultation will be published later this year.

The next statutory post-implementation review of the regulations will be carried out in the next five years.

[HCWS173]

EDUCATION

Early Years; Early Education and Childcare

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Will Quince): This Government are committed to ensuring that families can access high quality and flexible childcare and early education that helps children to learn in their earliest years, provides enriching experiences around school hours and supports families and the economy by enabling parents to work.

With the cost of living rising, we want as many families as possible to benefit from the childcare support they are entitled to, saving them money, and helping to give children the best start in life.

This Government have extended access to early education and childcare to millions of children and parents over the past decade. We invest a significant amount of funding in early education and childcare, including over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on early education entitlements for two, three and four-year-olds.

We have also introduced tax-free childcare, which provides working parents with support of up to £2,000 a year to help with childcare costs for children under 12, or £4,000 for disabled children under 17, and Universal Credit, where parents can claim back up to 85% of eligible childcare costs, compared to 70% under tax credits.

The Government have today announced plans to improve the cost, choice and availability of childcare that will benefit families and give childcare providers more flexibility and autonomy to make decisions about their settings and needs of children.

We will support more people to become childminders, which are generally the most affordable and flexible form of childcare, by:

Reducing the upfront costs of becoming a childminder via financial support.

Allowing childminders to spend more of their time working from a greater range of locations.

Clarifying flexibilities in childminders' ratios when looking after their own children, or siblings of other children.

Working with Ofsted to reduce inspection for childminders.

Publishing a slimmed down, childminder specific Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

Encouraging the growth of Childminder Agencies—stimulating competition and driving down costs while providing parents with more options for care.

We will also streamline the Ofsted registration process for providers. More providers registering would mean that parents have a wider choice of providers on which to use these schemes, to pay for childcare that supports their working lives.

With safety and quality at the heart, as a first step, today I am also confirming the publication of two consultations:

Childcare ratios and supervision while eating consultation.

We are consulting on proposed changes to the current statutory minimum early years staff: child ratios in England for two-year-olds from 1:4 to 1:5; and clarifying flexibilities in childminders' ratios when looking after their own children, or siblings of other children.

These proposals hand greater flexibility and autonomy to providers to exercise professional judgement in their staffing decisions, according to the needs of their children. This change would bring minimum requirements into line with those in Scotland.

As we continue this journey, there will be opportunities to explore further reform to statutory staffing requirements, and this document invites early views on some potential additional options.

We are also consulting on supervision requirements while children are eating, to ensure the safety of every child across early years settings. Engagement with early years providers to date suggests that for many settings, adequate supervision while eating is already understood to mean that children are within sight and hearing of a member of staff. We believe that an explicit requirement in the Early Years Foundation Stage will reinforce this practice and ensure the safety of children in early years settings.

The Early Years National Funding Formula and Maintained Nursery School funding consultation.

We are consulting on updates to the funding formulae for the two-year-old and three and four-year-old early education entitlements in England, the scope of which will also include the distribution of supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools.

We are proposing to update and adjust the funding formulae used to distribute the Government's investment in the early years entitlements—which deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare for eligible two, three and four-year-olds for 38 weeks a year—fairly and transparently to local authorities across England.

Many of the datasets which underpin these formulae, and which we use to reflect geographical cost variation, are not up to date. It is important that they remain current, to ensure the funding system can be fair, effective and responsive to changing levels of need across different areas, with targeted investment towards those areas where it will do the most good. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, we are therefore planning to update the formulae for the 2023-24 financial year and intend to continue to do so annually thereafter. We are also consulting on proposals to mainstream the early years elements of the teachers' pay grant and the teachers' pension employer contribution grant from 2023-24, bringing early years in line with schools and high needs.

The proposed update will result in some changes to local authority funding levels given costs and levels of need in certain areas will have changed relative to others. As such, we are also consulting on applying new year-to-year protections to local authority funding rates, to help local markets to manage changes better. The 2021 spending review settlement allows us to offer protections which means that all local authorities will see an increase in the hourly rate that the Government provide for 2023-24.

We are also consulting on proposals to reform maintained nursery school supplementary funding. Maintained nursery schools make a valuable contribution to improving the lives of some of our most disadvantaged children. As we have confirmed continuation of maintained nursery school supplementary funding throughout the spending review period, it is now right to examine the way in which this funding is distributed to LAs. We are therefore proposing to invest an additional £10 million into maintained nursery school supplementary funding from 2023-24 and are consulting on proposals to create a fairer distribution of the funding across all LAs with maintained nursery schools.

Taken together, our current and proposed reforms not only reflect the Government's commitment to supporting as many families as possible with access to high quality, affordable childcare, but also provide the foundation for taking a renewed look into the childcare system.

[HCWS175]

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Bishop of Truro's Recommendations: Independent Report

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Elizabeth Truss): At the beginning of 2019, the former Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), asked the Bishop of Truro to review what more

the then FCO could do to address the persecution of Christians. The Bishop published a report in July 2019 setting out the gravity of the issue, as well as practical recommendations for an enhanced FCO response to the plight of persecuted Christians and people persecuted for holding other religious beliefs, other beliefs, or no religious belief at all.

Recognising that the persecution of people for their religion or belief is unacceptable and a significant international problem, the Government committed to implementing the recommendations of the Bishop's review. His final recommendation was that an independent assessment of our progress in doing so should be carried out three years after the original report. I am pleased to publish that assessment today. We welcome and accept this expert review on progress and in line with the findings, accept their assessment for the need to continue to work to promote and strengthen freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental human right for all. We thank the reviewers for their important work. A copy of the report will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

I have seen first-hand how much work has gone in across the organisation to delivering the review recommendations. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon has worked closely with the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), to promote freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) internationally and to oversee progress on implementing the review recommendations. The independent assessment concludes that the majority of the recommendations are either at an advanced stage of delivery or in the process of being delivered, whilst noting that there is still more to do. The reviewers have also recognised where there have been constraints to delivery or an alternative approach has been taken.

I am encouraged by what has been achieved in recent years, in the face of many global challenges. We have led international efforts to increase collaboration to support those who are persecuted for what they believe. In March 2021, Lord Ahmad hosted a meeting at the UN Security Council to raise awareness of persecution of religious minorities in conflict zones. We used our G7 presidency to secure language on FoRB in the G7 communique for the first time, galvanising support for those suffering discrimination and persecution. The FoRB Special Envoy holds the Chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance this year, demonstrating UK global leadership on FoRB. We have sent a clear message that the international community will not turn a blind eye to serious and systematic violations of human rights through our global human rights sanctions regime. Religion for international engagement training is now available to all civil servants to enhance their understanding of the role of religion and belief in a wide variety of contexts, in order to deliver the UK's international objectives more effectively.

Building on this work, we will continue to ensure that the changes we have made are embedded and to look for opportunities to make FoRB central to the FCDO's wider human rights work. We will do this, working alongside others, to deliver real change for the good, protecting and promoting everyone's right to freedom of religion or belief.

Our work on this important human rights issue will never be complete, and we will continue to champion global efforts on FoRB. As part of that, on 5-6 July this year, the UK will host an international ministerial conference on freedom of religion or belief. We look forward to welcoming partner countries and stakeholders from around the world to London.

Attachments can be view online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2022-07-04/HCWS174>

[HCWS174]

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Building Regulations: Public Toilet Provision

The Minister for Local Government, Faith and Communities (Kemi Badenoch): Toilets, both in municipal and private sector locations, are an important facility for members of the public, in particular, women, those with children, older people and disabled people.

The Government have taken a number of steps recently to support the increased provision of 'Changing Places' toilets for disabled people for whom standard accessible toilets are not suitable. Last year, the Government introduced 100% business rates relief for public toilets in England and Wales.

In October 2020, Government published a review: Toilet provision for men and women: call for evidence. This stemmed from evidence that shows that increasing numbers of publicly accessible toilets are being converted into 'gender neutral' facilities, causing problems for women and older people in particular.

'Gender neutral' facilities mean men and women share the same space for waiting and hand wash facilities; these should be contrasted with dedicated, self-contained 'unisex' toilets which maintain privacy for the single user (also known as 'universal toilets').

Such 'gender neutral' toilets place women at a significant disadvantage. While men can then use both cubicles and urinals, women can only use the former. The net effect is actually to reduce toilet provision for women. Women also need safe spaces given their particular biological, health and sanitary needs (for example, women who are menstruating, pregnant or at menopause, may need to use the toilet more often). Women are also likely to feel less comfortable using mixed sex facilities.

The review also asked for views on increasing the ratio of female toilets. Male toilets typically allow for a quicker transition of customers due to the use of urinals, yet insufficient female toilets are provided for a comparative number of cubicles to allow the same number of users to be served. This is not to disadvantage any sex - but greater ratios of female cubicles would help avoid queues inside and outside toilets.

The Government are also aware of broader concerns that women's biological differences are being 'erased' in public life. It is important that women's biological needs are respected and taken into account in the provision of

facilities such as toilets. A high volume of responses were received to the call for evidence, all of which have been read and analysed.

The call for evidence analysis has been carefully considered, and research has been commissioned by my Department on the design of toilet facilities. Following on from this, in autumn 2022, the Department will launch a technical consultation on formal changes to the building regulations and approved guidance, informed by the call for evidence responses.

The Government are minded to take the following approach to rules and guidance in England, subject to further consultation and assessment of equality impacts:

Policy Goal	Change to the building regulations and approved guidance
To amend building regulations and guidance to ensure separate toilets for men and women continues to be provided, guidance to encourage the provision of a unisex toilet, where space allows	Implementing a threshold approach i.e. above a certain number of toilet cubicles, require the provision of toilets for a range of users including separate male and female toilets, unisex toilets/ universal toilets, baby change, disabled Persons toilets, and changing places toilets.
Where unisex toilets are provided, that privacy is ensured	To set out the design of a unisex self-contained/ universal toilet cubicle with a sink which is designed to maximise privacy—informed by research underway and the call for evidence analysis.
To announce the intent for greater provision of toilets to reduce queuing	We will work with the British Standards Institution to develop the evidence base with a view thereafter to them updating their relevant codes of practice.

The technical review will ensure that the specific requirements of disabled users remain salient, and that access to and provision of toilets for disabled people will not be undermined by wider improvements to toilet provision more generally. The Department will be considering already commissioned research on the design of both disabled persons' toilets and changing places toilets as part of this review.

Better customer toilet provision in commercial environments may encourage people to visit the premises. The Government will be undertaking a full regulatory impact assessment.

Such changes to building rules will also complement existing statutory provisions in education law for schools to provide sex-specific—or self-contained unisex—toilets for children.

We would also encourage Government bodies to consider how such principles can be adopted now in its own buildings, prior to formal changes in building regulations.

The Government believe the proposals that we are minded to adopt will have positive equality outcomes for women, older people, pregnant women, those with babies, people who come under the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, and disabled people.

This common sense approach on protecting and improving toilet provision will ensure dignity, privacy, tolerance and respect for all, and further the cause of equality and inclusion by recognising the different needs of everyone in society.

[HCWS172]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Cost of Living Payments: Contingencies Fund Advance

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (David Rutley): The Department for Work and Pensions has obtained approval for an advance from the Contingencies Fund of £2,477,600,000. This will enable the Department to administer the first cost of living payments from 14 July, before the Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Bill, which includes these measures, gains Royal Assent.

The amount covered by the advance is for the first cost of living payment to eligible means tested claimants, worth £326, provided for by the Social Security (Additional Payments) Act.

The payments will deliver immediate support to around 8 million low-income families at a time of increased costs of living.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £2,477,600,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in the main estimate for the Department for Work and Pensions. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £ 2,477,600,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The advance will be repaid at the earliest opportunity following Royal Assent of the Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Bill.

[HCWS171]

Ministerial Corrections

Monday 4 July 2022

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Business of the House

The following is an extract from Business of the House questions in the Chamber on 30 June 2022.

Mark Spencer: The Government are getting on with meeting the challenges and solving the problems that we face. We said that we would recruit over 20,000 more police officers, and we have already recruited 13,500. We are investing a huge amount of cash—£39 billion—in helping people with the challenges of the cost of living. *[Official Report, 30 June 2022, Vol. 717, c. 455.]*

Letter of correction from the Leader of the House:

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire).

The correct response should have been:

Mark Spencer: The Government are getting on with meeting the challenges and solving the problems that we face. We said that we would recruit over 20,000 more police officers, and we have already recruited 13,500. We are investing a huge amount of cash—**£37 billion**—in helping people with the challenges of the cost of living.

The following is an extract from Business of the House questions in the Chamber on 30 June 2022.

Ian Mearns: I received a letter from Her Majesty's Passport Office yesterday in response to 17 different inquiries about missing passports on behalf of my constituents. Some of these 17 answers date back to inquiries submitted in March. We are still getting inquiries, on an almost daily basis, from constituents who are worried about their missing passports. The situation does not seem to have improved since I first raised it in the House back in late February or early March. Can we have a statement from the Home Secretary on what is being done to improve the situation? Whatever has been done already is not working.

Mark Spencer: I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman back in his place, and I hope his slipped disc is now better. I know how heavy those RMT banners can be, so he should be careful when carrying them.

On the challenges for the hon. Gentleman's constituents in getting their passports, I hope he will recognise that the Home Office has recruited another 550 staff, with another 600 to come very soon.

[Official Report, 30 June 2022, Vol. 717, c. 457.]

Letter of correction from the Leader of the House:

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns).

The correct response should have been:

Mark Spencer: On the challenges for the hon. Gentleman's constituents in getting their passports, I hope he will recognise that the Home Office has recruited another **650** staff, with another **550** to come very soon.

The following is an extract from Business of the House questions in the Chamber on 30 June 2022.

Cat Smith: With the cost of living crisis hitting, I have been contacted by many constituents who live on houseboats, in flats or in park homes who are not eligible for the £400 discount on energy bills. Can we have a debate in Government time on ways in which we can support people who do not pay their energy bills direct?

Mark Spencer: The Government are very much aware of this issue, which was raised a number of times at Treasury questions this week. That is why the Treasury is looking at the way in which these things are calculated. It is also why we are investing £39 billion to support people with the cost of living challenge that we face.

[Official Report, 30 June 2022, Vol. 717, c. 462.]

Letter of correction from the Leader of the House:

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith).

The correct response should have been:

Mark Spencer: The Government are very much aware of this issue, which was raised a number of times at Treasury questions this week. That is why the Treasury is looking at the way in which these things are calculated. It is also why we are investing **£37 billion** to support people with the cost of living challenge that we face.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Inshore Fishing Fleet

The following is an extract from the Westminster Hall debate on the Inshore Fishing Fleet on 14 June 2022.

Victoria Prentis: On the seafood fund, much of the inshore fleet can receive 80% grant funding if it does not use towed gear.

[Official Report, 14 June 2022, Vol. 716, c. 63WH.]

Letter of correction from the Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis):

An error has been identified in my speech.

The correct information should have been:

Victoria Prentis: On the **fisheries and seafood scheme**, much of the inshore fleet can receive 80% grant funding if it does not use towed gear.

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**not later than
Monday 11 July 2022**

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