

**Tuesday  
19 July 2022**

**Volume 718  
No. 38**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**Tuesday 19 July 2022**

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# House of Commons

*Tuesday 19 July 2022*

*The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

*The Secretary of State was asked—*  
**Access to NHS Dentistry**

1. **Chris Loder** (West Dorset) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry services in the south-west. [901148]

13. **Selaine Saxby** (North Devon) (Con): What progress he has made on increasing the availability of NHS dentistry services. [901161]

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):** During the pandemic, we took unprecedented action to protect NHS dentistry capacity, providing over £1.7 billion of income protection. We also ensured that those who needed it most could access the available care by establishing 700 urgent care centres nationwide. NHS dentists are now returning to 100% of their contracted activity.

**Chris Loder:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer, but in West Dorset we are really struggling with dentist availability; at the moment there is no capacity for new patients, and the NHS appears to be incapable of solving the issue. Could my right hon. Friend tell me what he is doing to help restore dental services in West Dorset for those who need them?

**Steve Barclay:** My hon. Friend raises a very pertinent point. I recognise that there are significant challenges in NHS dentistry, including disparities across regions. Improving access for patients is a priority, and that is why just today the Government, together with NHS England, have announced a package of improvements to the NHS dental system, on which we have worked closely with the sector and the British Dental Association.

**Selaine Saxby:** Having seen the former Minister for dentistry on numerous occasions, we were assured of today's announcement to tackle the appalling lack of dentists in dental deserts such as my North Devon constituency. Can my right hon. Friend explain how the measures in today's written ministerial statement will rapidly deliver extra dental appointments?

**Steve Barclay:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's campaigning on this issue; it is something she has highlighted on a number of occasions. The sorts of areas where the measures announced today will help include the management of NHS dental contracts, increasing the use of the skills mix in the dental workforce, and rewarding complex treatment to better reflect the complexity of that work.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): There are 18,000 people on the NHS waiting list for dentistry in Plymouth; it is a real crisis. As a city, we have a cross-party plan for the new Cavell centre, a west end health hub as part of a health village in the city centre, with extra dental capacity with our brilliant dental school. However, we urgently need the Government to unlock the funding for it. Will the Secretary of State agree to meet a cross-party delegation from Plymouth to make the case for that, so that we can get on, get spades in the ground and get people's teeth healed?

**Steve Barclay:** As part of the Government's wider commitment to levelling up, we are very interesting in taking a place-based approach. Indeed, the essence of the integrated care boards is to help facilitate that. I am very happy to have discussions with colleagues across the House on how we best deliver that.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): We all know that NHS dentistry was in crisis long before the pandemic. In my community, only a third of adults have seen an NHS dentist in the last two years, and fewer than half of children have seen a dentist in the last 12 months. It is obvious why: we have an ageing system—units of dental activity—based on a snapshot taken 15 years ago, which is completely unfit for purpose, as dentists and patients around the country are telling the Government. Will the Secretary of State listen to dentists and patients and reform the system urgently?

**Steve Barclay:** I hope the hon. Gentleman will look at today's announcement, because it shows that the Department has listened. That is why, for example, it will facilitate better contract management, better reflect the floor price for units of dental activity and reward complex treatment, which was one of the key concerns. Equally, I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that this Government, through the £1.7 billion of income protection during the pandemic, have done much to facilitate dentistry's ability to bounce back.

### Net Zero

2. **Robbie Moore** (Keighley) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help the NHS achieve net zero. [901150]

**The Minister of State, Department for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):** We are committed to supporting the NHS to achieve net zero by 2040 for direct emissions, with the Government already investing £280 million through the public sector decarbonisation scheme to support that ambition.

**Robbie Moore:** The NHS plays a key role in our national attempts to achieve net zero. I was therefore delighted to see the Airedale NHS Foundation Trust

submit its plans for a new Airedale Hospital in my constituency. Those plans of course deal with the severe structural risk associated with aerated concrete, but they are also designed to create Europe's first ever carbon neutral hospital. Does my hon. Friend agree that these are extremely exciting plans and that they are another reason why we should try to achieve a new Airedale Hospital in my constituency?

**Maria Caulfield:** I thank my hon. Friend, who campaigns hard on this issue for Airedale Hospital. I absolutely understand the urgency around aerated concrete given the effect it is having, and of course I agree that the NHS has a vital role in supporting net zero. He will understand that I cannot commit to any one application. We are reviewing all applications and we aim to make a final decision later this year.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** Can the Minister assure me, and the House, that the money used for the purpose of achieving a net zero NHS will have no impact on, for instance, those who are on waiting lists for cataract operations, who cannot even see the environment because they have been waiting for their operations for so many years? Net zero is very important, but what is more important is getting those operations done.

**Maria Caulfield:** I think we can do both. We have already reduced emissions in the NHS by 30%, and there are a number of ways in which we can reduce them further, from changes in procurement—the NHS will no longer purchase from suppliers that are not aligned with net zero ambitions—to the delivery of estate change.

#### **Breastmilk Substitutes: International Code of Marketing**

3. **Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP):** If his Department will take steps to fully implement the international code of marketing of breastmilk substitutes. [901151]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maggie Throup):** The Government recognise that the code is intended to promote breastfeeding. Existing legislation in the UK implements its general principles, giving effect to its aim of covering marketing, accounting, information and the responsibilities of health authorities. As well as restricting advertising to scientific and specialist baby care publications, it sets requirements for labelling, presentation and advertising so as not to discourage breastfeeding. Guidance on working within the code is available to service commissioners, providers and practitioners.

**Alison Thewliss:** As the World Health Organisation's recent status report on implementation of the code gives the UK a mark of only 40 out of a possible 100, the UK could clearly be doing a great deal more to implement a code that was intended to protect breastfeeding, and to protect those who are bottle-feeding from marketing influence. Will the Minister meet me and the all-party parliamentary group on infant feeding and inequalities to discuss the issue further?

**Maggie Throup:** I commend the hon. Lady for the work that she does through her all-party parliamentary group. The Government recognise the importance of these issues, which is why we recently committed £50 million to improve breastfeeding support in 75 local authorities. I should be delighted to meet the hon. Lady and the APPG.

#### **Mileage Expenses Reimbursement: NHS Community Care Staff**

4. **Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab):** What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the rate of reimbursement for mileage expenses for NHS community care staff. [901152]

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):** The reimbursement of travel costs for NHS staff is covered by the NHS terms and conditions, which are agreed jointly by employers and NHS trade unions. The terms and conditions set out the process for reviewing the rate, and that process includes reviewing fluctuations in fuel prices.

**Rosie Cooper:** Motorists across the country have seen the cost of fuel increase by as much as 60p per litre since this time last year. Fuel costs are penalising the many NHS staff who treat patients in the community for simply doing their job. The current reimbursement rate of 56p per mile drops to 20p after staff have travelled 3,500 miles, and that has not been adjusted since 2014. Does the Secretary of State agree that if the rate of reimbursement does not rise in line with prices at the pump, those staff can easily obtain jobs in the acute sector, where they will not face the extra fuel costs? Given that we want more people to be treated in the community, that would surely be a catastrophe both for staff and for patients at home.

**Steve Barclay:** This is an important issue, and it affects different parts of the workforce in different ways. The 56p is higher than the rate approved by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and, as the hon. Lady said, it drops to 20p after 3,500 miles have been travelled. Of course, the Government are taking other measures more widely in their fiscal response to the cost of living, such as cutting fuel duty, but there is a review mechanism in respect of the NHS specifically, which involves looking at these issues in the round.

#### **Covid-19 Vaccine Uptake**

5. **Dame Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op):** What steps he is taking to encourage covid-19 vaccine uptake in adults. [901153]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maggie Throup):** Vaccines continue to be the best line of defence against covid-19, and about 94% of those aged over 12 in England have come forward for their first dose. We are continuing to make vaccinations as accessible and convenient as possible, with thousands of sites operational, including targeted mobile vaccination clinics. Throughout the roll-out, we have monitored data and shared it with local NHS systems to support tailored interventions and outreach.

That includes providing bespoke messages from the trusted community and faith leaders who know their communities best.

**Dame Meg Hillier:** As the Public Accounts Committee reported last week, there are still 3 million people who have not been vaccinated, and we hope that the Government will give as much support as they can to increase the take-up among that group. However, I am particularly concerned about people with black, black British and Pakistani backgrounds, who are far less likely to have had their first booster. There is a real inequality issue here. Can the Minister give us any further indication of how she will ensure that, on her watch, we do not see that inequality embed itself?

**Maggie Throup:** I have read the hon. Lady's Committee's report with interest and I recognise the points she has raised. We know that vaccine hesitancy among ethnic minority groups has reduced over the course of the covid-19 vaccination programme, but we will not rest on our laurels. We continue to work closely with our valued communities and community leaders to provide advice and information at every opportunity, and we have materials translated into 28 different languages. There have been many ways in which we have reached out to those communities. For example, we have had vaccination sites in mosques—I visited one in Small Heath in Birmingham—and the Bangladeshi community have come together and encouraged people to get a “jab with your jalfrezi”. We are looking at every different way of reaching out to ensure that we reach all those communities.

**Mr Speaker:** We now come to the Scottish National party spokesperson, Martyn Day.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): Vaccination remains one of the most important ways to protect ourselves and others against covid-19, so I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he has accepted the independent advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the autumn covid-19 booster programme, but what additional steps does the Minister feel need to be taken to encourage vaccine uptake among those with a hesitancy for the additional boosters?

**Maggie Throup:** The hon. Gentleman is right and, as I said to the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Dame Meg Hillier), we know that there is more work to be done and we cannot rest on our laurels. We know that covid-19 vaccinations are our best line of defence and that the more people who come forward and take up their first jab, the more people are protected. That evergreen offer is still there, so if anyone has not had their first jab or has not come forward for their second or their booster, I encourage them to come forward now. It is never too late.

#### Access to GPs

6. **Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): What steps he is taking to help improve access to GPs. [901154]

18. **Kate Hollern** (Blackburn) (Lab): What steps he is taking to help improve access to GPs. [901167]

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):** We know that general practices are still under significant pressure and demand for their services is high. We are investing at least £1.5 billion to create an additional 50 million appointments a year by 2024, and of course not all appointments are, or should be, with GPs.

**Judith Cummins:** Last week, hospital clinicians raised with me their serious concerns that they are seeing incoming case notes of vulnerable and frail patients marked with

“telephone consultation during covid-19 pandemic”,

but those consultations were just in the last few weeks. This is clearly unacceptable and is leaving many of my constituents with the very real possibility of either a missed diagnosis or a misdiagnosis. What action is the Secretary of State taking to guarantee face-to-face appointments that are easily available for the elderly and vulnerable patients who need them?

**Steve Barclay:** The number of face-to-face appointments is increasing and in May 2022, excluding covid-19 vaccines, 64% of appointments were face-to-face, up from 55%. But the hon. Lady is right to say that patients should have the choice, and that is why the NHS access improvement programme has been supporting practices experiencing greater access challenges. Indeed, one of the first visits I did in my new role was to a GP practice to look at the practical measures it was putting in place to facilitate greater access for its patients.

**Kate Hollern:** The inverse training law is depriving communities in Blackburn of access to primary care. Blackburn already has one of the lowest ratios of GPs to patients in the country, and it struggles to attract and retain GPs. The Government have committed to provide 6,000 new GPs by 2024, but according to the British Medical Association there are actually 1,737 fewer GPs as of this month. What is the Secretary of State's Department doing to level up primary care and deliver the incentives for GPs to train and practise in communities such as Blackburn?

**Steve Barclay:** I know this is an issue of concern that the hon. Lady wrote to my predecessor about, and indeed she raised its impact on her constituency in the House last month. There are specific programmes such as the targeted enhanced recruitment scheme that was launched in 2016, and the one-off financial incentives to attract GPs to the more deprived areas. We are also looking at how we can have the right skills mix to boost not just the number of GPs but wider access to appointments.

**Jo Churchill** (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend to his place. I offer a solution. Will he commit himself to sorting out the transfer of electronic prescriptions between hospital consultants and GPs, which would stop people trying to get appointments for prescriptions written in hospital. That would simplify things enormously, and my GPs would really welcome it. We could also do rural dispensing doctors while we are at it.

**Steve Barclay:** I always welcome solutions from colleagues on both sides of the House. From memory, Tim Ferris, who leads on tech within the NHS, is looking at a tech solution—I think it is in beta testing, although I would



have to check. Appointments made shortly after a person has been discharged from hospital are often quite complex cases and create additional pressure on GPs.

Another issue I am keen to explore is GP appointments that can be done through either better use of technology or the wider skills mix so that we can better focus GPs' time on more complex cases where their expertise delivers the best patient outcomes.

**James Gray** (North Wiltshire) (Con): A much-needed new medical centre at Calne in my constituency was approved by the NHS in 2021, but there have since been a number of blockages to do with covid and the contractors. Will the Secretary of State look into those problems to find out what the blockages are—I think they are largely bureaucratic—and clear them out of the way to give the people of Calne their much-needed new medical centre?

**Steve Barclay:** I am very happy to look into that specific issue, which I know my hon. Friend has raised with the Department. I am happy to have further conversations with him.

**Simon Lightwood** (Wakefield) (Lab/Co-op): The GP survey out last week shows that the proportion of people reporting their overall GP experience as very poor or fairly poor doubled between 2021 and 2022. Instead of picking a fight or blaming someone else, will the Secretary of State tell us what he will do to ensure that people in places like Wakefield can see their GP when they need to?

**Steve Barclay:** Far from blaming anyone else— notwithstanding the fact I have been in post for less than two weeks—I have set out a range of things we need to do, because this is a shared challenge that affects all our constituents, and it is within the context of increased demand. The May figures show a significant increase in appointments—1.31 million appointments per working day this year compared with 1.24 million last year. There is increasing demand, and we need to harness GP time, the skills mix and better use of technology.

**Mr Robin Walker** (Worcester) (Con): We need more GPs and junior doctors in Worcestershire, and there is strong support from our local GPs, our acute trust and neighbouring trusts for the Three Counties Medical School in Worcester. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss the case for providing funded places as swiftly as possible?

**Steve Barclay:** My hon. Friend will be aware that, through this Government's funding, we have opened five new medical schools and, from memory, 1,500 additional undergraduate places. That is thanks to the work of the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), who championed this specific initiative to address workforce pressure.

More widely, I am always happy to meet my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker) to discuss issues in Worcester.

**Kim Leadbeater** (Batley and Spen) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State agree that one way we can take some of the pressure off overstretched GP services is to

ensure that pharmacists can continue to play their vital role in looking after the health and wellbeing of patients? Pharmacies across the country are closing because of financial pressures, so will he urgently look into extra support for them to recruit and retain staff?

**Steve Barclay:** The hon. Lady raises a valid and important point about getting the right service to patients, which can often best be delivered by a pharmacist. That is why, as I signalled earlier, we need better use of tech to support patients in understanding where they can best access the advice they need.

**Kate Griffiths** (Burton) (Con): Access to GPs is a huge problem across my constituency of Burton and Uttoxeter, as it is in other constituencies. A walk-in centre in Burton would significantly ease some of the load on our GPs and hospital services. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss this possibility?

**Steve Barclay:** I have had quite a few meeting requests this morning, and I am always keen to meet colleagues. My hon. Friend will be well aware that part of the reason for having integrated care boards within the place-based approach is that commissioners can determine the best mix of services in the locality, including in Burton.

#### Emergency Care: Average Waiting Time

7. **Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): What recent estimate he has made of the average waiting time for emergency care. [901155]

**The Minister of State, Department for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):** NHS Digital publishes information on average waiting times, and the data for May shows that the median average total time spent in A&E for all patients was three hours and six minutes.

**Matt Western:** Across the west midlands, 38 people died waiting for ambulances between March and May 2022. In the same period in 2021, two people died; before 2019, in the corresponding period, there were no deaths. A week ago Sunday, 80 people were waiting in accident and emergency in my constituency. What are the causes of these problems?

**Maria Caulfield:** The west midlands is more affected than many regions of the ambulance service. There are a number of causes, the first of which is that we are living with covid, which has not disappeared. If we look at the in-patient rates, we see that they have increased significantly; last month, they were 17.9 per 100,000 and they are now up to 24.4 per 100,000 in the west midlands, which is experiencing significantly higher rates than other parts of the country. *[Interruption.]* If the shadow Secretary of State wants to hear this, I can tell him that we also have a significant number of staff sicknesses from covid; this time last year, it was about 4% of staff but when I spoke to some trusts this weekend I heard that it was up to 6%. That has a knock-on effect on acute and emergency services and ambulance services being able to respond.

**Mark Logan** (Bolton North East) (Con): Derek Taylor came to my surgery as his late wife Lynda had tragically passed away in Moses Gate country park while they were out walking together. The ambulance was unable to access the park due to barriers impeding entry, and

he will never know whether Lynda's life could have been saved. What steps can the Minister take to ensure that all public parks are accessible to ambulances in cases of emergency?

**Maria Caulfield:** I am very sad to hear of the experience of my hon. Friend's constituent and he is right to say that emergency services need to be able to access public areas. I am happy to talk to him about that afterwards to see what more can be done.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): "24 hours in A&E" was a reality TV programme but now it appears to be the reality for far too many people. The zero tolerance standards on 12-hour A&E waits and 30-minute ambulance handover delays are being systematically and seriously breached. So when do the Government plan to achieve those standards, which were set and delivered by the Labour Government?

**Maria Caulfield:** Let me place on record my thanks to all the ambulance staff up and down the country who have gone above and beyond in the past 24 to 48 hours to be able to respond to extreme pressures that are only really seen in winter times. Let me give a scale of the pressures they are under. Compared with the situation in May last year, there have been over 100,000 more calls to the ambulance service, and there were 2.1 million attendances at A&E departments in June, which is 3.6% higher than the figure for June 2019. So they are under incredible pressure, and I pay tribute to all of them doing their best.

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con): One issue affecting waiting times in many acute hospitals is the fact that so many people could be in community hospitals instead. In my constituency, I have a bid in to replace Shotley Bridge Community Hospital, doubling the capacity to 16 beds from the current eight. However, this is not under way just yet, as a few more hoops need to be jumped through. Will the Minister or Secretary of State come on a visit with me to North West Durham to see what more we can do to speed through the replacement hospital for Shotley Bridge as quickly as possible, to help ease some of the issues in our acute hospitals?

**Maria Caulfield:** My hon. Friend is right; the delayed discharges and being able to free up those beds has a knock-on effect on A&E, which in turn has a knock-on effect on ambulances being able to unload. We have the £2 billion better care fund, which is supposed to be addressing just that, to help integrated care boards deliver and help patients get out of hospital. I have a meeting with all the integrated care boards tomorrow, so his is a timely question, but I am happy to meet him as well.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Minister, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan** (Tooting) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. A&E waiting times are through the roof, and we have people waiting without a bed—not even a trolley. This is removing the dignity that every patient deserves, but, sadly, it is not a one-off; this is commonplace up and down the country. It is not the Health Secretary who is on the receiving end of it, but staff, who are running from patient to patient trying to ease pain, diagnose illness and save lives—most importantly, it is

of course the most vulnerable themselves. When the Minister hears reports such as this, does she not feel ashamed of the decisions her Government have made over the past 12 years?

**Maria Caulfield:** I say gently to the hon. Lady, who does amazing work on the frontline in A&E, that I have worked in A&E under the last Labour Government—I am showing my age now—and there were trolley waits and ambulance queues then as well, just as there are in Wales, where Labour is running the NHS, and in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. This is unprecedented pressure, because we are trying to live with covid and deal with a backlog of procedures and rising cases. The shadow Secretary of State was not here yesterday, so he may have missed some of the support that we are putting in. We are putting £150 million of extra funding into the ambulance service, £50 million into 111 to increase capacity, and £30 million into an auxiliary ambulance service to increase support. We are supporting the service, but we must recognise that it is facing unprecedented pressures.

**Dr Allin-Khan:** With respect, I will take no lectures from the Minister about working in A&E under a Labour Government and a Conservative Government. I have worked in the NHS under a Labour Government, when NHS waiting times hit record lows, and I have worked under a Tory Government, when NHS waiting lists hit record highs.

The Minister can use the pandemic, the heatwave, or even winter as justification. I have seen that emergencies do increase demand for services, but there is no excuse for not hitting the four-hour A&E waiting target for seven years. There is no defence for stroke and heart-attack victims waiting almost an hour for an ambulance. Undoubtedly, lives will be lost that could have been saved. Will the Minister apologise for those failings?

**Maria Caulfield:** The hon. Lady says there is no excuse for missing those waiting times, but perhaps she can explain why the Labour Government in Wales are also missing those times.

### Cancer Outcomes

8. **Nicola Richards** (West Bromwich East) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve cancer outcomes. [901156]

**Mr Speaker:** I welcome you to the Dispatch Box, Minister.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (James Morris):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Government are focused on improving the early diagnosis of cancer in England to aid cancer outcome rates. That was set out in the NHS Long Term Plan, setting an ambition of seeing 75% of people diagnosed within stages one and two by 2028. Progress has continued on delivering the Long Term Plan. That includes increased investment and public awareness campaigns, rolling out targeted lung health checks, and introducing non-specific symptom pathways to speed up diagnosis.

**Nicola Richards:** Very sadly, in April this year I lost my mum to a sudden diagnosis of secondary breast cancer in the liver, and so like many, I understand that cancer outcomes are not just statistics. In my constituency

of West Bromwich East our outcomes are significantly poorer than the national average, and I know what that means for families. When will my hon. Friend publish the 10-year cancer plan, and confirm the levels of investment going into that?

**James Morris:** I am sure I speak for the whole House in expressing condolences to my hon. Friend for the loss of her mother. I know she is a doughty champion for addressing health inequalities in her constituency. While the publication of the 10-year cancer plan is under review, we remain committed to tackling inequalities and levelling up outcomes, experience and access. That is a key focus of the NHS Long Term Plan and 2022-23 planning guidance, and it remains a priority for the Government and the NHS cancer programme. Approaches to support that are embedded throughout the programme—for example, increased accessibility for the cancer quality of life survey, to help increase representation results and, as I mentioned, the targeted lung health check programme is focused on areas with high lung cancer mortality, where typically there are also high levels of deprivation.

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): Weston Park Cancer Centre provides outstanding cancer care for patients, not just in South Yorkshire but around the country. I met two previous Secretaries of State, and the outgoing Minister, to press the case for investment in the site, given that it is now 50 years old. Will the Minister please look at the case for investment in Weston Park, so that it can continue to provide outstanding care for patients around the country?

**James Morris:** I am very happy to meet the hon. Gentleman. We are investing further money—£350 million in diagnostics—and making efforts to address the backlog caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): Brain tumours kill more children than any other cancer. My constituent's five-year-old granddaughter has a brain tumour. She, and many children like her, are being given chemotherapy drugs that were originally developed in the 1960s for adults, and we need more research into this. What can the Minister and the Government do to help accelerate research into paediatric brain tumours to save children such as my constituent's granddaughter, and will the Minister meet me to discuss the case I have mentioned?

**James Morris:** That sounds like a very distressing constituency case. Obviously we are investing lots of money in research across the whole cancer spectrum, and I would be happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss the issue he raises.

**Sarah Owen** (Luton North) (Lab): Unprotected exposure to the sun can leave someone vulnerable to skin cancer, but as my constituent Tina, who suffers with melanoma, knows, the sun is not the only risk factor for skin cancer—sunbeds continue to be used all year round at very high risk. Does the Minister agree that it is time we took the dangers of sunbeds seriously? Does he support Melanoma UK's campaign to ban the use of sunbeds, and if not, why not?

**James Morris:** Obviously, given the weather that we are experiencing at the moment, issues to do with melanoma are particularly high on the priority list. I am happy to meet the hon. Lady to discuss the specific issues that she has raised in relation to sunbeds.

## Eye Health

9. **Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to improve eye health. [901157]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (James Morris):** We are supporting the prevention of sight loss throughout the NHS sight testing service and diabetic retinopathy screening programmes. Work to reduce smoking and obesity tackles risk factors for sight loss. We are also supporting ophthalmic services to recover from the pandemic and to transform services so that we can meet future demand, including exploring the provision of delivering more services out of hospital, closer to patients where they need them.

**Marsha De Cordova:** Fifty per cent. of all sight loss is avoidable, but currently there is no overarching strategy in England to govern eye care that would help to reduce sight loss. A strategy for England would improve the quality of life for people who are blind or partially sighted, address health inequalities, and link up patient pathways for overall improved health outcomes. Does the Minister therefore agree that England needs its own national eye care strategy, which would include targets for the reduction of avoidable sight loss, and will he agree to meet me to discuss this further?

**James Morris:** Given the size of England and the diversity of the health needs of different communities, we believe that commissioning should be locally led, so there are no current plans for a national eye health strategy. However, I am delighted that NHS England has appointed the first-ever national clinical director for eye care, Louisa Wickham, who will want to set priorities in this area. It is also worth mentioning that we continue to be committed to the national eye care recovery and transformation programme, which is looking to transform secondary care ophthalmology services in order to use existing funding to improve service quality and patient outcomes. That remains a top priority for us.

## Treatment and Care Innovation: NHS Patients

10. **Colleen Fletcher** (Coventry North East) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to support innovation in the treatment and care of NHS patients. [901158]

**The Minister of State, Department for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):** The NHS has made significant progress in recent years in embracing innovations, from the NHS app where patients can now access their medical records, to the expansion of electronic patient records making it easier for healthcare professionals to share information for better, safer care for patients.

**Colleen Fletcher:** I recently visited Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust's wound healing service and saw the ground-breaking work being undertaken there, which is changing the lives of people who were thought to be living with unhealable wounds. By adopting



innovative methods of healing, the service has not only healed the unhealable, giving patients back the quality of life they deserve, but reduced the average cost of healing at the trust. Will the Minister look at how this approach could be adopted more broadly to improve patient care, save money, and reduce on-costs incurred through unhealed wounds?

**Maria Caulfield:** I thank the hon. Lady, because it is the first I have heard of that and it sounds very exciting. I know how difficult it is with chronic wound management to get wounds to heal. Often these are patients with multiple co-morbidities such as diabetes that make the wounds very difficult to treat. I am keen to visit her constituency and her trust to learn more about it.

#### Care Setting Transfers: Waiting Lists

**11. Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): What steps he is taking to help reduce waiting lists for people transferring to a care setting. [901159]

**The Minister for Care and Mental Health (Gillian Keegan):** I assure the hon. Lady and everybody in the House that this is a key focus for the Department as we know that delayed hospital discharges put pressure on the health and care systems and, most importantly, impact our patients. To address delays, we have established a national hospital discharge taskforce, which is running a 100-day discharge challenge, and integrated care systems can now become discharge front-runners to share good practice and ambitious ideas.

**Rushanara Ali:** I thank the Minister for her answer, but Miriam Deakin of NHS Providers has said:

“There is huge pressure on beds...and a lack of social care capacity means that hospital patients can’t be discharged as soon as they could be to recover closer to home”.

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine has estimated that 57% who longer meet the criteria are stuck in hospital. That is putting huge pressure on hospitals such as the Royal London in my constituency, which is doing amazing work. However, it cannot get the job done if the Government do not step up and back local authorities with the resources they need to provide care for those who can be discharged. That is what is needed. Is it not time that the Minister, with the new Health Secretary, got to grips with this problem, which has built up over a decade because of the decimation of social care? That is what is needed. There is a fix; the Government need to get on with it.

**Gillian Keegan:** Between March 2020 and March 2022, we made nearly £3.3 billion available to support discharge, recognising the pressures faced by the health and social care sectors, as they manage the demands of covid-19. Under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006, funding can be pooled across health and social care to ensure the effective use of available resources. That allows funds such as the better care fund to be used to support discharges, and I know that many integrated care systems are focused on doing that and pooling more resources.

**Mr Speaker:** We come to shadow Minister Karin Smyth.

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): I do appreciate that it has only been two weeks, but the Secretary of State will be familiar with the use of root cause analysis

to solve problems; however, yesterday he spoke for almost eight minutes on ambulance delays with scant reference to social care. Had he been badly briefed?

**Gillian Keegan:** The Secretary of State did mention social care, and of course, very recently, on 1 July, we established the integrated care systems. They are specifically focused on making sure that local authorities work with their local health services to really focus on the patient and improve outcomes for the patient. We recognise that these systems all have to work together around the patient.

**Karin Smyth:** We understand what the proposals are, but the Secretary of State said earlier that he welcomed solutions. We have heard today from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. Seven in 10 say that care providers have closed, handed back contracts or ceased trading. We have all seen this in our constituencies. It is mainly due to the now imminent workforce crisis. Will the Minister ensure that the Secretary of State heeds those warnings and responds adequately to the workforce crisis?

**Gillian Keegan:** This is absolutely key, which is why we are implementing a comprehensive reform programme of adult social care. In September 2021, we committed to investing an additional £5.4 billion over three years, and in December we published “People at the Heart of Care”, which set out our 10-year vision for reforming adult social care and our priorities for investment. This absolutely has to be done—it is a key part of the system—but we have to put the foundations in place. Our 10-year plan will put those foundations in place.

#### Unusable PPE

**12. Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): If he will make an estimate with Cabinet colleagues of the amount of unusable PPE procured by the Government since the outbreak of covid-19. [901160]

**22. Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): If he will make an estimate with Cabinet colleagues of the amount of unusable PPE procured by Government since the outbreak of covid-19. [901171]

**The Minister of State, Department for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):** Around 3% of PPE that the Department purchased was unusable. We are working to dispose of this unusable stock in the most environmentally friendly way.

**Kirsten Oswald:** I am grateful for that response. From the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government have worked with the NHS and Scottish suppliers, as well as on a four-nation basis, to ensure that Scotland has adequate stocks of PPE. In Scotland, 88% of PPE is produced locally, and the overall cost of pandemic procurement was a third less than for the UK. The Scottish Government have committed to retaining powerful safeguards on the use of public money in healthcare through strong procurement rules. Will the UK Government follow suit and replicate this ethical model?

**Maria Caulfield:** I am very interested to hear from the hon. Lady, because according to *The Herald on Sunday* recently, half a billion pounds-worth of procurement in Scotland during the pandemic did not go through the usual scrutiny process. I would be very interested to hear her update on that.

**Alan Brown:** The Public Accounts Committee found that there is £4 billion-worth of unusable, substandard PPE in storage, which is due to be incinerated, which is hardly environmentally friendly. While cronies and donors were fast-tracked, this substandard PPE put frontline workers' lives at risk by preventing them from accessing the right equipment. How much of that £4 billion will be recovered, and what other actions are being pursued against these so-called suppliers?

**Maria Caulfield:** To put this in context, I make no apologies for all the efforts that were made to secure PPE for frontline staff. We delivered more than 21.5 billion items of PPE to keep frontline staff safe during a time when we had a dangerous virus that no one knew anything about, we had no vaccine and there was a global push on the market resources. Those products that we procured that did not meet the standards for health and social care were used in other avenues. For example, we donated masks to transport operators and to schools, so that we could reopen the economy and to help them to keep safe.

**Mr Speaker:** I call SNP spokesperson, Martyn Day.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): While the Tories flogged off PPE contracts to party donors and friends of Ministers through their unlawful VIP PPE lane, the Scottish Government's processes ensured value for money, as we have heard; their PPE costs were less than a third of the UK Government's. Will the UK Government follow Scotland's example in future, and refuse to engage in cronyism and corruption?

**Maria Caulfield:** I outlined in my answer to the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Kirsten Oswald) that around half a billion-worth of pounds of procurement in Scotland did not go through the usual channels. All offers that were identified, regardless of route, underwent rigorous financial, commercial, legal and policy assessment, led by officials, and the final decision on whether to enter a contract sat with the appropriate accounting officer at the Department.

### Topical Questions

T1. [901173] **Ian Byrne** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):** I am honoured to have taken on the role of Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and to have responsibility for incredibly important services that touch all our lives. I pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid), for everything he achieved in this role, and for the dedication he showed. I also welcome my new ministerial team.

Since my appointment, I have been relentlessly focused on the urgent pressures facing health and care, including this week's extreme weather. Yesterday I updated the House on the strong support we are giving, including extra ambulance capacity and more call handlers, and we will stay vigilant so that we can make sure our health and care system is there for those who need it.

Today marks one year since we lifted covid restrictions. While the virus has not gone away, we are able to enjoy our freedoms, thanks to the incredible vaccine roll-out. I have accepted the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice for a covid and flu autumn and winter booster campaign, in which we will roll out that vaccine further.

**Ian Byrne:** I have been contacted by many constituents working in the NHS who are struggling to cope with financial pressures, exhaustion and stress. I recently spoke to a district nurse using our food pantry in West Derby, and it was a heartbreaking example of how the cost of living crisis is impacting people across our communities. That nurse was going to lose their home and was struggling to feed their children. How does the Secretary of State plan to address the dire situation that the very people he applauded as heroes during the pandemic now face? Maybe a start would be giving NHS workers an inflation-proof rise.

**Steve Barclay:** On NHS pay, I expect to announce a response to the integrated pay review bodies shortly. We are putting more funding into the NHS, as I signalled in my statement yesterday.

T2. [901174] **Dr James Davies** (Vale of Clwyd) (Con): Making a diagnosis of dementia is important to allow appropriate treatment, support and time to plan for the future. Pre-pandemic, the diagnosis rate for dementia in England was meeting the two thirds target, but today it is 61.9%. In Wales, data capture and quality is poor, but the equivalent rate is thought to be just 50%. Will my right hon. Friend outline what steps he is taking to improve the situation?

**Steve Barclay:** My hon. Friend will be aware that the matter is devolved to the Welsh NHS, but I can say that in the last financial year, the Government allocated £70 million to NHS England to specifically address dementia waiting lists and increase the number of diagnoses. To further support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rate and access to post-diagnostic support, NHS England is funding two trusts in each region to pilot the diagnosing advanced dementia mandate tool, which will improve access to diagnosis.

**Mr Speaker:** I call shadow Secretary of State, Wes Streeting.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary of State to his first oral questions and, as this is likely to be his last oral questions, also wish him the best for the future. I associate myself with his remarks about his predecessor, who of course resigned from the Government on a point of principle as others chose to remain loyal; on that note, I also pay tribute to the former Minister, the hon. Member for Charnwood (Edward Argar), for the diligent approach he took to his work and the spirit in which he engaged with the Opposition.

One of the contenders for the Conservative leadership says that public services are in a state of disrepair. Another describes the NHS backlog as frightening. A third called ambulance waiting times appalling, and of course the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport said that the former Health Secretary's preparation for a pandemic was "found wanting and inadequate". They are right, aren't they?

**Steve Barclay:** The Government are committed to putting increased funding into our NHS. I set out yesterday the position on the resource departmental expenditure limit. Just to remind the House of the capital departmental expenditure limit, capital investment in the spending review was £32.2 billion between this year and 2024-25. The Government are committed to putting record funding into our NHS. We are also committed to funding 40 new hospitals and have allocated £3.7 billion to that programme.

**Wes Streeting:** I cannot believe that the Government are still talking about 40 new hospitals with a straight face. Nobody believes that it is true. As for capital investment, we have the lowest in the OECD and we lag significantly behind.

We have the longest waiting lists in NHS history and record waits for ambulances. People are finding it impossible to book a GP appointment. There are 400,000 delayed discharges each month because the social care support is not there. The Government are finally acknowledging that covid is still a challenge, and that the hot weather is a challenge, but they do not want to talk about their record, which is, I am afraid, at the heart of the challenge. Does the Secretary of State really believe that it is reasonable to expect NHS employers to meet the pay rise for NHS staff from existing budgets?

**Steve Barclay:** We will respond shortly to the independent pay review body, which, as part of its recommendations, weighs up the pressures on the cost of living and the other factors within its remit. The Government are delivering more doctors, more nurses, more appointments and more treatments, investing in our estate and planning for the future. That includes investment in research and development, and in future technology through our life sciences. That not only delivered the vaccine that allowed us to lift the covid restrictions that the Opposition wanted to retain, but will unlock the technologies of the future.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Chairman of the Health and Social Care Committee, Jeremy Hunt.

**Jeremy Hunt** (South West Surrey) (Con): May I recommend some scintillating summer reading to the Secretary of State: the study of 4.5 million patients that showed that people who see the same GP over a long period are 30% less likely to go to hospital and 25% less likely to die? Will he, after reading that, consider changing the GP contract to get rid of the micromanagement, and replace it with what doctors and patients want, which is the ability to have a long-term relationship?

**Steve Barclay:** I think my right hon. Friend knows me well enough to know that I will have a close interest in reading anything over the summer that is data driven.

He highlights an extremely important issue. Just yesterday, I met with Andrea and Simon Brady, whose daughter tragically died of cancer at the age of 27. One of the key concerns that they raised with me was the lack of consistency when it came to the GP that Jessica went to see, and the fact that she kept seeing different people, and there was not continuity of care. Specific cases that I am looking into speak to this issue, and I am happy to look at the data that my right hon. Friend can share.

T3. [901175] **Janet Daby** (Lewisham East) (Lab): As the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on sickle cell and thalassaemia, I and the chief executive officer of the Sickle Cell Society were due to meet the Secretary of State's predecessor to discuss the experiences of and health failings for people living with sickle cell and, indeed, sickle cell patients. Will the Secretary of State meet me—if he is still in post in September—or urge his predecessor to meet me and the CEO of the Sickle Cell Society?

**Steve Barclay:** I am not sure that I will urge my predecessor to do so, but if indeed there is a successor, I will be happy to share that with them. The hon. Lady raises an important point, and I am happy to look into it.

**Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): We are becoming more aware of how poor lifestyles, including with respect to diet, physical activity and stress, can contribute to an increase in the risk of cancer. Research is also highlighting that exercise, particularly moderate-intensity aerobic training, reduces side effects from treatment, anxiety, depression and recurrence rates. With that in mind, will the Secretary of State ensure that alongside diagnostics and treatment, exercise forms a fundamental part of the forthcoming 10-year cancer strategy, not only for preventing cancer but for reducing its recurrence?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (James Morris):** My hon. Friend makes an important point. As part of our public health messaging and so on, exercise as a preventive mechanism against cancer is extremely important. We have had a call for evidence; we will consider the evidence that has been provided when we look at the 10-year plan, of which exercise will be an important component.

T4. [901176] **Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): Despite repeated questions from me and other hon. Members, immunocompromised people still do not have access to the prophylactic drug Evusheld. It appears that some heads might need knocking together, so will the Secretary of State convene an urgent meeting with AstraZeneca and the UK Health Security Agency to ensure that test results can be released? If the results are positive, will he get on with ordering supplies and rolling them out, so that immunocompromised people can finally get on with living their lives?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maggie Throup)** *rose—*

**Vicky Foxcroft:** It is a question for the Secretary of State.



**Maggie Throup:** The hon. Lady continues to be a loud voice for those who are immunosuppressed, and I commend her for that. As she is aware, Evusheld was awarded conditional marketing authorisation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, which outlined some remaining questions, including about the amount of protection and the dose needed. My Department has been conducting an assessment of Evusheld, looking at the data available and the options for the NHS. We have asked clinicians to look at what we can do for future patient cohorts; we are considering their advice and will update the House shortly.

**Edward Argar (Charnwood) (Con):** One of the great privileges of the three years that I spent at the Department of Health and Social Care was seeing at first hand the amazing work of our NHS workforce; I put on record once again my gratitude to them. Growing that workforce is vital to meeting the future health needs of our population, so will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, whom I welcome to his post, reconfirm the Government's commitment to the target of 50,000 more nurses, and update the House on progress towards that target?

**Steve Barclay:** May I take the opportunity to thank my hon. Friend for his service as Minister of State? I think he was one of the longest-serving Ministers in that role; in fact, I think he took over from me, or shortly after me. He carried out the role with great distinction, as I am sure the whole House recognises.

I am very happy to reconfirm our commitment. I think the number is at about a third of a million, and great progress is being made. That enlarged measure is down to my hon. Friend's work as Minister of State.

**T5. [901177] Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab):** I wrote to the Secretary of State's immediate predecessor on 16 May and followed that letter with one to the Prime Minister about the case of a young man in my constituency, Elliott Simpson. Sadly, I have not had a response. Elliott was misdiagnosed with a water wart in a telephone consultation with a GP. When Elliott finally got to see someone face to face, he had late-stage skin cancer. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines do not currently allow him to receive the necessary life-saving treatment. Will the Secretary of State meet me and Elliott's family to discuss what can be done to get this young man the treatment that he desperately needs?

**Steve Barclay:** I am very sorry, as I am sure the whole House is, to hear of the circumstances that the hon. Lady sets out. I am happy to look at the case, as I said to her ahead of this sitting, when I discovered that she had written to my predecessor. As I also flagged earlier, the number of face-to-face appointments is increasing. Telephone consultations are not a new thing; they have been around for a long time and are an important part of the mix—indeed, some patients prefer the flexibility that they offer. But of course I am happy to meet the hon. Lady in due course.

**Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con):** Long Crendon Parish Council in my constituency has an exciting proposal for an innovative new health and wellbeing centre, including GP services. It has the land from planning gain, and it has an agreement to put Unity Health in as the GP

partnership, but we are stretched for funds to build it. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Charnwood (Edward Argar) for his engagement over the past year. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meet me over the summer to discuss how we can move the project forward?

**Steve Barclay:** Again, as I am sure my hon. Friend will appreciate, these decisions should not be run from Whitehall and the centre. We should take a place-based approach, letting local decision-makers and commissioners make the decisions to shape the best services through their integrated care boards. My hon. Friend the Minister of State or I will engage with him to ensure that his representations are very much at the heart of any decisions that are taken.

**T6. [901178] Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab):** An estimated 117,000 people are reported to have died while on NHS waiting lists. A record 6.6 million people are waiting on the NHS for treatment, and they are in pain and suffering and, in many cases, fearful for their lives. This is a direct consequence of more than a decade of mismanagement and incompetence. What will the new Health Secretary do to give the British people the guarantees that they need to make sure that more do not die while waiting for treatment on the NHS?

**Steve Barclay:** That is why we have launched a range of initiatives, such as surgery hubs and diagnostic centres, to address the very real backlog resulting from the pandemic. Indeed, the NHS has published its delivery plan for tackling the covid-19 backlog of elective care, and that is focused on four areas: increasing health service capacity, prioritising diagnosis and treatment, transforming the way that NHS provides elective care, and providing better information and support to patients.

**Dame Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con):** I welcome both the Secretary of State and the new Minister to their places and warn them that the one statistic that they will hear me say time and again is that cancer is the biggest cause of death of children under the age of 14. Both of their predecessors met my constituent Charlotte Fairall, who lost her daughter, Sophie, to a very aggressive form of rhabdomyosarcoma. Their story inspired the speech that the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid), gave when he launched the 10-year cancer strategy. With that in mind, I would really appreciate it if the new Secretary of State restated his commitment to that strategy and to including a childhood cancer mission at its very heart.

**Steve Barclay:** The House recognises how my right hon. Friend has championed this issue over many years. There can be few more emotive issues than the one she draws to our attention. Of course, in keeping with my predecessors, I would be very happy to engage with her on this important issue.

**T7. [901179] Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP):** [R] I refer hon. Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I am asking specifically about intractable epilepsy. Three NHS prescriptions have been written for the appropriate medicine, so we have proven that that can be done and that the medicine



can be provided free on the NHS. When can families and friends, who scramble every month to raise thousands of pounds to pay for private prescriptions, reasonably expect to receive this medicine on the NHS?

**James Morris:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question, and I deeply sympathise with patients and families who are dealing so courageously with the difficult conditions that he describes. The Government are taking an evidence-based approach to unlicensed cannabis-based products to ensure that treatments are safe and effective before they can be considered for routine funding within the NHS. Whether to prescribe cannabis for medicinal use must remain a clinical decision, and public funding arrangements apply, as they do for all other medicines. The Government remain committed to research and catalysing the generation of evidence to support the use of these products. The National Institute for Health and Care Research remains open—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I call Mary Robinson.

**James Morris:** The National Institute for Health and Care Research remains open to receiving research proposals in this area as a priority.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Minister, when I stand up, please do stop. You are the one who is dragging this out, so you tell these people why they cannot get in.

**Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con):** I welcome the confirmation of the cohorts to be vaccinated against covid-19 and flu this autumn. Will my hon. Friend advise the House and my constituents whether the two vaccines will be co-administered?

**Maggie Throup:** My hon. Friend asks a really important question. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that covid and flu vaccines can be given at the same time where that is operationally possible, and we will seek to maximise opportunities to co-promote and co-administer the flu and covid vaccines where it is possible and clinically advised, especially where this improves patient experience and vaccine uptake. Regardless of whether co-administration is offered, it is important that eligible people come forward as soon as they are called by the NHS for their jab, whether for flu or covid.

T8. [901180] **Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab):** Today, the Office for National Statistics reports that real pay is dropping at the fastest rate since records began in 2001. However, it is reported that the Government are going to punish our hard-working NHS staff even further by forcing through a real pay cut of between 5% and 6%. Will the Minister please dispel that by confirming that NHS staff will be awarded an inflation-proof pay rise?

**Steve Barclay:** The Government have committed to giving NHS workers a pay rise this year, on top of last year's 3% rise when pay was frozen in the wider public sector. The independent pay review bodies base their recommendations on a number of factors, which include but are not limited to the cost of living and inflation, as well as the economic context and issues such as recruitment

and retention. The Government are considering carefully the content of the pay review body's report and will respond shortly.

**Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con):** I want to raise the case of 10-year-old Lucas from my constituency, who has a rare form of cancer called DIPG—diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma. The only drug that would prolong his life has to come from Germany. The family have raised the funds to pay for the drug, but they are now being charged £530 per shipment in import duty. Will my right hon. Friend please help me to lobby the Treasury for an exemption, because it should not be making money off the back of this poor boy's lasting difficulties?

**Steve Barclay:** As my hon. Friend recognises in her question, that is a decision for Her Majesty's Treasury, but I am very happy to highlight with the Chancellor the case that she brings to the attention of the House.

T9. [901181] **Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Lab):** Many people in the Chamber will know of my passion for addressing alcohol harm and addiction. However, 2022 marks a decade since the last alcohol strategy was introduced, and a decade of Government inaction. With deaths reaching the highest level in 20 years and the number of those drinking at high risk rising steadily, what plans do Ministers have to introduce a new comprehensive alcohol strategy to reduce the number of lives lost to alcohol harm and save the vast cost that alcohol imposes on our society?

**Maggie Throup:** I have heard the hon. Gentleman speak passionately about the impact alcohol has had on his family, and I commend him for his continued campaigning on the matter. It is not just about plans; it is about action. Through the drugs strategy, we are making the largest ever single increase in drug treatment and recovery funding, with £532 million being invested to rebuild local authority-commissioned treatment services. That will benefit people seeking support for alcohol addiction, as alcohol and drugs services are often commissioned together. In addition, £27 million has been invested in an ambitious programme to establish alcohol care teams in the 25% of hospitals that are most affected by alcohol dependency.

**Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con):** Last week, I chaired a joint meeting of the all-party parliamentary groups on maternity and on baby loss, where we heard from bereaved parents, maternity staff, and the fabulous and dedicated Donna Ockenden. Given that the women's health strategy is about to be published, can the Minister or the Secretary of State reassure everybody in the sector that it will address maternity safety and the maternity staff numbers we so badly need?

**The Minister of State, Department for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):** I thank my hon. Friend for all her hard work campaigning on pregnancy and baby loss. We will publish the women's health strategy shortly. Baby loss featured heavily in the call for evidence, and we committed to provide more than £200 million of funding to improve maternity staffing after the Ockenden review.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Today's Order Paper states that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has released three statements. Two have been released—those on dental system improvement and the health update on the Down Syndrome Act 2022—but there is no sign of the Department of Health and Social Care update. We have just had the last oral questions to the Department of Health and Social Care for three months, so will you advise me what we can do to ensure that statements are released in time to be referred to in ministerial Question Time?

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Lady for notice of her point of order. The Government's guidance states:

"Written statements should be issued at 9.30am where possible...If the statement cannot be issued by 12.30pm, the department should endeavour to notify the Chair of the relevant select committee and/or any other member with an interest."

It states that that should include "Opposition front bench spokespersons". Hopefully, the Chief Whip has heard the message and will want to deal with it.

## Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement: Scrutiny

12.39 pm

**Anthony Mangnall** (Totnes) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade if she will make a statement on the Australia-UK free trade agreement and the scrutiny process.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Mr Ranil Jayawardena)**: I have been asked to reply. Our Anglo-Australian trade deal will play an important role in levelling up the United Kingdom. It is expected to increase trade with Australia by 53%, boost the economy by £2.3 billion and add £900 million to the wages of hard-working households across our country in the long run. Her Majesty's Government have stated on a number of occasions that the agreement will be ratified only once it has passed its statutory scrutiny period under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 and, in addition, the necessary implementing legislation must have passed.

Her Majesty's Government have made extensive additional scrutiny commitments, which include allowing a reasonable amount of time for the Select Committees to produce reports prior to the statutory scrutiny period under CRAg. We further set out that, for the Australia deal, this would be a period of at least three months. In actual fact, double the amount of time has now been provided: the agreement has been available for scrutiny for over six months. I should also point out that, before starting CRAg, Her Majesty's Government published two reports to support scrutiny: the independent Trade and Agriculture Commission's report on 13 April, and the Government's own report under section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020 on 6 June. Both reports were provided to the relevant Select Committees prior to publication to support their scrutiny work.

Her Majesty's Government have now started the CRAg process, following this six-month scrutiny period, which was in addition to the statutory period provided for by CRAg. By the end of the CRAg period on 20 July, the treaty will have been under the scrutiny of this House for over seven months. The House will undoubtedly have benefited from reports from three separate Select Committees—the International Trade Committee, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and the International Agreements Committee in the other place.

In addition, the agreement can only be ratified once Parliament has scrutinised and passed the implementing legislation in the usual way. The agreement requires primary legislation, and the Trade (Australia and New Zealand) Bill is currently before the House of Commons and will have its Second Reading in due course. This legislation will be fully scrutinised and approved by Parliament in the usual way. I should point out that we expect Australia to conclude its parliamentary process before we do. Therefore, any delay to our process slows the deal's economic benefits from being felt across Britain.

Let me say this to my hon. Friend: he knows that my brief usually covers other markets, but the principles remain the same. In my view, it is important to strike the right balance between the scrutiny of trade deals and

bringing them into effect in a timely way so that our consumers and businesses can reap their full rewards. I believe that the balance is right, and that this House and my Department should continue to harness the power of trade to create jobs, boost wages and secure prosperity.

**Anthony Mangnall**: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question on the Australia free trade agreement. The UQ is supported by the whole International Trade Committee and the Chair, the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil), who cannot be with us but is here in the guise of his favourite Scottish export spirit—whisky, of course. The Chair of the Select Committee and I have very different perspectives on the Australia free trade agreement, but despite that we both wholeheartedly believe in the need for scrutiny in this place of that agreement.

This is the first wholly new trade agreement that we have signed since leaving the European Union, but unfortunately it has not had the scrutiny it deserves. On 8 October 2020, the then International Trade Secretary, who is now the Foreign Secretary, said that

“we will have a world-leading scrutiny process, comparable with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. That will mean the International Trade Committee scrutinising a signed version of the deal and producing a report to Parliament, a debate taking place and then, through the CRAg...process, Parliament can block any trade deal if it is not happy with it.”—[*Official Report*, 8 October 2020; Vol. 681, c. 1004.]

I ask the Minister whether the Government are still committed to that point of principle. The Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for International Trade have made those commitments to right hon. and hon. Members of this House, and we deserve our say on a trade agreement that makes a significant difference. On the Australia free trade agreement, the Government began the 21-day CRAg process before the International Trade Committee had even produced its report and even before the Secretary of State had come before us to defend the agreement in the first place. The Government refused to grant the Committee's request for 15 sitting days between the publication of the section 42 report and triggering CRAg, thus denying us more scrutiny. As I have already said, the Government have failed to provide a Minister in good time and good order. In relation to the first report the Committee wrote on this, the Secretary of State was asked eight times to come before the Committee to discuss the agreement. She only did so a week and a half ago. The Government have failed to provide a debate and a vote on the agreement, so will the Minister, as the Liaison Committee and many other Members across the House have asked, delay ratification for the further 21 days and allow us to have a proper debate on this issue? Will he ensure that every future free trade agreement is signed and drawn through the CRAg process, as you have suggested, Mr Speaker? Will he ensure that Ministers are made available to discuss trade agreements ahead of time?

We are asking for nothing that we have not been promised at the Dispatch Box. It is time we are given that.

**Mr Jayawardena**: We have a system that compares very well with other parliamentary systems around the world. We will not be extending the CRAg period, given

[Mr Jayawardena]

the extensive scrutiny time that Parliament has had—as I set out earlier, seven months by the end of the period—and we will not be able to offer a debate. The Secretary of State said that she felt the agreement could benefit from a general debate, but that is a matter for business managers in this House. The Labour party was very keen to have another debate yesterday, which took a whole day of parliamentary business from this House.

The section 42 report is there to inform the scrutiny period, not create an additional scrutiny period above and beyond CRaG. We published that report on 6 June. As my hon. Friend says, it was sent to the International Trade Committee, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the International Agreements Committee in the other place on 27 May to ensure they had ample time to consider the report. There is a balance, as I say, between ensuring sufficient time for robust scrutiny and ensuring agreements come into place quickly. I think we have got that balance right.

On CRaG, the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 was introduced by the Labour party. It gave the opportunity for parliamentary disapproval of treaties statutory effect and it gave the House of Commons the power to block ratification. Members across the House will know the answer to that. I am more than willing to set out the process, but in the interests of time and allowing people to come in I shall sit down for now.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Secretary of State, Nick Thomas-Symonds.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab):** I am grateful for the granting of today's urgent question and I congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) on securing it.

The Government's failure to make adequate parliamentary time available for a debate on this trade deal is completely unacceptable and a clear breach of promise. Lord Grimstone wrote in May 2020:

"The Government does not envisage a new FTA proceeding to ratification without a debate first having taken place on it".

The Select Committee has, rightly, been scathing about the way the Government have handled scrutiny on this issue and about their premature triggering of the 21-day CRaG process without full Select Committee consideration being available to Members. Today's clear rejection of an extension to the CRaG process is, yet again, unacceptable behaviour from the Government.

The truth is that Ministers are running away from scrutiny. Might Ministers be running away because of the Select Committee's report stating they lack a "coherent trade strategy"? Or might the Government be hiding from scrutiny because of the chaos at the Department itself? Members do not have to take my word for it. Yesterday, the Secretary of State was saying of her own Minister of State for Trade Policy, the right hon. Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt), that there has been a

"number of times when she hasn't been available which would have been useful and other Ministers have picked up the pieces".

That is her own Minister. Maybe the Under-Secretary of State for International Trade, the hon. Member for North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena), is one of the

Ministers who has been picking up the pieces. Or might Ministers be hiding because of the lack of progress in their trade policy, with no comprehensive trade deal with the US in sight?

There are profound consequences for our agricultural sector from the Australian deal that Ministers should be open about and accountable for. Is it any wonder that Australia's former negotiator at the WTO said:

"I don't think we have ever done as well as this"?

To put it quite simply, when are Ministers going to stop running away from their own failure?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I think that, actually, we have a very good deal that the Government should be proud of and which will benefit the British people. As I said—perhaps the right hon. Gentleman was not listening—this will increase trade with Australia by 53%, boost our economy by £2.3 billion and add £900 million to household wages in the long run. In fact, £132 million of exports already go from Wales to Australia. We want to boost that even further to benefit the people of Wales and his constituency.

As for what my noble Friend Lord Grimstone said, processes for the other place are a matter for the other place. It is clear that the Labour party is so focused on process that they are not focused on securing the benefits for the British people of Brexit.

**Mims Davies (Mid Sussex) (Con):** The Minister recently joined the second SussExport event at Wiston House, which aimed to boost Sussex trade and our global reach. This is a vital first trade deal. Does the Minister believe that its positive delivery will boost crucial further success, including more jobs, meaning that it can deliver on the SussExport objectives?

**Mr Jayawardena:** My hon. Friend did a great deal to create jobs across the United Kingdom in her previous role and she continues to bang the drum for her constituency. It was a pleasure to visit the SussExport event. I believe that tariff-free trade for all British exports will deliver great benefits for businesses in Sussex, including the Bolney wine estate, which I look forward to visiting with her in due course.

**Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP):** This deal will punish the food and farming sectors—that is not my conclusion; it comes from the Government's departmental advice. Those civil servants join the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the National Farmers Union, trade experts and academics. The Prime Minister's former food tsar has outlined Australia's

"abysmal record on deforestation, animal welfare and climate".

The benefits of the deal are pennies compared with the amount that we are losing from not trading as much with our EU neighbours. The Minister is a temp, in place under a lame-duck Prime Minister in a dysfunctional Government. Why is this deal not being brought forward for parliamentary scrutiny, as was promised in this Chamber? Why are the Government flouting their own advice? Why are they happy to sacrifice the food and farming sector? Why would they press ahead with the prospect of job losses, higher food bills and fewer safeguards on food standards? This deal should be halted until we get answers. Scottish households, farmers



and businesses deserve better than these acts of wilful harm. They must be given the chance to choose better than this place.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I see that the hon. Gentleman is in his usual mood, talking about trade in one way in the Chamber and the opportunities of trade outside it. The truth is that £333 million of exports from Scotland go to Australia. We want to boost that in the years ahead, and this deal is the way in which we can do that. He refers to me as a temp, but he might want to look at employment law, because I have been in this role for 26 months. I am very pleased that we have now secured trade agreements with 71 countries around the world, covering trade worth £800 billion. That is how we are delivering for the British people. He talks about Britain's departure from the European Union. Of course, he wants to depart from the United Kingdom, breaking away from the British internal market, which delivers for the people of Scotland.

**Mrs Flick Drummond** (Meon Valley) (Con): What assessment has my hon. Friend made of the impact on agriculture of this deal, with reference to our need to maintain our domestic food production as a strategic sovereign capacity?

**Mr Jayawardena:** My hon. Friend is rightly thoughtful in this area. Food security remains important. As a result of the challenges faced in the last 26 months because of covid and the war in Ukraine, I have seen this for myself. It is right that we back our farmers. It is really important that we seek new markets in which they can secure greater value for their products, which will encourage them to continue to farm more land more productively. I assure the House that the Trade and Agriculture Commission said that the deal does not require the United Kingdom to change her existing levels of statutory protection in relation to animal or plant life, or health, animal welfare and environmental protections, so there is no threat in that regard.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): I sit on both the International Trade Committee and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. The latter is doing an inquiry into CRaG. We heard clearly from legal experts last week that it is unprecedented for the Government to ratify a treaty before the implementing legislation has been passed. The fact that the Government are trying to ratify the treaty through the CRaG process before that is surely problematic. In addition, the fact that CRaG only allows a treaty to be stopped through a debate and then a vote in this Parliament means that the denial of a debate is the denial of the CRaG process, in the spirit in which it was written. I beg the Minister to reconsider his foolish urgency on this matter, delay CRaG by 21 days—that would not delay the ratification of the treaty, because the implementation legislation is still needed—and give us a debate.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I do not think that seven months is rushing anything. This agreement can be ratified only once Parliament has scrutinised and passed the implementing legislation in the usual way.

**Jack Brereton** (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): There are huge opportunities from the Australia trade agreement for the ceramics industry in Stoke-on-Trent. Does my

hon. Friend agree that it is vital that we get on with delivering that and delivering the jobs and opportunities for industries in the midlands and the north?

**Mr Jayawardena:** My hon. Friend has done great work at the Department for International Trade and I am delighted that he has championed the Potteries today. The wider region and the west midlands as a whole make £37 million-worth of exports to Australia. He is absolutely right that this deal, unlocking the benefits of Brexit, will secure new opportunities for businesses across his region and beyond.

**Sir Mark Hendrick** (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): In October 2020, the then International Trade Secretary—the current Foreign Secretary—set out the CRaG process for Parliament to have a say in the scrutiny of international treaties. This procedure should allow Parliament 21 sitting days to scrutinise the final text. It is disgraceful that adequate time has not been allocated for proper parliamentary debate in this Chamber and scrutiny of the first trade deal to be negotiated from scratch—the Australia-UK free trade agreement. Is it not the case that the Government are becoming arrogant and no longer feel that they need to be accountable to Parliament for their actions? What sort of precedent does this set for the scrutiny of trade agreements?

**Mr Jayawardena:** Officials from my Department and the Secretary of State have given evidence to three separate parliamentary Committees on six occasions since the Australia deal was signed in December. There is clearly a lot of scrutiny and this Government are making themselves accountable to the British people through Parliament. The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act allows the Commons to resolve against ratification. He will know that process because it was introduced by the last Labour Government.

**Alicia Kearns** (Rutland and Melton) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) on securing this important urgent question. The Minister knows that I have enormous respect for him—he is one of the most diligent and effective Ministers—and there is much to commend in this deal, but many of us made a great number of reassurances to our farmers and food producers that there would be a debate on the Floor of the House following promises that were made at the Government Dispatch Box. What am I meant to say to farmers across Rutland, Melton, the Vale and Harborough villages when they ask why I was not given the chance to have my say in a debate on this important trade deal?

**Mr Jayawardena:** My hon. Friend champions food production, including the opportunities for pork pies to be exported around the world. I look forward to making sure that the tariff-free arrangements from this deal deliver for farmers in her constituency and beyond. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade Policy also believes that this is really important—as the Minister responsible for this deal—and the Secretary of State has long talked about the opportunity, as has the Foreign Secretary, for food production across the United Kingdom in seeking new eaters around the world.

**Sarah Green** (Chesham and Amersham) (LD): It is not too late: the Minister can extend the period for parliamentary consideration by another 21 days, and I call on him to do just that. UK farmers are facing ongoing labour shortages and rising costs on farms. These problems have been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, and this deal will open our doors to imported food while doing nothing to support farmers in the UK. What protections have been put in place to ensure that imported food meets the high animal welfare standards in the UK?

**Mr Jayawardena:** The first part of the hon. Lady's question has been asked and answered, and the Trade and Agriculture Commission has answered the second part, on statutory protections. As I said earlier, the TAC says:

"The FTA does not require the UK to change its existing levels of statutory protection in relation to animal or plant life or health, animal welfare and environmental protection."

It goes on to say—I am sure the hon. Lady has read this, but perhaps, given the time that has passed in the scrutiny of the deal, she has forgotten it—that the FTA "goes beyond WTO rights and obligations"

in some instances, including the requirement for

"the UK and Australia to aim for high standards of protection in their environmental and animal welfare laws".

**Paul Bristow** (Peterborough) (Con): I chair the all-party parliamentary group on CANZUK, a campaign group that presses for closer relations between Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. I welcome this free trade agreement with Australia and want it to be in place as soon as possible. At the same time, we want a trade deal with New Zealand and accession to the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership, and hopefully we will see something big and bold with Canada soon. However, does the Minister recognise that this is just the start for us, and will he commit himself to a multilateral trade agreement between all four CANZUK countries as soon as possible?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his work in support of bringing the CANZUK nations closer together. He is right that this is just the beginning. Not only have we secured trade deals with 71 countries around the world plus the EU, covering trade worth £800 billion, but we are now applying for accession to the CPTPP, which includes Australia, New Zealand and Canada, to deepen our trade ties even further. In his region, the east of England, there are already £498 million-worth of exports to Australia and £81 million-worth of exports to New Zealand. With his championing of business in Peterborough, I am sure those will increase even further.

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): The Minister is deliberately choosing to miss the point of the urgent question. However much he grins at the Dispatch Box, it will not alter that fact. This is not about whether the deal is good or bad; it is about the fact that this is the first trade deal to come before the House, and about whether scrutiny has been delivered in an acceptable way. As you know, Mr Speaker, the scrutiny belongs to the whole of this House of Commons, not simply to a Select Committee. The Minister must explain how we will get that scrutiny, because he is not doing it in a UQ.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I am very happy to set out the process of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, introduced by the last Labour Government. For the first time, it gave statutory effect to the opportunity for parliamentary disapproval of treaties, and the process is—

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** How?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I am very happy to set out the process, Mr Speaker, if you allow me the time. There are four points. First, the Government may not ratify the treaty for 21 sitting days—days when both Houses are sitting—after it was laid before Parliament. Secondly, if within those 21 sitting days either House resolves that the treaty should not be ratified by agreeing a motion on the Floor of the House, the Government must lay before Parliament a statement setting out their reasons for nevertheless wanting to ratify. Thirdly, if the Commons resolved against ratification, regardless of whether the Lords did or did not, a further period of 21 sitting days is triggered from when the Government's statement is laid. During that period, the Government cannot ratify the treaty. Fourthly, if the Commons again resolves against ratification during that period, the process is repeated. That can continue indefinitely, in effect giving the Commons the power to block ratification. Of course, that is what the Opposition want—to block the opportunities of Brexit from this trade deal.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): The first thing that leaps out from the stats on the website of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is the export of 159 billion Australian dollars-worth of goods and services each year to communist China. The integrated review of 2021 stated that China posed a "systemic challenge" to UK interests, yet here we are attempting to sign a free trade deal with—I will be blunt, Mr Speaker—a state that has been enabling communist China to build capacity, clamp down on dissent and tighten its grip on Hong Kong with exports of raw materials for its economic needs. Can we assume that the Secretary of State will be ignoring the findings of his own Government in the integrated review and supporting China's application to join the CPTPP alongside the UK and Australia, as he mentioned at the Dispatch Box only a moment ago?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I welcome that question, actually. The challenges—[*Interruption.*] Opposition Members heckle, but the challenges posed by those who do not play by the rules are challenges we should face head on. We are not currently a member of the CPTPP, otherwise known as the trans-Pacific partnership—the TPP—so it is not within our gift to support or block anyone from joining it, but what is clear is that we are first in the queue, we are looking forward to joining it, and we believe that like-minded nations who play by the rules should trade more with one another.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Government made a promise to the House that there would be a debate, and the Government have broken that promise. That sets a very bad precedent, precisely because this is the first trade deal that was not rolling over a deal we had previously. Although the Minister has rejected a debate for the scrutiny of this agreement, can he give

the House a commitment today that for any subsequent trade deals, there will be a debate on the Floor of the House?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I think the balance that we have is right. We have already been clear that we—*[Interruption.]* They ask the questions but they do not want to hear the answers. We have been clear that we would seek to accommodate a request for a debate if one were made by the Committee, subject to parliamentary time being available. The Secretary of State reinforced that before the International Trade Committee on 6 July—the right hon. Gentleman is right to talk about what we have said—saying that she felt the agreement could benefit from “general debate”. However, the business managers have not been able to schedule a general debate before the CRAg period ends on 20 July.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): The Minister seems to think we should all just calm down about standards, but the text of the deal does not set out crucial conditionality or equivalence on imports based on animal welfare standards used in production. The absence of such equivalence language means that products produced to lower standards will enter the UK market. That is a fact, not spin, so I will ask again: what support do the UK Government intend to offer our farmers and food producers so that they can fairly compete?

**Mr Jayawardena:** That question has been asked and answered, but I will answer it again. The Trade and Agriculture Commission has set out that this deal

“does not require the UK to change its existing levels of statutory protection in relation to animal or plant life or health, animal welfare and environmental protection.”

I hope that provides the hon. Lady and her farmers with reassurance.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) and the other members of the International Trade Committee on standing up for this Parliament. The way the Government are behaving is a disgrace. The Minister knows that there is widespread concern about the lowering of standards in this trade deal, particularly around the use of antibiotics on livestock and harmful pesticides. That is one of the key reasons why it is right that this House should have the opportunity to debate what is in the trade deal. Will the Minister give an undertaking that we will be able properly to scrutinise it and other trade deals in the future?

**Mr Jayawardena:** Asked and answered, Mr Speaker, but the truth is that the deal removes tariffs on all British exports to Australia, which will make us more competitive and able to sell iconic products such as cars, Scotch whisky and fashion to Australia more easily. Flexible rules of origin will also mean that British businesses can use some imported parts and ingredients and still qualify for nil tariffs when exporting to Australia. The Committee and the House have had the opportunity to scrutinise that for seven months.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): I remind the House of my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) not just on securing the urgent question, but on the vigour with which he prosecuted it. What the Minister has told us today is not what we were promised by way of scrutiny, and it is not adequate, especially since we now know that the current Foreign Secretary, when she was Secretary of State for International Trade, was warned that this deal would be bad for British farmers and food producers. Will the Minister take back to Government business managers the message that the House needs to be given the debate and vote that we were promised, and that in order to inform the debate, all the advice that was given to the then International Trade Secretary and her successor is required to be published?

**Mr Jayawardena:** Again, that question has already been asked and answered, but I will provide the House with a little additional information. This deal—and I am sure that the House has looked at it over the past six months, which will be seven months by the end of the CRAg process—goes further than Australia has ever gone in giving services companies access to the Australian market, which means that firms from architecture to law to financial services to shipping will be able to compete in the Australian market on a guaranteed equal footing. That is great news for every part of our United Kingdom, and I am sure that the House has looked at it over the past six months—seven months by the end of the process.

**Bill Esterson** (Sefton Central) (Lab): Promises were made during the passage of two trade Bills, and those promises—for a debate on the Floor of the House before ratification—have been repeated ever since by Ministers. The Minister knows only too well that scrutiny after ratification is no scrutiny at all, so why have the Government not used the seven months that he keeps talking about to bring a debate to the Floor of the House, and why are they so against scrutiny of an agreement with such profound consequences for farming, food production and animal welfare?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I am afraid I disagree with the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. We are not against scrutiny, and indeed we have been open to scrutiny for six months—seven months by the end of the process. I would ask the hon. Gentleman why Scottish National party Members are so against this trade agreement, which secures a benefit of Brexit for people of our country.

**Stephen Flynn** (Aberdeen South) (SNP): Is it the lowering of food standards, is it a couple of pence off a bottle of wine, or is it perhaps a colossal 0.08% of GDP growth that should most excite the people of Scotland about the fact that we left the European Union in order to sign this trade deal?

**Mr Jayawardena:** Once again, SNP Members demonstrate that they are anti-trade. I do not think they have ever supported a trade deal in the House, but they will correct me if I am wrong. These are the figures that should excite the people of Scotland, and indeed the people of our whole United Kingdom, given that the UK internal market is Scotland's biggest trading partner. This deal will increase trade with Australia by 53%, boost the economy by £2.3 billion, and put £900 million into the pockets of people across the United Kingdom.



**Derek Twigg** (Halton) (Lab): We have heard criticism today not just from the Opposition Benches but from the Government Benches—and I say to the hon. Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) that in my years in this House I have heard few such forensic and detailed assessments of the way in which the Government are ignoring the importance of scrutiny and democracy. The Minister, and the Government, did promise that there would be scrutiny by the House—that was made very clear—so may I ask the Minister why he thinks it is a good idea for the House not to scrutinise and debate this trade agreement before the Government ratify it?

**Mr Jayawardena:** This House, and the Committees of this House and indeed the other place, have already had six months to scrutinise the agreement, and they will have had seven months by the end of the period.

**Dave Doogan** (Angus) (SNP): This deal was signed in December 2021, and Parliament has never had an opportunity to scrutinise it properly and vote on it prior to ratification. The Secretary of State for International Trade has bottled it twice at the Select Committee, and she has clearly bottled it today, which is why the Minister is here: he has already admitted that this is not his brief. What is it that the Government do not get? Why are they opening up Scottish farmers to a country that is 30 times larger than the United Kingdom? Although the Trade and Agriculture Commission has said that we do not have to review our standards, it is not our standards we are worried about; it is Australian standards.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I am not sure that that question really made sense, but let me try and draw some points from what the hon. Gentleman said. The truth is that the Government gave a commitment that the CRAg process would be followed. As I made clear earlier, the Government said that we would seek to accommodate a request for a debate, but that that was subject to the availability of parliamentary time. If the hon. Gentleman wants to read other words into what was said, that is up to him, but that is what the record shows.

**Helen Morgan** (North Shropshire) (LD): When I have spoken to farmers in my constituency, they have said that they are very concerned about the deal. They have used phrases such as “sold out” and “bargained away”. They want us to come here and represent their views, because they feel that this deal sets a precedent for all the future trade deals that will come along. It is important for us to have the opportunity to reflect their concerns in this place, and I ask the Minister to reconsider.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I am delighted to represent some great farmers as well, in North East Hampshire. Across the United Kingdom, our farmers need to have the opportunities to export to the world. For instance, some meats are twice the price in Asia as they are in Europe. The ability of our farmers to access these new markets through CPTPP, of which Australia is a core member, is a great opportunity, which we should be seizing.

**Paul Girvan** (South Antrim) (DUP): We have not had an opportunity to discuss this deal in detail with the Minister, either in Committee or on the Floor of the

House, and there are many other deals on the table. Will this be the form for the future, or will we be addressing the matter after today?

**Mr Jayawardena:** The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 is the statutory footing on which treaties are looked at and ratified and provides for a scrutiny period. To ensure that the House has the opportunity to look at future deals, we have made additional offers, as the House has had on this occasion. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade appeared before the International Trade Committee recently, and she and the Committee were able to follow up these questions and others. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House also wrote to the Committee on 18 July to confirm that there would not be a debate before the summer recess owing to intense pressure on the parliamentary timetable.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The Minister laughed when Brexit was mentioned earlier, but it is no laughing matter for the Scottish seafood sector, which has been hammered by Brexit, and it is no laughing matter for farmers who have no access to labour to pick the fruit and veg in their fields. The Government’s own impact assessment on this free trade agreement shows that the British agriculture, forestry and fishing sector will lose £94 million a year and the food processing sector will lose £225 million a year. Given how important Scotland is to the overall UK food and drink sector, when will we see the publication of an impact assessment that shows the actual impact in Scotland of that hit of more than £300 million a year?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I sometimes fear that some Opposition Members have a permanent sense of humour failure. The facts about the deal are these. It will deliver the benefits of trade to people, businesses and communities in every corner of our United Kingdom: this is how we level up the country. As I have explained, it is expected to increase trade with Australia and put money into people’s pockets, including the pockets of people in Scotland. It means that 100% of tariffs on British exports have been eliminated—and that includes Scottish businesses, which now have guaranteed access to the Australian market, and indeed the ability, across industry, to bid for public sector contracts worth about £10 billion. This is a great opportunity for businesses across Scotland and our whole United Kingdom; and let me just remind the hon. Gentleman that we have secured the best deal that the European Union has ever secured with anyone—a zero-quota, zero-tariff deal.

**Richard Foord** (Tiverton and Honiton) (LD): Jilly Greed farms near where I live in Devon. She is a co-founder of Ladies in Beef, and this is what she wrote about the trade deal:

“This is like Christmas all over for Australia. There are currently 3,700 tonnes of product coming in from Australia. The agreement will increase it to 45 times that in 15 years.”

Are the Government afraid that the true extent of the damage to west country farmers from this trade deal would be laid bare by full parliamentary scrutiny?

**Mr Jayawardena:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to this place, even though I perhaps disagree with some of his principles. None the less, I hope that I will convert



him to the cause, because of the opportunities that lie ahead for farmers in the west country and beyond. The truth is that this deal secures new opportunities for those farmers to export to the world. It is part of a plan, as my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Paul Bristow) mentioned, that secures access to the CPTPP, and that involves the new trade deals that we are negotiating right now in the Gulf, which the NFU has welcomed, and India.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I just dinnae like this deal, on top of which it sets a dangerous precedent for our future trade deals with nations such as India, Mexico and Canada, where we will be dealing with far more sensitive products such as eggs, pork and chicken meat. Why is the Minister pressing ahead with it without the promised scrutiny?

**Mr Jayawardena:** Asked and answered, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Right. We now come to the next urgent question, from Dame Diana Johnson.

## Contaminated Blood Scandal: Interim Payments for Victims

1.20 pm

**Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will make it statement on the Government's policy on interim payments for victims of the contaminated blood scandal.

**The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Michael Ellis):** I thank the right hon. Lady for her question. I note that she does not appear to be seeking the full debate that I recently wrote to her in support of, and I would commend my recent letter to her, wherein I suggested that perhaps a full debate would be in order when the House resumes, if the Leader of the House will agree. I frequently pay tribute to her, as she knows, for her long-standing work on this issue, and I ask her to accept from me that other people are also working hard on it, including my officials and officials from across Whitehall. She has been a resolute advocate for her constituent—also through her all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood—and I am seeking also to support the wider community of people who have been affected by this appalling tragedy.

The specific question that the right hon. Lady raises today concerns the compensation framework study. This was produced by Sir Robert Francis QC and was commissioned by my predecessor in her then capacity as sponsor Minister for the infected blood inquiry. I can tell the House that it was delivered to me as the current sponsor Minister for the infected blood inquiry only in March. Sir Robert had been asked to give independent advice about the design of a workable and fair framework for compensation for victims of infected blood that could be ready to implement upon the conclusion of the inquiry, should its findings and recommendations require it.

The Government published Sir Robert's study some six weeks ago on 7 June. Sir Robert then gave evidence about his work to the inquiry last week, on 11 and 12 July. His evidence was quite detailed, quite lengthy, quite technical and forensic. As hon. Members will appreciate, Sir Robert's study is a comprehensive and detailed one. It reflects the contributions of many victims and their recognised legal representatives, and of the campaign groups who have been representing the infected and affected communities so well. In total, Sir Robert makes no fewer than 19 recommendations that span the full spectrum of considerations for the creation, status and delivery of a framework, including non-financial compensation, for victims—both individuals who were infected by contaminated blood or blood products and those whose lives were affected after their loved ones or family members received infected blood or infected blood products.

The Government are grateful to Sir Robert for his thorough examination of these complex questions and the detailed submissions, and I wish to assure all those who have taken part that the Government are focused on making a prompt response. One of Sir Robert's recommendations, and the focus of the right hon. Lady's question today, is that the Government should consider making interim compensation payments to infected blood

[Michael Ellis]

support scheme beneficiaries before a compensation scheme is established, in the interest of speeding up justice and giving some level of assurance and security to those who may not live to see the end of the inquiry. My colleagues and I are particularly and keenly aware of this reality. After all, it was this Conservative Government under my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May)—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. This is a very important debate but I do not think that people have advised the Minister on this and he is way over time. I do not know who has written his speech for him, but there are lots of people wanting to get in and a lot of business ahead. I presume he is nearly at the end.

**Michael Ellis:** Yes, Mr Speaker, just two paragraphs left. I apologise if I have run over.

I was saying that my colleagues and I are keenly aware of this reality. After all, it was this Conservative Government under my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead that launched the inquiry in the first place and it was this Government under the current Prime Minister that commissioned the compensation framework study last year.

To conclude, I can confirm to the right hon. Lady and the House that officials across Government are making haste to address this as quickly and thoroughly as possible. However, responsible government requires proper and careful consideration of how complex and important schemes can and should work, and it will take a little more time for the work to be completed.

**Mr Speaker:** Can I just say that we need to advise Ministers of how much time they have? When people are putting speeches together, can they please try to work within the allocated time, because all these Members here have great interest in this issue and need to get in.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** Thank you for granting this urgent question today, Mr Speaker. The response from the Paymaster General is yet again wholly inadequate and insulting to those who have suffered so much over so many years. With over 3,000 people dead and over 419 of them dying in the five years since the public inquiry was called, and with one person dying every four days on average, people cannot wait a day longer than necessary.

As the Paymaster General set out at length, to avoid further delays the Government asked Sir Robert Francis QC in May 2021 to undertake a parallel in-depth review of financial compensation ahead of the overall public inquiry concluding. Sir Robert found a “compelling case” for interim payments of at least £100,000 to those affected. Ministers have had these recommendations since March but they refused to publish them, saying that they wanted to publish their response at the same time. We waited and waited, then the review was leaked to *The Sunday Times* newspaper and the Government finally published in early June but not with their promised Government response. Last week, as the Paymaster General said, Sir Robert gave oral evidence at the public inquiry on 11 and 12 July, making the case again for interim payments.

The Government have already, rightly, granted £30 million of interim compensation for the Post Office Horizon IT scandal long before its public inquiry concludes, as well as interim payments for the Windrush scandal, but not for infected blood. Given the undoubted urgency, on 15 July Sir Brian Langstaff QC started a 10-day consultation on using his own powers to recommend interim payments ahead of his final report to which the Government will need to respond. Its 25 July deadline comes after the House enters the summer recess. As Mr Speaker has repeatedly said, this House should hear announcements first.

After decades of cover-up and appalling treatment, what exactly is preventing the Minister from announcing today, before the summer recess, that the interim payments recommended by the Government’s own independent reviewer will be paid? If not now, when? What is the timetable for the announcement on interim payments and on a response to the wider review? Will the Paymaster General tell me when we will see the Government’s submission, which I am sure his officials are preparing, to the independent inquiry on interim payments that Sir Brian has set up?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I gave the right hon. Lady some injury time there because the Minister overran, but I remind everybody that it is normally three minutes and two minutes.

**Michael Ellis:** I am conscious of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker’s admonitions about speed, so I will be brief. The Government will need to reflect carefully on the very detailed evidence that Sir Robert gave only last week in two days of evidence. That forensic detail included issues such as scope, the types of benefit, the legal issues and the legislative issues. There is a great deal of complexity and interconnectedness in this matter, and we want to get it right. We will act, as we have done, as a responsible Government throughout this process. We will continue to do that.

**Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con):** I speak as the co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on HIV and AIDS. Due to ignorance about HIV and a lack of understanding about how it is transmitted, many people assumed that people with haemophilia were infected with AIDS, which forced so many to hide their haemophilia for fear of the stigma and discrimination. Frankly, they have suffered enough.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), the then Prime Minister, announced this inquiry when I joined the Department of Health as a Minister five years ago, and we are still here. An urgent question from the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) in the last week of term has become a staple, but it should not be needed. Is work under way to identify people who will be eligible for the interim compensation payment scheme, or are the Government still considering whether there should be such a scheme? That is an important distinction, and my affected constituents would like to know the answer.

**Michael Ellis:** The whole matter is still being considered. There are 19 recommendations, and my officials are working hard across Whitehall on the matter. It is unfair and inaccurate to characterise this as having made no progress over the years. Of course it made no

progress, or hardly any progress, for many, many years after the infected blood scandal began. Since my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead began the inquiry, considerable progress has been made and is being made.

**Fleur Anderson** (Putney) (Lab): I thank Mr Speaker for granting this urgent question.

I start by paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) for securing this urgent question and for her years of campaigning on behalf of the victims of this horrendous scandal. These excuses just do not wash. Where there is a political will, as we saw at the beginning of covid, the Government can act very fast, but we have seen the opposite of haste on this issue.

For too long, the contaminated blood community has been failed by Government and ignored by those who let their demands fall on deaf ears. Tragically, as a result of this delay, many members of the infected blood community will not live to see the outcome of this inquiry. The longer it goes on, the fewer victims will be around to see justice done. Is that what the Treasury wants to happen?

Justice delayed is justice denied, but this Government continue to hide behind more and more reviews. The Paymaster General, as he just said, received Sir Robert Francis's report on the compensation framework study four months ago and pledged to respond in due course, but what work is currently under way to respond to the report's 19 recommendations? How many meetings have been held? What is concretely being done?

With one person dying every four days as a result of infected blood, how does the Paymaster General justify his Department's slow response? The deadline for the response will now fall after the House enters its summer recess, but what is to stop him publishing his response early so that Parliament has the chance to scrutinise and debate the outcome? Does he agree with Sir Robert that there is a moral case for compensating victims and for getting on with it earlier? This inquiry also seeks to investigate why warnings about the safety of blood products may have been ignored, and why plans to make the UK self-sufficient in blood products were scrapped. What is the Paymaster General's assessment of these issues?

I pay tribute to the courage, resilience and determination of the survivors of the contaminated blood scandal, and their families, who have stayed in this fight for too long. It is time for answers.

**Michael Ellis:** My officials are working hard on this matter with the Department of Health and Social Care and across Whitehall. There are 19 recommendations, and we had Sir Robert Francis's very detailed and forensic evidence only last week. The matter is being given the fullest, speediest and most expeditious consideration, and I ask the hon. Lady to bear in mind that officials across Whitehall feel just as passionately as I do, and as the House does, about getting this right and doing the right thing for all those infected and affected.

**Damian Hinds** (East Hampshire) (Con): I very much welcome Sir Robert's comprehensive work, including the recommendation on expedited payments. I have corresponded with the Minister on this on behalf of my

constituents, and I am grateful to him for his reply and for expressing his understanding of the time sensitivity. I join others in urging him to look not only carefully but urgently at the case for expedited payments to people who will receive moneys through the compensation scheme anyway, given the passage of time and given how much these people have suffered through no fault of their own. They have been let down by the system.

**Michael Ellis:** My right hon. Friend's point, and the strength of it, is noted.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) on securing this urgent question. She chairs the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood tenaciously and quite superbly. I note the case of a young family in my constituency.

Sir Robert, in his evidence to the inquiry last week, said there should be no barrier to starting work now on setting up the compensation framework in advance of the end of the inquiry. He suggested that the appointing body be set up in shadow form to begin appointing panel members and gathering data on claims.

The report's first recommendation says there is "a strong moral case" for compensation. Do the Government agree that there is a strong moral case for compensating people affected by contaminated blood? How will they ensure interim payments are also available to bereaved partners, parents and children, many of whom have so far been excluded from support?

Finally, recommendation 15 says that all support payments from current support schemes should be raised by at least 5% above median earnings and should be guaranteed for life by legislation or secure Government undertaking. Will the Government commit to providing that security?

**Michael Ellis:** I recognise the power of the hon. Gentleman's point about his own constituents, and many hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the House will also have constituents who are affected. I cannot prejudge the matter, of course. Work is ongoing at haste, and a lot of analytical work needs to be done. We will have the answers to those questions as soon as we can.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): One of the first meetings I attended after being elected to this place in 2015 was a meeting of the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, and the campaign had already been running for many years. I have been contacted by a number of constituents who have still not received their compensation. They do not care about consultation or compensation frameworks. They need money. This is such a clear case of injustice. Will my right hon. and learned Friend please impress it upon the Prime Minister, before he leaves office, to make these interim payments now?

**Michael Ellis:** My hon. Friend's eloquent point is noted and will be relayed.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): My constituent Nick was infected with hepatitis C. When he died in 2012, he left behind his partner and a tiny baby. Ten years on, this little girl is about to go to



[Catherine West]

secondary school. These families cannot afford any more delay. Will the Minister pledge today that not only the living but those who have been so badly affected by the loss of a loved one over the decades will receive interim payments?

**Michael Ellis:** I cannot, at this moment, prejudge the ultimate decisions on this matter, but I can say that the matter has my full attention and the full attention of officials across Government, and it will be given the attention it so richly deserves.

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con): I speak as a member of the APPG on haemophilia and contaminated blood.

With Sir Robert Francis's report recommending that substantial compensation be paid to those infected and affected by contaminated blood and blood products, what conversations have taken place with Her Majesty's Treasury on allocating a sufficient budget to cover the costs between the Cabinet Office, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Treasury itself?

**Michael Ellis:** I cannot speak exactly to my hon. Friend's point, but the general point he makes is a good one. There are issues across Whitehall and across Government that need to be addressed in all these matters. As I have said, that work is continuing with DHSC and across Government.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): We have all heard what the Minister has said, and we all appreciate that he appears to be genuinely concerned, but does he appreciate that, for our constituents who have waited decades, too much time has already been wasted, too many people have died and too many families have been left to suffer without the compensation and justice they so richly deserve? Will he please say something today to reassure them that they will get more than just more words?

**Michael Ellis:** I hope I can relay, and have relayed, to the House my feelings on the matter, which I am sure are the same as feelings across this House. This is not a party political issue. It is one about which we all feel strongly and we recognise the matter for what it is. Having said that, I know that the hon. Lady will understand that we have to go through the requisite processes to make sure we get these things right, and that is what is happening. This is not a question of dilatoriness and of sitting on one's hands. Every effort is being made to process this matter as expeditiously as possible.

**Ian Lavery** (Wansbeck) (Lab): The contaminated blood victims are entitled to be fed up to the back teeth with bluster, delay and dithering from the Government. Two victims are dying each week. There are 208 victims who have died in Wales, 548 in Scotland, 100 in Northern Ireland and 3,000-plus in England. There are 419 victims who have died since the inquiry began in 2019. Sir Robert Francis stated in recommendation 14 of his report that interim payments should be paid without delay. Has that recommendation actually been costed? Will the Minister tell the House how many times his office has been in touch with the Treasury to discuss the compensation set out in recommendation 14?

**Michael Ellis:** I am very conscious of the passage of time from when the infected blood issue began many, many years ago—decades ago—and the inquiry that was begun by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead in 2019. I am conscious of the years that have elapsed and I reiterate what I have said about moving as expeditiously as possible.

**Paul Girvan** (South Antrim) (DUP): I want to speak and ask a question on behalf of a lifelong friend of mine who was born a haemophiliac. Unfortunately, as a young boy he ended up having factor VIII that was contaminated. He is now in his 60s; with the help and care of our health system he is still here. He has survived, but he has had to have a liver transplant. That gentle man has had to live a life where he has been somewhat living under shadow. Subsequent Governments have failed up to now to do anything. I thank the Minister for the movement that has been made up to now in relation to the report that is coming forward, but I have concerns about the payments, and I am asking for interim payments to be made urgently. This man's friends have all passed away and I feel that further delay means that we are just passing the ball further down the road. This is a UK-wide inquiry and I ask that if payments are made, they should be paid as UK-wide payments and not as money that will go into the block grant of devolved institutions, which, ultimately, might not make its way to those directly affected.

**Michael Ellis:** The hon. Gentleman makes his point with characteristic eloquence, and my heart goes out to his constituent in that appalling example. That is one of many tragic examples in this matter. I also note what he says about the Northern Ireland aspect of this and that matter will be given proper consideration.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): The fact that interim payments have been recommended implies that there is an urgency in compensating these people. It is five years since the inquiry was set up and more than 400 people have died since that time. So what is it about the 19 recommendations that links them to the interim payments? Why do the Government have to wait to respond to those 19 recommendations and not, as the report suggests, get on with the interim payments?

**Michael Ellis:** It is not as though the Government are waiting; the Government are working, across Whitehall, to produce results in the matter. There is no dilatoriness here; there is expedition on the part of my officials and officials across Government, and the wish to get the matter right.

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): The Irish Government established their compensation tribunal more than 25 years ago, yet the UK Government continue to leave victims facing death, without even basic justice for the harm done to them and their families. I remind the Paymaster General that this urgent question is about interim payments. Will he at least commit to moving forward now with key recommendation 14, on interim payments, rather than leaving victims and their families to face ongoing financial hardship?

**Michael Ellis:** I cannot prejudge the matter at this stage, for reasons that I have already given.



**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): The Paymaster General will know that 419 people have already died, and it is estimated that one will die every four days, so this is urgent. I respect the points he has made and believe that he wants this matter dealt with urgently. However, Sir Robert Francis reported in March; the Department is aware of the information and the forensic detail that the Paymaster General has referred to, and it promised a response to that when it published the report. That has not happened. To say that Sir Robert gave his evidence to the inquiry only last week is misleading the way in which this should be debated, because the information was known. Before he ever gave his evidence to the inquiry, the Government had that information, so why can they not act on the interim compensation payment, as Sir Brian Langstaff has said he wishes, at least to deal with the immediate hardship people are facing?

**Michael Ellis:** I hope the right hon. Gentleman will accept from me that the matter is complex, and that things are interconnected—I use that word advisedly—across Government, which makes them particularly complex. This may be more complex than other comparable schemes. I ask him and others to accept that everyone is working as fast as they can to achieve the right result on this matter.

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson): the Paymaster General's response was inadequate. Describing the people we are talking about—our constituents—as “tragic examples” is not helpful. I have three constituents affected, one of whom was infected with hepatitis C in the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital in the early 1980s. In January 2014, he found out that he had begun to develop cirrhosis of the liver. He has had to put his career on hold while he is having treatment, and he has had great stress and worry. It is only right that my constituents, and the others we are hearing about who have been affected by this scandal, receive the financial help and support that they deserve. How soon will the Government implement Sir Robert's recommendation that substantial interim payments be offered of no less than £100,000?

**Michael Ellis:** As soon as is reasonably possible.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): My constituent Linda Cannon lost her husband after he received a blood transfusion that infected him with hepatitis C. My constituent Vera Gaskin has stage two chronic cirrhosis of the liver, a serious and lifelong condition, which she got through contaminated blood. I have sat with both of my constituents and listened to them describe the impact on their life. I have been raising this matter for seven and a half years, and we are about to have our fourth Prime Minister in that time. Some 400 people have died since the inquiry started five years ago. Is the Government's strategy to wait for more people to die before they get justice—we can give people money right now, as has been recommended—or will the Government finally pull their finger out and give justice to the people affected by contaminated blood?

**Michael Ellis:** I am sorry, but the hon. Lady's question is unworthy. It is completely wrong to characterise anyone as waiting for people to pass on. That does not

do justice to the gravamen of the situation, or to the officials working on the matter. I reiterate that good people are working hard to get the right result on this matter. I hope she will reflect on that.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Most of us here represent constituents who are victims of the contaminated blood scandal. As they have waited for justice for so long, there is often quite a long gap between our hearing from them, and we wonder, “Have they moved away? Have they just been exhausted by the process? Are they too ill? Have they died?”. This is an extraordinary, cruel process, but also an unnecessary one. Interim payments are a common feature of personal injury litigation. We know exactly what they are, and they do not, by definition, prejudice the outcome of any inquiry. Just answer one question: what prejudice is there to the Government in making the interim payments now?

**Michael Ellis:** It is not a matter of prejudice. The Government have a responsibility to work these systems effectively and correctly, and they have to make decisions based on the complexity and interconnectedness of all these issues. The situation. The matter is not as the hon. Gentleman says; it is a question of getting these things right as speedily as possible.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I have constituents who were infected, and constituents who were affected by, and bereaved as a result of, the contaminated blood scandal. I pay tribute to all the campaigners, the all-party group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, the Factor 8 campaign, and everybody who has done so much work on this issue over the years. Their stories are seared on my memory, as is the evidence that I have seen tweeted from the inquiry. It is absolutely chilling. People are reported to be dying at a rate of one every four days. This community cannot wait. They have already waited, suffered, and been let down for far, far too long. What conversations have been had with Treasury officials about the urgency of releasing funds for interim payments right now?

**Michael Ellis:** It is well understood that the matter is urgent and important. It is also understood that it is complex and interconnected. I assure the hon. Lady that questions such as this in the House, and the points that she and others have raised, help to reiterate, if that were needed, that the matter should be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) for her dogged perseverance. We are all indebted to her for her sterling efforts. More than 400 people have died since the publication of the report five years ago, and every one of those deaths is a tragedy, as I know the Minister appreciates. It is time to do the right thing. Will the Minister commit to action on a reasonable timescale, to put the minds of victims of contaminated blood, and their families, at ease? They have suffered considerable stress and anxiety, due to poor health and extreme financial difficulties. As each day goes by, those financial difficulties and debts mount up. Time is of the essence.

**Michael Ellis:** I accept the premise that time is of the essence, and the point that the hon. Gentleman eloquently makes about each day that passes. I am very conscious of that, as are those working with me, and I ask him to accept that.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): There is no good reason why interim payments cannot be made. When we first raised issues of contaminated blood some 20 years ago, we were repeatedly told that no wrongful practices were employed. Andy Burnham conceded at the inquiry that he and his ministerial team were given lines by officials that he now knows to be false, and that that has had an impact on real lives. What is being done to address that misinformation, and will the Minister commit to an inquiry, over and above Sir Robert's, into why MPs were misled at that time by officials?

**Michael Ellis:** I cannot commit to that. I am not aware of the detail of the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman. I have seen no evidence of officials giving deliberately incorrect information, but I will look into the matter.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I thank the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) for her urgent question, and the Minister for responding for just over half an hour.

## Supply of Drugs to Children Under 16 (Aggravated Offence)

*Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)*

1.53 pm

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make the offence of supplying or offering to supply a controlled drug aggravated when the person to whom the drug is supplied or offered is under 16; and for connected purposes.

As John F. Kennedy once said:

"Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future."

Society recognises our special duty to protect children, and to ensure that those who bring them harm feel the full force of the law. The Supply of Drugs to Children Under 16 (Aggravated Offence) Bill, or Leah's law, intends to change the law to make clear that no person under the age of 16 can consent to taking illegal substances, and to ask our judges to impose tougher sentences on those who supply drugs to our children. That will have the dual effect of keeping young people safe and acting as a deterrent to those who callously target children.

To outline why this change is long overdue, let me explain the tragic background to the Bill. In May 2019, 15-year-old Leah Heyes from Northallerton was sold MDMA by two friends. She took the substance in a car park and died shortly after, tearing the life of her family and community apart. The unimaginable was exacerbated by the fact that the young adults who sold Leah the drugs received custodial sentences of 21 and 12 months respectively. The two ended up serving a paltry six months each.

At 15, Leah was, in the eyes of the law, just a child when her life was cruelly cut short. Quite rightly, society and the law offer greater protections and special consideration to children. As we know, it is illegal to sell alcohol or cigarettes to, or to have sex with, somebody under the age of 16, and somebody under that age cannot consent to sex. Even beauty salons that allowed under-18s to use sunbeds would be committing a specific offence against children. When it comes to the supply of drugs, one would think that we would offer our children greater protection against those who seek to exploit their innocence, but we do not.

It is an offence under section 4 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to supply a controlled drug to any person, but that blanket approach to sentencing does not protect those who need it most. There is clear disregard shown, and a callousness, in knowingly deciding to put a child's life in danger, yet when it comes to dealing drugs, there is not a greater penalty applied for doing that. Although there are statutory aggravating factors—for example, when an offender uses a child to deliver drugs, or supplies drugs on or in the vicinity of school premises during or close to school hours—those do not apply when someone sells drugs to children such as Leah; it is a huge gap in the law.

Although the tragedy of drug-related death is not limited to children, adults are seen by law as having legitimate agency and the capability to make their own choices. In other areas, however, the law recognises that children do not have that capability. Given the added

peer pressure in this age of social media, children are particularly impressionable and vulnerable targets. It cannot be right to class a child's agency as being the same as an adult's when it comes to something as damaging as drugs. We know that county lines drug gangs target young people, who in turn go on to supply drugs to their peers. Profits pile up for the dealers, and the cycle continues.

Although case law has established law that targeting vulnerable individuals or children in order to supply them with drugs could be examples of aggravating features, that approach is not mandated by a specific piece of legislation, and that is what Leah's law would do. This would not be an unconventional approach to drugs sentencing. Certain states in Australia recognise the differentiation, and in Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia, there are specific offences for the supply of drugs to under-16s.

Since Leah's death, her mother, Kerry Roberts, has tirelessly championed the case for Leah's law—that is why I am standing before the House now. Kerry is watching today, and I thank her for raising awareness of the issue. She does not want her daughter's death to be in vain, and for that the whole House will have nothing but admiration. Although Kerry is not my constituent, drug-related crime among young people affects each and every one of us in Parliament, and I fully intend to help her campaign succeed. If we ensure that just one person thinks twice about selling drugs to an under-16-year-old, save just one child's life, or create just one better start in life, it would make the Bill, and all Kerry's crucial work, worth while.

I do appreciate that the Government are carrying out a great deal of work on restricting drug supply and working with charities and agencies, but the reality is that the global fight against drugs is a massive undertaking and this will take many, many years to solve. We must deter these perpetrators from preying on our children. We can start to tackle this issue on behalf of all the families whose lives have been devastated by drug crime. It speaks volumes that the Leah's law petition garnered 10,276 signatures, but it is disappointing that the Government's response thus far is that they are not going to act on this. I did, however, have a very constructive meeting with the Minister, so I hope that position will change soon.

It is simple; I am asking the Government to think again and support my Bill to make it a specific offence to supply drugs to those aged under 16, ensuring that this crime carries a harsher sentence. I will continue to work with Leah's mother and with Ministers to make this campaign a reality.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That Kevin Hollinrake, Andrew Selous, Andy Carter, Tim Loughton, Anthony Higginbotham, Jack Brereton, James Daly, Matt Hancock, Craig Williams, Jim Shannon, Chris Bryant and Liam Byrne present the Bill.

Kevin Hollinrake accordingly presented the Bill.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 28 October, and to be printed (Bill 145).*

## Northern Ireland Protocol Bill

[2ND ALLOCATED DAY]

*Further considered in Committee*

*[Relevant document: Oral evidence taken before the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on 29 June 2022, on Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 285.]*

[MR NIGEL EVANS *in the Chair*]

### Clause 7

REGULATION OF GOODS: OPTION TO CHOOSE BETWEEN  
DUAL ROUTES

2.3 pm

**Stephen Farry** (North Down) (Alliance): I beg to move amendment 44, in clause 7, page 5, line 5 insert—

“(1A) This section applies only if the following conditions have been met.

(1B) The first condition is that a Minister of the Crown has consulted appropriately with representatives of Northern Ireland business organisations on the option to choose between dual routes.

(1C) The second condition is that a Minister of the Crown has reached an agreement with the European Union on the option to choose between dual routes.

(1D) The third condition is that the Northern Ireland Assembly has approved by resolution the option to choose between dual routes.”

*This amendment would impose conditions before the option to choose between dual routes could be implemented.*

**The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means** (Mr Nigel Evans): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Clause stand part.

Amendment 45, in clause 8, page 5, line 24, at end insert—

“only if the conditions in subsection 7(1A) to (1D) have been met.”

*This amendment is linked to Amendment 44.*

Clause 8 stand part.

Amendment 36, in clause 9, page 5, line 27, leave out “the Minister considers appropriate” and insert “is necessary”.

*This amendment changes the threshold for giving a Minister power to make regulations under this Clause. The threshold is amended to make it objective rather than subjective.*

Amendment 28, page 5, line 34, at end insert—

“(3) Before making regulations under this section, a Minister of the Crown must carry out an economic impact assessment of the proposed regulations, and conduct a consultation on the proposed regulations with any stakeholders whom the Minister of the Crown considers appropriate.

(4) The Minister of the Crown making regulations under this section must lay before each House of Parliament with a copy or draft of the regulations a copy of the relevant economic impact assessment and a report of the relevant consultation.”

*This amendment would require an economic impact assessment to be carried out before a Minister could make any provisions for the dual regulatory regime.*

Clause 9 stand part.

Clauses 10 and 11 stand part.



**New clause 13—Report on dual access—**

“A Minister of the Crown must, at least once in every three months from the day on which this Act is passed, lay before each House of Parliament a report stating what, if any, steps are being taken by Her Majesty’s Government to promote, uphold, support and facilitate dual access to the British market and European markets for Northern Ireland businesses either as a consequence of the exercise of the powers conferred by this Act or by alternative means.”

*This new clause requires a Minister of the Crown to lay a report before each House of Parliament stating what, if any, steps the Government is taking to promote, uphold, support and facilitate access to both British and European markets for Northern Ireland businesses, pursuant to the powers conferred by this Act and any other powers.*

**New clause 14—UK-EU Joint Committee: duty to give primary regard to North-South proposals—**

“A Minister of the Crown must respect, reflect and support in UK-EU Joint Committee meeting proposals relating to the regulation of goods made by the North-South Ministerial Council and other North-South Implementation bodies to the Specialised Committee on the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland pursuant to Article 14(b) of the Northern Ireland Protocol.”

*This new clause seeks to require a Minister of the Crown representing the United Kingdom in UK-EU Joint Committee meetings to respect, reflect and support proposals made by the Strand Two Belfast/Good Friday Agreement bodies acting in their capacity as set out in Article 14(b) of the Northern Ireland Protocol.*

**New clause 15—UK-EU Joint Committee: report to Parliament—**

“(1) When the UK-EU Joint Committee has discussed regulation of goods in connection with the Northern Ireland Protocol, a Minister of the Crown must lay a report before each House of Parliament detailing those discussions within 21 days of the meeting of the UK-EU Joint Committee at which those matters were discussed.

(2) Each such report must include information on how UK representatives adhered to and sought agreement with representatives of the European Union on relevant proposals—

- (a) agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive or endorsed by the Northern Ireland Assembly, or both, and promoted by the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly, or
- (b) agreed by the North-South Ministerial Council or North-South Implementation bodies and made to the Specialised Committee, pursuant to Article 14 (b) of the Northern Ireland Protocol.”

*This new clause would require a Minister of the Crown to report to each House of Parliament on meetings between the UK and EU in the Joint Committee within 21 days of each meeting and to include information on the regard afforded to any submissions from the Strand One and Strand Two institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement by UK and EU respectively.*

**Stephen Farry:** Earlier in the debate on this Bill, we discussed solutions on which I think it is fair to say that there was some common ground, such as the idea of red and green channels. The problem was the means of getting there: threats or unilateral action from the Government, versus building trust and using negotiation. Never mind the means, however; dual regulation is fundamentally a very bad idea. The business community in Northern Ireland has expressed significant concerns about this aspect of the Bill. Notably, this includes the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association, the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association, and Manufacturing Northern Ireland.

There are many motivations behind the Bill. However, the claim that it responds to the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland or the interests of the business community in Northern Ireland does not stand up to scrutiny. I remain very critical of the so-called engagement process from both the Foreign and Commonwealth and Development Office and the Northern Ireland Office. They have sought an echo chamber to reinforce their own agenda rather than consulting widely.

**Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP):** I thank the hon. Member for tabling amendments so that the issue can be debated properly and thoroughly, but this is where I start to disagree with him. One of the conditions laid down in amendment 44 is

“that a Minister of the Crown has reached an agreement with the European Union on the option to choose between dual routes.”

Does he seriously suggest that a Minister of the Crown—of Her Majesty’s Government—must seek the permission of the European Union on how we should trade within the boundaries of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland? That is effectively what is being asked for.

**Stephen Farry:** Indeed. Unfortunately this is the outworkings of Brexit, which the hon. Member pursued. We have a protocol in place to manage the fall-out from that decision, and a whole host of implications will flow from it. I am very sceptical, as indeed is the business community, about the notion of dual routes, but if that were to be conceded in relation to any one set of products or commodities, it would have to be by negotiation with the European Union. If not, that flow of trade would not have recognition and it would not work for the business sector in question.

On consultation, I want to highlight the current run of propaganda videos coming from the Northern Ireland Office. We are joined by the new Secretary of State, whom I welcome to his place. Those videos focus very heavily on haulage, which of course does have some particular concerns, but that comes at the expense of other interest groups in the business community where there is a very different narrative. Of course businesses recognise the need for some modifications to the protocol, but more and more say that the protocol is working for them and they do not want those aspects to be compromised, undermined or ditched. Those are the voices that the Government are not listening to, never mind seeking to promote.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** On the programme “Countryfile” on Sunday night, a farmer from my constituency, Sam McChesney, outlined very clearly that the Northern Ireland protocol is affecting him, and his lamb and beef. He cannot sell beef cattle across the water to the mainland in the way that he once did. He said that he wants to see changes to the nitty-gritty of the bureaucracy, red tape and small print that is affecting his business, and that if this continues as it is, he will not be in business. Will the hon. Member take a deep breath and think about what Sam McChesney said, and then he will think the same as us and ask for the changes that he wants to see?

**Stephen Farry:** I advise the hon. Gentleman to reflect on some of the things that the Ulster Farmers Union has been saying about this aspect of the Bill. He should listen to what the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters

Association is saying—so if the gentleman he mentions is exporting meat, that is what his trade body is saying. Of course there should be no obstacle for anyone in Northern Ireland selling into Great Britain, but we are in danger of losing the ability for meat producers in Northern Ireland to sell into the Republic of Ireland and onwards into the European Union. *[Interruption.]* I will come to that in a moment, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to have some degree of patience.

We will also talk about the interests of the dairy sector in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Gentleman wants to reflect the views of his constituents, he will be aware that one of the major employers in his constituency is Lakeland Dairies, which, along with the wider dairy sector, is extremely exercised about this aspect of the Bill.

**Jim Shannon:** I have met the chief executive of Lakeland Dairies on a number of occasions, and I do so regularly, because it is a major employer in my constituency. He says that he can work with this process, and if changes to the Bill come through, he can also work with that. There are factories south of the border and north of the border. Lakeland Dairies wants a workable system and says that it can work with this. I am not sure who the hon. Member is talking to, but I talk to the chief executive regularly and he tells me that he can deal with the system and with the issues as they come forward.

**Stephen Farry:** We will talk about the dairy sector in much greater detail shortly. Indeed, it has given significant evidence to Committees in this Parliament. Whenever we talk about the dairy sector, it is important to bear in mind that this idea of the hon. Gentleman's that we will end up with segregated production, north versus south, is not feasible. If that was to be introduced, the lead-in time would potentially be two to three years, and the costs would be between £200 million and £250 million, so the notion that this is an easy option is a major fallacy. Indeed, the notion that we want to spend extra money to reorientate an industry that works quite successfully at the moment is for the birds.

**Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP):** I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. Does he agree with me and with Mike Johnston, the chief executive of the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, that the Bill risks making rural areas poorer by cutting off £600 million of trade?

**Stephen Farry:** Indeed, and the dairy sector in Northern Ireland is absolutely clear. The provisions in this Bill are an existential threat to their business model, and we will come shortly to the consequences of that.

**Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP):** I thank the hon. Member for giving way; he has been quite generous, but it is important that we scrutinise the amendment. Will he explain to me how the dairy sector, or whatever other sector wished to trade with the Irish Republic, would be disadvantaged if it agreed to dual regulation—in other words, if it complied with EU regulations for the products that it wished to trade with the Irish Republic? Is the EU going to say, “We will not accept your goods, even though you’ve accepted all our regulations, you’re applying those regulations and your goods are safe to enter the EU”?

**Stephen Farry:** I strongly encourage the right hon. Gentleman to engage with the Dairy Council and listen directly to what it is saying. The issues and complications are manifold in this respect. They come, first of all, from the inputs to the dairy sector—we are talking about the grain, the veterinary medicines—

**Ian Paisley:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

**Stephen Farry:** Let me finish the first point and then someone else can come in.

If those inputs are not compliant with EU regulations, the raw milk that is then produced cannot be accepted or certified by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs vets as complying with annex 2 to the protocol, which sets out the various regulations that apply in that regard. Therefore, raw milk from Northern Ireland will not and cannot be accepted for processing in the rest of Ireland. A third of the milk produced in Northern Ireland currently goes south for processing, and that will be dropped.

**Ian Paisley:** I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I should just put on the record that I represent one of the largest farming constituencies in Northern Ireland; I was previously the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Agriculture and Rural Development Committee in Stormont; I have been one of the longest serving members of the British Veterinary Association in Northern Ireland; and, for the record, my son-in-law is one of Northern Ireland's largest dairy farmers, so I have some knowledge of the agricultural sector.

The hon. Member has touched on the issue of veterinary products for Northern Ireland. Is it not the case that the European Union has strategically blocked the sales and advantage that would come to Northern Ireland as a result of Brexit, because it does not want Northern Ireland agriculture to be a success? Northern Ireland agricultural businesses are in direct competition with businesses in the Irish Republic, and up to 40% to 50% of all agri-medicines for veterinary products, agricultural use and pet use will be blocked at the end of this year, because the European Union wants to block it. The EU is not interested in talking or making a deal with Britain on this matter. In fact, the representative agency, the National Office of Animal Health, has said that more time is no longer required. We need this Bill to solve these matters with regard to veterinary science.

**The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. I want to establish right from the outset that interventions should be brief by their very nature, not speeches in themselves. Mr Paisley, that was longer than some of the speeches I have made in this place.

**Stephen Farry:** I will briefly respond, and then hopefully I will make some progress. What the hon. Member has said is utter nonsense. The notion that there is some sort of conspiracy or plot to undermine the Northern Ireland agriculture sector is for the birds. The threat actually comes from this Bill and from Brexit. It does not come from the protocol; it comes from the notion of scrapping some provisions in the protocol, which are working on behalf of the sector. The sector is diverse and some

[Stephen Farry]

people may have a different perspective on it, but I urge Members to listen to the representative business organisations that reflect the views of their members. The Dairy Council is adamant and very vocal in this regard.

2.15 pm

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** The hon. Member is making a very good speech. It is not the EU that wants to change the rules; rather, we hear from some contenders for the Conservative leadership that they want to change the rules. They want to strip away regulation, as indeed do some members of the DUP. Is that not a concern for the agricultural sector?

**Stephen Farry:** Absolutely; I concur very much with what the hon. Member says. Regulation sometimes has a negative connotation, but it is there to protect everyone's interests and it is there for often very good and valid reasons. It is noticeable that we do not have the Foreign Secretary with us today—or indeed for any stage of the Bill, apart from the first hour—even though she has been very keen to promote it, for whatever agenda she has.

**Jim Shannon:** It is because it is right.

**Stephen Farry:** If I can make some progress, clause 7 essentially introduces a dual regulatory system for regulated classes of goods to which any provision of annexe 2 to the Northern Ireland protocol applies, including manufactured goods, medicines and agri-food. It envisages businesses having a choice over the regulatory route between UK requirements and EU requirements, or both.

On the surface, that sounds benign, but it is in fact unworkable. To be clear, there is an implicit element of acceptance that there will be different regulatory regimes, and maybe standards, in the concept of a red-green lane for Northern Ireland customer final destination goods that pose no threat to the single market. It is important to acknowledge that subtlety, but we are focusing in this debate on dual regulation that covers ingredients, components and goods that may enter the single market via further processing or as a final good. More and more businesses in Northern Ireland are exporting to the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the European Union. Since Brexit, this trade has grown significantly. That is market forces in operation, reacting to changing conditions. There is nothing malign about it whatsoever.

If this dual regulation were implemented, it would have major consequences. It would create chaos in many sectors of the Northern Ireland economy and increase the risk of economic crime, including smuggling. Even the Bill itself entails uncertainty for investment decisions, never mind the implications of its full application. It would mean Northern Ireland losing access to the single market for goods, both in practice, as companies in the Republic of Ireland or the rest of the EU would see Northern Ireland products as risky, and as a matter of law.

Such moves would threaten the comparative advantage that Northern Ireland goods currently have from unfettered access to both the Great Britain market and the EU

single market. More widely, they raise the question as to how and where the interface between the UK economic zone and the EU single market will be managed. There is a commonality of consequences from the Government unilaterally trying to impose dual regulation, alongside similar measures to disapply article 5 of the protocol and annexe 2 to the protocol, and also the marginalisation of the European Court of Justice, which we will talk about tomorrow.

No doubt the Government and others will argue that GB and EU regulations will in practice be the same, just as they argued that their version of the management of movements between GB and Northern Ireland would protect the EU single market, but this neglects the fundamental point, which relates to the legal regime, in which there has to be either dynamic alignment or mutual recognition. That can be created and maintained only via negotiation, with an agreed means of enforcement. Many sectors of the Northern Ireland economy have both supply chains and sales that operate on both an east-west and a north-south basis. That can only be managed with one set of regulations.

Let us explore one particular sector in depth, the dairy sector, which a number of Members have already drawn me on. The dairy sector is heavily integrated across the island of Ireland. That reflects specialisation and economies of scale. It is an entirely sensible set of arrangements. Every year, about 800 million litres of raw milk, about a third of the entire output, goes to the Republic of Ireland for processing. There is full traceability of that milk. The milk is then often mixed with raw milk from south of the border. It can be mixed, as both Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland milk is produced to the common EU standards and, crucially, recognised as such. It then goes in to final products, or sometimes into intermediate products that come back to Northern Ireland for final processing, for example at Lakeland Dairies in the neighbouring constituency of Strangford.

**Ian Paisley:** Can the hon. Member perhaps explain how the mixing of that milk will be changed by this Bill?

**Stephen Farry:** The mixing of the milk will not happen, because milk from Northern Ireland will not be accepted for mixing, because—

**Ian Paisley:** That is unreasonable.

**Stephen Farry:** It is not unreasonable. It is basically common sense, because the milk cannot be certified as being in compliance with EU regulations, and therefore it will not be accepted.

**Ian Paisley:** But it's coming from the same cows, being milked by the same machines.

**Stephen Farry:** The hon. Member may say it is coming from the same cows and the same machines. The issue here is that—

**Ian Paisley:** This is just nonsense—this is bureaucracy at its worst.

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** Order. The same noise is coming from the same mouth, as well—let us stop that, please.



**Stephen Farry:** The hon. Gentleman tempts me to refer to the time when his father famously said that the people of Northern Ireland may well be British, “but our cows are Irish”,

which recognised the integration of animal health and agriculture on the island of Ireland. It was certainly a wise comment from the hon. Gentleman’s father.

Final products go right across these islands, into the European Union and further afield. The Bill is a threat to the sector in that it would allow products to enter Northern Ireland that are not produced to EU standards. The biggest issue relates to grain, around 400,000 tonnes of which are imported in Northern Ireland annually, but seeds and veterinary medicines may also cause complications. Even if the imported grain, seeds and veterinary medicines are in practice produced to the same standards as the European Union, that still misses the point in terms of the legal regime.

According to the Dairy Council, if any of those inputs were used in the production of milk, it would mean that the raw milk could not be supplied to customers in the EU, as Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs vets would not be able to sign the necessary certificates to demonstrate that the milk had been produced in accordance with EU regulations and standards. Such an outcome would pose an existential threat to the Northern Ireland dairy industry.

The notion of trying to segregate inputs such as grain or milk produced to different standards or under different legal regimes is simply not realistic. Segregation would involve separate production, storage and cleaning. Tankers may collect milk from five to 10 farms into one tanker. The sector is already very efficient and works to very tight margins of 3% to 4%. It cannot absorb the additional costs of managing such segregation, and to do so would anyway make no sense. Indeed, it would involve substantially more paperwork and red tape, something I understood Brexit was designed to cut back on.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP): I have listened intently to the hon. Member and I am left confused by what he has to say. As I understand it, the dual regulatory system is a voluntary one, so what is to stop the co-operatives, which dairy farmers are part of, voluntarily agreeing to follow EU regulations under this system and abide by EU rules? The farmers are sending the milk in tankers to be processed in Monaghan, so it is processed within EU territory. What happens between the milk’s leaving the farm and its arriving at the processing centre in Monaghan that makes that milk incompatible with EU standards?

**Stephen Farry:** I think perhaps the right hon. Member was not listening fully. The point relates to the inputs in terms of grain, seeds and veterinary medicines. That is where the particular issue is. My point is that, if people decide not to do that, the scale of the segregation that would be involved in trying to accommodate that choice would lead to costs that the sector simply cannot afford.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Stephen Farry:** I have already given way to many DUP Members.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I can answer his point.

**Stephen Farry:** No doubt the right hon. Gentleman will have a chance to speak shortly.

The outcomes here will pose an existential threat to the Northern Ireland dairy sector. We are talking about potentially 800 million litres of milk that need to be accommodated somehow. The cows, of course, still need to be milked, and that begs the question as to where the surplus milk will go; that could pose considerable environmental challenges. It is simply not sustainable for farmers to retain animals that no longer have an economic purpose, so we could face a brutal cull of healthy cows. It would cost between £200 million and £250 million to create alternative processing capacity in Northern Ireland, and could take three years. Even if it made any sense to do so, by then the markets for Northern Ireland products would be long gone.

It is worth stressing that the island of Ireland has always been treated as a single unit for animal health. That makes huge sense, but dual regulation undermines it; there has not been dual regulation in the recent past. The same dynamic that applies to the dairy sector also applies to other aspects of agrifood, such as Northern Ireland’s very successful meat exporting industry. Any dual regulation in relation to feedstuffs and medicines undermines the ability to access the European Union in accordance with EU regulations.

Again, it is not realistic to segregate certain fields or farms for domestic Northern Ireland or Great Britain markets from those for EU markets, because—this may address the point by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson)—we will not have a situation where one farm says, “We’re only going to do Northern Ireland and Great Britain forever.”, and one says, “We are going to do the European Union.”

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Why not?

**Stephen Farry:** Because in a free market situation, businesses want to maximise their sales. No business wants to shut off one half of a market when it does not need to.

Overall, the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association estimates that agrifood provides £4.9 billion in terms of value added to the Northern Ireland economy and supports more than 100,000 jobs. Agrifood may be a small aspect of the economy across the United Kingdom, but it is massive in Northern Ireland, and it is worth noting that, if this Bill destroys the business model for many, there will be few alternatives for employment in many rural areas.

The same dynamic applies to manufacturing. Very few manufacturers seek to service a domestic market only. Any components in goods that are manufactured or processed in Northern Ireland that do not comply with the relevant parts of EU law will not be certified for export into the EU either for further processing or for final sale. Dual regulation may make things easier for suppliers in Great Britain supplying Northern Ireland. However, the needs of Great Britain’s suppliers would be better addressed via improved information and guidance, and of course the delivery of sustainable solutions around the red and green channel and a sanitary and phytosanitary agreement—or, even better, a full UK-EU veterinary agreement.

[Stephen Farry]

There are strong reservations, through to outright opposition, to this proposal for dual regulation within the Northern Ireland business community, and I urge hon. Members to listen to them. The amendment therefore provides significant safeguards against dual regulation in broad terms, but also the potential to facilitate dual regulation for any set of products or sectors where it makes sense. Consultation with the Northern Ireland business community is vital, as it has the expertise and on-the-ground knowledge. Agreement with the EU is necessary, as without a proper legal regime it would not work and indeed would be self-defeating. So is the agreement of the Northern Ireland Assembly, since this is notionally for the good of Northern Ireland and the Assembly represents a much more balanced perspective of the political views of the people of Northern Ireland.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** Just to remind everybody, if you were not here from the very beginning I am afraid you cannot make an independent speech, but you are able to intervene on others. We have a list of everybody who is here. Just before I call Mr Ellis, can I ask hon. Members who wish to contribute on this first group to indicate their intention by standing up, so we can get a general idea? Thank you very much. That will be very useful.

**The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Michael Ellis):** I begin by thanking hon. Members for their participation in the debate so far. I remind them that, while the Northern Ireland protocol was agreed with the best of intentions, it is causing real problems for people and businesses in Northern Ireland, and this legislation will fix the practical problems that the protocol has created.

On the clauses under scrutiny today, clause 7 makes it clear that businesses will have a choice which regulatory route to follow when supplying goods to the market in Northern Ireland. It introduces a dual regulatory regime in Northern Ireland for regulated classes of goods to which any provision of annexe 2 to the protocol applies. That will create a new option to meet UK rules, compared with the existing protocol arrangements, whereby goods are required to comply with the relevant EU rules. Where the relevant requirements allow, it will also be possible for the same product to simultaneously comply with both UK and EU sets of requirements. Current traders have no choice but to meet EU rules when supplying goods in or to Northern Ireland. This obviously deters some companies, especially those trading exclusively within the United Kingdom. We have seen numerous examples of that already. It deters them from serving Northern Ireland due to the costs and administrative burdens of meeting this EU law such as retesting, re-marking and relabelling of goods, all of which are expensive, as well as the appointment of a representative to undertake administrative duties. All that bureaucracy comes at a cost, which is unnecessary for goods that are to remain on the UK's market.

The dual regulatory regime provides businesses across the United Kingdom with choice. If a Northern Ireland business trades north-south in the island of Ireland, it can continue to follow EU rules if it wishes and sell its

products in the EU and across the UK, because the Government have a commitment to unfettered access. However, if the model of a business is UK-focused, it can choose to follow UK rules and avoid the additional cost and burden currently applied to intra-UK trade.

2.30 pm

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): My right hon. and learned Friend is right to highlight the significant frictions on trade within the UK that the protocol has caused. That has led the courts to conclude that there is a partial suspension of the 1801 articles of the Act of Union. Will the Bill fix that problem and ensure that the Act of Union remains fully on our statute book?

**Michael Ellis:** My right hon. Friend makes a powerful and valid point. The Bill will ameliorate a plethora of problems that have been caused by the protocol.

As my right hon. Friend knows, by providing an alternative UK rules route to market in Northern Ireland, clause 7 protects the integrity of the UK's internal market. Clause 8 ensures that the protocol no longer prevents a dual regime such as that introduced by clause 7. It makes provision to exclude EU law where it would prevent goods made to UK rules from being placed on the market in Northern Ireland in accordance with clause 7. It means that goods made to UK rules can be supplied in Northern Ireland in accordance with clause 7 to enable the functioning of this dual regulatory regime.

Clause 9 provides a Minister with the powers to make provisions through secondary legislation to ensure the effective working of the dual regulatory routes in Northern Ireland. The dual regulatory regime will need to take into account the results of engagement with business, which we have already undertaken and will undertake much more of, and it will need to be able to evolve over time as UK and EU regulatory regimes change. The default dual regulatory regime may also need to be amended to ensure that it works effectively for different types of goods—for example, should it be required to ensure that specific highly regulated goods regimes can function effectively. So clause 9 is needed to ensure that goods are compliant throughout the supply chain for traders operating under this dual regulatory regime, whichever route is chosen, and it will therefore safeguard the interests of consumer safety and biosecurity arrangements and maintain appropriate public health standards. The clause is essential to ensure the effective working of the dual regulatory routes and protects the integrity of the UK's internal markets as well as the EU's single market.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm what the default position will be if a business has not made an election? Will it operate under EU law unless it positively chooses to use UK regulations? What will the process be for making this choice? Will someone have to file a document with an authority to say that they intend to use UK regulations when they make goods in Northern Ireland? Will there be a public register? Will it be an entirely private choice for a business? Will no one know publicly what they are doing?

**Michael Ellis:** The first thing to state clearly is that no business will be forced to do anything. They will not be obliged to choose one over the other. It will be up to

businesses to do that. One power we will give to Ministers in due course, when the Bill has passed, is to make regulations that will fit in most neatly with businesses' wishes and desires.

**Nigel Mills:** Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

**Michael Ellis:** If I may, I will make a little more progress.

Clause 9 provides a Minister with the powers to make provisions through secondary legislation to ensure the effective working of the dual regulatory routes in Northern Ireland.

I will move on to clause 10, conscious as I am of the Second Deputy Chairman's admonition about speed. The clause defines the types of regulatory activity covered by the dual regulatory regime established in the Bill. This provides clarity on interpretation of the Bill's provisions in relation to the dual regulatory regime and makes the scope of that regime clear.

Clause 10(4) provides that a Minister of the Crown may, by regulations, make provision about the meaning of "regulation of goods" in this Bill, and that includes changing the effect of other provisions of the clause. We want to ensure that the sale of goods made to UK rules in Northern Ireland is not prohibited due to a particular aspect of regulation falling outside the meaning of "regulation of goods" in clause 7. So the power ensures that goods will be able to benefit from the dual regulatory regime.

**Ian Paisley:** This issue is very important because, before January 2021, goods travelling from GB to Northern Ireland had to fulfil four criteria to be loaded on to a lorry and transported to shops or outlets in Northern Ireland. Since January 2021 there are 15 compliance points, including heavy paperwork responsibilities. Is the point not that those matters will now be removed and we will be back to where we were in 2021—with frictionless trade in the UK?

**Michael Ellis:** The hon. Gentleman makes a powerful and succinct point.

Clause 11 gives Ministers appropriate powers to ensure that the regulatory regime in Northern Ireland operates for goods in any given sector, ranging from ball bearings and ice cream to lamp posts, gas cookers and children's toys—myriad different items, but also intermediate goods such as chemicals. All are regulated in different fashions. We want to ensure that they can all operate effectively. So the powers in clause 11, which I know are controversial in the eyes of some hon. Members, allow a Minister to prescribe a single regulatory route for specific sectors, including a UK-only route with no application of EU law, for example. This can also apply to part or all of a category of goods or to some or all of a regulatory route. We consider the clause vital in ensuring that the dual regulatory regime can be tailored to the needs of industry and ensure the smooth running of the new regime for all sectors.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

**Michael Ellis:** I will give way, but I am just about to come on to the amendments, so the right hon. Gentleman may wish to wait.

**Hilary Benn:** It is on the point that the Minister just raised. If I heard him correctly, he just said that the Government were taking a power to prescribe which regulatory route should be chosen. Earlier, he said that it would be entirely a matter for businesses to determine which they chose. Just so the House is clear, the Minister is saying that it is a free choice unless the Government decide that it is not a free choice.

**Michael Ellis:** No. Businesses will not be obliged to follow any particular route. They will not be forced to follow either UK or EU regulations. It is a choice, and I should be able to expand on that later.

Amendments 44 and 45 are in the name of the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry). As I have said before, the Government are engaging broadly on the issues created by the protocol with stakeholder groups across business and civic society in Northern Ireland, in the rest of the UK and internationally. I have been to Belfast in recent weeks to discuss this with some industries. We will give plenty of notice to those affected. The clauses need to provide stakeholders with certainty that the Government will swiftly deliver the solutions that we have outlined to the problems that the protocol is causing.

Our preference remains to reach a negotiated outcome with the EU. I emphasise that our door remains open. We need a lasting solution to these issues to restore stability in Northern Ireland and a working Northern Ireland Assembly based on the consent of the communities. Her Majesty's Government have made proposals that would address the issues with the protocol. So far, I am sorry to say, the European Union has not been willing to agree to those, but there is no reason why it could not do so. We hope that it changes its mind. We are always open to discussions, and we want a shared solution—I cannot be clearer than that. However, amendments 44 and 45 risk tying the Government's hands behind their back. On consent, I respectfully point out that the Northern Ireland Assembly is not sitting at the moment. It is exactly because of the breakdown of the institutions in Northern Ireland that this Bill is needed. We need to see the restoration of the institutions as quickly as possible. Further to that, I confirmed previously to the House that we hope the institutions will be restored soon and that it will be possible for the Northern Ireland Executive to bring forward, for example, a legislative consent motion. I therefore ask the hon. Member for North Down to withdraw the amendments.

**Claire Hanna** (Belfast South) (SDLP): We have been spun the narrative that this is about the consent and the engagement of Northern Ireland. Although, of course, businesses are up for ways to ease the frictions imposed by Brexit, these provisions are far in excess of anything that anybody has asked for.

On the specific issue of restoring the Assembly, it is very vague as to what it will take for the Democratic Unionist party to go back in. Has the Minister any understanding of what the bottom line is for those people who walk around with scarves around their faces and create the protests that the Northern Ireland Office seems so engaged in? Do we think that they will happily accept green and red lanes, or will that be the next problem?



**Michael Ellis:** May I put it this way? The Sewel convention applies to this Bill, as it does to all Bills of the UK Parliament which intersect with devolved competence. I respectfully point out that the Northern Ireland Assembly is not sitting at the moment. It is exactly because of the breakdown of the institutions in Northern Ireland that we are where we are right now and this Bill is actually needed. We need to see the restoration of the institutions as soon as possible. I hope that goes some way towards answering the hon. Lady's question.

**Claire Hanna:** Will the Minister give way?

**Michael Ellis:** Forgive me, but I must make some progress. I am sure that there will be another opportunity to intervene.

Let me turn to amendment 36, in the name of the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). I addressed this point previously, so I shall be brief. It would potentially circumscribe the ability to design dual regulatory routes under clause 9 to preserve the unity of the UK's internal market. Given that there are more than 200 pieces of goods regulation applied by the protocol, those powers are needed to ensure that the regime can function effectively in practice for each class of goods. The dual regulatory regime is necessary to remedy disruption to GB-NI trade, which will only worsen as the EU and UK rules diverge over the course of time. The arrangements will also need to be updated over time to reflect changes in UK and EU regulations, so Ministers will need appropriate discretion to make policy decisions in doing so. The right hon. Gentleman may well not agree with me, but I ask him to withdraw his amendment.

I turn to amendment 28, also tabled by the right hon. Member for Tottenham, who I do not think is in his place. The Government have engaged broadly on the issues created by the protocol with stakeholder groups across business and civic society in Northern Ireland, as well in the rest of the UK and internationally. As the House will know, the Bill provides specific powers to establish a new regime in Northern Ireland, which addresses the issues with the current operation of the protocol. We are engaging with stakeholders on the detail of how those powers are to be used and will give plenty of notice to those affected.

The Government have already begun a detailed programme of engagement to inform the specific design of the regime in Northern Ireland that will be created by this Bill. Furthermore, clause 9 is designed to provide stakeholders in Northern Ireland with certainty that the Government will deliver the solutions that we have outlined to the problems the protocol is causing. It is essential that this power can be used quickly if needed. Although in normal cases the Government will engage with stakeholder groups in Northern Ireland, and already are engaging with them, there may be occasions when the urgency of a situation means that the Government need to act swiftly. The amendment risks tying the Government's hands behind their back.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): Does the Minister note that, while the Opposition are now asking for an economic assessment of the protocol Bill, they did not seek any such economic assessment before they voted for the protocol? Even when the economic consequences

were evident, they then still pursued the path of supporting the protocol. It does seem a bit hypocritical to ask for an economic assessment of this Bill while ignoring the economic impact of the protocol, which they support.

2.45 pm

**Michael Ellis:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point, and it is one with which I tend to agree.

The full details of the new regime will be set out in and alongside regulations made under the Bill, and that includes economic impacts where appropriate. The regulations will be the product of engagement with business. We are going to talk to people to ensure that the detail of the new regime is as smooth and as operable as possible. That is what we are getting on with now. The House will have the opportunity to scrutinise these regulations in the usual fashion, under the normal parliamentary procedures. An additional requirement for the Government to lay an assessment and a report each time, which is what this amendment asks for, would clearly not be necessary. That is why I ask the right hon. Member not to press the amendment.

Let me move on to new clause 13 in the name of the hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood). I argue that this new clause is unnecessary. The hon. Gentleman's new clause would create a statutory obligation for the UK Government to publish, at least quarterly, what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to promote, uphold, support and facilitate dual access to the British market and European markets. The Government already publish a host of information on trade, and it is not necessary, in my submission, to duplicate existing publications on a quarterly basis and lay them before Parliament. The dual regulatory regime provides businesses across the UK with choice. If a Northern Ireland-based business trades north-south on the island of Ireland, then they can continue, as now, to follow EU rules and sell their products in the EU and across the UK, because of the Government's commitment to unfettered access. But if their business model is UK-focused, they can choose to follow UK rules and benefit from the opportunities afforded there. I therefore urge the hon. Gentleman not to press his new clause.

Finally, let me turn to new clauses 14 and 15 in the name of the hon. Member for Foyle. These new clauses are, in some aspects, unnecessary, and, in other aspects, inappropriate. As the hon. Gentleman knows, article 14(b) of the protocol already requires the specialised committee to

"examine proposals concerning the implementation and application of this Protocol from the North-South Ministerial Council and North-South Implementation bodies set up under the 1998 Agreement".

That is an entirely appropriate and valuable role. The hon. Gentleman's new clauses, by contrast, would create a statutory obligation for the UK Government to "support" proposals relating to the regulation of goods made by the North-South Ministerial Council and other North-South Implementation bodies.

That would cede control over the UK Government's stance in the Joint Committee to a council on which the Irish Government—the Government of an EU member state—sits. The hon. Member can surely see that this would be wholly inappropriate. In any case, as part of our "New Decade, New Approach" commitments, the Government already ensure that representatives from

the Northern Ireland Executive are invited to meetings of the Joint Committee, which discusses Northern Ireland specific matters, and these are also attended by the Irish Government.

**Claire Hanna:** Does the Minister agree that the North-South Ministerial Council and other architecture of the Good Friday agreement provide solutions to addressing some of the issues around democratic deficit and input of civic society? Does he acknowledge that the North-South Ministerial Council is not currently operating because strand one and strand two of the agreement are being held to ransom by the DUP?

**Michael Ellis:** I do not accept the characterisation of the hon. Lady's point.

The aspects of new clauses 14 and 15 obliging the Government to lay reports before Parliament are also unnecessary. The Government have already committed to—and do—lay written ministerial statements in Parliament before and after each meeting of the Joint Committee. We also provide explanatory memorandums on matters to be discussed at Joint Committee meetings. I therefore urge the hon. Member for Foyle not to press new clauses 14 and 15.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills) asked in an intervention about businesses having a choice. Businesses will, of course, have a choice by default. He asked about processes. We are engaging with businesses. We may need to tailor regulatory routes in some cases, but businesses will have a choice by default.

To conclude, the Bill on which this honourable House is spending up to 18 hours in Committee provides a comprehensive and durable solution to the existing problems with the Northern Ireland protocol by giving businesses a choice over which regulatory route to follow when placing goods on the market in Northern Ireland. I therefore recommend that the clauses under consideration stand part of the Bill.

**Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship once again, Mr Evans.

I shall start by responding to a point made by the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson). To clarify, the Labour party and I voted against the protocol when it was before the House. In fact, we walked through the Lobbies together on this issue. I am surprised he does not remember such a memorable occasion—it is quite a rarity, it must be admitted. I hope that when he comes to speak, he will correct the record, because we have a good relationship. It is one that I value and that I hope will continue.

**Sammy Wilson:** For the record, will the hon. Gentleman tell us the stance of his party on the protocol today?

**Peter Kyle:** First, I am slightly disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman did not take the opportunity to correct the record from his previous intervention.

My stance and that of the Labour party on the protocol is very clear: it needs to evolve, to change and to be improved, and that should be done by all lawful means. This Bill is not lawful. Of course, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), the former Prime Minister, said on the Floor of the House just a few days

ago that in her opinion it was unlawful. We heard from a former Attorney General in the last day of debate that he felt it was unlawful.

For that reason, the Labour party believes that although we voted against the protocol in the first place, now that it is in domestic statute and part of an international treaty, the responsible thing to do is to negotiate a way forward. What we cannot do is repeat the debates of previous days. We need to stick to the clauses before us. Today, we are talking about—

**Ian Paisley:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Kyle:** Of course I will give way, but I will not rehearse the debates of the previous two days.

**Ian Paisley:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's giving way. The issue of lawfulness, which he put on the agenda today, has to be addressed. The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee is the only Committee to have taken evidence on the lawfulness, or otherwise, of the protocol under international law. For the record, it was stated:

"no, it does not violate international law. It does not violate the protocol."

I have heard people who should know better saying that it does, but I am afraid they are wrong. They are obviously not international lawyers. The evidence given to this House by the emeritus professor of public international law at the University of Edinburgh, who advises the Government and the Opposition, says that it does not break the law. Why does the hon. Gentleman persist with this inaccurate point?

**Peter Kyle:** Again, I will not repeat the debate from the first day of Committee, when all those issues were explored in detail. It is a shame to hear the hon. Gentleman say that of the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead, whom I know he respects. She said in the House that she asked herself three questions:

"First, do I consider it to be legal... Secondly, will it achieve its aims? Thirdly, does it...maintain the standing of the United Kingdom in the eyes of the world? My answer to all three questions is no."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 2022; Vol. 717, c. 63.]

**Stephen Farry:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Kyle:** I am going to move on, because we need to stick to the clauses before us. I will give way once, but I promise, Mr Evans, that I will then crack on with the business before us.

**Stephen Farry:** Hopefully it will be a very helpful intervention. Does the shadow Secretary of State agree that it is important for Members to reflect fully on the evidence that was given to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee? The last time the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) made reference to it, at least one of the people who gave evidence expressed concern, along with other international lawyers, that what was said did not fully reflect the subtlety of the arguments put before the Committee, which were not as simplistic as the hon. Gentleman said.

**Peter Kyle:** I am very grateful for that intervention. For the record, I think that all the interventions I receive here are helpful. They are certainly in the spirit of the debate that this place exists for. I believe

[Peter Kyle]

that the hon. Gentleman is right, and I am grateful to him for setting the record straight so that we can move forward.

Today, we are considering clauses 7 to 11, which deal with the dual regulatory regime the Government want to set up for Northern Ireland. Amendment 28 would require a Minister to carry out an economic impact assessment and a consultation before making any regulations for a dual regulatory regime. Some parts of the Bill indicate that the Government have been listening to problems that businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland are facing. In those areas, the Labour party is clear that the EU must show more flexibility to deliver the progress that businesses in Northern Ireland need.

However, in proceeding with the dual regulatory regime, the Government demonstrate that they are ignoring the voices of most businesses. We saw that in the Government's press release about Second Reading. It revealed, alarmingly, that the Government had only just begun

"a series of structured engagements with the business community, to discuss and gather views on the detailed implementation of the Bill."

That had happened in recent days—not recent weeks, months or years, but in recent days. Businesses I know that are taking part in the process have asked for a commitment from the Government that they will publish the results in a report. I hope that the Minister will give that assurance from the Dispatch Box today.

Instead of taking the time to develop a policy that works for businesses, the Foreign Secretary is doing what the Government have done from the start: they have been so preoccupied negotiating with the various factions in their own party that they neglect to engage meaningfully with the stakeholders and partners who are the only ones able to unlock the progress our country needs.

Declan Billington, the chief executive of John Thompson and Sons animal feed manufacturers and co-chair of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association, said, when asked for his assessment of the proposals,

"I cannot actually answer the question because when I say, 'Lift the bonnet under the bill and show me the detailed policies that we can engage with,' I hear conversations about co-design and, therefore, I cannot benchmark."

This is absurd. Instead of coming up with serious proposals, the Government are simply asking businesses to do the hard graft for them. In a damning assessment, the trade expert Sam Lowe described the proposed dual regulatory regime as

"a solution looking for a problem: it is near-impossible to find a business in Northern Ireland advocating for it."

There are many reasons businesses are not calling for a dual regulatory system. High on the list is the shift in the burden of responsibility for ensuring that goods do not enter the EU off the Government agencies and on to the 75,000 individual Northern Ireland businesses. That might work for retailers, but exporters and businesses with highly integrated all-island supply chains see it as an almost existential threat. Again, the Government have been clear that their preferred outcome for the protocol is a negotiated solution. Such unserious proposals undermine the common ground in other areas.

The dissent in Tory ranks complicates the situation further. Several prominent Conservatives, including the Attorney General, have said that they want the dual regulatory regime to be scrapped in favour of mutual enforcement down the line. The irony of asking for mutual enforcement is that it requires absolute trust between the UK and the EU. It would take serious negotiation and deep good faith to achieve it. It is pure fantasy to think that we can get there with this Bill, which unilaterally rewrites the agreement we have.

**Hilary Benn:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Peter Kyle:** It would be a pleasure.

**Hilary Benn:** The dual regulatory regime raises more questions than it answers. If I understand the Government's position correctly, a firm can decide to operate under one regime or the other. Say, for the sake of argument, that UK regulation banned a particular ingredient for a food product, but it was not banned by the EU. Is it my hon. Friend's understanding of the Government's proposals that it would be legal for a firm in Northern Ireland to sell that product with the banned ingredient in the rest of the UK, so long as the company claimed it was operating under EU rules?

**Peter Kyle:** I am always very grateful to my right hon. Friend for his interventions in these debates; they always add a great deal. He has, with his forensic mind, picked a situation that shows one of the many absurdities thrown up by this Bill. It will, in practice, mean a huge amount of complexity for businesses across Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Some businesses will find it impossible to answer the questions he has raised, and will be deterred from trading on current terms, simply because they are worried about infractions from one of the markets or the other, or indeed about how the two interact. That is an area that I will move on to.

3 pm

I listened with great interest to the exchanges with Northern Ireland Members a few moments ago about the dairy trade, and to the interventions by the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley). I am straying into the same territory now as I quote the representative body for the dairy sector. I encourage all Members to read the written evidence that the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland submitted to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee just last week. This is a hugely important industry for Northern Ireland. There are over 3,200 dairy farming businesses there, which contribute at least £1.5 billion a year to the economy. It is very good to know that the hon. Member and his family are part of that success for Northern Ireland.

In the words of the Dairy Council,

"The NI Protocol Bill represents a threat to the IoI"—the island of Ireland—

dairy value chain through the proposal for a Dual Regulatory Regime...which will open the potential for products used on dairy farms in the production of milk to be imported from GB without having to adhere to EU standards.

The IoI dairy value chain operates on the basis that NI and RoI milk are produced to the same EU standards".

It also stated:

"Annually around 800m litres of milk, about one third of total NI production, moves to RoI for processing. NI does not have sufficient processing capacity to process all the milk produced in



NI, so anything that damages or limits the dairy value chain would have serious consequences for the NI dairy sector.”

At present, Northern Ireland vets issue certification that the Republic of Ireland vets accept for each consignment of milk.

**Ian Paisley:** Will the hon. Member give way?

**Peter Kyle:** After I have made this point, I will, because I am always interested in the hon. Member’s views on this issue.

What the Government are proposing would impose additional layers of bureaucracy to prove that every step of the milk processing complied with EU standards. This would be disastrous for the dairy industry; it would require segregation of milk at every stage and push the sector into negative growth in Northern Ireland.

**Ian Paisley:** On that technical point, as the hon. Member will accept, the protocol is an example of red tape being used to tie up commerce. Given what he has just said, does he accept that a commercial opportunity is being set aside, and farmers are not being allowed to take it?

**Peter Kyle:** The hon. Member talks about what I said, but all I did was quote the words of the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland; I was not expressing my views. When I talk about an industry in Northern Ireland, I of course try extremely hard to listen to the people on the frontline who represent that industry. Of course I take into consideration his experience, and the frontline experiences of his family.

My amendment 28 says, “Let’s listen to those on the frontline and get the Government to do an assessment before we do something that could have radical consequences for the sector.” I understand that the hon. Member has first-hand experience of talking to people, and of living in a family of people, who are affected by this. Expert opinion fed to me contradicts that view. What is the logical conclusion? Before we move forward with a set of regulations that could ride roughshod over the dairy industry in Northern Ireland, let us take the time to make an assessment. We should have an impact assessment, lay it before the House, and debate it before we pass a law that could radically impact the industry.

**Sammy Wilson:** The hon. Member has to be very careful in listening to bodies that claim to be representative of an industry; those at the top of the body very often have their own agenda. Let us look at the logic of his argument. A third of Northern Ireland’s milk goes for processing in the Irish Republic. In other words, some businesses in the Irish Republic are dependent on an awful lot of milk, which they cannot produce in their country, from Northern Ireland. If we have a system of dual regulation that ensures that the milk is as safe tomorrow as it was yesterday, and as safe after the Bill goes through as it was before the Bill, does he not think that businesses and Government in the Irish Republic will accept that Northern Ireland milk is essential for those industries, and so would not seek to put a barrier in its way?

**Peter Kyle:** The point I am making is quite clear. There is a difference of opinion here, and I think it is unwise to reject out of hand the representative body for the dairy sector in Northern Ireland. Let us engage with

that. I have been very respectful of the right hon. Gentleman’s view, but I make the point that that was the second intervention from him, and I did ask him to correct the record in relation to his previous intervention, when he said something that was categorically untrue about my voting in the past. I hope that when he makes his next intervention he will do the right and honourable thing, which is to correct the record unequivocally and recognise that I voted in the polar opposite way to the way that he said I did.

The best way for us to resolve these issues is to have an independent assessment of the impact on different sectors that might be negatively affected—or certainly affected—by the legislation. It would be irresponsible not to, because there is such a difference of opinion.

**Stephen Farry:** Talking of putting things on the record, would the shadow Secretary of State join me in standing up for the credibility of Mike Johnston, who leads the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland? I stress that no one here has any evidence whatsoever that he has any motivation other than standing up for the interests of his industry.

**Peter Kyle:** I am certainly very grateful for the intervention, and to the witness for giving the benefit of his insight, wisdom and experience to a Select Committee of the House—insight gained from his membership of his organisation. All submissions to this place are welcome, and must be received in the spirit in which they were given to the House. However, it is the role of Government to deliver, and I urge the Government and Ministers to deliver in the way that has the least chance of negatively impacting a sector as important as the dairy sector in Northern Ireland. We are talking about the dairy sector, but it is just one of many sectors that could be negatively impacted if the Government get the implementation of the Bill wrong.

The Dairy Council for Northern Ireland estimates that processing all the milk that Northern Ireland produces would take three years and up to £250 million of investment. Let us be clear that we are debating a proposal that would cripple a part of the economy that supplies basic consumer goods and is working well. The proposals would take a wrecking ball to this key sector in the middle of a cost of living crisis, wreaking havoc on businesses and driving up prices. It would be a different debate if the Government were saying that they are introducing a dual regulatory regime because they do not want Northern Ireland to have dual market access any more, and this was the first step towards that, but that is not what Ministers are saying.

On Second Reading, the Foreign Secretary said that this regime

“cuts the processes that drive up cost for business”—[*Official Report*, 27 June 2022; Vol. 717, c. 40–41]

and allows business to choose which market they want to use. That is the exact opposite of what businesses are saying that a dual regulatory regime would achieve in practice. It is self-explanatory that moving to a dual regime would lead to more administration. The clue is in the name: dual regulation, under a dual regime, means double the number of processes that a business could encounter.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I fear the shadow Secretary of State is approaching this on the premise that the dual regulatory system will be compulsory. As I understand the Government's proposal, it is for each business—and sector, indeed, if it so wishes—to decide whether it wants to opt in or opt out of this system. Businesses and sectors could decide to opt into the UK system only or the EU system only, or both. The idea that every business and sector will have to adopt both sets of regulations is simply not true.

**Peter Kyle:** I am grateful for the intervention. I make two simple points: first, I used the word “could” encounter, not “would” or “be compelled” to encounter. Secondly, let us take a business that might be operating in both markets. It would be forced to undertake the bureaucracy required by both markets. He says that is optional. Of course it is, but it is not optimal if a business that is operating perfectly contently and successfully—perhaps even growing, and creating more wealth, opportunity and jobs in Northern Ireland—wants to withdraw from one of the markets just to avoid the paperwork. It would not be forced; I understand that. It would be voluntary, but let us not kid ourselves that withdrawing from one of the markets simply to avoid bureaucracy or red tape would not have any impact on jobs, prosperity and wealth in Northern Ireland.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Northern Ireland does not operate in a vacuum. A business in my constituency is no different from a business in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. If a business in his constituency wants to sell goods in the EU single market, is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that that business can apply British standards, even if they are different from EU standards, and sell those goods in the EU without complying with EU standards? Of course not. Businesses in Northern Ireland have to make commercial decisions. If they want to sell goods to the EU, they must comply with EU standards. If they want to sell goods in the UK, they must comply with British standards. That is the way the commercial world works. That is the way it is regulated. Let us not pretend that we are creating a new regime here for Northern Ireland businesses, and that if we want to sell goods both in the UK and the EU, we need only one set of standards. That is not the case.

**Peter Kyle:** I am not quite sure where to start with that intervention. The right hon. Gentleman suggests we take the instance of my community in Hove and Portslade, on the sunny Sussex coastline. If businesses there are exporting to the EU, then of course they have to do all the additional red tape that has been imposed by the particular Brexit deal negotiated by this Government, but they do not have to do so if they are selling locally. This is the problem we have at the moment: we are suggesting a dual regime for the domestic Northern Ireland market, so it is not the same. Those who trade within Sussex—there is such fantastic produce grown, compiled, sold and retailed there—would not expect to have two regulatory regimes forced on them in Sussex. I do not think we should conflate exporters with those who produce for the domestic market. That is the problem we face in Northern Ireland; producers there are certainly being forced, in that situation, to make a choice. I am not suggesting that anybody is being forced

to trade under both regimes. They can unilaterally decide to withdraw from one of the markets and perhaps downscale their business. But let us move on.

**Hilary Benn:** I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way; he is being most generous. The argument has been put by the Minister and others in the Chamber that businesses in Northern Ireland would be entirely free to choose whether they use one regulatory system or the other, but according to the explanatory notes, clause 11

“allows a Minister to prescribe whether the dual regime should no longer apply to a specific class of regulated goods. It also provides a power for a Minister of the Crown to modify the different regulatory routes available in Northern Ireland.”

In other words, the Government are taking for themselves the power to turn off the choice that they advocated that businesses should have, as an argument for voting for the proposals.

**Peter Kyle:** Again, my right hon. Friend makes a fundamental point about the weakness of the Bill. It is basically a one-sentence Bill. Paragraph (a) in clause 1 states that the Bill

“provides that certain specified provision of the Northern Ireland Protocol does not have effect in the United Kingdom”.

That is the heart of the Bill. The rest of the Bill is, as he says, powers for Ministers to act as they will into the future. That is a fundamental problem. We have heard time and again throughout the passage of the Bill that it repatriates the most enormous powers not to British traders and not to the regions of Britain and Northern Ireland, but to Ministers directly. It creates huge uncertainty. As I said earlier, businesses recognise that they cannot prepare, because they do not know how Ministers will implement the powers they have into the future. At the moment, all they are saying is that they want those powers to make use of as they see fit.

3.15 pm

Let us move on. If goods in Northern Ireland can be made to GB standards or EU standards, a Northern Ireland manufacturer with a presence in both markets could find themselves having to make goods to both standards because of customer demands. That will all have to be administered by a combination of Westminster and Stormont. There is also the issue of allowing businesses to continue to have market choice. According to the Northern Ireland Business Brexit Working Group, the biggest issue with a dual regulatory regime is that it causes significant reputational risks to Northern Ireland exports sold into the EU market, which could damage access. Our amendment 28 is simple. It would require the following:

“Before making regulations under this section, a Minister of the Crown must carry out an economic impact assessment of the proposed regulations, and conduct a consultation on the proposed regulations with any stakeholders whom the Minister of the Crown considers appropriate.”

A report on those exercises would then have to be laid before Parliament. It should not be controversial to ask the Government to do that before proceeding with proposals which could have such a devastating impact on businesses in Northern Ireland.

**Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP):** I rise to speak to, or at least draw attention to, amendments 19 and 22 in my name, and to speak to the other amendments that have been discussed.

On amendments 19 and 22, I do not intend to rehearse in any depth the arguments I put forward on day one, except to say that even if the Bill was not at risk of being in breach of international law, in our view it still gives Ministers far too much power to proceed without adequate reference back to this place and opportunities for scrutiny by Members. I make that point again for the consideration of the Treasury Bench; no doubt they will instantly dispose of it, but nobody can accuse me of not having made it again.

On amendments 44 and 45, it seems to me entirely reasonable that Ministers should be required to consult appropriately on the impact of dual routes, and to make sure there is an agreement with the EU and the option to choose between dual routes so that the dual routes procedure can operate as intended. It also seems to me to be perfectly reasonable to refer back to the directly elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland in the Assembly on how they might wish such a mechanism to go ahead or to work, so we are supportive of amendments 44 and 45.

On amendment 28, ensuring that an economic impact assessment is carried out before proceeding with a dual regulatory regime seems to me to be the very essence of common sense. If only we had carried out a thorough economic assessment before stepping into this morass in the first place, it might have given people some pause for thought.

Finally—I said I would be brief—new clause 15 would require the House to be informed timeously of the details of discussions in the UK-EU Joint Committee when they involved regulation of goods in connection with the protocol, and to be given details of the regard that has been offered to the strand 1 and strand 2 arrangements. That seems a perfectly sensible way to ensure that consent is in place and that the views of all relevant stakeholders have been properly taken into consideration before such a momentous step is taken.

We entirely support those provisions and, if they are selected for separate decision, we intend to walk through the Lobby in support of them.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the various amendments. I say to my honourable friends and colleagues from the Alliance party and the Social Democratic and Labour party that, in all their contributions to debates on the Bill, I have yet to hear once any acknowledgment of the impact of the protocol on the Unionist community in Northern Ireland and its sense of identity, including its sense of identity within the United Kingdom. There has been no recognition from either party of the importance of these issues for the people I represent and how that has contributed significantly to the breakdown of power sharing in Northern Ireland and the breakdown of the North South Ministerial Council. If we are going to find a solution, I have to say, with respect to my colleagues, that simply focusing in on what I accept are important points while ignoring the elephant in the room will not take us anywhere close to finding a solution that restores political stability in Northern Ireland.

**Claire Hanna:** I think Members across the Chamber would concur, and *Hansard* will certainly show, that I and others are acutely aware of the discombobulating

and disturbing impact on many of a Unionist background. We have put on record many times our concerns about the symbolic effect of borders, which is why we worked so hard and for so many years to ensure that there is a borderless solution. We regret that not all parties joined us in that fight. Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that many of us are concerned that his party, in legitimate pursuit of the rights of those with a strong Unionist identity, utterly ignores the majority of people who support the protocol in some form and is disregarding the majority of people in Northern Ireland—a comfortable majority—who wish the Northern Ireland Assembly to be up and running and who wish MLAs, MPs and others to find a negotiated, not a unilateral, solution to this impasse?

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I welcome the intervention from the hon. Member, for whom who I have a high regard. It is important that she placed on record a recognition of the concerns of Unionists, but she mentioned the word “majority” at least twice, and I find that interesting. She will no doubt scold me for quoting John Hume, as she did my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart), who is with us this afternoon. I have said on the record that even though I would have had many differences with John Hume, I came to respect and understand his very clear view that in a divided society such as Northern Ireland, consensus, not majority rule, is the way forward. As a Unionist, I accepted that any political institutions that were to operate in Northern Ireland and that could command broad support had to operate on the basis of that consensus. The consensus has broken down because of the protocol’s impact on the Unionist community.

**Claire Hanna:** Does the right hon. Member acknowledge that it feels duplicitous to many people for him and his colleagues to say repeatedly that the protocol requires cross-community consent but that Brexit does not—that the protocol means that this Bill is fine because it has a Unionist party’s consent, even though all the other parties, representing a number of other traditions, do not support it? Does he acknowledge that there is a bit of give and take? Many Unionists would like this argument to end, but does he understand that you cannot in the same breath make the argument for consensus while completely discounting every single elected representative of a nationalist or other identity?

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I have no desire whatever to replace Unionist discontentment with nationalist discontentment in Northern Ireland. I recognise that a solution to these issues must be capable of commanding broad support and of dealing with the concerns that arise, not just for Unionists. If, for a moment, we can set aside the process—I think that is what incurs the wrath of some about how the Government are going about this—and look the Government’s proposed solution, I believe we will see that it is capable of addressing the concerns of the European Union and its need to protect the single market and its integrity. What it does for Unionists, however, is to respect the integrity of the UK internal market.

When I hear the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry) explaining his opposition to the Bill—I use this only as an example; I am not saying that it is the totality of his opposition—by saying that because one



[Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson]

third of milk production in Northern Ireland crosses the border to be processed, we cannot find a solution that respects the integrity of the UK internal market, I am simply at a loss to understand the logic of that argument, because it completely ignores the right of this United Kingdom to regulate its own market. We do have that right, as a nation. We took that right upon ourselves when, in a referendum, the majority in this country voted to leave the European Union. I understand the point that the hon. Member for Belfast South makes. If we could turn the clock back, she would argue, no doubt, that in such a referendum there should be a need for cross-community consent in Northern Ireland, but the fact is that that did not exist—it was not argued for at the time—and the result of the referendum stands.

Therefore, we must make the best of this, but the best of it is not the protocol, because the protocol seriously inhibits the ability of the United Kingdom to regulate its internal market. The former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers), made the point that it goes beyond that: it actually undermines the Union itself. In respect of article 6 of the Acts of Union, which gives every citizen in this United Kingdom the right to trade freely within our own country, stating that there shall be no barriers to trade between the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, the protocol undermines the Union. It undermines Northern Ireland's ability, as part of the United Kingdom, to trade freely with the rest of our own country.

**Claire Hanna:** The SDLP is acutely aware of the sensitivity of people's identity, but does the right hon. Member agree that having customs checks

“doesn't mean that you change the constitutional status of a part of the United Kingdom,”

and does he agree that he said that on 3 March 2020?

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Absolutely. The customs checks I was referring to were in the context of proposals that the Government had introduced in the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill—and that they proposed to introduce in the Finance Bill—which would have removed the need for customs checks on goods circulating within the United Kingdom. My point to the BBC at the time was that customs checks on goods moving into the EU do not represent constitutional change, but what does represent constitutional change, as confirmed by the High Court and the Court of Appeal, is placing those checks on goods staying within the United Kingdom.

My party and I have been consistent on this point. If the hon. Lady refers back to the speeches made when the protocol was debated in this House, she will see that the view of the Democratic Unionist party has been clear from the outset that the protocol, if unchanged, would threaten Northern Ireland's place within the UK and impact our ability to trade with the rest of our country, and that we opposed the notion that we could have customs checks on goods moving within the UK internal market. That has consistently been our position, because that alters our constitutional status as part of the United Kingdom.

I believe that what the Government propose is a serious endeavour to correct that problem and address that difficulty, to ensure that we can regulate our own

internal market and that where goods are moving within the United Kingdom and staying within the United Kingdom, they are not subject to customs checks, which, in our opinion, are unnecessary.

As the Minister rightly indicated, clause 7 introduces a system of dual regulation in Northern Ireland. I will not repeat what I said to the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), but I listened very carefully to what he had to say. If a business in his constituency wants to export goods to the United States of America, it must comply with US standards. It is the same for businesses in any part of the United Kingdom wanting to export to the EU: they must comply with EU standards.

I will use the example of the dairy sector to set out what is different for Northern Ireland. Farmers in my constituency who are part of the Lakeland Dairies co-operative have their milk collected in tankers at their farms in County Down and County Antrim and driven to the processing plant across the border. Very often, that milk comes back to Northern Ireland and is sold on our supermarket shelves, so we need a bespoke solution for the dairy sector. Dual regulation does not prevent that from happening. In fact, it enables it, because although one third of milk crosses the border, two thirds of it remains in Northern Ireland for processing. It is as if we are ignoring the reality that the majority of farmers in Northern Ireland do not send their milk across the border to be processed; it stays in Northern Ireland, and much of it is sold in Great Britain. No provision has been made for that.

3.30 pm

This is our difficulty, and this is why the concept of dual regulation is important. Dual regulation is a compromise—a compromise between my desire for British standards to apply throughout the United Kingdom and the desire of some in business, and political parties from Northern Ireland, for us to take measures to protect cross-border trade. My party wants to ensure that we do protect cross-border trade, and I believe the concept of dual regulation allows us to do that, although we need to understand how it will work in practice for each sector. I do not believe it is beyond the capacity of the dairy sector to present the Government with proposals for a bespoke solution based on this concept that will work for all dairy farmers—not just those who sell their milk across the border, but those who have their milk processed within Northern Ireland and want to sell it into Great Britain.

I think that where there is a will, there is a way. We are happy to engage with Mike Johnston—whom I respect—and the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland and to talk this through, and I welcome the fact that the Government are now engaged in consultation with business. I do not pretend, as a politician, that I have all the answers—I recognise that there will be some difficulties—but let us identify those difficulties and find solutions, because it is in finding solutions that we will move towards the restoration of political and economic stability in Northern Ireland and give businesses the certainty that they are crying out for.

I do not see how the choice brought about by a system of dual regulation will harm the Northern Ireland economy in the long run. In fact, I think it will help us to maximise the potential of dual market access, and

will enable businesses and sectors to make choices that constitute commercial decisions. My right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) made an important point. Yes, regulation is important, but in the end, business thrives on its ability to make commercial decisions, and to take advantage of what my hon. Friend the Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) described as the commercial opportunities.

Of course regulations change, but one of the difficulties I have is that the Northern Ireland dairy sector is now subject to regulations over which I, as a representative of many farmers in my constituency, have no say. When my dairy farmers come to me and say, “Jeffrey, we are concerned about these regulations coming from the EU”, where do I go with that? Do I go to the Minister in Stormont and say, “There is a problem here”? Yes, I can do that, but the Minister has no control over how those EU regulations are drawn up, and it is the same with the Minister in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs here at Westminster. There is a democratic deficit that needs to be addressed, and we believe that there are solutions in what the Government are proposing which will help to take care of not only the regulatory issue, but the democratic deficit that flows from it.

Clause 9, as the Minister said, is designed to give effect to the aspects of the Bill that will require further regulation. Let me say to the Minister and his colleagues that I think it important for both business and politics in Northern Ireland for the draft regulations to be published as soon as the initial consultations with the business sector have been completed. It would be helpful to see what the Government’s thinking is, in respect of the schemes that they intend to introduce—not least those relating to the green and red lane concept—but also in respect of matters such as dual regulation. We could then look at the regulations and suggest changes, or the industry and business sectors could suggest changes, and hopefully we would come up with solutions that worked within the concept of the Bill’s aim of delivering solutions to the problems created by the protocol. I therefore urge the Government to publish the draft regulations at the earliest stage possible.

Let me now turn to the amendments tabled by both the Alliance party and the SDLP. While I understand where they are coming from, I tend to agree with the Minister. I think that much of this is unnecessary, and that we can work out much of the detail when we see the regulations. We would certainly not be in favour of fettering the Government in respect of their ability to regulate the UK internal market by requiring them to seek permission from the EU every time they wanted to change the way in which they regulate it. I would not expect the EU to accept the UK Government having a veto over how the EU regulates its internal market, given that we have left the European Union, but the EU must accept that the UK has the right to regulate its own market. I do not think we should be imposing requirements that necessitate the approval of the European Union for the internal regulation of the UK internal market, except perhaps where there is a cross-border element.

That brings me to the North South Ministerial Council and the SDLP’s amendment, which would effectively almost hand a veto to the North South Ministerial Council in respect to this. That is not something we

would, or could, support. I recognise that the council can be a forum within which we discuss practical issues with the Irish Government and how those problems might be resolved, and it might be a forum in which ideas can come forward.

**Colum Eastwood:** If the right hon. Member agrees that the North South Ministerial Council would be a good forum for discussing some of these issues, maybe he would allow it to meet.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I am as anxious as anyone to get back to having those discussions, and once the confidence of the Unionist community has been restored—the Bill has the potential to help us to do that—we will be back in our place. I simply say to the hon. Member for Foyle (Colum Eastwood), as I said to the hon. Member for Belfast South (Claire Hanna), that we must recognise that this is not just about the practicalities of trade; for Unionists it goes much deeper than that, and we need to address this. We need to find a solution to this that rebuilds confidence and restores the need for consensus in our politics, and that applies to the North South Ministerial Council. What I cannot accept, and what my party would not agree to, is giving the North South Ministerial Council a veto over what the UK can do to regulate its internal market. I do not think that is right or appropriate. It would have an impact on the delicate constitutional balances that are part of the Belfast agreement.

**Colum Eastwood:** The right hon. Member makes an interesting point, and I think he is right when he says that it is not just the practicalities of trade that are damaging confidence within the Unionist population, but does he believe that this will be enough to keep those people who are out on the streets happy? There will still be checks, and that constitutional issue that he has will not go away as a result of this Bill.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** We are seeking to find a solution that works for everyone, and we are listening to what business is saying, just as the hon. Member for North Down and the SDLP are rightly doing. I accept that there will not be a solution that everyone in Northern Ireland will agree with.

I do not believe that accommodating checks on goods moving from the UK to the EU represents a constitutional change to our status as part of the United Kingdom, but I do believe that carrying out customs checks on goods travelling from GB to Northern Ireland and staying within the United Kingdom does have a constitutional impact on our position within the United Kingdom. I make a distinction in that respect. The question then is where and how you do those checks. We are prepared to look at what the Government are proposing, which is why I asked them to publish as soon as possible their proposals for the so-called green lane and red lane approach so we can see what that means in practice and how it might work, and to consult the Northern Ireland political parties and the business community on the practicalities of all this. But, in my opinion, removing the bureaucracy, the checks and the restrictions on the movement of goods within the UK internal market answers the question raised by the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet: this will resolve the issue around

[Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson]

article 6 of the Act of Union, which says there should be no barriers to trade within the United Kingdom itself.

Although I understand the concerns that have been raised about the practical workings of this Bill, I believe it offers a potential solution that addresses the real and genuine concerns of not only Unionists in Northern Ireland but many in the business community. Yes, some in the business community say that the protocol works for them, but many say the opposite.

We are looking for an outcome that respects Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom, that respects the core principles of the Belfast agreement, including the need for consensus, that removes the barriers to trade within the United Kingdom, that offers a practical solution to goods crossing into the European Union and protects the integrity of the EU's single market, and that enables business to have a real say in how those solutions are designed.

We will not be supporting the amendments because we do not believe they are necessary to achieve the required objectives.

**Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): I rise to speak in support of amendment 28.

It is frustrating and worrying that, yet again, we are debating legislation that will violate an international agreement under a Government who have an alarming disregard for the rule of law. For the second time in the space of a few weeks, the Government are attempting to force a Northern Ireland Bill through this House against the express wishes of many people in the north.

The contempt in which this Government hold the views of people in the north of Ireland has become increasingly clear. They are simply pawns in this Government's political games, yet the decisions taken today and tomorrow will have a massive impact on the lives of ordinary people across the Irish sea. Given that the Government forced through the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill just the other week, despite being opposed by every party in the Northern Ireland Assembly, it is a shameless act of hypocrisy that they are now using the lack of cross-community support for the protocol as an excuse for scrapping it, especially when the majority of MLAs have written to the Prime Minister opposing these plans, branding them "reckless", and rejecting the Government's

"claim to be protecting the Good Friday Agreement as your Government works to destabilise our region. To complain the protocol lacks cross-community consent, while ignoring the fact that Brexit itself—let alone hard Brexit—lacks even basic majority consent here, is a grotesque act of political distortion."

Cross-community support has real meaning in Northern Ireland, and it is so poor that the Government are seeking to portray themselves as champions of bridging the divide when, just the other week, they were dismissing its importance out of hand. It is absolutely clear that the majority of legislators in the north believe that the measures in this Bill will come at a clear economic cost to Northern Ireland and that the protocol represents the only available protection for Northern Ireland from the worst impacts of that hard Brexit. It is therefore scandalous that this dying Government are dedicating

their final days to riding roughshod over the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland in the name of policies that could have a detrimental impact on the local economy.

That is why I will be supporting amendment 28, as it would prevent the Government from making regulations relating to the dual regulatory regime until an economic impact assessment of the proposed changes has been carried out. The Prime Minister negotiated, signed off and campaigned on this protocol, which he promised to deliver—one of the many promises on which he has reneged. Now, in the death throes of his term in office, he is forcing through this Bill, damaging the credibility of GB. As he leaves office, his legacy remains a complete lack of respect for the rule of law, for international agreements and for the people of Northern Ireland. Sadly, the people of Northern Ireland will be poorer for it.

3.45 pm

**Sammy Wilson:** First, as the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), seems to be very sensitive about any comments I make about his past voting behaviour, may I confirm that yes, of course, he walked through the Lobby with us in opposition to the withdrawal agreement? I am not so sure that his main motive was his objection to the Northern Ireland protocol. I suspect that the evidence since that date, the full support the Labour party has given to the protocol and its ignoring of many of the concerns that Unionists have probably confirm my view, and that of most people in Northern Ireland, that regardless of the initial trip through the Lobby in this House, the Labour party supports the protocol. Indeed, its amendments today would seem to indicate that it opposes any attempts to do away with the protocol. I hope that that is a sufficient assurance to him as to my position on his stance.

I want to deal with the three main amendments that have been debated today. The first is amendment 44 to clause 7, in the name of the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry). It is, no doubt, an attempt to ensure that the process and the concept of dual regulation never takes place. Yet what is the purpose of clause 7? It is threefold. First, it is to ensure that the democratic deficit that exists in Northern Ireland is wiped out. That deficit relates to the EU regulations and laws currently on the statute book as a result of annexe 2 of the protocol and the prospect of any of those 82 pages of laws being changed in the future. Those changes would apply to Northern Ireland without any say from this House, the Northern Ireland Assembly or the business community in Northern Ireland, whether they were detrimental or not.

For the life of me, I cannot see how the continued imposition of that part of the protocol is to the advantage of Northern Ireland. Indeed, I note that some who are opposing the Bill are doing so on the basis that the regulations provided for in the Bill would be implemented by Ministers here, without reference, they say, to the Northern Ireland Executive or Assembly. It seems okay for EU laws to be imposed upon Northern Ireland without any say, but it is an "affront to democracy" when UK Ministers impose regulations on their own country. One has to look at the motives of those who are opposing this clause and ask: are they and do they continue to be the agents of the EU, wishing that we could remain in the EU, even knowing that the people



have voted not to remain in the EU? They are trying to circumvent the wishes of the people of the United Kingdom.

Secondly, these regulations apply by and large to firms that will never trade with the EU. Some 95% of firms in Northern Ireland do not do any trade with the EU, yet they are required under the protocol to abide by EU regulations. This Bill genuinely gives the best of both worlds to firms in Northern Ireland, because those that do not trade with the EU will now be freed from having to abide by costly EU regulations, which may even be detrimental to their business.

At the same time, those that wish to trade with the EU will be able to volunteer to accept EU laws, even though those EU laws have not passed through the Northern Ireland Assembly or been subject to scrutiny. Regardless of the fact that those laws have not been scrutinised, or that they may have detrimental effects, they will volunteer to comply with the regulations. If that is the case, that addresses the concern expressed by the hon. Member for North Down and others—here again, the hon. Member for Hove is wrong—[*Interruption.*] I think the record will show that the hon. Member did say that businesses would be forced to adopt those regulations. No one will be forced to adopt them. They will make a commercial decision: do I wish to trade with the EU? If I do, I will volunteer to comply with the regulations.

One of my arguments about the Bill is that the clause on dual regulation is probably unnecessary. If a firm decides to trade with another nation, by definition it will have to apply the regulations that are required to sell goods in that country. There is no need for a firm such as Caterpillar in my constituency, which sells generators to Africa, China and America, to adopt dual regulation with the countries to which it sells the generators. It simply makes sure that it adopts and includes the relevant regulations when producing its products, because otherwise it could not sell in those countries. Nevertheless, the Government have decided to include this measure, to give an assurance to the EU that firms that trade from Northern Ireland into the European Union via the Irish Republic will be compliant with EU regulations. They will make that decision. People talk about the Government not honouring the protocol, but this is another way in which they have sought to honour an objective of the protocol, namely that the EU single market will be safeguarded. It will be safeguarded because firms will make a conscious decision to abide by the regulations, whether they are manufacturing chairs, sofas, beds or milk.

I am very touched by the concern that the hon. Member for North Down has for the agriculture industry. I wish he would transfer that concern to some of the climate zealots in his own party, who are demanding that we stop eating beef, drinking milk and using dairy products, and that laws are passed to ensure that people cannot enjoy the kind of sunny day we are experiencing today. I wish only that his concern for the farming industry in Northern Ireland was as consistent as he claims it to be, because I do not think it is. Indeed, some of the climate policies that his party has been promoting in Stormont would have devastated the beef industry, the pig industry, the sheep industry, and the dairy industry in Northern Ireland.

Amendment 13 would require a report on dual access. Substantial information is produced on trade across the border. That is why we know that only 0.4% of EU trade comes through Northern Ireland—we have the statistics. That is how we know that only 5% of businesses sell to the Irish Republic, and that five times more of our exports go to GB than to the Irish Republic. There is already extensive reporting, so I do not know why there is any need for further reports. There also seems to be concern about the impact that the measure would have on the European market. Well, I think the role of this Government is to protect the UK market, not to have concerns about what happens in the EU market. The EU can look after its own market—we have left it—and decide what is good or bad for it. This Government do not have a job to promote the EU market; they do have a job to protect and promote the UK market.

Amendment 14 would require that the North South Ministerial Council debate the regulations and come to a conclusion, and then that that conclusion be reflected and supported by the UK Government and the Joint Committee. There are two fundamental flaws in this. First, the North South Ministerial Council does not have a role in dealing with issues that are reserved matters here at Westminster; it only has a role in dealing with those aspects that are under the remit of the devolved Assembly in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government. So this would extend the role and the remit of the North South Ministerial Council by allowing and requiring it to comment on issues that are reserved to the United Kingdom Government. Secondly, the United Kingdom would then be required to reflect and support the view of the North South Ministerial Council. Let us not forget that although people talk about the all-Ireland economy, the Irish Government are in competition with the Northern Ireland economy and with the UK economy. How can we reasonably expect something that may be agreed at the North South Ministerial Council that may be detrimental to the UK economy to be supported by UK Ministers?

**Claire Hanna:** Does the Member acknowledge that the North South Ministerial Council, when it is not being held to ransom, is already a consensus-based forum, and that our amendment speaks to proposals agreed there that would therefore be agreed by his party? Does he not understand how hollow the words about respecting the Good Friday agreement in all its parts sound when a vital part of it, strand 2, is denigrated in this way? Does he further acknowledge, as his party leaders have done, that there are potential mechanisms within strand 2 of the agreement and within the North South Ministerial Council that can give voice to Northern Irish interests?

**Sammy Wilson:** That brings me to my next point—that introducing reserved matters to the North South Ministerial Council would mean that the controversies that have currently stopped it working, and stopped the Northern Ireland Assembly working, would be imported into the North South Ministerial Council so that we would not get the kind of agreement that the Member talks about. Amendment 14 would reinforce the impact that the protocol has had on the current institutions of the Belfast agreement and bring them into the remit of the North South Ministerial Council in future.

[Sammy Wilson]

New clause 15 goes down the same route of introducing an input for the North South Ministerial Council, and another barrier to the introduction of dual regulation in the Bill, by requiring that the Executive endorse the arrangements—and in a way that, as we have heard, would exclude Unionists because the SDLP has now adopted majoritarianism with regard to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

A comparison was made with Brexit. Brexit was a majority decision. It was not a majority decision in Northern Ireland; it was a majority decision of the people of the United Kingdom as a whole. A referendum was held across the whole of the United Kingdom and it was binding in all parts of the United Kingdom, regardless of pockets where there was a majority for Brexit or a majority against it. If we had gone down the route of consensus on a referendum as suggested by the SDLP—which would of course be impossible—then what would we have done about London or other pockets across the United Kingdom? We cannot make that comparison between the dealings of this Bill regarding the arrangements within the Assembly and a referendum vote.

I hope that the Committee will accept the points I have made and will not vote in favour of those amendments.

**Ian Paisley:** It is an honour to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson).

There is no doubt that the Bill before us is a repair job, because Brexit was not completely done. It was not properly done in Northern Ireland, where we were left with a protocol that has caused untold problems, hence why we are back here today. People can say, “Oh, there isn’t really a problem with the protocol. Just get on with it.” However, we have now had I-don’t-know-how-many hours of debate because the protocol is not working. It has broken down and needs to be replaced, and that is the fact of the matter.

4 pm

The Opposition spokesman, the shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said that the Bill was a solution looking for a problem—I think that was how he characterised it. As funny as that may be, the protocol is a problem and it requires a solution, and we have a duty—indeed, a responsibility—to try and find that solution between us. The protocol is an example of red tape being used to tie up commerce. I will come to that point in some detail later, but the Government were warned that the protocol was going to be a problem. Indeed, the current Secretary of State for Northern Ireland left the Government on the issue—that is the fact of the matter—because it caused problems for Northern Ireland and the Union that he and I both cherish.

Of course, we were warning way back in October 2019 that the protocol would cause friction. A previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made it clear that there would be no friction at all and that it would be light-touch, but it has been heavy-handed and has caused problems, so today we are in a position of, “Yes, we told you so.” We now need to fix this, and I am delighted the Government are bringing forward some

measures to fix it. We will see in the round whether they do, but we have to remove the frictions on trade, which are intolerable.

The Minister said earlier that I had made a powerful point about trade. I refer to a graph put together by the haulage industry, which shows that before 2021 there were four requirements to bring goods to Northern Ireland. First, trade transportation would be agreed, standard paperwork would be issued and completed, goods would be transported from GB to Northern Ireland, and then delivery would be completed, which is essentially the same process for taking goods from Scotland to Northern Ireland or Scotland to England.

Since 2021, an additional 11 measures have been put in place, including entry summary declaration forms, simplified frontier declaration forms and movement reference numbers—the carrier then populates goods details for the GVMS, or goods vehicle movement service, and then obtains goods movement reference numbers or GMRs. Goods would then be cleared for transport to Northern Ireland. There would then have to be supplementary declarations completed and duties would be paid on the at-risk goods, alongside a whole host of other measures.

I am delighted that the Minister said that those frictions would be removed, because they need to be removed. They have added considerable costs, as the leader of my party has demonstrated on numerous occasions, not only to doing business in Northern Ireland but for consumers in Northern Ireland. This discriminates against Northern Ireland. It adds costs for everybody in Northern Ireland, it is unfair and it is against our democratic rights. It is important to put that on the record.

In moving his amendment, the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry) dwelt mainly on the impact on milk. There are a considerable number of dairy farms in the North Down constituency, so I know that he will have had representations from the dairy industry, but I think it is wrong for the Alliance party in Northern Ireland to pitch this as a “them and us” argument, because it affects every single farmer in Northern Ireland, including every single dairy farmer. It will affect them in slightly different ways, given how they have calibrated their businesses and which area they wish to trade in, but this should not be turned into a zero-sum game. I thought it was unfair of the Member for the Alliance party to parade Mike Johnston out as someone from the dairy sector who supports his point of view and not someone who supports our point of view. It is grossly unfair to characterise Mike Johnston in that way, because he is an absolutely honourable, decent gentleman, and he will tell hon. Members that the current protocol is not the answer to the problems either.

**Stephen Farry:** I am glad the hon. Gentleman is paying respect to Mike Johnston and his integrity. It was the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) who alluded to ulterior motives behind some of the people fronting some of those organisations and suggested that they were not representing their members. I am not here to twist the Dairy Council to fit a particular narrative; both I and the shadow Secretary of State were simply reflecting what has been said by the sector to Parliament. It is important that we listen to those voices. On the subject of representing people, the

hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) made reference to Lakeland Dairies' somehow being out of sync with the Dairy Council, so I will put on the record that during the course of this debate, I have had a message to say that Lakeland Dairies is in fact very much aligned with the position of the Dairy Council.

**Ian Paisley:** I thank the hon. Member for that point, but I want to make it clear that I listened to the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim, who works with and knows Mike Johnston as well as I do, and he did not make any detrimental comment about Mike himself in any of the comments he made. He referred to other members and other motives, but he did not make any reference, derogatory or otherwise, about Mike Johnston. I think that is very clear. It is unfair to cast those aspersions.

It is not for us as politicians to say, "Oh, we'll parade this body in front of Parliament; they're for us." That goes back to the zero-sum game of politics. Parading the Ulster Farmers Union and saying, "They're on our side on this point," is a cop-out of our political responsibilities. We have a duty as politicians to solve this political problem. The protocol is not a dairy milk problem; it has an impact on the dairy milk sector, but the protocol is a political problem that has caused these problems in the sector. We have a responsibility as politicians to solve the problem and to pull together to try to fix it, because it affects Protestant farmers, Catholic farmers and farmers of no religion the same way. It damages the potential for their business, and we should be pulling together to try to fix it. If this Bill does one thing to try to fix it, I will support that as a step in the right direction.

**Carla Lockhart** (Upper Bann) (DUP): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way; he is certainly in full flow. It is important to strip this debate back to the businesses currently impacted by the protocol. We cannot look ahead of ourselves. Wilson's Country and Glens of Antrim Potatoes cannot bring seed potatoes in to Northern Ireland from Scotland, and that will ultimately damage the potato industry in Northern Ireland in future years. AJ Power in my own constituency has said that the increase in costs is sixfold and is likely to be more when the UK Government input reduces. My hon. Friend makes an important point that those issues are impacting businesses now, and therefore we need this Bill to resolve some of them.

**Ian Paisley:** The point about seed potatoes is particularly interesting, because that represents the entire community in Northern Ireland—companies that employ right across the community and farms from across the community are all being detrimentally impacted in the same way as a result of the protocol. That is why it needs to be fixed.

We have heard some scaremongering about a mass cull of cows and suddenly milk in Northern Ireland becomes different milk because of paperwork, when the milk is being produced in the same way and the same green grass is being used to feed the cows to produce it. Not only is the milk being produced normally, but the same seeds and crops are brought in to feed the cattle, and it is very clear that none of that will change.

The commercial issues that I referred to and that my right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim touched on are very interesting: I think there are more dairy

cows in County Cork than there are in the whole of Northern Ireland, yet County Cork and the Republic of Ireland still cannot produce enough milk. Therefore, they need a commercial relationship with Northern Ireland dairy farms to help them and to increase and encourage their businesses. The commercial reality is that we have to do business across the island. The idea that suddenly people will be able to say to farms in Northern Ireland, "Well, you can't do business with us in the Republic of Ireland.", when Republic of Ireland companies need Northern Ireland farm produce, highlights the commercial reality in all this.

Again, I go back to this point: the protocol is a political problem that is interfering in commercial and farming activity, and we have to pull it away from that and solve the politics around this.

The Bill does not change the cows, as the hon. Member for North Down seemed to imply. It does not change the grass that the cows are fed on. It does not change how the cows are milked, what lorries the produce goes into or what factories the milk is processed in. No, this is about Eurocrats stopping trade, not because the standard of the food has changed but because the paperwork might change. That is not a good basis on which to run any business, to run cross-border activity or to run cross-national frontier businesses. It is not. That is why the protocol should be changed and why the European Union should be ashamed of itself when it refuses to change some of the aspects of the protocol and to try to fix these matters.

The hon. Member for North Down has mentioned on many occasions the issue relating to veterinary products, pharmaceutical products and so on. A solution was agreed for human products, but the EU has blocked that solution for animals and animal welfare. It did so in such a manner that in a matter of months 50% of all veterinary products will be prevented from going to Northern Ireland. That will have a detrimental impact on farming, and the commercial aspect of that, on pets and on our income and our economy.

If ever there was a threat to cattle, it comes from the EU blocking veterinary products coming into Northern Ireland. That is the damage to our business. Do not take my word for it. Take the words of the National Office of Animal Health. It has been campaigning for this change and it has written to all the Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive and told us that this has to be changed. But there is no appetite in the EU to change it. NOAH says clearly that this is not about getting more time to negotiate. Time is over; time has run out. Indeed, the Government's position is that they have been talking for a year and a half to try to fix this. Time is now over. Time is called on this matter. We have to have it resolved urgently and immediately.

Some references have also been made to manufacturing. I am proud to have one of Northern Ireland's largest and most obvious manufacturing businesses—a world business in fact—in Ballymena, a part of my North Antrim constituency. Wrightbus has traded both before we were in the EU—before 1973—for 40 years after joining the EU, and since leaving the EU. It has been a successful world business. Why? Because of EU regulations? No. Because of British regulations? No. Because it makes the best product, and the best product sells. When it made poor products they did not sell. So because it makes the best product, it has at its feet a



[*Ian Paisley*]

world market. It has been able to trade in the United States, all over Malaysia, in the middle east and in other parts of the world as well as the EU.

The idea that suddenly the protocol is making life easier or better for Wrightbus is wrong. The evidence from Wrightbus has been that, yes, it is getting good trade deals both inside the EU—in Germany and the Republic of Ireland—and outside the EU—in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. That is because of its product, but its product has been made costly to produce due to the impact of the protocol. It has made it more costly to get aluminium and other components into Northern Ireland from Great Britain. That adds to the manufacturing time, and time equals money. There is an impact on its product. While it is a market leader at present, as soon as it is challenged in that market lead, we will soon find out the pressure that that industry will be under.

It is very clear to me that in the Republic of Ireland there is a commercial interest in having some damage done to Northern Ireland's trade. People do not like that being said, but it is a fact. The Republic of Ireland has breached regulations time and again. It is being investigated for a £200 million loan to Aer Lingus, which was brought to our attention in April. Since Brexit, I understand that the UK Government have set up an EU subsidy monitoring unit, which has asked for that £200 million loan to be investigated. It is causing commercial differences on the island of Ireland, to the point that the arm of Aer Lingus that operates out of Northern Ireland airports is being damaged by the grants and loans being given to its commercial arm in the Republic of Ireland.

4.15 pm

Why would the Republic of Ireland do that? Well, it is in the interests of Dublin airport to get more passengers, but there is only one place it can get them from: the island of Ireland. If it is not getting enough passengers from the Republic of Ireland, it will have to take them from Northern Ireland. That commercial disadvantage has an impact on Northern Ireland and its trade. I am glad that that illegal loan is being investigated; I hope that the Republic of Ireland comes clean about it and is made to take it back, instead of giving unfair advantages to its companies in the Republic of Ireland.

That paragon of neutrality, Mr Leo Varadkar, has told us that the UK is not even-handed when it comes to the protocol. Well, I am glad that the UK is not even-handed, because the protocol is damaging part of the United Kingdom, but we are talking about a person who has single-handedly juxtaposed the security installations of Northern Ireland for the past 40 years with the allegedly commercial installations that need to be put in place because of Brexit. It is little wonder that people feel very annoyed and let down by people like Leo Varadkar, who effectively told lies about the process that would take place.

We have always had two currencies on our island, and two tax regimes. It is very clear to me that this matter will need to be solved urgently. I am therefore more than happy to support the Bill once again today, as a step in the right direction in getting us through the morass created by the Northern Ireland protocol.

**Michael Ellis:** I am grateful to all the participants in this important debate. Very briefly, I would like to reiterate the following points. No business, including in the dairy sector—I recently visited Lakeland Dairies in Belfast—will be worse off as a result of UK action. The Bill will force no change on any sector, but it will allow Ministers to respond to specific asks from each sector, if appropriate. I have heard strong views about the thoughts of sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, particularly dairy. Understanding such concerns is at the heart of our work; that is why we have been engaging with stakeholders, and will continue to.

May I place on the record my appreciation for the work of the business representative organisations in Northern Ireland, which are doing, and will no doubt continue to do, an important, worthy job on behalf of their members?

While the Northern Ireland protocol was, as we know, agreed with the best of intentions, it is causing real problems for people and businesses in Northern Ireland. This legislation will fix the practical problems that the protocol has created in Northern Ireland.

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The Committee divided: Ayes 201, Noes 293.*

**Division No. 46]**

**[4.18 pm**

#### AYES

Abrahams, Debbie  
Ali, Rushanara  
Ali, Tahir  
Amesbury, Mike  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, rh Jonathan  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barker, Paula  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Betts, Mr Clive  
Blackford, rh Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blake, Olivia  
Bonnar, Steven  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre  
Brown, Alan  
Brown, Ms Lyn  
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris  
Buck, Ms Karen  
Burgon, Richard  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Chamberlain, Wendy  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Cooper, Daisy  
Cooper, Rosie  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil  
Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Daby, Janet  
David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint

Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
Debonnaire, Thangam  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Doogan, Dave  
Doughty, Stephen  
Eagle, Maria  
Eastwood, Colum  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Elmore, Chris  
Eshalomi, Florence  
Esterson, Bill  
Farron, Tim  
Farry, Stephen  
Fellows, Marion  
Ferrier, Margaret  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flynn, Stephen  
Foord, Richard  
Foxcroft, Vicky  
Foy, Mary Kelly  
Furniss, Gill  
Gardiner, Barry  
Gibson, Patricia  
Glindon, Mary  
Green, Kate  
Green, Sarah  
Greenwood, Lilian  
Greenwood, Margaret  
Griffith, Dame Nia  
Haigh, Louise  
Hanna, Claire  
Hardy, Emma  
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  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hussain, Imran  
Jardine, Christine  
Jarvis, Dan  
Johnson, rh Dame Diana  
Jones, Darren  
Jones, Gerald  
Jones, Ruth  
Jones, Sarah  
Kane, Mike  
Keeley, Barbara  
Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)  
Khan, Afzal  
Kyle, Peter  
Lake, Ben  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Chris  
Leadbeater, Kim  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Lightwood, Simon  
Linden, David  
Lloyd, Tony  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Caroline  
Lynch, Holly  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Maskell, Rachael  
Matheson, Christian  
Mc Nally, John  
McCabe, Steve  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Miliband, rh Edward  
Mishra, Navendu  
Monaghan, Carol  
Morden, Jessica  
Morgan, Helen  
Morgan, Stephen  
Murray, James  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Nichols, Charlotte  
Nicolson, John  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Olney, Sarah

Onwurah, Chi  
Oppong-Asare, Abena  
Osamor, Kate  
Oswald, Kirsten  
Owen, Sarah  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Mr Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pollard, Luke  
Powell, Lucy  
Reed, Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Rodda, Matt  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Shah, Naz  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smith, Alyn  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, Nick  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Stephens, Chris  
Stone, Jamie  
Stringer, Graham  
Tami, rh Mark  
Tarry, Sam  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick  
Thompson, Owen  
Thomson, Richard  
Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
Trickett, Jon  
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  
Winter, Beth  
Wishart, Pete

#### **Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Liz Twist and  
Taiwo Owatemi**

#### **NOES**

Adams, rh Nigel  
Afolami, Bim  
Afriyie, Adam  
Aldous, Peter  
Allan, Lucy  
Anderson, Lee  
Andrew, rh Stuart  
Ansell, Caroline  
Argar, Edward  
Atherton, Sarah  
Atkins, Victoria  
Bacon, Gareth  
Bacon, Mr Richard  
Bailey, Shaun  
Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Scott Mann*)  
Baker, Duncan  
Baker, Mr Steve

Baldwin, Harriett  
Baynes, Simon  
Bell, Aaron  
Beresford, Sir Paul  
Berry, rh Jake  
Bhatti, Saqib  
Blackman, Bob  
Blunt, Crispin  
Bone, Mr Peter  
Bottomley, Sir Peter  
Bowie, Andrew  
Bradley, Ben  
Brady, Sir Graham  
Brereton, Jack  
Bridgen, Andrew  
Brine, Steve  
Bristow, Paul  
Britcliffe, Sara  
Bruce, Fiona  
Buchan, Felicity  
Burghart, Alex  
Butler, Rob  
Cairns, rh Alun  
Campbell, Mr Gregory  
Carter, Andy  
Cartlidge, James  
Cash, Sir William  
Cates, Miriam  
Caulfield, Maria  
Chalk, Alex  
Chishti, Rehman  
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  
Coutinho, Claire  
Crosbie, Virginia  
Crouch, Tracey  
Daly, James  
Davies, David T. C.  
Davies, Dr James  
Davies, Mims  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Davison, Dehenna  
Dinenage, Dame Caroline  
Dines, Miss Sarah  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
Double, Steve  
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  
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
Eustice, rh George  
Evans, Dr Luke  
Evennett, rh Sir David  
Everitt, Ben  
Fabricant, Michael

Farris, Laura  
Fell, Simon  
Firth, Anna  
Fletcher, Katherine  
Fletcher, Mark  
Ford, Vicky  
Foster, Kevin  
Fox, rh Dr Liam  
Frazer, rh Lucy  
Freeman, George  
Freer, Mike  
French, Mr Louie  
Fuller, Richard  
Fysh, Mr Marcus  
Garnier, Mark  
Gibson, Peter  
Gideon, Jo  
Girvan, Paul  
Glen, John  
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
Gove, rh Michael  
Graham, Richard  
Grant, Mrs Helen  
Gray, James  
Grayling, rh Chris  
Green, Chris  
Green, rh Damian  
Griffiths, Kate  
Grundy, James  
Gullis, Jonathan  
Hall, Luke  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Sally-Ann  
Hart, rh Simon  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris  
Henderson, Gordon  
Henry, Darren  
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  
Jack, rh Mr Alister  
Javid, rh Sajid  
Jenkinson, Mark  
Jenkyns, Andrea  
Jenrick, rh Robert  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Johnson, Gareth  
Johnston, David  
Jones, Andrew  
Jones, rh Mr David  
Jones, Fay  
Jones, Mr Marcus  
Jupp, Simon  
Kawczynski, Daniel  
Keegan, Gillian  
Knight, rh Sir Greg  
Knight, Julian  
Kruger, Danny

Lamont, John  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cheryllyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Dame Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Nici, Lia  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quince, Will  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence

Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, rh Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, rh Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, rh Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Stuart Anderson and**  
**David Morris**

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Clause 7 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

## Clause 9

### REGULATION OF GOODS: NEW LAW

*Amendment proposed:* 28, in page 5, line 34, at end insert—

“(3) Before making regulations under this section, a Minister of the Crown must carry out an economic impact assessment of the proposed regulations, and conduct a consultation on the proposed regulations with any stakeholders whom the Minister of the Crown considers appropriate.

(4) The Minister of the Crown making regulations under this section must lay before each House of Parliament with a copy or draft of the regulations a copy of the relevant economic impact assessment and a report of the relevant consultation.”—  
*(Peter Kyle.)*

*This amendment would require an economic impact assessment to be carried out before a Minister could make any provisions for the dual regulatory regime.*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 205, Noes 293.

**Division No. 47]**

**[4.33 pm]**

### AYES

Abrahams, Debbie  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Ali, Tahir  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Anderson, Fleur  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan  
 Bardell, Hannah  
 Barker, Paula  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Blake, Olivia  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Brown, Ms Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Daby, Janet  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint

Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 Debbonaire, Thangam  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Eastwood, Colum  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flynn, Stephen  
 Foord, Richard  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Foy, Mary Kelly  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Green, Kate  
 Green, Sarah  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Dame Nia  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Hanna, Claire  
 Hardy, Emma  
 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  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lightwood, Simon  
 Linden, David  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 Mc Nally, John  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahon, Jim  
 McMorris, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Helen  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nicolson, John  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi

Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Rayner, rh Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Shah, Naz  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete

#### **Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Liz Twist and  
 Taiwo Owatemi**

#### **NOES**

Adams, rh Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Andrew, rh Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Gareth  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Scott Mann*)  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Baynes, Simon

Bell, Aaron  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, Ben  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buchan, Felicity  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Campbell, Mr Gregory  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 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  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Crabb, rh Stephen  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Double, Steve  
 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  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura

Fell, Simon  
 Firth, Anna  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 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  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Henry, Darren  
 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  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Jenrick, rh Robert  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Fay  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John

Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cheryllyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Dame Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Nici, Lia  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quince, Will  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin

Robinson, Mary  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, rh Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, rh Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 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  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, rh Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Stuart Anderson and**  
**David Morris**

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Clause 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 10 and 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

## New Clause 15

### UK-EU JOINT COMMITTEE: REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

“(1) When the UK-EU Joint Committee has discussed regulation of goods in connection with the Northern Ireland Protocol, a Minister of the Crown must lay a report before each House of Parliament detailing those discussions within 21 days of the meeting of the UK-EU Joint Committee at which those matters were discussed.

(2) Each such report must include information on how UK representatives adhered to and sought agreement with representatives of the European Union on relevant proposals—

(a) agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive or endorsed by the Northern Ireland Assembly, or both, and promoted by the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly, or

(b) agreed by the North-South Ministerial Council or North-South Implementation bodies and made to the Specialised Committee, pursuant to Article 14 (b) of the Northern Ireland Protocol.”—(*Colum Eastwood.*)

*This new clause would require a Minister of the Crown to report to each House of Parliament on meetings between the UK and EU in the Joint Committee within 21 days of each meeting and to include information on the regard afforded to any submissions from the Strand One and Strand Two institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement by UK and EU respectively.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

*Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.*

*The Committee divided: Ayes 204, Noes 292.*

### Division No. 48]

**[4.47 pm**

### AYES

Abrahams, Debbie  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Ali, Tahir  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan  
 Bardell, Hannah  
 Barker, Paula  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Blake, Olivia  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Brown, Ms Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex

Daby, Janet  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 Debbonaire, Thangam  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Eastwood, Colum  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flynn, Stephen  
 Foord, Richard  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Foy, Mary Kelly  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Green, Kate  
 Green, Sarah  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Dame Nia  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Hanna, Claire  
 Hardy, Emma

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  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lightwood, Simon  
 Linden, David  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 Mc Nally, John  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahon, Jim  
 McMorris, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Helen  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nichols, Charlotte

Nicolson, John  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Rayner, rh Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Shah, Naz  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 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  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete

#### **Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Liz Twist and  
 Taiwo Owatemi**

#### **NOES**

Adams, rh Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Andrew, rh Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline

Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Gareth  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Scott Mann*)  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, Ben  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buchan, Felicity  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Campbell, Mr Gregory  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 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  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Crabb, rh Stephen  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Double, Steve  
 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  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 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  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Hall, Luke  
 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  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Henry, Darren  
 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  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew



Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Fay  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherilyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Dame Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Nici, Lia  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quince, Will

Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, rh Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, rh Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, rh Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 Stuart Anderson and  
 David Morris

## Clause 12

### SUBSIDY CONTROL

**Peter Kyle:** I beg to move amendment 37, page 7, line 10, leave out “the Minister considers appropriate” and insert “is necessary”.

*This amendment changes the threshold for giving a Minister power to make regulations under this Clause. The threshold is amended to make it objective rather than subjective.*

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing):** With this it will be convenient to discuss:

Clause stand part.

Amendment 41, in clause 17, page 9, line 40, leave out “they consider appropriate” and insert “is necessary”.

*This amendment changes the threshold for giving a Minister power to make regulations under this Clause. The threshold is amended to make it objective rather than subjective.*

Clause 17 stand part.

**Peter Kyle:** Thank you Dame Eleanor; it is a privilege to serve under your chairship this afternoon.

We are now covering clauses 12 and 17, which deal with subsidies and VAT. These are complex areas of the legislation that speak to a lack of detail in the Bill and about what the Government will actually do in these areas, should the Bill proceed to statute. Clause 12 excludes article 10 and annexes 5 and 6 of the protocol. These are the EU state aid rules relating to goods and wholesale electricity trade between Northern Ireland and the EU. We can immediately see that there is an added complexity to this part of the protocol due to the fact that the electricity industry operates a single wholesale market across the whole island of Ireland. I am not aware that the Government want to try to unpick that—I do not want to give them any ideas—but it illustrates the tangled web that Ministers are creating with this Bill.

5 pm

Clause 12(3) simply says:

“A Minister of the Crown may, by regulations, make any provision which the Minister considers appropriate in connection with any provision of the Northern Ireland Protocol to which this section relates.”

Amendment 37, which is a probing amendment, would leave out “the Minister considers appropriate” and insert “is necessary” to turn the provision into an objective test. Considering the past actions of this Government, I am surprised that any Member is content to let Ministers make any provisions on a whim in such a hugely complex policy area.

The Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee shares this view. Its report on these clauses says:

“The Government’s justification is that the power allows them to take account of any possible future developments in this policy area. This is an inadequate justification because it does not explain why this should be done in regulations rather than by amending the Bill once enacted. Nothing is said about the sort of provision that could be made beyond the fact that it must be appropriate. Although the Memorandum notes that the effect of disapplying EU state aid law would mean the UK subsidy control regime applies, clause 12(3) read with clause 22(1) allows regulations to rewrite the position for Northern Ireland.”

In other words, the Government are giving themselves practically limitless scope to do whatever they want. What makes this even more frustrating is that subsidy

*Question accordingly negated.*

controls are an area on which there is a clear path forward to adapt the protocol, and it should be improved via the joint committee.

We all want our relationship with the EU to evolve, and the trade and co-operation agreement contains subsidy measures on which the Government and the EU have previously found common compromise. The Government are letting the EU off the hook by bundling everything into this Bill rather than engaging in the hard graft of negotiation and compromise to improve the protocol in a legal way as part of an agreed process.

Clause 17 is similar in how it looks to solve problems with the VAT application of the protocol. The Labour party has been clear that we would like to remove VAT from energy bills to tackle the Tory cost of living crisis on a UK-wide basis, and we have called on the Government to do that immediately. The protocol currently makes that harder to do in Northern Ireland, and it is something we would seek to negotiate. We have to talk to the EU, because the agreement the Government signed explicitly requires Northern Ireland to follow EU VAT rules on goods.

It beggars belief that the Government did not foresee VAT issues when they negotiated and signed the protocol. Neither can they argue that it is being implemented in a bureaucratic way, because VAT issues, by their nature, are bureaucratic and technical. Clauses 12 and 17, on VAT and subsidies, represent areas where we all want to see improvements in the protocol, but this Bill makes improving them harder to achieve because it pushes a negotiated solution further away.

Dame Eleanor, you will be pleased to know that my comments on this group are brief.

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman how impressed I am by that.

**John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** I welcome the notion of measures that restore our control over VAT and subsidies in Northern Ireland. It is entirely within the spirit and the text of the protocol, which says that both parties will respect the internal market of the United Kingdom. How can we have a proper functioning internal market if we have to have rates of VAT in Northern Ireland that are different from the rest of our internal market? And how can we claim that our country's sovereignty is respected by this part of the agreement, as the EU originally said it would be, if we are not sovereign to change VAT in an important part of the United Kingdom? It is right that we legislate on this issue, because we took back control and we wish to restore the sovereignty of this Parliament. How can we say that we have a sovereign Parliament properly restored if our Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot change VAT in part of the UK? It is right and it is legal that we legislate within the terms of the protocol and the agreement, and it is essential that we do so. Those who favour a negotiated solution with the EU should recognise that a huge amount of time and talent has been put into negotiating with the EU in recent years on these matters, and it has been unwilling to be reasonable or to respect the spirit and even the letter of the protocol itself. It is time to legislate.

I say to those who favour a negotiated solution and still have this idea that the EU will, in due course, negotiate properly over one that it is far more likely to

negotiate in a more sympathetic and realistic spirit if it knows that we have the firm backstop of clear legislation, which means we will do the right thing by Northern Ireland and the whole UK if the EU cannot be bothered to meet us and understand what it means for the communities in Northern Ireland.

The EU should also take on board the good advice from the Democratic Unionist party and other members of the Unionist community in Northern Ireland. The whole fabric of the Good Friday agreement rests upon the consent of both communities. The EU says it fully signs up to that and sees it as of prior importance to the protocol, so the EU has to understand that there is no cross-community consent for the current position. The sooner we legislate to sort that out, the better.

**Sammy Wilson:** Although the proposer of the amendments, the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), has said that these are complex issues, for people in Northern Ireland they are very simple. First, simply the inclusion of Northern Ireland under the VAT regime of the EU means that when there are tax changes that can apply to the rest of the UK, they cannot apply to Northern Ireland. I know that he has placed considerable faith in the willingness and ability of the EU to negotiate its way around some of these obstacles, but the fact of the matter is that despite two years of negotiations, these obstacles have not been removed. When it comes to the kinds of things that the Government may wish to do, and which he would like the Government to do, for example, on VAT on electricity bills, the action required is not something to be done some time in the distance future; it is something that is essential now, because people are facing the high fuel and energy bills now. Frankly, many people in Northern Ireland, where fuel poverty is higher than it is in most parts of the UK, would find themselves disadvantaged for not weeks or months but perhaps even years while negotiations went on as to whether or not the EU would be prepared to permit the UK Government to exercise the fiscal freedoms that we thought we had obtained when we left the EU and to apply them to Northern Ireland.

I believe that this Bill and this clause are necessary. I also believe that the wording is correct, with the Government deeming the issue "appropriate" rather than "necessary", because it could be argued that in some instances although it might be good to change the VAT rate, it is not necessary to do so; it could be argued that it is not necessary to keep in line with the rest of the UK and that particular circumstances pertain in Northern Ireland that do not make it necessary. That is why I believe the threshold of appropriateness is correct.

When it comes to state aid, the issues are also not complex—they are very simple. They have implications for the constituents of all Members of this House, because let us not forget that the state aid provisions refer to any state aid and any support that the Government may give to industries or firms anywhere in the UK if it impacts on trade between Northern Ireland and the EU. That is what article 10 says about any respective measures that affect trade between Northern Ireland and the Union, and that are subject to the protocol. Annexes 2 and 5 of the protocol contain lists of the kinds of sectors that would be impacted by that.

That means that the Government are always looking over their shoulder when they seek to give support to businesses. That support may be peripheral—for example,

[Sammy Wilson]

if the Government decide, as they have done, to support the production of batteries for motor cars in a factory in GB. If those cars are selling in Northern Ireland and, as a result of the subsidy and support, cars made in GB would have an advantage on the Northern Ireland market—compared with French cars, for example—that could be an area where the EU Commission would say that state aid rules apply, and the Commission and European Court would make a decision on that.

That is why it is appropriate that the Government have such a provision, because we cannot define or be sure at what stage the EU may say, “The support you have given that industry will impact on and give a Northern Ireland seller an advantage on the EU market, and therefore we wish to interfere in the support that you give to industry.” That is not just about Northern Ireland, because state aid provisions do not just apply specifically to Northern Ireland firms; they apply to those firms that may sell in Northern Ireland and get support elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is why it is correct that Ministers have the ability to make a decision on whether something is appropriate.

Secondly, Ministers should have the flexibility to consider circumstances and issues that may emerge, and actions that the EU may wish to take. Those actions cannot be foreseen now, but we might have to act on them quickly in future. For that reason, I hope the amendments will not be pushed to a vote, and that Labour Members will see that rather than being complex, these are simple issues that require the kinds of actions already included in the Bill.

**Stephen Farry:** I will be brief, as I have just a few short points. First, I recognise that there are genuine concerns about state aid and VAT. We want to see those issues resolved, but that resolution has to be via negotiation with the European Union. On state aid, it is worth reflecting that companies will be operating across the service and goods sectors, and this is where things become incredibly complex, given the different nature of the regimes and how that applies to the European Union. State aid rules are not an absolute barrier, and prior to leaving the European Union, all parts of the UK would routinely apply to the European Commission for permission in that respect.

We should desire a situation where there are reduced rates of VAT in line with wider UK policy, and allow various incentives for people to do activities or help people with bills. We have the option of negotiating again with the European Union. Application to Northern Ireland is not barred under the protocol, but it does involve the UK Government making an application to the Commission. I have spoken to Maroš Šefčovič in that regard, and the door is open for those discussions.

There was a lot of cynicism about what was announced by the Chancellor in his spring statement on VAT and renewables, and this was seen as a major cause célèbre for why the protocol had to be addressed and fixed. In practice, the actual value of that measure to Northern Ireland per annum, based on the Treasury’s figures, was only £1 million, yet a huge drama was built up around it. Of course it was open to the Government to talk to the European Commission about the measure’s application in Northern Ireland. I asked the Treasury a question

towards the end of April, and the answer was, “We’ve had no such discussions with the European Union in that regard”, and that it would be part of wider discussions on the Northern Ireland protocol. Rather than actually addressing the issue when a solution was readily available, the Government were more interested in using it as something with which to bash the European Union about the head, and to create a narrative of crisis.

5.15 pm

**Ian Paisley:** Last autumn, the Chancellor announced several VAT changes and confirmed that he had to speak to the EU to make those changes. There have been talks with the EU, but those changes are still not in place. Does the hon. Member not agree that it is wrong that all our constituents to have to wait for the EU to go through its machinations before VAT changes can be effected in Northern Ireland? On the point about there being only £1 million of benefit from the subsidy in the spring statement, if the benefit is so minor, why does it take so long to make the change?

**Stephen Farry:** There are two points to raise on that. The first is about the practicalities. My understanding is that discussions have not been taking place between the Treasury and the European Union to get these issues resolved, particularly on the situation with renewables, but the door is open. The amount may be £1 million, but we will get that as a Barnett consequential anyway. The solution is available. Across the European Union, rates of VAT, or its equivalents, are being reduced to support renewables and to help people with energy bills, so we are not asking the impossible.

The wider point is why on earth we have to go through this process in any event. The answer is probably the same one that we give on countless occasions: this is the outworking of the protocol, and the protocol is the outworking of Brexit. Decisions made about the nature of Brexit subsequent to the introduction of the protocol had to be put in place, and these are the issues that have to be managed as a consequence. We have to own the decisions taken by the Government and this Parliament, and work through them to find the best outcomes, which I believe are achievable only through negotiation.

I am not denying that there are issues on state aid and VAT, but unilateral action will not provide a long-term outcome; in fact, it will make things more difficult. We can achieve outcomes through negotiation, and I believe that the door is open for that if the Government choose to walk through it, rather than standing back, and using the issue as an excuse and a reason to construct a narrative as to why this Bill is required.

**Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP):** I heard your positive assent, Dame Eleanor, when the shadow Secretary of State sat down, and you were rather impressed when the usual channels inquired of us how long we would take and we indicated that we would be brief. We were asked whether we would be about 20 minutes, and I aim to please, Dame Eleanor.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry), who in many ways makes a great argument, but not, I think, the one he intended to make. What he outlined highlights starkly not just the practical application of state aid policy, subsidy policy and VAT policy, but the interface between that practical



application and the constitutionally injurious position that we are left in because of the protocol. Whether the differential between VAT on solar panels and renewables was £1 million or £100 billion, the issue is not the scale of the sum; it is why this sovereign Parliament is constrained in setting VAT rules for the nation. That is the nub of it. People say that there is no constitutional harm with the protocol, and when we highlight the constitutional damage that has been done, they rubbish it and wish it away, but here is the outworking of that; one part of our country is unable to benefit from VAT rates set nationally by this Parliament.

The fact that there are two probing—and, I respectfully suggest, rather superficial—amendments before us from across the political spectrum highlights that not only is there a problem with VAT rates, subsidies and state aid under the protocol, but that a resolution is required. Why should we have to negotiate that agreed solution or outcome? It is because we have ceded sovereignty in a way that constitutionally impinges on article 6 of the Acts of Union. That is why we are in this position. If that had not been impliedly repealed, as the Government lawyers state in our High Court in Belfast, we would not have these challenges.

The Joint Committee has summarily failed in many aspects of what it was tasked to do under the Northern Ireland protocol. It did not designate anywhere near enough goods as goods that could come from GB to Northern Ireland without risk of onward transit into the single market. We raised the issue of the VAT margin on the sale of second-hand cars, for example, for which there should have been a quick fix, but there was not. Whereas a second-hand car salesman in England pays VAT only on the profit from the sale of the car, in Northern Ireland they have to pay VAT on the entirety of the sale. Why? Because of the Northern Ireland protocol. The solution is very simple, but it took months and months of painstaking negotiation, and that is but one example from scores of issues that pervade industry and business in Northern Ireland.

That was the VAT margins; then there are the importation tariffs that our businesses in Northern Ireland had to pay in importing steel, a raw product, from GB to Northern Ireland. There should not be any tariffs at all within our own country. That highlights the practical application of the constitutional harm. Again, it took month upon month of painstaking work to get agreement through the Joint Committee, but when we were on the cusp of agreeing a solution for steel, I said, “Hang on a second. I have an aircraft manufacturer in Belfast East that uses aluminium. What about tariffs on aluminium?” It remains the case that a tariff is applied to any aluminium, a raw product, coming from GB to Northern Ireland, and a further tariff is applied to anything fabricated in Northern Ireland as a result of that raw product going back to GB for further integration—a tariff on the movement of a material from one part of our country to another, and back again.

**Stephen Farry** *rose—*

**Gavin Robinson:** Civil aviation parts are tariff-free internationally anyway, and large manufacturers such as Spirit Aerosystems in my constituency have an agreed workaround and are exempt, but many in the supply chain do not, including some engineers in the hon. Member’s constituency.

**Stephen Farry:** Indeed, and I am having dinner later tonight with representatives from an esteemed local company in the aerospace sector. Does the hon. Member recognise that his very valid points about tariffs point to an issue not with the protocol, but with the trade and co-operation agreement, and the gap that was rather, shall we say, irresponsibly left by the lead negotiator, Lord Frost?

**Gavin Robinson:** No, I would not agree at all with that, because the tariffs came long before the TCA and arise from the protocol. I heard the hon. Member’s suggestion that people were making a mountain out of molehill in relation to VAT on renewables; with respect to him, I think that was a bit of a stretch. I do not agree with him on that, but the tariffs on raw materials coming from one part of our country to another are unnecessary. They are a breach of article 6 of the Act of Union. That breach is constitutional harm arising from the practical application of a protocol that was, I recognise, agreed by this Parliament, but not without warning from us.

Dame Eleanor, you will recognise that none of these contributions is going into extraordinary detail on the issue. There is a complexity to it, but in the real world of politics, consumers and the businesses that we represent, we need a practical solution. Given how limited the amendments in this group are, it is fair to say not only that it is accepted that there needs to be a practical solution, but that this Bill takes us far along that path.

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Sir Geoffrey Robinson.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Being named after another esteemed Member of this House is, I am sure, a fitting tribute, but thank you, Dame Eleanor, for the opportunity to say a few words in this debate.

**The Chairman:** I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman; I have just realised that I called him by the wrong name—it is 41° C outside.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Robinson is quite a popular name in the Democratic Unionist party. I am honoured to join my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), who has that assignation.

I listened very carefully to the comments that the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry) made about VAT, and particularly the difficulties that arose from the Chancellor’s announcement of a VAT relief on certain energy products that are designed to make homes more energy-efficient. He made the point, and I am sure it is accurate, that according to Treasury figures, Northern Ireland would stand to benefit by an amount in the region of £1 million. However, that highlights the failure of the Alliance party to recognise that for us it is not a matter of the sum involved; it is the principle—the fact that Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, as is recognised in the Belfast agreement, in the constitution of the Republic of Ireland and by this Government, cannot benefit from a scheme designed to benefit all our country because the rules of an external body prevent the Treasury from applying that benefit to all the United Kingdom.

**Sammy Wilson:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is an issue not just for us Unionists? It should be an issue for the whole House that the Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot apply his or her decisions to the whole United Kingdom, which this Government are supposed to have gained sovereignty over. That should be a concern for everybody who is elected to this House and believes that this House is the body that makes decisions for the United Kingdom.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** My right hon. Friend is right, of course. That goes to the heart of what Brexit is about. The mantra was “Taking back control.” That meant taking back control of our borders, our money and our laws. Her Majesty’s Government and the Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot apply a benefit designed for the whole United Kingdom to one part of it, Northern Ireland. That highlights a flaw in the final Brexit arrangements: in respect of Northern Ireland, we do not have control over our money, our laws or, sadly, our border. That is a fundamental point.

I respect the fact that the hon. Member for North Down speaks from a particular perspective, and I in no way mean to diminish its validity, but many of his constituents are solid Unionists. I have been in North Down since becoming leader of my party and have met many of those Unionists, who are affronted that their sense of identity and of belonging to the United Kingdom is undermined by the protocol, and that there is no proper recognition of that reality. That goes to the heart of why we have the current political problems and instability, and why our political institutions are not functioning properly.

**Sammy Wilson:** There is the argument that says, “Well, you could negotiate this. We should go back to the EU and negotiate to allow the VAT reduction to be applied to Northern Ireland.” Does my right hon. Friend accept that that is even more demeaning? The Government claim to have taken back control; the argument is that they should go cap in hand to a body that we left because we no longer wanted it to have control over decisions made in the United Kingdom, and ask, “Please can we apply tax changes that we made for England, Scotland and Wales to Northern Ireland?” That is even more demeaning than saying, “At least we’ve got back control for the rest of the UK.”

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** My right hon. Friend makes a valid point, but the matter goes further than that. It is not just that our Government cannot apply their own policies and economic and financial initiatives to Northern Ireland in the same way that they can to the rest of the United Kingdom; it is that those restrictions imposed by the European Union are restrictions over which none of us on the DUP side has any control. They are regulations and rules on VAT brought forward by the European Union, on which we have no say whatsoever.

**Stephen Farry:** It may surprise the right hon. Gentleman that I have quite a lot of sympathy with what he is saying on VAT. Perhaps it is for this reason. A lot of the issues relating to regulation of goods relate to the devolved competencies of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Obviously, we are talking here about UK-wide macroeconomic tax policy. That is a different issue. I do not want to get into

the whole background of Brexit and the protocol during this Committee stage, except to say that the reason for the differential relates to the fact that, in order to avoid a land border on the island of Ireland, certain decisions were taken, and one of those was that Northern Ireland should retain access to the single market for goods. The VAT rules are linked to that. While I acknowledge that there is some validity in the right hon. Gentleman’s argument, it is important to acknowledge the background, and the only way to address it is through negotiation.

5.30 pm

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but negotiations have taken place and all these issues have been well aired with the European Union. When I met Maroš Šefčovič, I pointed out the real and practical impacts of the protocol not only on businesses in Northern Ireland but on consumers. More fundamentally, I pointed out the impact on our identity and sense of our place within the United Kingdom—the relationship of Northern Ireland with the rest of our home country.

I simply wanted to rise to make this point again this afternoon, Dame Eleanor, and to reaffirm a point that is fundamentally important. Let us not lose sight of the main objective of the Bill. While the Bill seeks to create a framework within which we can find practical solutions to the problems created by the protocol, more fundamentally the Bill is about addressing the concerns that have given rise to the political instability in Northern Ireland. It is about protecting the Good Friday or Belfast agreement, protecting the political institutions, protecting the delicate constitutional balance that is at the heart of that agreement, and resetting it in a way that achieves the consensus that is the absolute engine that drives power sharing in Northern Ireland.

I fear at times that some fellow Members of this Committee get so into the weeds of the detail that they lose sight of the bigger picture, which we believe is fundamental for the delivery of the Bill.

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Lucy Frazer):** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General for opening the debate this afternoon, and I thank hon. Members across the Committee who have contributed to it.

There has been a lot of talk this afternoon about negotiation. The Government have consistently said that it is our preference to resolve the issues through negotiation. Our door remains open, but the EU has so far not been willing to make changes to the protocol that deliver the solutions Northern Ireland needs. In that context, the Government are acting now to provide the solutions, to be implemented through this legislation, including for fiscal policy.

The reality is that businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland are not currently afforded the same UK tax breaks as those in the rest of the United Kingdom. That is preventing them from reaping the full benefits of this Government’s policies, and this simply cannot continue to be the case. The clauses we are discussing today will enable us to remedy these discrepancies, by paving the way for Northern Ireland to benefit from VAT, excise and subsidy control regimes consistent with those in place in Great Britain.

Let me begin by addressing clause 12. The hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) said that the clause was complicated. It provides the basis for a single UK-wide subsidy control policy rather than the two separate regimes currently existing under the Northern Ireland protocol. The clause will provide legal certainty, and therefore confidence, about the extent to which businesses will be able to receive subsidies. It will provide clarity in domestic law that article 10 is disappplied, meaning that any subsidies that would previously have been notifiable to the EU under article 10 will no longer need to be notified. The clause will also amend section 48(3) of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 so that UK subsidy control requirements will apply to all UK subsidies, including those in Northern Ireland. Clause 12(3) provides powers for a Minister to make appropriate provision regarding any part of the Northern Ireland protocol to which the clause relates.

The protocol creates a two-tier system in the UK under which people and businesses in Northern Ireland are at risk of losing out in comparison with the rest of the UK. EU state aid rules have limited the level of support that may be granted in Northern Ireland without approval from the EU. With the covid-19 recovery loan scheme, for example, there were more limitations on who was eligible for the loans in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. The Bill will remove that uncertainty for businesses and bring about parity between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

Clause 17 provides Ministers with the ability to ensure that VAT, excise and other relevant tax policy is consistent across the whole UK, including Northern Ireland. That means that people in Northern Ireland will benefit from the same policies as people in Great Britain where it is beneficial for them to do so—as, of course, they should. I would like to explain why that is important. The EU has set rigid limits on VAT and excise rates and reliefs in Northern Ireland, meaning that even if UK policy changes would have no impact at all on the EU, they may not currently apply in Northern Ireland. That is why, as hon. Members across the Committee have mentioned, we still have not been able to introduce the new temporary zero rate for energy saving materials in Northern Ireland, as we have done in Great Britain.

**Stephen Farry:** Will the Financial Secretary clarify whether the Treasury has made any approach to the European Commission to seek the flexibility to have the same rate? Whenever she wrote to me at the end of April, she said that no discussions whatever had taken place since the Chancellor's spring statement.

**Lucy Frazer:** As the hon. Member will know, because the point has been raised across the Committee over the past few days, negotiations have been taking place for almost two years. There have been 300 hours of negotiations with our EU counterparts, UK officials have shared 17 further non-papers with the European Commission, and we have been attempting to find common ground across these areas. Since the date that the hon. Member mentioned, the Foreign Secretary invited Vice-President Šefčovič to a joint committee meeting, where she announced our intention to table legislation. We would like to resolve the issue through negotiation, but it simply has not been possible.

In future, businesses in Northern Ireland will be subject to new EU VAT, excise and energy tax directives even where they are inappropriate and burdensome for

Northern Ireland. That includes forthcoming changes to the application of the EU VAT registration thresholds, which could have a significant administrative impact on businesses in Northern Ireland. Under the Bill, however, we will be able to introduce targeted reliefs to support individuals with the cost of living crisis and achieve net zero, in addition to being able to reform our complicated alcohol duty system, bringing our tax system into the modern era and benefiting the entire UK.

It is not right that there should be unnecessary tax discrepancies between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. Clause 17 will enable the Government to lessen or eliminate those discrepancies.

**John Redwood:** Will the Financial Secretary confirm that the Treasury will never use the argument that we must not press ahead with the very necessary VAT cut on energy in the cost of living crisis because we cannot apply it in Northern Ireland? It could damage GB as well as NI if that argument were used. Will she promise that the Government will energetically pursue complete sovereignty over VAT?

**Lucy Frazer:** After this legislation has passed, we will be able to introduce VAT legislation across the UK in the interests of both GB and Northern Ireland. I can assure my right hon. Friend that the Treasury consistently looks at tax policies, including VAT, and the benefits and disbenefits of bringing in changes.

I turn now to amendments 37 and 41 in the name of the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). I should note that this issue was addressed in a previous debate, so, in the interests of time, I shall aim to be brief. The amendments would restrict the use of the Bill's powers to only make provision that is "necessary" rather than to make provision that the Minister considers is "appropriate".

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office and I have said previously, "necessary" is a very strict legal test. The amendments would therefore remove the policy discretion for the exercise of these powers, potentially limiting Ministers' choice of the right solutions to the problems caused by the protocol. Changing the test to an objective one will provide additional uncertainty to businesses and consumers and it would severely limit the ability to facilitate consistent VAT, excise and other relevant tax policies between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, as well as a domestic subsidy control regime that applies to the whole of the UK.

I want to comment on how that was expressed by the hon. Member for Hove, who suggested that Ministers could make changes on a whim. That is simply not the case and is a misrepresentation of the position that is clearly set out in the legislation. Clause 12(3) clearly states:

"A Minister of the Crown may, by regulations, make any provision which the Minister considers appropriate in connection with any provision".

Therefore, he or she would need to consider those matters very carefully, as Ministers from across the House would do. The amendments might also prohibit the Government from responding in a flexible way to issues facing Northern Ireland. That, in turn, will have a negative impact on Northern Irish businesses and individuals, so I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his amendment.



[Lucy Frazer]

Many hon. Members discussed the negotiations, and I hope that I have answered those points in my response to the intervention from the hon. Member for North Down (Stephen Farry). The hon. Member for Hove talked about the single electricity market. The right thing to do is not to impact the single electricity market. As the Foreign Secretary has said, we want to cement the provisions in the protocol that are working, including the single electricity market. That is why this Bill does not seek to exclude article 9 or annex 4, which maintain the single electricity market. The Government are committed to preserving it and the benefits that it provides to UK citizens in Northern Ireland.

For those reasons, taken together, these clauses will ensure that the Government can set UK-wide policies on subsidy control and VAT, ensuring that those in Northern Ireland can benefit from the same level of support as those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Peter Kyle:** The Minister has clarified that the Government would not act on a whim. However, she did so by saying, in essence, that they would not act on a whim, but they had the power to do so. That is the worry that we have before us. None the less, I will withdraw our amendment, because I hope that the other place will have more time to ventilate these arguments, go into them in more detail and return with some more credible amendments for us to consider in this place. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Clause 12 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Resolved,*

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—(*Julie Marson.*)

*The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.*

*Progress reported; Committee to sit again tomorrow.*

**The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Peter Bone):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thought it might be appropriate to draw the House's attention to a small adjustment to the business tomorrow. Given the progress of the Committee of the whole House, we will now take Third Reading of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill tomorrow. A supplementary programme motion will be tabled tonight to provide an extra hour of debate tomorrow.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I will take any points of order further to that point of order. I see that there are none. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. It is very useful for the House to know of the change that will be made to tomorrow's Order Paper.

## Business without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** With the leave of the House, we shall take motions 3 to 6 together.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)).*

### ELECTRICITY

That the draft Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2022, which was laid before this House on 22 June, be approved.

### CIVIL AVIATION

That the draft Airports Slot Allocation (Alleviation of Usage Requirements) (No. 2) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 21 June, be approved.

### BUILDING AND BUILDINGS

That the draft Building Safety (Leaseholder Protections) (Information etc.) (England) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 7 June, be approved.

### FINANCIAL SERVICES

That the draft Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 15 June, be approved.—(*Julie Marson.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

### Quarry in Preesall

5.47 pm

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I rise to present a petition signed by 45 of my constituents who live in and around the beautiful village of Preesall. It was signed by every member of the public who attended my very impromptu public meeting on the matter of the Preesall quarry on 1 July. I put on the record my thanks to my constituent Leanne for organising the posters across the village so well.

Residents are concerned about the proposal to build a new quarry, due to concerns about the roads and the environmental impact, as well as about noise, dust pollution and contaminated water. Quarries disrupt the water table, which is a worry in a village that has localised flooding.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to ask Lancashire County Council to engage with local residents and ultimately reject the plans for a quarry in Preesall.

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,*

*Declares that residents of Preesall and Knott End on Sea are concerned about a proposal to build a new quarry in Preesall to remove 460,000 tonnes of sand and gravel; notes if the company wants to remove 460,000 tonnes of material, it is equivalent to 43,000 return trips on Preesall's narrow rural roads; declares that, given the dangerously poor state of the public access routes to the quarry land at Bourbles Farm, rural roads can not withstand the daily impact of so many 32 tonne HGV journeys; further that many hundreds of families would be adversely affected by the environmental impact of mining a quarry so close to residential homes; further that creating quarries requires the removal of virtually all natural vegetation, top soil and subsoil to reach the aggregate underneath leading to a loss of existing animal wildlife and biodiversity as plants and aquatic habitats are destroyed; further that adjacent eco-systems are affected by noise, dust, pollution and contaminated water; and further that quarries also*

*disrupt the existing movement of surface water and groundwater which is a worry in a village with a history of localised flooding.*

*The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to ask Lancashire County Council to engage with local residents and ultimately reject the plans for a quarry in Preesall.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

[P002744]

#### **DWP dedicated telephone line for advice services**

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Over the past few weeks, I have spoken to a number of local citizens advice bureaux that, as would always be the case, are concerned about the impact of social security cuts at Westminster on many of their clients. One issue they have raised with me is the increasing casework they are experiencing. In particular, it is taking their staff and volunteers hours and hours to get through to the Department for Work and Pensions.

I pay tribute to Liz Willis and Joan McClure from the Parkhead and Easterhouse citizens advice bureaux who have petitioned me.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to set up a Department of Work and Pensions dedicated telephone line for advice services.

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of the constituency of Glasgow East,*

*Declares that punitive social security cuts as well as the rising use of conditionality means that more and more people are turning to advice services, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, to advocate on their behalf with the Department of Work and Pensions; and further that many advice service staff and volunteers are spending far too much time waiting to speak with DWP staff on general telephone lines.*

*The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to set up a Department of Work and Pensions dedicated telephone line for advice services.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

[P002745]

#### **Asylum Accommodation: Barry House, East Dulwich**

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Julie Marson.)*

5.48 pm

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I am grateful to have secured the Adjournment debate to bring to the House my concerns about the wellbeing of asylum seekers living in Barry House in my constituency. Barry House is Home Office initial accommodation that is provided under contract by Clearsprings. It provides housing for approximately 140 asylum seekers. Among the residents of Barry House at any given time are a significant number of children, babies and pregnant women.

I raised concerns about Barry House in a Westminster Hall debate on initial accommodation in 2018. I looked back at that debate today, and not only is every single concern I raised still relevant; every one of them has worsened because of the growing Home Office backlog. So I want to speak again about Barry House and to raise concerns about the plight of asylum seekers living in hotels across the country, which are being used as overspill accommodation under the initial accommodation contract.

I meet regularly with residents of Barry House. They are clear that the issues they are experiencing are not the fault of staff who work at Barry House, whom they describe as trying to do their best. The problems are structural. They are in the nature of the Home Office contract and the management of the contract. They are an indication of how this Government regard those who come to the UK fleeing violence and persecution.

There is a major accountability gap in relation to initial accommodation for asylum seekers because the Government publish no data and have no official target for the length of time that an asylum seeker is supposed to spend in initial accommodation. There is also no official data on the length of time that asylum seekers wait to receive section 98 support, without which they would be destitute.

I understand that the Government have historically aimed to move asylum seekers on from initial accommodation within 35 days, but a freedom of information request by *The Independent* newspaper revealed that, at the end of September 2021, two thirds of asylum seekers in hotels, including 1,079 children, had passed that limit, and the situation is no different at Barry House. Nearly 1,000 asylum seekers, according to that data, spent more than six months in hotel rooms, with 356 longer than a year. The Home Office refused to publish more up-to-date data, but it is not a wild leap of the imagination to suggest that the situation may have got significantly worse.

I hear regularly from residents in Barry House who have been there for many months, and there is currently at least one family, with two teenage children and a disabled grandmother, who have been stuck in a single room in Barry House for more than two years. While asylum seekers wait at Barry House, the quality of accommodation is dire. Barry House provides bedrooms with shared bathrooms and no kitchen facilities. Covid restrictions remained in place long after they had been

[Helen Hayes]

lifted for everyone else, meaning that the shared common room and dining space were closed and residents had to eat in their rooms.

One of the most frequently raised issues at Barry House and in hotel accommodation is the quality of the food. Residents report that the food is bland, unappetising, nutritionally poor, culturally inappropriate, often cold and repetitive. Fresh fruit and vegetables are scarce. I have been told by several residents, including the mother of a teenage girl, that after a period of time they have found the repetitive diet so unpalatable that they are only eating bread and yoghurt.

This morning, along with other south London MPs, I met a number of food banks serving communities in south London, which are frequently contacted by residents seeking support with food for asylum seekers living in hotels. They told us that the food provided in hotels is similarly dire, yet the food banks are operating with a lack of clarity, frequently being turned away by hotels and receiving conflicting advice about whether or not they can provide support to asylum seekers living in hotels.

Asylum seekers at Barry House and in hotels often experience great difficulty in accessing items that are essential for basic human dignity, such as shoes, underwear and toiletries. NHS staff working in Barry House tell me that they come across newly arrived asylum seekers who have crossed the channel wearing only the clothes they stand up in and having lost their shoes in transit, yet the welcome packs provided under the Home Office contract contain no underwear and there is no provision for shoes to be made available.

When I have made inquiries about these problems, the Government point to section 98 support as the answer, but asylum seekers can wait weeks for section 98 support and to be issued with an ASPEN—asylum support enablement—card. Research by Refugee Action in 2018 found that some people wait more than 100 days. This system is simply not fit for purpose as a means to provide such essential items when there is an immediate need.

At the root of these problems is the Government's failed asylum system. The Government have failed to provide safe and legal routes and have no plan to address the backlog in decision making. The system traps people in limbo. It is a shocking and disgraceful waste. I have met residents in Barry House who are teachers, plumbers, electricians, chefs—people whose skills our community and economy desperately need.

I worry all the time about a teenager who wants to become an architect. She has been in Barry House for more than two years. She is only able to access basic English lessons at college, although her English is good. Her hopes and dreams are being crushed every day that she spends still in limbo, still waiting for the Home Office to take care of her family. Every time I see her, she is visibly more demoralised.

While these vulnerable people wait, the Government's wider deportation policy is having a terrible impact on their mental health. I have heard from a number of organisations supporting asylum seekers in my constituency about the increasing number of people they encounter who are on suicide watch in their accommodation because

of the fear of being deported to Rwanda. Desperate people are coming to seek sanctuary in our country, yet our Government trap them in limbo, fail to provide for even the most basic of needs and further damage their mental health.

Therefore, I ask the Minister today whether he will take a personal interest in the plight of my constituents living at Barry House and in hotels in the surrounding area. Will he seek to establish for the content of welcome packs and the food provided proper standards which are scrutinised and enforced so that everyone seeking asylum in the UK is treated with basic dignity and respect? Can he provide clarity on whether hotels should be accepting deliveries from food banks where help is requested from the wider community? Will he set out when the Government expect to clear the backlog in asylum applications to reduce the length of time people are waiting in initial accommodation? Will he provide better support to local authorities who have large numbers of asylum seekers living in hotels to enable them to respond to the needs of vulnerable people in their area? Does he recognise the concerns that are being raised about the mental health and wellbeing of those living in initial accommodation with regard to the Government's deportation policy, and what action is he taking in response?

The conversations I have with asylum seekers living in Barry House in my constituency leave me humbled by the experiences they have endured and their desire to settle, rebuild their lives and contribute to our community, and deeply ashamed of the way they are being treated by the Government. Our country can do so much better by those who come here seeking sanctuary in fear for their lives.

5.57 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) on securing the debate. The United Kingdom has a long and proud history of helping the world's most vulnerable and desperate people to seek safety and sanctuary here, as we have seen most recently through the schemes we launched in response to Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, with over 155,000 visas now having been issued to those arriving under those schemes.

We recognise we have a duty to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. As part of that, we provide support and accommodation until an individual's claim is fully determined. Local authorities play a very important role in providing that support, including the London Borough of Southwark. My officials, and those at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, therefore work closely with local authority partners on this and a range of topics, and we are genuinely grateful for their support—in the case of Southwark over many years, including as a dispersal area.

I have previously said to the House that our asylum system is broken. That is felt most keenly in the accommodation space. The aftermath of the pandemic, combined with the unprecedented and unacceptable rise in dangerous small boat crossings, has increased demand for support. That has had a cumulative impact on the overall asylum estate. One critical impact is on the increased requirement for dispersal accommodation.



We are procuring dispersal accommodation as quickly as possible, but we accept that some people are remaining in initial accommodation, such as Barry House, for a longer period than we would wish or would have expected. We have also, as was touched on, had to procure hotels. Published data as of March 2022 shows an increase in demand for asylum support of about 50% since the start of the pandemic, with accommodation now required for more than 80,000 asylum seekers while their claims are considered. That is unacceptable. For the individuals concerned it is not the best outcome, for taxpayers it is not the best outcome, and it is not the best outcome for local communities either. That is why we are committed to fixing it.

First, I will highlight the move to full dispersal. I announced in April that the Home Office would immediately move to a nationwide full dispersal model, so that asylum pressures are more equally spread across all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, as the hon. Lady might be aware. A large number of local authorities, unlike hers, were not participating in providing dispersal accommodation, limiting our options. I used to mention the oft-quoted figure that 31 out of 32 local authority areas in Scotland were not participating, so we are moving to all local authorities—all areas—being part of the system.

We have begun procuring asylum accommodation in co-operation with local authorities in areas that have not participated before. That will help us to move from contingency accommodation, such as hotels, to less expensive but, crucially, more suitable accommodation, particularly for families. This will also see our initial accommodation estate return to being the short-stay solution that it was always designed to be, rather than being used for longer-term accommodation, to which the hon. Lady referred. We do not want that, which is why we are moving to implement full dispersal.

To deliver the new change, we are working in partnership with local authorities to develop regional plans. Between 9 May and 1 July, we held an informal consultation with local authorities and other interested parties to help to shape the design of a reformed asylum dispersal system that is fair, sustainable, innovative and responsive to changing demands and needs, and which, crucially, covers all immigration demands in a local authority area. The focus today is on asylum accommodation but we are conscious—local authorities make this point—that such things as accommodation for Afghans arriving under the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, or who had arrived under Op Pitting, resettlement routes and asylum have traditionally been dealt with separately, and it makes sense to bring them together, particularly in areas such as Southwark, which has regularly played its part following requests that we have made.

Full dispersal will provide local authorities with more control and autonomy at a regional level by asking them to collectively agree an approach to dispersal in their region. We are in the process of analysing the evidence gathered through the informal consultation and I look forward to working with local authorities in the coming months following their contribution to this process. We are keen to work with them to agree how this will work and how we fairly allocate the level of accommodation that there should be in local communities, while being clear that full dispersal means that there is not an option for a local authority to walk out of the

door and decide not to take part. To be fair, London authorities have worked together in this area for many years and we want to try to move that model to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Part of this is about funding, which the hon. Lady touched on. The full dispersal system will be funded by a model designed to recognise the contribution of areas that have had a long-standing track record of supporting this work, while encouraging the provision of new dispersal accommodation in both new and existing areas where dispersal is applied. Each local authority in England, Scotland and Wales that was accommodating asylum seekers under dispersal on 27 March this year will receive a £250 one-off payment per asylum seeker accommodated in their local area. To date, we have paid 101 local authorities about £14 million to implement and/or bolster services in new and existing areas.

Encouraging the use of new accommodation is part of that. Funding will be available up to 31 March next year to provide £3,500 to the local council for each new dispersal bed space occupied in new and existing dispersal areas, further alleviating pressures on the system. That funding is not ringfenced, which will allow flexibility in its use, recognising the different priorities that local communities may have about how to spend it.

To implement the full dispersal model, we are undertaking a new burdens assessment as part of the informal consultation process. That will provide an opportunity to better understand the costs associated with asylum dispersal and engage with the local government sector. I hope that gives the hon. Lady reassurance that we are looking to move away from a dependency on contingency accommodation.

Despite the challenges, we have consistently met our statutory obligations towards destitute asylum seekers. We expect clear standards from our service providers and monitor them closely to ensure that they meet those standards. When essential living needs are not provided for in hotels, a cash allowance is provided. Extra assistance is provided for those who can show that they have exceptional needs. Additional support is also available for special cases; for example, further top-ups are available for families with pregnant mothers or very young children.

All asylum seekers have access, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to the advice, issue reporting and eligibility service provided by Migrant Help, where they can raise any concerns regarding accommodation or support services and get information about how to obtain further support.

Turning to the specific subject of the debate, I thank the hon. Lady for highlighting the issues with the Barry House site, as she did in late 2018 during a Westminster Hall debate. There have been important developments since that debate. In September 2019, the Home Office started working with our contractor, Clearsprings Ready Homes, in London and the south. That has enabled significant improvements to service delivery, accommodation provision and collaboration with local partners.

We believe that Barry House has been improved and offers a good standard of accommodation and support. It has kitchen facilities on each floor, a spacious dining room, communal spaces, and dedicated areas of privacy for breastfeeding mothers and multi-faith worship. Bedrooms also offer wet rooms and wheelchair access throughout. I heard the concerns that the hon. Lady

[Kevin Foster]

raised, and we will of course look into them. I am happy to meet her separately, with the Home Office team, to go through them in a little more detail, particularly if there are points about individual cases that she did not want to share in a public forum. We take our responsibilities in this area seriously.

I hope the hon. Lady will have noted that some of the times of stay are not times that we are looking to be the standard but reflect the pressures in the system. Those pressures are motivating our move to things such as full dispersal. We will continue to have a close and collaborative relationship between Home Office officials and senior officials in Southwark. Again, we are grateful for the local council's support.

On some of the wider points that were raised, we are recruiting more asylum decision makers. Traditionally, there have been about 400 to 500. We are rapidly approaching having 1,000 in post—obviously, there is a process of training and mentoring to go through—and we will look to go beyond that, because we are conscious that we need to get the number of people waiting down. As I have said at the Home Affairs Committee, too many people are waiting too long for a decision. That is not in their interests, it is not in the interests of the immigration system and, ultimately, it is not in the taxpayer's interests. That is why we are bringing in more

people and more resources, and looking at how we can make our teams more productive, learning from other European systems that are able to process decisions more quickly, partly through investment in digital transformation.

Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to the hon. Lady for raising this important issue. I am grateful to all in her community for the support that they provide to those who are accommodated among them while waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. We are reforming the asylum system to make it fairer and more effective. I suspect that the hon. Lady and I disagree about some of the moves we are making to do that, but there is no doubt that an overhaul is needed, not least to put an end to some of the lengthy delays people face while waiting for determination of their asylum claim, and to reduce the time people spend in accommodation that was only designed for them to spend a short period in before moving on to dispersed accommodation. We are committed to making this happen, and we remain committed, as ever, to meeting our statutory duties to support those who would otherwise be destitute and delivering the decisions they require in a timely way.

*Question put and agreed to.*

6.8 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

*Tuesday 19 July 2022*

[GRAHAM STRINGER *in the Chair*]

## New Pylons: East Anglia

9.30 am

**Graham Stringer (in the Chair):** Before we start the debate, I want to say something about the exceptional heat. While the heat remains at this level, I am content for Members not to wear jackets or ties in Westminster Hall. Mr Speaker has announced similar arrangements for the Chamber. When the House returns in the autumn, Mr Speaker and the Deputies will expect Members to revert to wearing a jacket, and will strongly encourage male Members to wear a tie when speaking in the Chamber and Westminster Hall.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered new pylons in East Anglia.

It is my great pleasure to introduce this debate on the prospect of new pylons in the east of England, and I thank the Backbench Business Committee for granting us time to discuss the new electricity transmission infrastructure in our constituencies, which will have a high impact if it goes ahead as proposed.

I am introducing the debate barely 24 hours after the death of my mother. She loved the countryside, she loved Essex and she lived in Suffolk; and she would have wanted me to carry on with the debate, I am absolutely certain.

East Anglia Green Energy Enablement, or GREEN, is the title of the project that proposes to build a new high-voltage network reinforcement between Norwich, Bramford near Ipswich in Suffolk, and Tilbury on the Essex coast. As an MP, I have never received as many emails from my constituents about a single topic.

Today, I speak as chair of the Off Shore Electricity Grid Task Force, or OffSET, which does what it says on the tin. We are calling on National Grid to publish a fully costed offshore alternative to East Anglia GREEN. Yesterday evening, we had a helpful meeting with National Grid and Electricity System Operator, or ESO, and National Grid informally made the commitment that it would produce those costings and plans so that they can be compared with the proposal it is making. We urge National Grid to make that commitment publicly.

In Scotland and Wales, new transmission infrastructure faces a similar backlash. Scottish and Welsh MPs kindly signed up for the debate to explain their frustration over the development of infrastructure in their constituencies, and if they are not here today, that is probably because of the heat, although their moral support is certainly with us.

The environmental and societal impacts of East Anglia GREEN will fall disproportionately on my constituents in North Essex, although they will see little benefit from the new infrastructure in their own lives. On the contrary, the impact is all negative. The new transmission infrastructure is primarily required to transport electricity from offshore wind farms off the east coast and from new nuclear builds on the coast to London.

The East Anglia GREEN background document states that the reinforcement will require

“underground cabling through the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”.

That is obviously a mitigation, but it will create another problem. The construction phrase “undergrounding” will impact local habitats and archaeology—Dedham Vale is an ancient archaeological site as important as Stonehenge, only the henge in Dedham Vale was wooden, so it is not standing today, although its imprint still exists—as well as destroying valuable agricultural and arable land. Local farmers are concerned that undergrounding will disrupt soil layering and impede drainage.

The national planning framework states that development within area of outstanding natural beauty settings should be

“sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”

In my constituency, I am particularly concerned about the construction to the south of the area of outstanding natural beauty, which leads to and from the proposed site of the Tendring substation. It will require a double run of cables, to the substation and then back from the substation towards London. That double run of pylons will adversely impact local communities to the north of Colchester.

I do not understand the rationale whereby because a community—Ardleigh village, in this case—already hosts existing infrastructure, it is seen to be best placed to host new infrastructure. Ardleigh has a small substation, but the planned new Tendring substation is much larger than the existing one and will cover 20 hectares, spreading into three different parishes. Two further customer substations may also be located nearby.

The House of Commons engagement team has kindly spoken to many constituents in all our constituencies about their experience of the National Grid consultation, and I thank all those who contributed, including two of my constituents. Laura, who stands to have pylons on three sides of her property, was told by a local estate agent that the value of her house could decline by 30% to 40%. That is not costed into any proposal; it is a hit that she and her family take, not something that National Grid or anyone else has to pay for. Julia, who was recently widowed, is struggling to sell her family home of 28 years because of uncertainty surrounding the East Anglia GREEN. The proposals are already blighting people's lives.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): I am sure I speak for all of us here today when I offer my hon. Friend my most sincere condolences on his grievous loss.

The National Grid plan does not come through my constituency of Rayleigh and Wickford, but it runs relatively close. However, having checked with my office yesterday, I was given no notification at all about this consultation and, as far as I know, neither were my constituents. Does my hon. Friend agree with me—I say this to the Minister through him—that the consultation should be rerun, so that all Members of Parliament and the people they represent can have their say?

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for his kind words. I agree with him completely. One of my arguments is that this consultation is completely



[Sir Bernard Jenkin]

inadequate. All the respondents to the House of Commons engagement team's inquiries expressed a strong preference for an offshore transmission system, which would avoid the blighting of farmland, and people's homes and communities. That barely figures in the consultation and it was only in yesterday's discussion that National Grid started to explain why it had not really considered that, but it has not published the reasons, figures, assessment or analysis as to why that has been dismissed so quickly.

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Did we not learn yesterday that the reason National Grid had not published those detailed figures and analysis is because it did not have them, and that its pledge to produce them by the end of the summer—to give us more information that it believes will show the justification for the decision—suggests it will be working in reverse? That is not how a consultation should be done.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** No, it is not, but to be fair to National Grid, it engaged openly with us and we were grateful for that engagement. I believe the people at National Grid are doing their best; of course, they are working within a regulatory framework and against expectations that have been set since the industry was privatised in the 1980s that are now completely out of date. Everybody is guilty of making mistakes, but this is not about blaming people for making those mistakes; we need to address why the mistakes are being made and put that right, without casting blame on the people who are doing their best.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I commiserate with the hon. Gentleman on the loss of his mum. There is nobody as close to anyone as their mum, as I know, and we are very much aware of the hon. Gentleman's sorrow at this time.

The hon. Gentleman has outlined the environmental impact. I know this is not in my neck of the woods but in East Anglia, but the issue is the same. Whenever these pylons are being put in back home, many of my constituents express concern about the health impacts. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of those issues? Have his constituents conveyed to him their concerns about the health impacts for individuals that could well be caused by pylons? For instance, he mentioned a lady in his constituency who will have pylons on three sides of her house. Surely she must have some extreme worries about that?

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** I am not familiar with that issue, but the scientific literature on the health impact of pylons is still contested. There is no doubt, though, that they have a psychological impact, and that the psychological blight on people's lives can be very serious.

People do not like living near pylons, which is why they tend to favour buying homes that do not have views that are blighted by pylons. It is a very sad development that National Grid is still proceeding in this direction, and I call this overground proposal a continuation of the patch and mend approach, as against the undersea option known as "Sea Link 2". National Grid says that the "Sea Link 2" scenario would not provide the required capacity and would have required onshore transmission infrastructure as well. It should

publish a like-for-like offshore alternative to East Anglia GREEN so that we can see not only what the additional costs would be, but what the additional benefits would be, and we could offset things such as property blight and damage to the environment, which is not costed into the proposal.

It is interesting to note that there is 10 times more total mileage of committed offshore transmission cabling in Scotland and the north of England than in the east of England. A constituent affected by East Anglia GREEN wrote to another National Grid consultation, and the community engagement team explained that the main reason for offshoring infrastructure from County Durham to southern Scotland was to

"significantly reduce its impact on communities."

National Grid, again informally, now maintains that the reason for offshoring Scottish projects is that the electricity would have to cross multiple load boundaries, which is expensive. Again, it must explain that to the relevant stakeholders in detail. There is a complete lack of transparency about the process, which totally undermines public confidence in the decisions being proposed.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): I extend my condolences to my hon. Friend at this time.

My hon. Friend is making an important speech. Does he agree that it is hard for us to explain to our constituents why an offshore route is not being taken when such routes clearly exist in other parts of the country? A number of colleagues in the Chamber today, and my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Kemi Badenoch), who cannot be here, feel that it is difficult for us to make the case to our constituents that the proposals are fair and right when we are not being given the evidence.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** That is absolutely right, but we also need to make the point that even if the evidence is made available and proves the point in favour of the present proposals, it is against benchmarks that are out of date and inadequate for the purpose. That is why I call this a patch and mend approach to the existing infrastructure, when the scale of the extra capacity required to be carried in the East Anglian grid is massive. It is a huge leap, yet there seems to be no strategic or controlling mind behind the planning of the national grid for the next 50 to 100 years. It is all on much shorter-term horizons.

**Mr Richard Bacon** (South Norfolk) (Con): I extend my sincere condolences to my hon. Friend, in common with colleagues.

The lack of a controlling mind does seem to be one of the biggest problems. Does my hon. Friend agree that the only reason that the network needs to be reinforced from Dunston in the north of my constituency, going right across Norfolk and into Suffolk, is because of the perverse decision to route existing offshore wind connections to that part of the network, instead of following National Grid Electricity System Operator's own advice, which is to accelerate the provision of an offshore transmission network, which would save up to £3 billion in capital expenditure and a further £3 billion in operating costs? Does he agree that now is the time to revisit that decision?

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** My hon. Friend is completely right, but the real question is: to whom do we go to get it done? National Grid says it is locked into a regulatory and planning framework and has to operate in a certain way—that the assumption must be that overhead pylons are the right solution, unless there are other reasons.

The most difficult thing in the whole process is that not even the Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Greg Hands), is accountable for what is being decided; he will tell us, “This is the framework and this is what we have to stick to.” He will then tell us that there is going to be a new proposal for a different regime that would arrive at different outcomes, but that is not going to affect this consultation, and we will be left with decisions being forced down corralled pathways by an outdated regulatory and planning framework.

Who is accountable, today, for the decisions that are being made? Who is it? Who should we go to, and say, “You’ve got it wrong and you can change it”? If nobody can change it, it must be my right hon. Friend the Minister who is accountable. He must accelerate the new regime, which would allow us to look much more comprehensively and capably at a strategic plan. There is no controlling strategic mind in charge of planning the national grid. It is just something that happens, through an outdated market mechanism that was designed to sweat the assets of an industry that had far too much capacity in the 1980s.

We are now in a completely different world. We need a strategic planning framework, and it should be located, accountably, within the Department, so that Members of Parliament can hold Ministers accountable for what is being decided, instead of us just being shoved off into the system, where we do not seem to have any influence.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): May I express my condolences to my hon. Friend? I am so sorry to hear his news.

Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a wider problem? Losing the quality of our environment is a big cost for people’s wellbeing. In this case it is utilities and electricity; in Hertfordshire, it is about the chalk streams. No value seems to be given to environmental factors. We have regulators, but it is all about doing it cheaply. Does he agree that the Government need to look at the issue again, from the point of view of wellness, the environment and preserving the really valuable things in our communities?

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** I could not agree more. We have environmental policies and net zero policies that are costing the earth, even though they are designed to save the earth—they are very important policies and we put a great deal of money into them—and yet we have other policies that despoil the environment and communities. The damage they do is not costed into the proposals.

In a new regime, the effect on property prices, the loss of agricultural land and other non-monetised costs of the proposal need to be reflected in the costs; I think we would then find that the offshore transmission system would provide better value for money, and for the environment and communities. If it was worked out properly, an offshore ring main around the east of England down to London, with its connectivity, an

interconnectedness to the continent, and direct connectivity from the onshore nuclear power stations and the new offshore East Anglia array—incidentally, the development of offshore wind is being held back by the lack of capacity in the national grid—could be the quickest proposal, because we would not have the same planning issues that we are tied up with here.

Dare I mention the words “judicial review”? If my constituents go for a judicial review—they are very well funded and well organised, and we are backing them—how many years will that hold up the proposal? Would it not be better for the Government to cut through and say we should go for an offshore grid, which has public support and which people recognise will help us to achieve our net zero targets more quickly and protect the environment and communities? That is what we should do.

The main point I will leave the debate with is that public opposition to infrastructure risks undermining the roll-out of renewable and nuclear power. The Government must balance what is best for local communities with what appears to be cheapest. The current approach is not serving my constituents in Harwich and North Essex. The current proposals, and the regime they reflect, command no public confidence at all in the Government of this country, and should change.

**Graham Stringer (in the Chair):** Before I call hon. Members, I offer my condolences to the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin). I am sure I speak for everybody in this hall in doing that.

I will call the Opposition spokesperson at 10.40 am. I do not want to set a time limit; you can do the calculations yourselves. People usually take the appropriate time when it is left to them, rather than have the Chair set a time limit. I call Jerome Mayhew.

9.51 am

**Jerome Mayhew** (Broadland) (Con): I am glad to lend my support to the arguments of many MPs whose constituencies are directly affected by the proposed pylon route of East Anglia GREEN. I represent the constituency of Broadland in Norfolk, which is not directly affected. The run starts at Dunston in south Norfolk, just south of Norwich, heads through Suffolk and into Essex. The reason I wanted to join the debate is to question the rationale for reinforcing the transmission network from Norwich south in the first place.

The consultation, which has already been much criticised and will be by other contributors, starts with the assumption that there is a problem that needs to be solved. That problem is additional power being applied to the network at Dunston, at Norwich south. The power comes from offshore wind farms, both those connected in the past five years, since the previous review by Ofgem in 2015, and the huge number of additional wind farms anticipated between now and 2030, and thereafter.

We know from last year’s National Grid ESO report of an anticipated 17 GW of offshore wind constructed in the southern North sea alone—part of the 50 GW by 2030 ambition—but there is a problem. Although we won the argument for a holistic network design leading to an offshore transmission network, with the Secretary of State making that announcement on the Floor of the House, we appear to have lost the battle when it comes to East Anglia. The holistic network design comes into

[Jerome Mayhew]

force from 2030 onwards, we are told, yet the connections for East Anglia affect our counties between now and 2030. It is between now and 2030 that the 17 GW will be constructed and connected.

We have here the most classic example of putting the cart before the horse. Much better would be to look again at the design for East Anglian connection, follow the advice of the National Grid ESO report, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk (Mr Bacon), and create an offshore transmission network. Accelerate it; do not accept the argument that it can be put in place only by 2030 and push for 2025. If we do that, on its own estimates, there are £6 billion of savings to be made: £3 billion in reduced capital expenditure, because it is much easier for a wind farm to connect to a grid that is already offshore, and £3 billion of further operating savings between now and 2050.

**Mr Bacon:** Does my hon. Friend share my concern that, with this enormous extra offshore capacity that is coming, if we do not follow his suggestion of an offshore grid as soon as possible, which is Government policy, we could be faced with the current nightmare being duplicated or triplicated? In a few years it could be said, “Well, actually the pylons we installed a few years ago are not efficient, so we need even more pylons.” How lunatic would that be?

**Jerome Mayhew:** Of course, Ofgem would say, “Well, we’ve done the calculations. We know that there isn’t going to be any more offshore wind, and we think this is going to be enough.” But in 2015, when it last looked at this subject and was asked to assess whether an offshore transition network would provide value for the money to the consumer, its advice to the Government was, “No, it would not, because we will never have enough offshore wind to justify it.” Well, how wrong it was. Just seven years later, here we are bitterly rueing that short-sighted failure to make anticipatory infrastructure decisions. We could have avoided all these arguments and be leading Europe in the development of this innovative design, which now is absolutely technically possible. In fact, I have spoken, with others, to the managing director of Hitachi, who told us that this is off-the-shelf technology now.

We come back to the consultation, which has just been closed, and the position of the regulators and National Grid. Their argument is essentially that it is too late to change the decision about connection points. We already have radial connections coming into Norfolk. Given that the power is being delivered to south Norfolk, the network has to be reinforced to draw the electricity south, hence East Anglia GREEN and 112 miles of pylons. However, I invite the Minister to take a step back and look at the rationale behind the decision to write contracts to allow the offshore wind farms to connect to Norwich south. All those offers must have been subject to planning permission, because the regulator knew, or ought to have known, that the connection point did not have sufficient capacity to deal with the anticipated measures.

**James Cartlidge:** My hon. Friend is making an excellent, highly technical and very important speech. Is it not true that in our recent discussions with Ofgem, National Grid and others that officials from the Department for

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy confirmed on the call that none of the current contracts could in any way predetermine the planning application? Therefore, the question of how the electricity is ultimately shifted through the onshore grid is still open.

**Jerome Mayhew:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. As a question of law, it must be open because it is subject to planning.

The Minister has a great opportunity not to make the errors that we made in 2015 and to be bold about the anticipatory infrastructure that is required, which is being implemented for the holistic network design elsewhere in the country. It is ironic that the only part of the country that is not part of the holistic network design is East Anglia, given that East Anglian MPs pushed the Government into adopting the policy.

We have an opportunity to create the infrastructure that will allow us to connect without more devastating impacts on our environment and communities; to save money in the medium term, as pointed out by the National Grid ESO position paper; and to accelerate the early adoption of additional wind farms, because once the offshore transmission network is in place, the connection process will actually be quicker and easier. Additionally, if we take the offshore route via “Sea Link 2” down to the Isle of Grain, there will potentially be additional benefits in relation to international interconnectors.

I question the rationale behind the assumptions that went into the consultation paper, and I make this one further request. In the very constructive call that a number of us had with National Grid Electricity Transmission Operator yesterday, it committed to generating a like-for-like offshore replacement for East Anglia GREEN, but I have one concern about that. If we literally have a like-for-like replacement, we would be taking energy from Norwich South to Tilbury. That is not the question that should be asked. The question that should be asked is what is the cost of taking advantage of an offshore route to deliver electricity to the Greater London area? It is not an exact like-for-like comparison with Dunstan in south Norfolk to Tilbury. How do we take advantage of the benefits that National Grid ESO identified in its position paper to maximise the dynamism of our electricity provision while minimising the cost to the taxpayer and to the constituents of our three counties?

10 am

**Jo Churchill** (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew). I extend my sympathies to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin), whose parents enjoyed their later years in my lovely constituency. The whole town extends its love to him and his family over these next weeks.

I am pleased to see the Minister in his place. I am sure he will remark that many hon. Members have met him on several occasions recently. We are grateful for that engagement, but I will leave him with the thought that that is our engagement so far. As he has heard from my right hon. and hon. Friends, this system is not suitable for our constituents. Arguably, given our recent challenges with energy, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland pointed out, we need to future-proof ourselves and understand what we need for the country.



My main focus is on how the proposals fail to offer choice and the lack of meaningful consultation with my constituents. Like many, I fully support the work being undertaken to achieve net zero. Indeed, looking at the temperatures that we are currently working in and enjoying, it is essential to move towards adaptation as well. Low-carbon energy production has a crucial role, and the contribution of the east of England is likely only to grow, given the likelihood of Sizewell C, further offshore generation and the new generation of sea-tethered wind farms that could give us greater capacity. Our 4,100 MW of generation today is destined to rise to 25,000 MW by 2030, but as my hon. Friend pointed out, we have slightly put the cart before the horse. I would gently say that we are talking about energy resilience and critical national infrastructure, so we should take a step back and think about what we are doing here.

The National Grid's proposals display little thought or care. In the meeting yesterday, for which we were all extremely grateful, it straight away blamed the current regulatory framework—the national policy statement. The reason that it could not offer anything other than pylons was that that was the most economic and efficient way of doing it. I put it to the Minister that we need to halt and understand the problem. We need to look at the NPS and its criteria in relation to energy, add the east of England to the holistic network design, and offer true choice.

As it stands, Bury St Edmunds faces having 50 metre-high pylons tearing through it, as do the constituencies represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends. From the maps that the National Grid has provided, one could be forgiven for thinking that the stretch from mid-Suffolk had been drawn by merely placing a ruler on the map and drawing a pencil line down one side.

The electricity generated on the east coast is destined—demanded—to keep the lights on in London. While it is important to give that assurance for the east of England, we want protection for our communities, our countryside and the food that we produce for the nation. We are informed by those at NG ESO that multiple cables will be needed, but we have seen no impact statement or costings, so we feel that we are being taken for a ride. The only opportunity is for the deliverer, not our constituents. As announced yesterday, subsea transmission is good enough to pull energy from Morocco to the UK, and it is good enough for the north of England, so it should be good enough for us.

Our counties are not only good at generating energy; we are three of the nation's largest producers of food to give our people energy. What assessment has been made of the impact on that? I have received a significant amount of correspondence from constituents who are incredibly concerned about East Anglia GREEN and their strong local objection is echoed throughout the route. My right hon. Friend the Minister will know from his own constituents how passionate locals are about infrastructure projects. Mine are no different. This is precious to us.

I have visited part of the affected area in my constituency. As I drove around my constituent Tom Rash's farm, he pointed out the regenerative way in which he farms and how erecting pylons sat at odds with our objective of supporting food production and enhancing food security, and directly contradicts the objectives coming out of

the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As I looked at Wortham Ling, a site of special scientific interest on Mr Rash's farm that is overseen by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and managed as a nature reserve, the acid grassland and dry heath developed on glaciofluvial drift deposits—*[Interruption.]*—yes, one of those early in the morning—offer a unique area of natural beauty. As we look up at the big skies from Wortham Ling or the local well-attended tennis club or the church that stands adjacent to the farmyard, the pylons will bear down on us and give us no benefits in our community. This is precious to us; it is valuable.

The early opportunities team at National Grid appear to see the area as open land, free to cut through, and has given little consideration to anything but the bottom line and what the book says. Straight routes are cheaper; we are being serviced on the cheap. Due to the sparse population, we may be seen as an easy hit. Can the Minister confirm in his summing up if there has been a full impact assessment of overground and underground pylons, undersea options, the hit to food production and the environmental impact?

If we are just being seen as an easy early opportunity, that is unacceptable. From the correspondence that I and others have received, it is clear that subsea transmission is overwhelmingly preferred. However, I say again: we have not been given the chance to choose. Who is accountable, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex asked? I share my constituents' views, because offshore generation is only going to grow and we should ensure a system that is future-proofed. Indeed, looking at Octopus's latest announcement on Xlinks, there is more likelihood that renewables will come to us from different parts of the world. The Dutch are very high generators of renewables. Surely the ability to connect around the country would be a much more sensible approach?

Allowing those interconnectors to be put offshore would be a move forward, but I am led to believe no alternatives to the Norwich-to-Tilbury proposals have been fully explored. They appear to have been discarded without a full explanation as to why they are not viable. The recent consultation by National Grid offered no alternative to overland transmission. Indeed, many of the questions were somewhat irrelevant as they were closed, such as "Do you want green energy?" Who is going to answer anything but yes to that? There has been no ability to put forward a different view. To be frank, it was a *fait accompli*. It serves no purpose but to reinforce a decision that has already been made—"Sorry, overhead pylons are the default and that is what you are getting"—and to silence that local voice.

To add to the local incredulity regarding the consultation, it has now become apparent that elsewhere in the country, as others have said, subsea transmission is being used precisely to avoid impact on local communities. This is all starting to feel incredibly unfair to the east of England, particularly given our status as a net contributor to Her Majesty's Treasury: we give you our money, we give you our energy, we grow your food, yet we are not worthy of a proper consultation or protection.

I want to see complete transparency about the allocation of funding for subsea transmission, particularly as the east of England is a major power generator for the country, with connections to the continent to transmit energy when needed. It was not included in the holistic

[Jo Churchill]

network design and that feels like a mistake. The Minister and I have discussed the meaning of “holistic” before: it means dealing with or treating the whole of something and not just a part. We cannot have a three-quarters holistic network design, which is what we have at the moment. More work on inclusion in the HND is required. We are not nimbys in Suffolk; we are pragmatic. However, we want a fair consultation. All this can be avoided if we are treated in the same manner as other parts of the country, with subsea transmission replacing overland proposals, or we are at least given a choice.

My constituents and I want change. We want to be part of a holistic network design. We want a Government who stop and think and take stock. We want a Government who future-proof us. A sensible Government will do that. Demand will only grow as we need to be cool in the summer and warm in the winter. With any infrastructure investment, it is imperative to get it right first time. As the Minister knows, the local voice is important. Please listen to ours.

10.10 am

**Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve with you in the chair, Mr Stringer. I offer my condolences to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) for his loss. I congratulate him on his choreography to secure the debate, which is ultimately about the roll-out of zero carbon renewable energy on what is likely to be the hottest day ever recorded in the UK.

The transition to net zero provides enormous opportunities for East Anglia to be the engine room of the UK, bringing new sustainable and rewarding jobs not just for Waveney and Lowestoft, which I represent, but across the region. If we get it right, we can be a global exemplar of how to deliver the transition. That, in turn, will create enormous export opportunities.

The case for offshore wind is compelling. It is now the lowest-cost technology for generating electricity. Energy bills continue to rise, and being able to transport and deliver more offshore wind across the UK will reduce bills. We need more homegrown green electricity to move away from Russia's influence. The weather today provides a snapshot of our future if we delay action to reduce carbon emissions.

National Grid's East Anglia green energy enablement project, known as GREEN, should be set in the context that approximately one third of today's UK energy demand can be met by the energy that will come into East Anglia by the end of this decade. While much work has taken place to upgrade the existing transition network, it needs significant reinforcement. GREEN is the preferred option that National Grid has worked up in accordance with the existing regulatory framework, which includes the relevant national policy statements and the so-called Holford and Horlock rules.

I acknowledge the desire of all right hon. and hon. Members, on behalf of the communities that they represent, to consider an offshore option, but it would have been disingenuous of National Grid to have consulted on such proposal, knowing that the current policy and regulatory framework within which they operate would have discounted it. In due course the Government might wish to amend the national policy statements.

It should also be emphasised that we are at an early stage of the option appraisal and assessment process, with a statutory consultation and an examination in public to follow. There is therefore an opportunity for those concerned about the proposals to engage further with National Grid, following up the meetings they had yesterday and probably before, to address their concerns.

**James Cartlidge:** My hon. Friend is perfectly reasonable and has great passion about offshore wind, as we all do. He is perfectly entitled to make those points, but this is not a parallel universe. There is a sub-sea link going ahead off East Anglia called Sea Link 1. Our view is that we need far more of that. To quote National Grid about the justification:

“By connecting East Anglia and Kent, Sea Link will provide the additional network capacity needed to enable the import and export of wind energy to and from Europe.”

If it is not in policy, how can we be in a parallel universe where we are going ahead with sub-sea link off East Anglia? Our view is that we need more of them to build a connected offshore grid.

**Peter Aldous:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and I am about to address his point and highlight why that alternative is not viable under the existing framework. Taking into account the framework within which National Grid operates, I would make the following high-level comments on their proposals. First, they have presented the most economically advantageous solutions, as they are bound by the UK Government to do. To move it offshore not only is technically challenging but will cost an estimated 10 times the current proposal—a cost that will ultimately be paid by the consumer. To bury the cable along the entire route not only would have a huge impact on the environment—as 150-metre-wide trenches are dug—but would increase the cost some 14 times.

While other regions have benefitted from subsea links, the scale of the challenge in East Anglia is much larger, with significantly higher amounts of potential electricity needing to be delivered into the grid. To do that without multiple connections coming ashore, together with East Anglia GREEN, would be similar to redirecting traffic from the M25 on to the A140—that tortuous route, which East Anglians know well, that runs from west of Ipswich, via Norwich, up to Cromer.

**James Cartlidge:** On a point of information, as it were, the sea link that I am talking about, which my hon. Friend said cannot go ahead under policy, is approved. National Grid will be going ahead with the link; it will be going from Sizewell to Kent. It will be going ahead partly because it gives more resilience to the nuclear power station, if we are completely frank. The point is that it is a reality. The justification that National Grid uses is the same one that we want to see from Sea Links 2, 3 and 4. “Sea Link 2” was rejected. The sea link that we are talking about has been approved and the current policy framework allows approval of undersea connection off East Anglia. As far as we are concerned, the quantity is too low compared with other parts of the UK.

**Peter Aldous:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and I am sure that the Minister will pick up on that in his speech. From my perspective, I think it is wrong to dismiss the concerns of the communities that the new

pylons will run through, as we have heard from all colleagues today. The way forward at this early stage of the consultation process is for them to work in partnership with National Grid, developers and local and central Government to mitigate the impact. Developers are showing a willingness to do that.

In Norfolk, Vattenfall is delivering its Norfolk offshore windfarm zone by pursuing a co-ordinated approach to the onshore element of the transmission. Business organisations, such as the East of England Energy Group, Net Zero East, Opergy and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, together with the East Wind Offshore Cluster, are developing new ideas to help address future connection. That includes collaborative project design with shared or modular grid connections, and encouraging and facilitating hybrid projects such as wind to hydrogen and wind to storage.

I acknowledge the worries that all my colleagues are articulating on behalf of their constituents. However, there must be no holdup or delay in the roll-out of the offshore wind projects off the East Anglian coast. Already, they are making a significant contribution to the local economy. ScottishPower Renewables has a £25 million operations and maintenance base in the Hamilton dock in Lowestoft that is already running and providing jobs for people in my constituency and across Suffolk and Norfolk. ScottishPower Renewables is also planning to invest a further £6 billion up to 2030 as part of its East Anglia hub development. Such projects provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, creating new, exciting and well-paid jobs for local people, which is vital as part of the levelling up process. They are also critical for the overall prosperity of East Anglia and for us to play our role in mitigating the impact of climate change, which we are feeling so forcefully today.

10.19 am

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer. I join others in passing my condolences to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin), who made a brilliant speech in the circumstances. We are grateful to him for continuing none the less. We are also grateful to him for chairing OffSET; I think we have had an impact.

Let us be clear what we are not debating today. No one is debating the policy of pursuing net zero—all of us East Anglian MPs support that. No one is debating the need for sovereign sources of energy, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Actually, no one is debating the need for an offshore grid. That is now Government policy. When my hon. Friend the Member for North Norfolk (Duncan Baker) held an Adjournment debate in November 2020, the current Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, then the Energy Minister, said to him:

“I would suggest that the argument for some form of offshore network system has been won. What is critically under discussion at the moment is the timing.”—[*Official Report*, 5 November 2020; Vol. 683, c. 584.]

That was November 2020. In the summer of 2020, the discussion had not even started. That shows the progress OffSET made in persuading Government to buy into an offshore grid. Last May, in my last Prime Minister's question before being promoted, I asked the Prime Minister about an offshore grid. He said:

“My hon. Friend is spot on in what he says about the need for an offshore grid.”—[*Official Report*, 19 May 2021; Vol. 695, c. 698.]

So, it is Government policy.

The question before us is about the extent to which an offshore grid is being taken into account in the real life in-flight decisions being made today that are affecting our constituents, which brings us to East Anglia GREEN. We have just had the consultation on this brand new proposal for huge pylons across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. I attended those consultation sessions. Having met with my constituents, it is my view that they felt it was a predetermined consultation—what we would call a *fait accompli*.

My constituents were shown a narrow strip of land—I think it is called a swathe. The National Grid officials hoped that the discussion would be about where exactly the pylons would go within that very narrow swathe. However, my constituents and those of colleagues had envisaged that that informal consultation would be an opportunity to discuss the top-level options. Should the pylons go under the sea? Should they go over land? If over land, should they be underground just in the area of natural beauty, or elsewhere? Instead, constituents were presented with a final decision that the pylons were going in that swathe, on land—taking place, as I said earlier, as if in a parallel universe.

I also received feedback from constituents that when they asked the National Grid officials in the village halls doing the consultation about an offshore grid, they were told that it is not possible, not feasible and so on. I wrote to all constituents affected and pointed out that although officials were telling them that an offshore grid is not feasible, National Grid is committed to £3.4 billion of expenditure on undersea cabling off Scotland and the north of England, on two enormous bootstraps—undersea electricity cables.

In fact, we already have an undersea electricity cable off the west coast, from Scotland to north Wales, called the Western Link. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex said, the total mileage—built or committed—is about 800 miles. Off East Anglia, with Sea Link 1, which I referred to when I intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous), the mileage is about 80 miles—a ratio of 10:1. When I shared that with my constituents, they were astonished. They had been given the impression that it was not even possible; in fact, it is happening as we speak. Bootstraps have been built and others will be built. My constituents want to know why we could not get a greater share of that technology in our counties.

What particularly hurt was reading an email that was shared with me. I will not reveal the name of the person concerned—they are a member of the public. The email, which was sent to National Grid's community engagement team on the northern project, asked:

“Would you know the reasons to go submarine rather than overground, there are many obvious advantages but would be interested to understand the primary considerations?”

The response from National Grid was:

“This is a good question. Routing the cable overground for hundreds of miles would likely require overhead lines that would cause disruption and visual impacts to many communities, ranging from County Durham to southern Scotland, where the route originates. By routing the cable under the North Sea, away from settlements, we significantly reduce its impact on communities.”



[James Cartlidge]

Just to be clear, the question was about the primary considerations. It is clear that, off Scotland and northern England, the primary consideration—those are the words National Grid responded to—was the protection of communities. Yet when National Grid came to Holton St Mary village hall to speak to my constituents, who said, “We want you to protect our countryside by going offshore,” National Grid said that that was not even possible—“And, by the way, we can’t even talk about it as part of the consultation.”

**Jo Churchill:** My hon. Friend is making a very powerful case. If I understand him correctly, he said that in the consultation the value and worth of communities and environment was a strong rationale, but we are being told that we have to be bound by the rationale of the NPS, which is economic and efficient. Does he feel, like me, that we are not being treated fairly?

**James Cartlidge:** My hon. Friend makes a fantastic point: we are not being treated fairly. We possibly got some explanation about that at the meeting that we held yesterday with National Grid, National Grid ESO and Ofgem. Unfortunately, it was a private meeting, inasmuch as it was not held with our constituents, but it was public to the extent that we can talk publicly about what was discussed. I would much have preferred that our constituents were involved in those discussions, but unfortunately the consultation has closed.

What is crucial is that, first, National Grid argues that the consultation covered offshore options. National Grid emailed me. It believes that it covered those options because, buried in a 120-page document that it circulated when people from National Grid were going to village halls, there is a page that says:

“The use of onshore technology. The potential for an offshore connection was considered as part of the process of defining the preferred reinforcement solution”—

it then goes through some detail—

“but concluded that the options were poorer performing on the basis of capability and poorer in cost benefit least regret terms.”

In National Grid’s view, that means that the consultation covered offshore options. When I ask whether it covered offshore options, I mean that, when my constituents went to Holton St Mary village hall, was there a picture on the wall of their preference and another picture of what an offshore option would look like? That is what a consultation means: people look at both options. Of course the option was not on the wall; it was buried in the small print.

My view is not predetermined. National Grid says that it consulted on offshore. This, therefore, is what I am going to do. I will write to all of my affected constituents and ask them, “Did you participate in the consultation, and if so do you feel that it covered offshore? Do you feel that you had a say in the top-level choice of going overground or under sea?” My thoughts are not predetermined—I will see what they say—but my view is that the consultation did not cover it. There was no transparency on the justification.

There is a reason that there is no transparency, which we discovered yesterday. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex is absolutely right that the people at National Grid are doing their job, and we

should not cast blame. That is not the point; we are here to represent our constituents. National Grid said yesterday that given the concern about what is happening in Scotland and the sense of unfairness, it would publish a detailed assessment of an offshore option later in the summer. Why will that be published later in the summer? Because it has not been done. There has been no detailed assessment of an offshore option.

How on earth did National Grid conclude that it cannot go offshore? Let us figure that one out. That will answer the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds (Jo Churchill), because I am pleased to say that the meeting was attended by Akshay Kaul, the director of networks at Ofgem. The argument from National Grid is that the framework precludes it from looking at an offshore option. The regulator, Mr Kaul, said that is not correct: the framework does not preclude looking at offshore options; all the infrastructure projects should be looked at on a case-by-case basis. That is what he said to us yesterday, very transparently. How can something be looked at on a case-by-case basis if the detailed work has not been done?

National Grid also said to us something that goes back to the brilliant point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew): that the work it will do will show that an offshore option is not possible. There is a word for that. I have only recently resigned as the courts Minister, and must be careful what I say—I am conscious of the judicial arm—but that is predetermination if ever Members have heard of it: “We will do the work, but here is the answer it will tell you.”

I would like that report, first, not to be undertaken by National Grid, but to be commissioned by the Government and undertaken by an independent expert who is not predetermined. Secondly, I would like it—as my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland said—not to draw a line from the closest oceanic point next to Norwich down to somewhere in the south of England, for instance near Tilbury or the Isle of Grain, but rather to draw what we all want, which is a mesh of offshore connections: in other words, not just Sea Link 1, but Sea Links 2, 3 and 4, which would give us 6 GW, which is what the pylons would give us. Crucially, as my hon. Friend said, we would then have the nodes that give us the interconnectivity with the continent, so we can import and export, and be the Saudi Arabia of offshore wind.

In other words, we want the consultation to be reopened, not to look at this basic and expensive option, which has had no work put into it, but to ask an independent consultant, “What if we used this connectivity as the foundation stone for a proper offshore grid in East Anglia?”, which is what we believe Government policy should be.

There is one final thing that the report needs to do. It needs to include my constituents. We know constitutionally that none of us is here in our own right. We are here only by virtue of the fact that we have won an election and we represent our constituents. They have not been involved in any of the discussions. There was no meaningful consultation on offshore as far as I am concerned. This has to be reopened. That does not mean giving us a report; it means going back to Holton St Mary village hall with the results and explaining to people why it may not be possible to go offshore, but being transparent about that. That is what democracy is all about.

10.30 am

**Mr Richard Bacon** (South Norfolk) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Stringer. I reiterate the condolences of my colleagues to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) on his loss. That was a brilliant speech by my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge), and I associate myself with nearly everything that nearly everyone has said. I am smiling at my constituency neighbour—my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds (Jo Churchill)—whose constituency is behind Tesco and Morrisons in my constituency. We are neighbours, but if I were to go a few hundred yards to the east, my neighbour is a different Member of Parliament. I know Worthingam Ling well—I walk my dogs near there.

I am interested in two aspects of this important debate. First, planning permission cannot be assumed and therefore a route cannot be assumed. I may have misinterpreted this, but that appeared to have come as a bit of a surprise to the Minister. He certainly looked round in alarm when one of my colleagues made that point. The second aspect is about time. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex mentioned judicial review. I do not want to repeat anything that has been said, but it is clear in the development in recent years of English administrative law—common law—that there is a law of consultation known as the Gunning principles, which are set out clearly and helpfully by the Local Government Association. There are four principles and they derive from a case in which Judge Stephen Sedley was in charge of the court: *Regina v. Brent London Borough Council, ex parte Gunning*—that is why they are called the Gunning principles. They are now clearly established and applied by the courts.

The first principle is that the proposals are still at a formative stage. The second is that there is sufficient information to give intelligent consideration. The third is that there is adequate time for consideration and response. The fourth, which has become increasingly important in recent cases, as opposed to earlier cases where the first three principles were given more weight, is that

“‘conscientious consideration’ must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made”.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous) made a point about time. He said that “there must be no holdup” in the development of offshore wind. Amen to that—we all agree. The one way we can be absolutely sure there will be a huge holdup is if the lawyers get hold of this. If the Minister wants to be bogged down in judicial review and legal battles for years to come with no progress towards our net zero targets, all he has to do is ignore what all of us are saying, and I guarantee that that is where he will end up.

**James Cartlidge:** There is another email about the reasoning for the eastern link, and another reason was given was about the speed of delivery of an offshore link against the speed of building pylons. It says:

“The subsea link between Torness in East Lothian and Hawthorn Pit in County Durham needs to be in place by 2027. The link between Peterhead in Aberdeenshire and Drax in North Yorkshire is needed by 2029. While onshore AC overhead line options were considered, those were discounted because they would not be deliverable in the timescales that were required.”

Does that not show that going undersea can actually be quicker?

**Mr Bacon:** I have no doubt that my hon. Friend is right. If we want efficiency, effectiveness and economic progress, we should listen to the people calling for an offshore grid. After all, as several of our hon. Friends have said, it is already Government policy. What we need to do is follow through with the concomitant decisions that should apply when something is Government policy, rather than ignoring this area which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds said, will become the Saudi Arabia of England for offshore generation.

To conclude, because I do not want to overrun the time limit that you have set, Mr Stringer, we must make it clear that our constituents do not feel that they have been properly consulted or that offshore options were given any meaningful consideration. We want to be sure that any detailed report on offshore options is meaningful and thorough, involves our constituents fully and is written by independent experts. We also want it to embrace the idea of taking a first step towards a broad-scale East Anglian offshore grid, with, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk said, Sea Links 2, 3 and 4 carrying 6 GW and multi-noding with international interconnectors, in order to add further value, which must feature in any overall holistic cost assessment.

If we want to make progress on this, as everyone agrees that we need to do, particularly in light of the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and if we want to become more energy independent, more quickly, and hasten the drive towards net zero, which every single person in this room would like to see happen, we should listen to my hon. Friends, and the Minister should too.

10.35 am

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair as always, Mr Stringer. I congratulate the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) on bringing the debate and extend my commiserations to him on the death of his mother.

When I found out that I was speaking for the Labour Front Bench in this debate and saw that the subject was posited as local opposition to renewable energy projects, the first word that came to mind was *nimbyism*. Such debates can be about people not wanting something that spoils their view, but it has been made very clear that the debate today is not about that.

In his opening remarks, the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex was quite right to point out that it does matter if there is an impact on people's house prices or on the aesthetic appeal of living in the countryside. We should not dismiss those things lightly. He also spoke about food production and the hon. Member for Bury St Edmunds (Jo Churchill) spoke eloquently about the importance of regenerative farming. Ukraine affects this debate, as it affects so many things, both in our energy security and in our resilience, including the sort of crops that could be grown in East Anglia. We ought to be doing far more to support farming there.

The frustration that the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex expressed with the current processes and the discussions that have taken place was clear, and he talked about the lack of national control. Does the Minister think that the process is accountable and transparent? Could it be improved? Do we need a longer-term, broader-ranging strategy from the National Grid?

[Kerry McCarthy]

There were calls for National Grid to publish costed offshore alternatives to East Anglia GREEN. I welcome the fact that a meeting took place yesterday. That sounds as if it was a productive step on the way to trying at least to put more options in front of East Anglian communities, and I welcome that.

We heard from the hon. Members for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) and for Bury St Edmunds that this was a case of putting the cart before the horse. It came across very genuinely that this is not about people trying to delay something by throwing in lots of obstacles, almost like “Wacky Races”, where lots of rocks are thrown in front of the vehicles so they will not reach the finish line. These are genuine concerns that are being raised.

The hon. Member for Bury St Edmunds talked about the broader issue of energy resilience and critical national infrastructure. This is one local example of how we need to get it right but, as she says, we need more clarity on the issue nationally as well.

I was interested to hear the comments made by the hon. Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous), not least because, having served on the Environmental Audit Committee with him, I know that he is genuine in his commitment to environmental concerns. He said that there should be no hold-ups to rolling out offshore wind, and I entirely agree with him. There was a debate with the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) about whether the existing framework would permit alternative options to be considered. I will leave it to the Minister to go into who is right and what has been said about that, but that goes to the need for greater transparency in the process.

The hon. Member for South Suffolk also said that all East Anglian MPs support net zero. Having listened to some of the contributions to the Conservative leadership contest, I am not entirely sure whether the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Kemi Badenoch) would say the same, but that is a debate for another day. The hon. Member for South Suffolk said that the consultation was inadequate and did not cover the offshore options, which were buried in the small print. Again, I will leave it to the Minister to say whether he feels that the consultation was adequate. The hon. Member for South Norfolk (Mr Bacon) also said that the consultation was not adequate and warned about getting lawyers involved, which we would probably all want to avoid. I speak as a lawyer myself.

Let me conclude because it is important that the Minister has plenty of time to reply. The need to make the shift to low-carbon energy is real and urgent, and the push for 50 GW of offshore wind by 2030 is very much part of that. In recent weeks, the Government have been criticised by the Climate Change Committee for the inadequacy of their plans to reach net zero, although they are doing better on energy than on some other aspects, and only yesterday, Friends of the Earth successfully brought a court case against the Government, which will require them to rethink their net zero strategy.

I hope that there will be a revised strategy as a result of the court case and the criticisms of the Climate Change Committee, and that must include a big push to get the right low-carbon infrastructure in place. Opposition to onshore wind has been a disaster for efforts to ramp

up renewable energy capacity in the UK, and it is now easier to build a road than to put up an onshore wind turbine in this country.

On this project, while I bow to the local MPs over the points that they want to put on the table, it appears to me that we need the strengthening cable to facilitate the landing and transportation of power from new wind farms. Undergrounding has been discussed, although I note that the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex said that undergrounding would not work as well in practice as in theory. In Scotland, quite a bit of undergrounding has been done, but the hon. Gentleman was concerned that it would still have an impact on the Dedham Vale area of outstanding natural beauty. There was also discussion of whether alternative offshore routes are viable. I wait to hear from the Minister whether he thinks they really are an option.

I have a final question for the Minister: if there were additional costs associated with pursuing the offshore route, would they fall on customers through the transmission element of bills? I hope that that would not be the case. We all know the impact of rising energy prices, so will the Minister clarify whether, if a more costly option were deemed appropriate, for all the reasons the MPs here today have mentioned such as there being a problem with the cheaper option that is being posited, the Government would provide direct support to avoid that cost falling on customers through their bills?

**James Cartlidge:** To clarify, we are not saying that options with, for example, a higher theoretical up-front capital cost are necessarily more expensive over the long term. The key issue is the horizon over which we look. We feel that, based on National Grid's own figures, if we had a co-ordinated grid, that would be much cheaper in the long term for constituents.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I pose this question to the Minister: if a different option were adopted that turned out to be more expensive, would that cost be passed to the customer? I am by no means in a position to judge which option is more expensive.

Let me conclude. There is no perfect solution, and I am pleased that discussions are taking place and that National Grid has met MPs. I hope that those discussions continue, but the ball is now in the Minister's court for him to respond to the Members present for today's debate.

**Graham Stringer (in the Chair):** May I ask the Minister to leave a couple of minutes for the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) to make his winding-up speech?

10.44 am

**The Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change (Greg Hands):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer, and I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) on securing this important debate. I offer my sincerest condolences on the death of his mother. I knew my hon. Friend's father, who was a distinguished former Environment Secretary, and I feel sure I met his mother in connection with his father. I know how tragic the death of a parent can be, and I genuinely send him my deepest condolences at this difficult time.



My hon. Friend has continued to be a champion for his constituents on this topic. He said that he has never received as many emails as he has recently on this issue. I will be sure to continue to engage with National Grid on this matter, and I will ensure that it engages with my hon. Friend.

I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on their engagement. It is always impressive to see MPs closely in touch with their communities. I am glad that yesterday they met National Grid—NG ESO and NG ET—and Ofgem. If I am not able to respond on all the points that they raised in the 15 minutes available, I am sure we will meet again.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) wrote to me just over a week ago, and I want to address the questions and concerns in his letter. I will begin by introducing the topic and setting out the wider context. The British energy security strategy sets out bold plans to scale up and accelerate affordable, clean and secure energy, made in Britain for Britain, so that we can shift decisively away from expensive fossil fuels. That includes the ambition for 50 GW of offshore wind by 2030.

In the fourth contracts for difference auction earlier this month, five offshore wind projects totalling 7 GW won contracts at a record low strike price of £37.35 per megawatt-hour. To put that in perspective, on 7 July—the very same day as that result—the prevailing wholesale electricity day-ahead price was £230 per megawatt-hour. My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous) made the point well that we are No. 1 in Europe in terms of our offshore wind capacity, and the contributions to the local economy in East Anglia should not be underestimated. That confirms the fact that positioning offshore wind as a central pillar of our energy security strategy is the right call, and accelerating its deployment will be key to addressing Britain's long-term energy needs.

I welcome the support of my hon. Friend the Members for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew), my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk and others for the strong contribution that offshore wind makes to the UK's energy needs. Currently, it produces 11.4 GW. However, connecting that cheap, green energy and transporting it to where it is needed in East Anglia and across the country will require more electricity network infrastructure, both onshore and offshore, than we have today. We need that infrastructure to be built more quickly. Timescales for delivering transmission network infrastructure can be as long as 11 to 14 years—often far longer than the time taken to deliver the generation that is being connected. That constraint is already biting: about 5% of wind generation is curtailed, which means that its output is reduced because there is not enough capacity on the network to transport it. That could increase to 15% to 20% in the mid-2020s as wind generation increases.

How do we connect that energy? Unfortunately, placing all new infrastructure offshore is not feasible, as I think we would all agree, as ultimately the electricity needs to get to where the demand is, which is onshore. Therefore, even with offshore cables, infrastructure such as substations is required onshore at landing points.

Let me be up front with my right hon. and hon. Friends: the new projects proposed in East Anglia, such as East Anglia GREEN, are considered nationally significant infrastructure projects, as defined in the

Planning Act 2008. Any project of that nature comes to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who will consider a broad range of planning matters. That is a quasi-judicial process, of course, and I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will understand that I cannot comment on specific points, which will almost certainly be submitted during the planning process, but I will try to deal with as many points as I can in the available time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex called it a patch and mend approach. I disagree with that, but there is a big transformation coming up through the Energy Security Bill, which was published only last week and is due to have its Second Reading in the House of Lords today. It includes within it a future system operator, which will take a long-term view of the whole energy system. That is one of the key reforms in the Energy Security Bill that will come before the Commons in the autumn. Two of the four pathfinder projects that have come out of the holistic network design process, which is part of the offshore transmission network review, which I will come on to explain, are actually located in East Anglia.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds rightly pointed out that there is a presumption in favour of overhead pylons, but there are still broad overall factors involved in making these decisions. Those broad factors include the environmental impacts, the community impacts, the cost to bill payers, which I am sure all my hon. and right hon. Friends would agree is a significant factor, deliverability and speed. Those are all relevant factors when this planning is carried out. The significantly increased cost of undersea or underground cables needs to be taken into account, and the environmental impacts of different options need to be carefully weighed up. For example, undersea cabling can have a significant impact on marine life.

**James Cartlidge:** I appreciate what my right hon. Friend is saying—he is being very clear with us—but does he appreciate that what we learned from National Grid yesterday is that it will, over the summer, undertake a detailed assessment of a potential offshore alternative? In other words, yes, a range of factors can be considered, but that cannot have happened in the East Anglia GREEN consultation because there has been no detailed assessment of an alternative. On that basis, I hope he can understand why our constituents feel that the consultation should be reopened.

**Greg Hands:** I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Unfortunately I was not able to be at the meeting yesterday, but I will carefully look at a read-out of what was said at that meeting and study it. In any case I need to respond to his letter of 7 July, so I will make sure that I take on that specific point as far as I am able.

In general, my hon. Friend makes the good point that there is undersea cabling around the country. He rightly points out connections, for example, between Scotland and Wales, between Scotland and England and so on, but it is worth pointing out that East Anglia GREEN will deliver 6 GW of extra network capacity. I think my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney made that point. The latest offshore cable technology is capable of carrying up to 2 GW of capacity. When we are looking at the sheer amount of energy that needs to be transmitted, it

[Greg Hands]

is not necessarily comparing like with like. To deliver the equivalent of East Anglia GREEN offshore would require at least three 2 GW cables. We can all look at a map and see where connections are, but that does not tell the whole story.

**Jo Churchill:** The nub of it is that we have not been given these options. The Minister spoke about environmental impact and the other considerations that were taken into account, but as the MP trying to help inform my constituents, I certainly have never seen any of that information or data; I do not know whether anybody else has. Yesterday it was definitely inferred that some of this acquiring of information would need to happen in short order.

**Greg Hands:** I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I have spoken about yesterday, and I repeat my pledge to hold as soon as I can a further meeting with colleagues to consider what was said and the progression of these matters, while bearing in mind the quasi-judicial planning nature of the Secretary of State's decision.

In July my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, when he was Energy Minister, launched the offshore transmission network review, or OTNR, to improve the level of co-ordination in how we connect offshore and ensure that future connections are delivered in the most appropriate way. I think it was my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland who asked, could we not have foreseen in 2015 the great need for this work? To some extent, that is not an unfair point. In many ways, in this country we are victims of our incredible success with our offshore wind capacity, which is the largest in Europe. It was the largest in the world until last summer, when China overtook us. It really is the envy of the world, and others come to see us. The United States is scaling up its capability and other European countries are coming to see us and so on. So he makes a fair point.

Earlier this month, we reached a significant milestone in the review with the publication of a major deliverable—the holistic network design, to which my hon. Friends have referred. In addition, we recently announced Nick Winser CBE as the UK's first Electricity Networks Commissioner. He will play a pivotal role in ensuring that we have the right infrastructure to transmit electricity to where it is needed.

I pay tribute my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds for always being engaged on all matters environmental during her time at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. When it comes to commercial and industrial and energy resilience, which is very important, I refer her to the evidence that I gave yesterday to the Joint Committee on National Security Strategy, which goes into those matters in some detail.

The HND sets out the need for about £54 billion of onshore and offshore transmission infrastructure, new and upgraded, which will be needed to deliver our 2030 ambition. That is the first time that those have been co-ordinated to ensure better outcomes for communities, the environment and bill payers. Although a new requirement for onshore network reinforcement has been identified in the HND, no decisions have yet been

taken on how best to do that. All projects that come forward as a result of the HND will be subject to the relevant democratic planning processes to ensure that local stakeholders get a say on the developments and that the impacts are mitigated as far as possible. I have already mentioned the pathfinder projects.

I will deal with three or four other points that arose in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Broadland asked whether connection contracts were subject to planning. They are, but of course they are not yet in the planning system. There is a statement from the five projects in East Anglia that are working together on offshore co-ordinated options, as he knows, and utilising changes in the offshore transmission network review process. That will be supported by a £100 million offshore co-ordination support scheme, which will be launched later this year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds asked about the NPS, which will be reconsulted on later this year. I expect that that will apply to this project. MPs will have a chance to have an input on the NPS process. I expect both the current and future NPS to provide the flexibility for trade-offs between cost and impact and between offshore and onshore options to be brought forward where appropriate. That is a matter for National Grid Electricity Transmission and Ofgem. My hon. Friend also asked about the environment impact assessment for East Anglia GREEN, which will cover the impacts on agriculture. We expect farmers and landowners to receive compensation for any loss or impact on crop production.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk wants a study on the offshore grid to be done independently. In accordance with its transmission licence, it is NGET's responsibility to develop and put forward options to reinforce the network. BEIS is the ultimate decision maker for those nationally significant infrastructure projects.

**James Cartlidge:** NGET could commission an independent expert under its contract.

**Greg Hands:** I am sure that National Grid Electricity Transmission will have noted that point from the debate. If my hon. Friend did not make that point yesterday, I am sure he could make that to them. I must be careful about the role in the quasi-judicial process in relation to NGET's responsibility.

We have covered the holistic network design and the pathfinder projects, so I will allow my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex a couple of minutes in which to respond. I look forward to continuing engagement with my right hon. and hon. Friends on these topics. I will respond in writing to the letter of 7 July as soon as possible. I will also look at what was said yesterday and any other points from the debate that I have not been able to respond to.

10.58 am

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** I am most grateful for your chairmanship of these proceedings, Mr Stringer, and to the Minister for his response and the care that he has taken over the matter. I am extremely grateful for the kind words that everybody has expressed to me today and for the high quality of all the contributions to the debate.

I am still very unhappy, because the Minister is effectively still disclaiming responsibility for the process that we are in and holds out no prospect of being able to change it. Environmental costs and community disbenefits are not costed into the scheme in any way; let us compare that with how much extra has been spent on High Speed 2 to mitigate its environmental and community disbenefits. Why are the Government not taking responsibility for the national grid in the same way as they take responsibility for railway or road development? It is inconsistent.

For the Minister to say, “Oh well, I’ll see what was said in that meeting,” and, “I can’t say anything because of the quasi-judicial nature of the process,” underlines that nobody is in charge and there is no strategic mind. It is for the Government to come to Parliament and ask for the powers necessary to be responsible, so that we can do something about this runaway train that is about to wreck the environment and communities—

**Graham Stringer (in the Chair):** Order.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

## Listed Buildings Protection

11 am

**Graham Stringer (in the Chair):** I will call Paul Maynard to move the motion, and then I will call the Minister to respond. There will not be an opportunity for the Member in charge to wind up, as is the convention for 30-minute debates.

11.1 am

**Paul Maynard** (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered listed buildings protection.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer. I thank the Minister for his time today. He is becoming the Swiss Army knife of the Government—a multi-purpose Minister. Whenever Blackpool comes across the political horizon, I see the Minister. I have wanted for 12 years to have a Minister for Blackpool and I think I have now got one—and a very good one, at that.

I am here to talk mainly about the listing of modern buildings. I should declare an interest as a member of the Twentieth Century Society for getting on for 23 years. A couple of weekends ago, it was a true delight to take the Twentieth Century Society on a coach trip around Blackpool and Fleetwood. I was pleased to see their enthusiasm for the buildings they saw. I got to see things that I had not seen before, and to appreciate parts of our built environment that I had started to take for granted, as someone who lives in the area.

I am also pleased to be able to praise the Government; I do not always get the chance these days to do that. Just this week, we saw the listing of Quinlan Terry’s Brentwood cathedral. The platinum jubilee saw the listing of a number of buildings, from the Harrogate sun pavilion to the motorway markers on the M62 at the Lancashire-Yorkshire border. Obviously, the one on the Lancashire side is far superior to the one on the Yorkshire side. In the past couple of years, we have seen real efforts in Blackpool, listing our middle and lower walk colonnades by the Metropole hotel, as well as our excellent promenade shelters that hotel guests enjoy along the north shore. I can also praise the Government for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and all that contains, but I do not want to take part of the time for the Minister’s reply to me by detailing all that that includes.

As ever, Back Benchers like to point out what is not in a Bill. The Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies, a group of the likes of the Twentieth Century Society, the Victorian Society and the Georgian Group, has made the point that there is often uncertainty among local planning authorities about the occasions when they are required to notify national amenity societies of applications for listed building consent. The Bill would be an opportunity to provide a reminder and clarification, and have the potential to offer the introduction of a more practical recourse to rectification than judicial review, when a decision has been issued without notification. I urge the Government to look at that.

There are more systemic issues that see the architecture of the past 120 years not getting the same protection, which it deserves, as older buildings in this country. In particular, that applies to interim protection. There is little or no protection for a building in England while a



[Paul Maynard]

process of listing assessment is carried out. Indeed, the knowledge that a listing might be imminent sometimes encourages an owner who hopes to redevelop the site to rush deliberately to damage or demolish the building, specifically to prevent listing.

Setting up interim listing for England was to have been one of the most significant improvements delivered by the proposed Heritage Protection Bill that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published in 2008. Sadly, that Bill never became an Act, and we can blame the Labour party for that, like so much in life, mainly due to lack of parliamentary time. Ever since, there has been a desire to plug that obvious gap. That is another potential addition to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that I urge the Minister to consider.

We also see local authorities rolling out programmes of wider work enhancing the public realm. They forget that assets are sometimes listed. They do the analysis necessary for listed building consent and conclude that there is a wider public benefit that outweighs the loss of architectural significance, but that does more damage than is necessary to achieve the same public benefit. I recognise that many of my concerns, perhaps inevitably, are resource-related and right now is perhaps not the time to ask for more money—is it ever the right time to ask for more money—in this era of fiscal rectitude, which I hope will continue.

Local authorities' constrained resources can mean long waits for assessment of potential listings, which leads to very strict triaging of requests to eliminate all but the most urgent applications. That means that developers or potential building purchasers develop proposals, only to be frustrated by last-minute listing decisions. I point to Government policies on converting office blocks and other buildings in town centres into accommodation and housing. That can often hit a brick wall when people discover that that very building is listed nationally or locally.

Listing intervention for modern homes on single plots at risk of demolition is a particular problem. A "for sale" sign is not enough to require intervention, and potential purchasers need to be able to make informed choices about their purchase before they buy. The key problem here is how Historic England defines risk. It does not view risk merely in the case of a property being sold. Waiting for "threat", as it phrases it, is far too late in the planning process for developer and local authority certainty, as Historic England is very cautious when wanting evidence of threat. Developer purchase is not in itself a threat in its book.

We need to look to more strategic levels than just building by building. There is a debate to be had about the appropriateness of the 30-year rule—the point at which buildings are automatically considered for protection. Historic England guidance states that buildings

"are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time."

But technology and architectural fashion are moving so fast now that I do not think that rule still applies. We have seen a branch of Sainsbury's in Greenwich demolished after only 17 years—demolished for a blue IKEA box—despite being shortlisted for a Stirling prize and being at

the forefront of environmentally-friendly architecture. I would love to see Historic England revive its post-war steering group to look at post-1992 national lottery buildings and millennium-era buildings, of which we have a profusion. That was done in the Netherlands very successfully with its post-war reconstruction built environment. We can learn a lot from that.

As I have said, the cycle of architectural styles is accelerating, and that makes the 30-year rule less relevant. We saw post-modernism flourish in the early '80s. Some of those buildings have been listed because they are exceptional. I think of John Outram's Temple of Storms on the Isle of Dogs—a pumping station with a fantastic neo-Egyptian edifice.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman is right. I know that back home our historic buildings, whether listed locally or in our case provincially, are very important, but the issue for the developer or the owner of the building that is being listed is mostly one of finance. Does he feel that perhaps the financial assistance available through the Minister's Department might enable those buildings to retain their historic importance?

**Paul Maynard:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. Nothing would please me more than a pot of money to help save 20th-century buildings, but I fear that might not be forthcoming. My favourite building in Northern Ireland is Mussenden Temple. The biggest fear there is its collapsing into the sea, but that is not 20th century, so perhaps it lies outside this debate. However, he makes a perfectly fair point.

Portcullis House is a very good example. It is not listed, despite efforts to do so, because it is not under threat. However, there has been a gradual diminution of the original features. The central pool was meant to cool it—we can see how that is working today. Also, the benches on the sides are now crumbling at the corners. It needs a programme of repair, but because those original details have been altered, it will be less likely to be listed when the time comes. And I have not mentioned the row over Richmond House and the relocation of the House of Commons. We need a rolling programme of automatic assessment of a watch list drawn up by amenity societies, perhaps based upon Stirling prize nominees or another range of sources, or maybe even the self-nomination system in Australia for spot listing.

Historic England has done a number of good things, thematic listing being one of them, but not in insufficient depth or breadth to list all the good enough buildings. It has been seriously resource-constrained. None of that is to criticise Historic England. Thematic studies of the motor era and amusement parks have been of great value in expanding Blackpool's list of listed buildings. But banks and department stores are all being affected by commercial change and the changes in our high streets in recent years. We could do a whole lot more for parks and gardens. I could hold an entire debate based on the Gardens Trust's campaigning and helping safeguard Stanley park, a hidden jewel in Blackpool. That might be for my next heritage debate to drag the Minister to.

If the thematic programme is not expanded, we inevitably risk losses in the built environment. We have local listing, which I am sure the Minister will bring up, but that is also variable. There is often uncertainty about

the status of local buildings. Inconsistencies can lower the protection they receive in different local authorities. I welcome the Government funding for 22 areas that will be encouraged to build up their local listings.

**Craig Mackinlay** (South Thanet) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a very good speech, and I thank him for securing this debate. He is getting on to the issue of variability between different local authorities. As he will know, I am the chair of the all-party parliamentary group for listed properties. Sandwich in my constituency, the best-preserved medieval town in the country, is in isolation. I find too often in my role as APPG chair that different authorities will look at the same project and come to different conclusions when people want to make renovations and repairs. Add to that the withdrawal of VAT relief on repairs, and owners of listed properties are in a tough situation. There are delays in local authorities and variability of decisions, and that needs to stop.

**Paul Maynard:** My hon. Friend is right and demonstrates a need for clarity for owners, potential purchasers and potential developers about what they are getting into, and the likely obstacles, risks and obligations that come with owning a listed property. I am sure the Minister has heard his comments

In Blackpool, we are fortunate to have a head of planning who started off as the local conservation officer, Carl Carrington. We have a new policy in Blackpool, which I think is the first in the country, whereby owners of locally listed buildings will need planning permission to demolish them even if they are not in a conservation area. That is important in a seat like mine, where we have some exceptional inter-war domestic housing on the sea front. That will not always be in a historic conservation zone, and runs the risk of being demolished.

I welcome the Government's investment in heritage action zones, but I am concerned that, over time, they have been subsumed into the wider town centre pots of money that the Government are spending on levelling up, and the heritage element is being marginalised. We need to expand listing as part of building back better, coping with the changing high street and the retail environment. I query whether anything short of listing would do that protection job of enhancing new town centres such as Stevenage or Harlow, perhaps, while also reviving those town centres.

We still have too few conservation officers across local authorities. Blackpool is spoiled in that context, and we have seen the benefits of protecting our built historic environment. It all goes back to resources. That is why it needs to be part of levelling up. I know that survives as a concept and is the key to improving local protection.

Historic England did an excellent case study of how this can be made to work, in conjunction with the Twentieth Century Society. I am sure that the Minister knows all about it because it was all about Worcestershire. It was an unrepeatable project that only Worcestershire has benefited from so far. Historic England said that buildings in the 20th century

"are regularly described as making a 'detrimental or at best neutral contribution to an area', and that even when a structure is recognised as making a positive contribution, 'it doesn't always benefit from the same level of research and analysis afforded to

older areas'...Only a very small percentage of these assets meet the criteria for national designation. However, this everyday heritage illustrates wider social, cultural, economic, political and technological changes which were facilitated, amongst other things, by a transformation in England's planning philosophy and culture, accompanied by the emergence of new building types, construction techniques and materials."

That is a long quote, I know, but I just wanted to provide some examples from the Minister's very own constituency of West Worcestershire. I am sure he knows only too well the magnificent main post office in Evesham, dating from 1960, by H L Williamson in a modern style. I am sure he talks about nothing more than the fact that Evesham was only the second town in the country to have trunk dialling when the 1935 telephone exchange opened. That has to be a topic of dinner-party conversation in Droitwich as well as Evesham. He will know from the agricultural sector in the Vale of Evesham that much soft fruit was taken to Beach's jam factory in Evesham. That might not be an architecturally fantastic location, but it is part of local history and the architectural built environment of the Minister's constituency.

I am sure my hon. Friend knows the small village of Hartlebury. He is nodding his head; good. The case study states:

"The fate of a recently-demolished Morgan garage raises questions over how 20th-century heritage should be better valued and conserved. Although surviving as a well-preserved example of an inter-war filling station, with its vernacular revival form and detail, changes to its overall footprint were considered to undermine the case for protection. There needs to be more emphasis placed on understanding how buildings such as this illustrate their historic value, and are valued by communities: this could have been secured through retention of the main range facing the road, whilst accepting the need for internal adaptation and further changes to the footprint of the remaining structure."

Whether it is Hartlebury, Droitwich, Evesham or Blackpool, this really is all about pride in place, which is probably the successor phrase to levelling up. We can do much more to protect buildings across the country that are part of our communities, modern buildings from 1900 to the current day, which are changing how we see our communities and the pride we take in them.

If I had more time, there would be another 10-minute speech, but I have one final plea: can we please sign up to the UNESCO convention on intangible cultural heritage now? We are one of only 12 from a total of 193 countries not to do so. We have seen, for example, that we can no longer make cricket balls in this country. So the moment that someone says, "New balls, please," they will not be British balls any more. To quote the Foreign Secretary, "That is a disgrace."

11.17 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) for securing this debate and for highlighting such an important issue. He spoke passionately about not only his own constituency but the heritage ecosystem. I am also particularly impressed that he spoke eloquently and passionately about my own constituency. He was right to highlight the issues and concerns.

I thank those who have participated in today's debate, because we all care passionately about our nation's heritage, for the very reasons that my hon. Friend has

[*Nigel Huddleston*]

outlined. It is heartbreaking when parts of our history are wiped out because of ignorance or stupid decisions. I can assure him that I and the Department take our heritage responsibilities incredibly seriously, because we do not want to repeat the many mistakes of the past. However, we need to make sure that systems and processes are in place to minimise the chances of that happening, both at central and local government levels.

I recognise the rich heritage in my hon. Friend's constituency of Blackpool North and Cleveleys. We spoke before the debate about how many sites are there and right next door. Blackpool is Britain's favourite seaside resort for very good reasons and each year millions of visitors come to walk on its piers and beaches. The north pier, which is grade II listed and within the town conservation area, is just one of Blackpool's iconic and much-loved structures. Many are listed, including the Winter Gardens and the Blackpool Tower, so my hon. Friend is right to be proud of the heritage in his constituency and nearby.

I start by setting out where we are on heritage protection, especially the process of listing buildings. My hon. Friend mentioned the strengths and some of the challenges and weaknesses. The listing process is a celebration of buildings of special architectural and historical interest. It plays a vital part in helping to safeguard the legacy of our built environment. Listing protects a diverse range of buildings in this country—nearly 380,000—from grand palaces to private houses. Any member of the public may apply for a building they consider to be potentially of special architectural or historic interest to be considered for listing. Applications come through Historic England, the Government's heritage advisers, who assess the application and then make a recommendation to the Government. I note that my hon. Friend is very familiar with Historic England and has engaged with them in the past, as has the all-party parliamentary group for listed properties. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet (Craig Mackinlay) for his contributions as well.

The final decision on listing then goes to the Secretary of State, often via myself as heritage Minister—the junior Minister in the Department. On average we get 1,000 applications each year, many from local planning authorities, amenity societies—such as the Twentieth Century Society, which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys is a member of—and individual members of the public. Most of the remainder originate from a strategic programme of listing properties from Historic England—it proactively tries to identify potential sites for listing.

All listing applications are considered; they are assessed in accordance with the policies set out in the Secretary of State's "Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings". If a building is deemed to satisfy those principles, it is listed and formally recognised as a heritage asset of national significance. The factors taken into account when assessing a building's historical or architectural significance include its age, rarity and aesthetic appeal. It could also be considered significant due to its national interest. Thus it is the building itself, but also what happened in the building, that could be important. If there are relevant grounds for doing so, anyone can challenge a listing decision, requesting a review within 28 days of the decision's being published.

I will respond directly to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys made about the 30-year rule. It is not as hard and fast a rule as it may appear. The reason why buildings less than 30 years old are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest is because we usually expect listing to stand the test of time—a phrase that my hon. Friend used. It is not a hard-and-fast rule, and some buildings are listed despite being of relatively recent construction, although it is usually one of outstanding quality or particular historic interest. There is a degree of discretion here.

Once a building is listed, it is a criminal offence to demolish it or carry out works, alterations or extensions that affect the special architectural or historic interest without having first obtained listed building consent from the relevant local planning authority—usually the local council. The protections in place to determine changes to listed properties are robust; local planning authorities are obliged to have regard to policies on conservation or enhancement of the historic environment, set out in the national planning policy framework. It is important to recognise that listing does not prevent a building from changing use, nor does it protect the businesses, large or small, that may operate from such buildings. New users can sometimes help sustain historic buildings for the future. Indeed, many of our historic buildings have changed purpose over, in some cases, many centuries and that has enabled them to survive.

On enforcement powers, while the current protections are robust, they can always be strengthened. That is something I pay particular attention to. The debate is timely given that the Government are currently taking through Parliament the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which contains enhanced heritage protection measures. I will respond to the points made by my hon. Friend about that. There is a lot in the Bill, but I will give some highlights. The Bill will make it simpler for local planning authorities to step in and protect at-risk heritage assets through the use of new temporary stop notices for listed buildings. The Bill also strengthens urgent works powers, where urgent works notices can be served reasonably to a building that is in occupation. Previously, it was parts of the building not in use, as opposed to the whole building. The Bill includes the removal of compensation in relation to building preservation notices, which will encourage local authorities to serve those building preservation notices more effectively.

On interim protection, which my hon. Friend also mentioned, my Department already has a mechanism to step in where a building is deemed to be at risk. An emergency listing can happen at pace if the building is at risk of demolition or alteration. Building preservation notices can be served on such buildings for a period of up to six months to preserve them in their current state. Blanket interim protection for all buildings that are assessed for listing is an extreme measure, and we deem it to be an unbalanced approach for owners and developers. Providing interim protection for all buildings that are put forward for applications would potentially delay the planning system process, and we believe that our measures are a more balanced approach.

On the diversity of buildings on the list, many listed buildings are the result of strategic designation projects. In general, the list has grown organically over the years in response to individual applications—often in response



to threats posed to particular buildings. Consequently, it is recognised that some types of buildings and some periods are better represented on the list than others.

With Historic England, we recognise that there may therefore be an under-representation of early 20th-century buildings, as my hon. Friend identified. Of course, an under-representation is to be expected, given that the 20th century ended only a short while back, and therefore the public tend to be divided on some of the buildings from that era. I can reassure him that many of the proposals that come across my desk tend to be more modern buildings, ranging from brutalist architecture, on which opinion is divided in this House and in the country, to Palladian mansions and so on. Most of the very historic buildings are already listed and have been for some time, and therefore it is not surprising that the bulk of the new listings that come across my desk are more modern, so I see quite a lot of the proposals.

My hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet mentioned local listings. Locally important heritage buildings, of course, really do shape our sense of character and distinctiveness—the sense of place that they mentioned. Local planning authorities can formally identify such buildings through the compilation of local heritage lists, which, prepared with input from local communities, complement the national listing and can ensure that due regard is given to the conservation of buildings included on them in relevant planning decisions. The significance of locally listed buildings can be further highlighted through their inclusion in the relevant local historic environment records.

The Government are looking to place historic environment records on a statutory footing through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, and that will hopefully overcome some of the inconsistencies that my hon. Friends mentioned. They are right to mention the inconsistency of the resources and the attention paid to our historic buildings. I see that as I travel around the country, but generally I am very impressed by the attention that most local authorities pay to their heritage assets.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys for securing this important debate. As heritage Minister, I think it is right and important to highlight the Government's policy for listing and protecting our most loved heritage assets across the country. I have taken on board the points raised by my hon. Friend and others, and I hope I have been able to provide some reassurance that the Government intend to strengthen heritage protection in the planning system through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend will support our efforts in doing so.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), in his excellent speech, mentioned cricket ball manufacture. Does the Minister find it encouraging that the original cricket ball manufacturing factory in Penshurst for the Duke ball is, in fact, listed?

**Nigel Huddleston:** I am very pleased indeed that it is, and I am very pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend mentioned that in the final moments of the debate. I am also Sports Minister, and we could not have a debate without including some element of sport in the discussion.

I am certainly open to having a debate about intellectual assets. At the moment, we have some reservations about what can be included, because it is not clear how far it goes, but there is some merit in looking at such things. Our heritage assets are not just buildings; they also include the countryside. UNESCO listings are increasingly landscapes, not just old buildings and areas. As we progress this debate, options including intellectual property are worthy of discussion. I thank my hon. Friends for their contributions.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.29 am

*Sitting suspended.*

## Cost of Living Crisis: Wales

CAROLINE NOKES *in the Chair*

2.30 pm

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Before we start the debate, I would like to say something about the exceptional heat. I am content for Members not to wear jackets or even ties in Westminster Hall. Mr Speaker has announced similar arrangements for the Chamber. When the House returns in the autumn, Mr Speaker and the Deputies will expect Members to revert to wearing jackets and will strongly encourage male Members to wear ties when speaking in the Chamber and Westminster Hall. I call Ruth Jones to move the motion.

**Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the impact of the cost of living crisis in Wales.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship this afternoon, Ms Nokes. Thank you for the warning about the heat. I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the debate on behalf of the many families in Newport West who have written to me, called me and messaged me with their stories, experiences and fear for the months and years ahead.

I was elected to the House three years ago. In that relatively short time, despite the devastating pandemic and all the pain associated with it, until now I have never seen such worry and fear in the eyes of my constituents. I am so angry that they have been forced into that position by the actions of this 12-year-old Tory Government. Let me be clear: this is a cost of living crisis made in Downing Street. The biggest challenge facing us all is that we have a caretaker Prime Minister who is more focused on hosting parties than attending Cobra meetings, and more focused on holding power than using power. He is so evidently uninterested in ensuring that the people of Newport West, of Wales, and across the United Kingdom have the support they need and the good government they deserve.

I have shared this story before, but it speaks volumes to the challenge that the cost of living crisis has placed on people in Newport West. My constituent says this:

“Thank you for responding to my e-mail Ruth Jones, these are my concerns. We are in a position right now where we’re not coping. Our energy bills have risen 54% and I am afraid that myself and many others will not be able to provide for our families. My husband’s parents are on a state pension of £82.45 a week, we are concerned for their welfare as they cannot afford to heat their home nor pay for food if these energy prices continue. Many of my friends are concerned for their own families too, we are all struggling, and instead of living, we’re surviving day to day. If these prices don’t change, we must have an increase in the minimum wage.”

That is just one example of the constituents’ emails that I get every day.

**Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab):** I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. She is making an excellent speech. I am going to hold cost of living crisis workshops throughout Cardiff North, such is the scale of worry and concern from constituents writing to me time and again. Does she agree that this is because of the inaction and complacency of this Government, who have failed to deal with the crisis?

**Ruth Jones:** I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. The workshops sound an excellent idea. People are desperate and need such ideas. She is quite right that the obvious inactivity of the Government is the problem. This debate today is not about party politics or short-term political gain; it is about people’s lives. It is about housing, food, and the ability to have the fan on and be able to pay the bill. It is about survival.

Another Newport West resident wrote to me:

“I have one daughter, 12 years old. I am in full time employment and on benefits. I have cancer. Even before the surge in energy prices many people like me have been struggling to afford the essentials. The cost of weekly food shopping has risen, so has the cost of energy. My rent also increased recently. I have had to make cut backs on most things.”

Like colleagues across Wales, and indeed the House, I came into politics to make Newport West, Wales and our United Kingdom a better, fairer and more equal place to live, learn and work, and that remains my single focus. I hope today to give Ministers the chance to tell us how they can help us make life better for the people of Wales, but I am afraid that the response from Conservatives in Westminster and in Cardiff Bay to their cost of living crisis has been nothing short of insulting. They are out of touch, out of ideas and now out of time.

We cannot wait another day to act, because local people are worried about paying their bills and looking after their families, and have no basic survival abilities. At the same time, Ministers seem to be seriously suggesting that the answers to the challenges facing local people are dodgy loans and Tesco value products. The only conclusion I can draw from those suggestions is that the Conservatives are living on another planet. Although we are pleased to see the back of the caretaker Prime Minister, the current contest for the leadership of the Tory party means that we have no real Government in power. No decisions are being taken and there is no ambition for the people of Wales. There is no commitment to addressing their needs and no plan to get our country out of this mess.

That inaction stands in stark contrast to the decent and pragmatic leadership of the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford. The Welsh Labour Government are not just on the side of the people of Wales; they spend every day doing what they can to mitigate the impact of the Tory cost of living crisis. They have taken a number of steps, which I am sure other hon. Members will mention. In addition to those things, free prescriptions continue to help people across Wales to keep more of their hard-earned money. I note that prescriptions in England under this Conservative Government are currently £9.35 per item.

**Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab):** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising prescriptions. Does she agree that, had the UK Government delivered on their pledge last year to introduce hormone replacement therapy for one annual payment, women in England would not face the pressure of choosing between feeding their children and paying for their HRT prescription?

**Ruth Jones:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. Prescriptions, medicines and HRT are so important to people—[*Interruption.*] Absolutely, they are free in Wales.

The average band D council tax bill in England is £167 more than in Wales. Even with the UK Government's recently announced council tax rebate, households in Wales still pay £17 less than in England, which shows that people are better off with Labour.

People being better off with Labour is further exemplified by the Welsh Government's £244 million council tax reduction scheme, which helps more than 270,000 households with their council tax bills. Although the crisis is real, the Welsh Labour Government are stepping in and stepping up. That helps people in Marshfield, Rogerstone, Pill, Caerleon and right across Wales.

The crisis of food poverty is continuing to grow across the United Kingdom, which is why the Welsh Labour Government committed to provide free school meals to all primary school pupils. An extra 196,000 primary school children benefit from that offer, which shows how the impact of the Tory cost of living crisis can be mitigated by Labour in power. The Welsh Labour Government announced in December 2020 that free school meals would be provided through the holidays to children in Wales through to Autumn 2022, and the First Minister committed to further widen access to free school meals overall. This Tory Government have had to be forced, shamefully and repeatedly, into U-turns by Marcus Rashford's campaigning and the votes of Her Majesty's Opposition in Parliament.

As I have said in the House before, the people of Newport West are looking for help. The caretaker Government have no plan to help people with heating their homes, filling their cars with petrol or feeding their families. Last year, I spoke in this House about the 9,000 families in Newport West who had their universal credit cut, and since then I have seen for myself the devastating impact that decision had on families in Newport West and across Wales.

It is not just universal credit: older people and pensioners are at the sharp end of the Tory cost of living crisis, and they urgently need the Government to act. Pensioners spend twice as much on their energy bills as those under 30, and face spiralling inflation, with the prices of petrol, food and energy all soaring. Let us not forget that almost one in five pensioners now lives in poverty.

Our young people are facing the fierce winds of this crisis, with low wages, rising rent and the cost of living going through the roof. My constituent Bobbie said this:

"Hi, Ruth Jones. I would just like to ask a question, see if you can help. I work 2 jobs most weeks between 50 and 60 hours per week just to live. I get paid minimum wages for both jobs. My current outgoings are £1,200, and there is not much left when I pay the petrol, the electricity and done my food shopping. Where is the help for people like me?"

Bobbie is right. Where is the help for people like her?

I pay tribute to some of Britain's largest charities, including Oxfam, Save the Children and Fuel Poverty Action, which have formed a new campaign coalition—Warm This Winter. The coalition is calling on the Government and all those who seek to lead the Government to support plans to prevent a catastrophic winter energy crisis. Although we currently face record high temperatures, in just a few months families will be struggling again to heat their homes. Let us not forget that all this shows how much the impacts of the climate emergency can affect all parts of our lives.

Rather than help those in need, what are the Conservatives doing? They have whacked up national insurance payments at the worst possible time, hitting working people hard. And let us not forget how Welsh Conservative MPs have used their place and their votes in this House: they voted to cut the £20 universal credit uplift; they voted against free school meals for children during school holidays; they voted for the increase in national insurance contributions; and they voted against a windfall tax. I suspect that the people across Wales, from Delyn to Clwyd South and from the Vale of Glamorgan to Bridgend, will be very clear about their views, needs and wants come the general election that our country desperately needs.

We live in difficult times, but for all the global forces facing us and the world around us, ultimately we need our Government to act, and to act now, because the cost of living crisis is costing livelihoods, costing lives, and costing businesses in Wales and across the UK. Enough is enough—we cannot waste any more time. My message to the people of Wales is simple: help is on the way with a Labour Government, and the sooner the better for all of us.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** I am hoping to avoid having to put a time limit on Members, so they might like to think about how many of them are currently standing.

2.41 pm

**Dame Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab):** I will focus today on the structural issues that face Wales, and ask what the UK Government do for Wales in policy terms. I very much believe in being part of the United Kingdom—I believe that together we are stronger—but we can use that power in ways that can be influential and really benefit every single person.

In the last 12 years, we have seen a massive growth in inequality in this country. We have seen the rich get richer and the poor get poorer; we see that in the millionaire lists and in the people turning up at food banks. So what do we need? We need a tax policy that is redistributive, whereby those with the broadest shoulders bear the greatest burden. What have the Government done? Well, they have put in some immediate support for the time being, but it is a stop-gap; it is not changing the system or the way we redistribute our money. They did that because Labour said, "Look, come on, you need to have a windfall tax. You need to get that money and redistribute it from the oil and gas companies, and make sure it goes into the pockets of people who are facing those enormous bills."

Let us look at some of the taxation policies that we have had from this Government. There has been the raising of the threshold at which people pay income tax. In principle, that sounds a very good thing, but it is not the most effective way of using that money, because everybody benefits, up the whole scale; it wastes quite a lot of money on people at the top of the scale. By contrast, if we put in targeted support at the bottom, as tax credits were designed to do, we can get a lot more value for our money through redistribution and achieving equality.



[*Dame Nia Griffith*]

What about VAT? One of the things we suggested could have been done this year was taking VAT off energy bills. Back in 2008, Labour reduced VAT from 17.5% to 15%, but now it is obviously up at 20%. VAT is also a very regressive tax, because everyone pays it; it is not a way to redistribute wealth.

Let me turn to the national income insurance hike, which hit people who are working, but did not tax unearned income. Again, that is not a helpful way of taxing people. That is not to say that we do not need money; of course we need money for the health service and the care service, but the way we raise it matters. Our cost of living crisis goes back to some of those fundamentals.

I will move on now to the Department for Work and Pensions. We all know that the transition to universal credit has produced all sorts of anomalies and difficulties. The five-week wait has put families into debt. We are not against the idea of reform or of trying to simplify the benefits system, but I wish this Government would get away from demonising people who have to claim benefits.

Who benefits from the DWP? Well, pensioners take the bulk of the money from the DWP. Then, of course, there are people who are working—lots of people have to rely on top-ups, even though they are working—so they are not in any way to be demonised. Then there are genuinely disabled people, and then there are people who have to claim money to help with their housing costs. Why are we in that situation? It is because we have got rid of so much social housing at low rents, so we now find that lots of public money goes straight into the pockets of landlords. Those eyewatering figures do not go to the people who have to make the claims; they go to the landlords. Until the Government get a grip and have a massive housebuilding programme, we are obviously going to be wasting money in that way and leaving families in often unsuitable accommodation. We need to sort out what is being done with benefits and the tax system.

Let me move on to what has gone on over the last 12 years with public sector pay. If we squeeze and squeeze, is it any wonder that we now have a crisis when inflation suddenly picks up but wages have been on hold for years? We have an incoherent policy; the former Health Secretary, the right hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) threw out a figure of 7%, but the minute he became Chancellor he changed his mind. We cannot have a half-baked system. We have to talk in the round about having a proper public sector pay policy. The problems have been stacking up; they have not suddenly arisen. This Government have not handled the economy or the redistribution of wealth well.

I turn to my favourite topic: energy policy. If we had invested in all the renewables that we should have done over the last 12 years, we would not be so dependent on imported oil and gas. What is this nonsense where, yet again, in the energy security strategy for 2022, the Government are pussyfooting around when it comes to wind farms in England? Luckily, we have a sensible policy in Wales.

It was disappointing to hear the Minister, at the Welsh Affairs Committee, not fully understand the implications of the National Grid situation. I hope he now understands

the need for massive investment right across Wales, and between Wales and England, so that we can benefit from being the United Kingdom and all share our energy pools. We really need a strategy for energy and investment, on a wholesale basis, and not leave it to a private company to see whether they fancy it or not. We need a strategy that supports innovation, such as we have seen in the tidal lagoon, which is now being supported by Labour-run Swansea City Council, rather than having had help from the UK Government.

I will finish with a point about dealing with rural areas. As we know, rural areas have particular difficulties in that they have a limited choice of fuel that they can use to heat their homes. Many are dependent on oil, for example, and have seen prices rocket, with no help available. Then there are the massive mileage costs that people in rural areas clock up when they have to go to the shops or to work, or to take the children somewhere; and the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) asked whether there could be some support to help people in those areas through sensible, centrally thought-through policies that could redistribute and help areas with massive inequalities.

On that note, I will leave other colleagues to tell the terrible and heartbreaking stories that we have all heard recently. I ask the Minister: when he is thinking about which candidate he supports in the Conservative leadership contest, will he put to them the questions of how we change the structure to have an equal and fairer society?

2.48 pm

**Ben Lake** (Ceredigion) (PC): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) on securing this important debate. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Llanelli (Dame Nia Griffith), who made several important points regarding the situation we find ourselves in, most notably that it is the product of several failings over many years. I thank her for referencing some of the issues that rural communities face with the fuel and energy crises. That is something that I will focus on in my speech.

We have had a few opportunities in recent months to debate the impact of the rising cost of living on households and our communities. I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Newport West for securing this debate, because it allows us to focus on the impact it is having in Wales. As has already been mentioned, the April increase of 54% to the price cap has already caused a lot of concern and misery for households across Wales. I note that, as we debate today, there is speculation that the cap might rise again, in a few months' time, to more than £3,000, with further increases expected when it is reviewed in January next year. That coincides, of course, with inflation soaring to a 30-year high and the UK facing the biggest fall in living standards since records began.

It is sobering to reflect on the fact that, following the April price cap review, the Welsh Government found that some 45% of households in Wales would fall into real fuel poverty. I shudder to think what the situation will be this autumn, when there will be increases in both the price cap and the demand for fuel to heat the winter months.

It is worth repeating a few of the statistics, just to give the background to the severity of the crisis. Domestic gas prices increased by 95% between May 2021 and May 2022, while domestic electricity prices, as we have already heard, rose by some 54%. In nominal terms, last April's price cap increased the maximum for average bills from £1,277 a year to £1,971. Just last May, the chief executive of Ofgem said that he expected the price cap to rise by a further 40% in the autumn, to around £2,800. Perhaps demonstrating just how volatile and unpredictable the situation is, analysts now suggest that, rather than £2,800, the autumn price cap increase will actually surpass £3,000. If that happens, the price cap will have more than doubled in the last two years. That is why I think it is important that we discuss the sufficiency of the Government's measures to date.

As the hon. Member for Llanelli mentioned, in so far as the price cap offers any solace to households, it is only for those connected to the mains gas grid. Sadly, some 72% of properties in my constituency of Ceredigion are not connected to the mains gas grid. We have the unenviable accolade of being the UK constituency that is most dependent on domestic heating oil. As has already been mentioned, the prices for off-grid heating oil and gas are not regulated by Ofgem, so they have increased to astronomical levels. Indeed, average heating oil prices increased by 150% in the past year and by some 250% over the past two years.

Without wanting to labour the point, rural households have particular challenges when it comes to heating their homes. Some are structural, and one of the things that I would like the Government to address before this autumn is standing charges. Wales is particularly badly served by typical standing charges. In April 2022, the daily cap rose by 94% in south Wales—the figure in north Wales was 102%—to a daily rate of 46p. Since April, daily rates for my constituents in Ceredigion are on average about 50% higher than those levied in London. It does not matter how much they use, and it does not matter if they save—that is the daily standing rate.

That is a particular challenge when we consider that most of the housing stock in my constituency performs very badly when it comes to energy performance certificates. Indeed, some 36% of homes in Ceredigion reach an EPC rating of C or above. It is perhaps not surprising that we do so badly when we consider that 35% of our homes were constructed in the 19th century. It is staggering that the vast majority of the housing stock that will exist in 2050 has already been built, and over a third of it was built in the Victorian age.

The reason that I draw attention to that is that, when we talk about energy efficiency measures, off-grid homes and old homes are particularly difficult to bring up to standard. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has estimated that 20% of off-gas grid homes are technically unsuitable for low-temperature heat pumps, one of the major policies of this Government.

Furthermore, the heat and buildings strategy assessment has suggested that the average cost to retrofit an off-gas grid home is around £12,000. However, if we include insulation, which we really need to do, that adds a further £2,000. That is the average figure quoted in the heat and buildings strategy, but a lot of analysts suggest that for certain rural off-grid homes, the cost could be a lot higher. Yet the Government are not providing those homes with enough support or important interventions

to help make them more energy efficient. Furthermore, typically—not always, but typically—a lot of off-grid homes are in rural areas, which tend to have lower salaries. That is certainly the case in Ceredigion. We are, therefore, hit with many different challenges that we cannot overcome without Government support.

To summarise the challenges faced by my constituents and the severity of the situation, many have contacted me in recent weeks to say how they are taking extraordinary measures to try to keep their energy bills down. I have been told of people turning the boiler off so that they can save a little bit on that, having cold showers, turning their freezers off and saving on electricity by avoiding meals that need to be cooked in the oven. I do not need to point out to hon. Members that that will result in them making more use of microwaves, with the knock-on impact of typically less healthy meals. The most striking example was of a family telling me that they had bought solar-powered garden lights so that they can use them for indoor lighting in the evening, such was their concern about the electricity bill.

It is not just households that are being affected by the cost of living. I know of businesses and community organisations that are struggling, including to keep swimming lessons going in the community swimming pool. One hospitality business has quoted that energy bills have gone up by 450% in the last 18 months. Sadly, it is having to consider difficult decisions about whether it can continue to operate and stay in business.

I want to finish by referring to another problem we are facing in Wales and in rural Wales: the cost of fuel. We know that Wales is the most car-dependent nation of the UK, with some 83% of journeys being taken by private car as opposed to other means of transport. I would very much like it if, in the near future, the public transport infrastructure in Wales and in Ceredigion was such that we did not have to depend on the car. However, at the moment, many of my constituents simply do not have the choice. I want to put this point on record: we are not saying, as is sometimes suggested by colleagues elsewhere in the UK—though not in Wales, I should add—that car journeys are somehow a luxury. That is not the case. These are car journeys to go to work and to access services and healthcare. They are unavoidable journeys, and due to a lack of alternative options they are very vulnerable to the price increases in petrol and diesel.

I draw attention to one of the impacts that that has on public services. While this can be true across Wales, carers and district nurses in rural areas have explained to me that they will typically drive anything between 400 and 600 miles a week just to care for the residents on their rota, yet they are still having to pay astronomical prices at the pumps. I had a conversation with the previous Exchequer Secretary, the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately), about the possibility of extending the rural fuel duty relief scheme to parts of Wales. Areas such as Ceredigion satisfy all the criteria, barring the fact that we fall within a hundred miles of a refinery. As the Competition and Markets Authority review found a few weeks ago, there is no real link between higher fuel prices at the pumps and proximity to the refinery. Actually, the major drivers are to do with competition, the volume of sales and the models of garages locally. We need to look at extending the rural fuel duty relief scheme to areas such as Ceredigion so

[Ben Lake]

that, if nothing else, we have a bit of consistency and there is not a situation where there is a 4p or 5p difference between prices in Aberystwyth and those in Cardigan to the south. That is a cause of considerable frustration.

What about some solutions? We have already heard about the Government's £400 payment to households. Is that still sufficient, given the changes to the onward forecast for the energy price cap? I have some particular questions for the Minister, and I will be grateful if he addresses them in his summing up. We are still unsure whether the £400 energy rebate will apply to those living in park homes or on farms without a domestic electricity contract. I know that the Government are looking at that, but I impress on them the urgent need for clarity.

On short-term measures—I will not go into the long term—I think we need to look again at restoring the £20 uplift to universal credit, removing the two-child limit and increasing social security in line with more recent inflation figures, all of which are recommendations made by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs in a recent report. I would also like the Government to increase the eligibility of those who can claim carer's allowance better to reflect the true number of people providing vital care. Also, perhaps most boldly, if as has been reported the energy price cap exceeds £3,000, the Government need to consider whether they ought to intervene more directly to limit price rises, as other Governments in Europe have done. I have to say, in closing, that constituents across Ceredigion simply cannot afford any further dithering or delay.

3.1 pm

**Alex Davies-Jones** (Pontypridd) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairship, Ms Nokes. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) on securing the debate, and it is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake).

It is also wonderful to see so many Welsh Labour colleagues present for this important debate. That is a testament to the proud and long history that Labour has and will continue to have in the Senedd and among the Welsh electorate more widely. I note that a considerable number of Welsh Conservatives are absent this afternoon—I cannot possibly think what is distracting them at the moment.

The shambolic Tory leadership might be a priority for some, but I remain focused on the issues that keep coming up when I speak to constituents across Pontypridd and Taff Ely. The single issue impacting people the most is without doubt the cost of living crisis, which is putting working families on the brink. The crisis is hitting every single corner of the UK, but it is right to have a debate about Wales specifically.

In this place, we often talk about the north-south divide in England, but the complex situation across Wales is all too often forgotten in that narrative. Recent research by the Centre for Cities think-tank shows that regions in Wales are among the hardest hit by the cost of living crisis across all the devolved nations. Research by the University of Bristol suggests that 22% of Welsh households are in severe financial difficulty, meaning

that they are forced to do things like buy lower-quality food, shower less and even sell their belongings just to make ends meet.

In my constituency of Pontypridd and Taff Ely, the local Trussell Trust food bank in Treforest has had to extend its opening hours simply to deal with the swelling demand for its services. Only last week, *Wales Online* reported that some food banks in Wales are on the brink of running out of food. Demand is sky-rocketing, but the generous donations that food banks depend on to function are drying up, because people can no longer afford to donate and are themselves feeling the pinch. The teams running the food banks do incredible work in extremely difficult circumstances, but it does not have to be this way, and it should not be this way.

The reality is that without proper, long-term investment from Westminster, people in Wales will continue to be impacted. I know some Members will disagree with my assessment and will be keen to point out that any support failure is that of the Welsh Government, but I must be frank. I speak on behalf of residents in my area when I say that this UK Government have never taken their responsibility to Wales seriously. It is the UK Government's failure to recognise that wage stagnation and ineffective social security have now led to poverty and destitution, and that could have been avoided.

According to the End Child Poverty coalition, in Pontypridd and Taff Ely a staggering 31.3% of children were below the poverty line in 2020-21. That is almost a third of all the children in my area. It is a sharp statistic and one that all of us in modern-day Britain should be embarrassed by. However, let us be clear: with food banks running dry and the Welsh Government doing everything they can, without immediate action by the UK Government, living standards across the country will continue to fall.

In Wales, local and regional bodies have done everything to address the crisis. The Welsh Labour Government and my Labour-led council in Rhondda Cynon Taf must be commended for their work to relieve the pressures on households. The Welsh Government have committed more than £380 million to address the immediate and severe impacts of the cost of living crisis on low-income households in Wales. From the winter fuel support scheme to income relief for those on council tax bands A to C, Welsh Labour has worked tirelessly to fill the vacuum of support caused by UK Government inaction.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (David T. C. Davies):** Will the hon. Lady say where the Welsh Government got the money from for those schemes?

**Alex Davies-Jones:** It is not for Wales to come cap in hand to a Government in Westminster for what is rightly ours. We pay tax in Wales too and we are meant to be part of this United Kingdom. This is our money—we are not begging or asking for it. People in my constituency and across Wales are entitled to this money to help themselves. If the Minister will allow me, I will come on to the fact that in the recent uplift by the previous Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Rishi Sunak), people in Wales got the equivalent of £9 a head, which is shocking and is nowhere near the amount of money that they need to survive the cost of living crisis.



We have done everything we can to empower local authorities such as mine to mobilise resources at a local level. The Welsh Government have held two cost of living summits attended by Welsh Government Ministers and key stakeholders from across Wales. Those events allowed grassroots organisations to directly inform the Welsh Government about the impact that the crisis is having on communities. In turn, they allowed the Welsh Government to target support at those most in need. I pay tribute to all involved in those summits for their incredible efforts to help the people of Wales.

Let us be clear that those measures pale in comparison with what the UK Tory Government have the economic firepower to achieve if only there was the political will. In Westminster, the Tories are completely asleep at the wheel. While the leadership contest continues to take centre stage, everyday working people and families will continue to struggle. Good governance starts at the top, which is why I am genuinely proud of the work that Mark Drakeford and the team in Wales are doing, despite the situation in Westminster.

Ultimately, people in Wales, including me, are tired of false promises. As we all know, the UK Government are the absolute kingmakers of gaslighting and U-turns. I cast hon. Members' minds back to the spring statement, which I mentioned. The then Chancellor briefed the press that he was set to announce bold measures to support people through the cost of living crisis. He promised an increase in Welsh Government funding of just £27 million over the next year, which, as I stated, amounts to £9 a person in Wales.

It should shame the UK Government to treat us in Wales with such contempt. They try to palm off responsibility to the devolved Administrations, but refuse to properly fund their efforts. The Welsh Government have moved heaven and earth to mobilise their considerably limited resources, yet the Tories in Westminster refuse to act. It took relentless pressure from Labour for the UK Tory Government to eventually—reluctantly—endorse a windfall tax on North sea oil and gas, or, as the then Chancellor insisted we call it, because he cannot even admit that it was Labour's idea, the energy profits levy. But they should have implemented it months ago and, for many, the support that the windfall tax will fund will simply be too little, too late.

The Welsh Government have announced that the Welsh fuel support scheme will return this winter to help those in need by providing a one-off £200 payment for their bills. That will bring significant relief to tens of thousands of Welsh residents, and I welcome the commitment of the Minister for Social Justice last week to support people who will struggle this winter. Without UK Government support, however, that will still not be enough.

When I wrote this speech, four candidates remained in the Tory leadership contest; now we have three. To the best of my knowledge, Wales has not been mentioned once—not by a single one of them. It is clear that whoever wins the leadership will continue to forget about Wales and that, sadly, it will be a case of business as usual.

Despite the Welsh Government's limited resources, their actions show that Labour will always stand shoulder to shoulder with the country's most vulnerable. The cost of living crisis is not going away in Wales or across the UK, so I implore the Government to do the right thing, to take responsibility, to see the crisis for what it is and to act today to reach solutions.

3.8 pm

**Beth Winter** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) on securing the debate. The people of Cynon Valley, Wales and the United Kingdom are suffering a cost of living emergency—it is not a crisis; it is an emergency. In April, in response to the crisis, I conducted a survey among local people in my constituency, and its results were truly harrowing—that is not too strong a word.

I will take a moment to focus on those results, because this is about millions of real people's lives. I have sent a photocopy of the report that was produced to the Secretary of State; I am still waiting for a response, which I hope will be forthcoming. In excess of 650 local people responded within four or five days—an unprecedented number—which shows the severity of the crisis in Cynon Valley. Unfortunately, I am sure that is reflected across the UK.

Some 76% of people reported having to cut down on using heating in the last year and some 90% reported feeling worse off than this time last year. In Cynon, 81% of people reported that the cost of living crisis is impacting on their mental health, 78% are worried about paying the bills in the next 12 months, 61% of those on benefits have had to skip meals in the last 12 months and over half have had to borrow money in the last year. We also asked questions about the next 12 months, which were even bleaker in terms of the impact that the cost of living crisis is likely to have.

As I said at the outset, this is about real people and I want to quote what a couple of my constituents said:

"Both my wife and I work full time and don't feel any better off. Most schemes are aimed at people who are on benefits, which I understand, but people need help who work."

There is a massive problem with in-work poverty in this country. Another person said:

"It was already bad before the energy prices increased. Life genuinely does not feel worth living any more. I feel guilty for bringing my children into this awful mess of a world."

That is the reality for millions of people.

This is a political choice, and it is a political choice caused by successive Conservative Governments. It is bringing misery, anxiety and despair to millions of people. We are the fifth richest nation in the world; this is not inevitable. It is a political choice.

It is not simply because of the pandemic or inflation, although that has made matters worse. For 12 years, we have seen and experienced austerity measures in this country and the Tories have overseen a reduction in wages, including holding down public sector pay for key workers. I have just come off a call with a number of trade unions and other organisations, and the National Education Union was saying that since 2010 there have been 20% to 25% real-terms cuts in their members' pay because of the continuous pay freeze. It is not just about the cuts at the moment, but about the cuts over the longer term.

I shall go on to talk about the solution, but in Wales, despite insufficient funding from the UK Government and an inadequate devolution settlement, the Welsh Government are doing as much as they possibly can within the constraints placed on them. They have invested more than double what they received in consequential funding, to support households with the cost of living crisis, including through a £51 million household support

[Beth Winter]

fund announced in December 2021 and a further £330 million cost of living package of support announced in February 2022, which goes beyond, over and above what the UK Government have offered. Carers' pay has increased to a real living wage, basic income has increased and free school meals have been extended to all primary school pupils. That is in spite of the constraints placed upon them.

As I said, this is a political choice and unfortunately—tragically, actually, for millions of people—the Tories will not listen. They are the architects of low income. They have allowed poverty to become normalised in this country, and we need urgent, immediate action to better distribute the wealth in this country. We have got to change the balance of power from the few, in whose hands it is at the moment, to the many. We have got to tackle and address the horrendous inequality that I witness, and I am sure many others in the Chamber witness, on a daily basis. That would mean emergency measures to prevent wasteful profiteering and dividend payments from essential services. We should jumpstart the windfall tax and ban dividend payments in the public transport and in energy sectors while people are suffering.

The report also contains a number of key recommendations the UK Government need to take. I have consistently argued for an increase in social security benefits. They should have been increased in April, in line with inflation as it currently stands. The £20 uplift to universal credit should be reinstated, as the Welsh Affairs Committee has proposed, and should be extended to legacy benefits. The two-child limit also needs to be addressed, as the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) mentioned. Despite the triple lock, pensioners are suffering inexorably from the cost of living crisis. I am continuing to campaign for ex-miners in my constituency, and supporting the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign.

We must overturn over a decade of underinvestment through austerity, and end the rip-off of privatisation. I am an advocate of bringing utilities back into public ownership. As the hon. Member for Ceredigion suggested, we should look at what France has done in terms of limiting the increase in the energy cap. We could be doing the same in this country. As well as a windfall tax, we could and should introduce a wealth tax, which could raise in excess of £260 billion a year. The money is here in this country, but it is not evenly distributed. Those are not radical policies; they are about meeting people's basic needs. Everybody should have enough money to eat, to heat their home, to clothe their children, and to buy pens for their children to take to school—as the NEU representative mentioned, there was no spare money for people to buy pens and rulers for their children to use to learn in school. What kind of a society are we creating? It is extremely distressing. We should have a right to food, and everybody should have access to affordable and decent housing.

I also support the trade union demand—I asked a question on this in the Health and Social Care questions this morning—for an inflation-proof increase in public sector pay. I fully support the actions being taken by the trade unions at the moment. They have been forced to go on strike. It is not a choice; nobody wants to go on

strike. They have no alternative. I urge the Government to ensure that proper negotiations take place and that public sector workers, who sacrificed so much during the pandemic, and who continue to sacrifice so much, get a decent, inflation-proof pay award. Pay rises are not simply gifted. Unfortunately, they are having to be fought for. They should not have to be fought for; they should be an entitlement for people.

I will briefly mention the deductions from social security benefits, which drive huge amounts of poverty. There are 5,000 universal credit claimants in Cynon Valley who experienced a reduction in their benefits. That is unacceptable, and has an impact on people's ability to provide the basics for their households.

We are experiencing unprecedented times. As I have just said, we do not have to be in this situation. Please listen. Please act to stop the extreme levels of poverty and inequality that exist. There is an alternative. I will continue to work alongside colleagues in the trade unions, and in our communities, to organise, mobilise and fight for change. It is such a shame that we have to be doing that. We should all be sitting down around the table. There are solutions that easily resolve the problems. Please sit around the table with us, so that everybody can have those basic human rights. *Diolch yn fawr.*

3.19 pm

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter), who emphasised the depth of inequality, despair and impoverishment in her constituency and across Wales due to the cost of living crisis and a long history of cuts that we have seen disproportionately in Wales.

We are talking about Wales, and it is worth remembering that Wales is poorer, sicker and older. That was already the case before the austerity cuts began to bite from 2010 onwards. Let us put this in context. Austerity cut public services and welfare, and Wales is disproportionately reliant on public service jobs, has more older people on welfare and all the rest of it. That was the starting point. We know, from a University of York study that was published by *The BMJ*, that something like 50,000 extra people across the UK died from austerity.

Then, of course, we had covid. Again, we had the background of a poorer, sicker and older nation, where we would have expected, therefore, a much higher death rate. In fact, the death rate above the five-year average was something like 13% in Wales and 20% in England, but of course the average was much higher to start with because we had a poorer and sicker nation. The lower death rate was through the good governance of Mark Drakeford and his Welsh Government.

We are now coming to a situation after having had those massive cuts. Let us face it: in Wales, we are operating at 70% of gross value added, so average wages are about 70% of the UK average. We are having cuts and pay freezes in a very difficult situation, so people are suffering more. We have had Brexit. I know that the Minister is a big fan of Brexit, but 60% of Welsh trade was with Europe. In England, it is more like 48%. The problems that we have had, including problems with the Northern Ireland protocol, are again disproportionately hitting Wales.

Take a typical example of a public sector worker, for instance a nurse who is the only breadwinner in a house in the valleys, or wherever it is. If there are pay freezes on public sector workers, that house is impoverished. We have all heard the sorts of cases that were just mentioned: children who hold back half their free school meal to eat in the evening, because they do not have any food at home; children washing their hair with washing-up liquid; people not having the lights on, and so on. We know from the Trussell Trust that there are now 14 million people in poverty. There are, I think, 2.6 million people using food banks in the UK—up a hundredfold—and the majority of people who use food banks have some level of disability.

There is a pressing case for the Government to act now, whether through indexing social security or the universal credit uplift. There is also a pressing case for doing something about rent, which is not talked about very much. We talk about energy and food, but the local housing allowance has not been indexed. For example, studies by the Bevan Foundation show that, in an online search of private rented accommodation in Wales, only about 1% fits in with the local housing allowance. People are therefore driven into squalid, Rachmanite living conditions—another terrible fact.

In his intervention, the Minister implied, “Whose money is this, anyway?” I suggest that not only have the cuts disproportionately hit Wales but, as he knows from our meeting last week with Professor Mark Barry, there has been a historical lack of investment in Wales—of getting our fair share to boost productivity, jobs and wealth, so that we can pay our way. Over the last couple of decades, rail enhancement investment has operated at about 1.5% of the UK total, and we have 5% of the population and 11% of the rail track. Looking forward, instead of at the historical legacy, if we take 2020 as the baseline, Wales is being promised £0.5 billion out of an England promise of £106 billion, including High Speed 2, which is outrageous. HS2 is north-south. It will help Scotland much more than Wales, yet Scotland is getting its fair Barnett consequential. If we got it—90% of the 5% population—it would be £4.6 billion.

The Minister knows from that meeting that there are plans on the drawing board for about £2 billion to £3 billion. That is about half the amount that we deserve—from now on, I suppose, the legacy—and could make a big difference in moving us towards net zero, in productivity, in speed and in getting people to relocate. The truth is that once HS2 starts running, we will be able to get from London to Manchester in one hour and 10 minutes instead of two hours and 10 minutes, but it will still take nearly three hours to get to Swansea, so where will companies put their investment? In the case of Virgin, the answer is to take it out of Swansea and put it into Manchester. If we want to go to Staffordshire, it will take 45 minutes instead of one hour and 45 minutes, so on top of the historical inequalities I have mentioned, that will hammer Wales again.

The Minister asks, “Who will pay?” The way to pay is to invest in the productivity and future of Wales through moving towards a green future. We have talked about the windfall tax. Let us be straightforward: the big five oil companies have made excess profits of \$2 trillion in the past few decades. They were making those operating profits above costs, and then Putin invades Ukraine and we have a price hike. They have done nothing to earn

that windfall profit. It is our money, which was paid out of the pockets of the travelling public, and it should be given back.

In Spain, the people are getting free public transport; in Germany, it is €9 for a month. If we did that with the windfall tax, everyone could go to work for cheaper. We could get investment in green public transportation much more quickly, such as hydrogen and electric, and do something innovative. We could provide the background for pay settlements, such as the rail disputes. Instead of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers being told, “You can have 3% and 10,000 job cuts; what are you going to do about it?”—and, as we would expect, a strike is provoked—we could encourage everyone to go on public transport so that we do not need cuts in jobs. There might be a change to jobs, but there would be no cuts, and with more investment, we would not have to ask for so much. We can all agree to that.

**David T. C. Davies:** If that is such a good idea, why are the Welsh Labour Government not doing it in Wales? They have the power to do so.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. I gently remind the Member that this is a debate about the cost of living in Wales, not transport.

**Geraint Davies:** I know that, yes. It is not the Welsh Government's decision: we do not have the money to do that, and it is not devolved. The Exchequer runs UK plc; we all know that. We do not charge the windfall tax. The Welsh Government are not in a position to introduce a windfall tax or nationalise the oil companies, sadly, although they have done something about rail.

**David T. C. Davies:** The Welsh Labour Government could raise tax to do that, if they wanted to.

**Geraint Davies:** I am not talking about raising taxes; I am talking about taking back the money that has been stolen from the travelling public by oil companies. They did nothing to earn that money: it was simply that Putin invaded Ukraine, and they said, “We'll put the price up, take the money and fill our pockets.” The Government belatedly took a small share of that money, and now they are going to give 90% of it back to drill for more oil, when what they should be doing is investing in scaling up things like organic batteries. Swansea University has identified that the renewable energy from wind farms is only put into the grid at breakfast time and teatime, and is saying, “Let's use that wind, create hydrogen, and put that hydrogen in the gas grid”—which takes up to 40% of hydrogen, as used to be the case for coal gas. That would reduce the carbon footprint.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. The debate is about the cost of living in Wales.

**Geraint Davies:** I am talking about Wales.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Hydrogen is stretching my tolerance slightly.

**Geraint Davies:** It is permissible on a Wales-only basis, and that is what Swansea University suggests we do. Obviously, we would have to work in co-operation



[Geraint Davies]

with the UK Government to do that, but the idea would be to put that gas into the grid, or put the hydrogen into cylinders and send it to Ceredigion in place of the oil, so that people in rural environments would have a lower carbon footprint and a lower energy bill.

Whether it is those innovations or whether it is the tidal lagoon, there is no shortage of ideas; what there is a shortage of is Government focus on greening the economy and powering us up in a sustainable way. Instead, they just go to their mates—the oil barons—who say, “You’ve had to do this windfall tax. Give us 90% back to drill for more oil and destroy the environment.” Look at the temperature outside! It is absolutely disgraceful. The Government would not even help us with the tidal lagoon. That is not going to stop, is it? Of course, they said, “We are not helping.” That does not make any sense, even though it will go on for 100 years. The council and the Welsh Government have had to deal with it on their own.

We need a Government who care about people and stopping them starving. People may have heard of Professor Amartya Sen, a Nobel prize-winning economist who had the joy of teaching me on one occasion. He wrote “Poverty and Famines”, and found that famines were not a function of food shortages, but a function of high prices, low wages and some food logistics. He was not writing about the UK at the time, but that is precisely what we are now finding in the UK. We see pockets of starvation. We should stop that. The Government are empowered to stop it and they should, whether by indexing social security and universal credit, increasing rent, investing in green technologies, or stopping obeying everything the oil barons say. I will leave it there.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** I call Jamie Stone—to speak on Wales!

3.30 pm

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): It is always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) on securing this highly important debate. I rise with some trepidation as the sole Scot among so many Welsh colleagues, but I rise in support of some excellent contributions.

As everyone is saying, this is about families who are right up against it. One of my daughter’s best friends is a single mother who lives in social housing. I sat down with her and said, “Can we go through the budget?” She went through how difficult it is to make ends meet, and how everything matters. Each week and each month is down to just a pound or two. That was a year ago, and we are where we are now, which is a very different situation indeed. It is with her in mind that I think of my huge, far-flung constituency. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) said that this affects all of the UK, and it does—right up to the north of Scotland, which I have the honour of representing. The village of Altnaharra in my constituency is—

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. Mr Stone, please do not stretch my tolerance. This debate is about the cost of living in Wales, not in your own constituency.

**Jamie Stone:** I am sorry, Ms Nokes. I stand corrected. This particular village has the coldest climate every single year. Am I out of order, Ms Nokes?

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Yes. The debate is on Wales, not the climate in Scotland.

**Jamie Stone:** Very well. In that case, I will echo two points made by the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake). We need a cap on the price of heating oil. As he said, so many homes in Wales have no alternative at all. They are off grid; they cannot use gas. I approached the Minister of State for Energy in March this year, and he said that it was not going to work because of a survey done in 2011 that said so. How different is our situation now from March of this year, let alone 2011? The first point made by the hon. Member for Ceredigion is absolutely correct. His constituents—and I might say, sotto voce, mine too—are petrified of their bills. They are really terrified. I am the oldest member of the Lib Dem group in this place; I am getting on. I know that old people feel the cold more than young people, and they worry about money more than young people. I go back to my young friend who I mentioned earlier on, who is trying to balance a budget. It is a pretty desperate situation.

The other point made by hon. Member for Ceredigion was about the lack of choice other than to use a car. The price hike on petrol and diesel is really cutting into budgets. Some years ago, a scheme was put in place for certain parts and certain postcodes of the UK. As he said, we seek to extend that to other needy areas, such as Wales and—dare I mention, also sotto voce; I fear that I am sailing close to the wind—the north of Scotland..

I have one final point, in a Welsh context. There is such a thing as digital poverty. We have social tariffs, but their take-up is lamentable. When we look at a food bank anywhere in the UK, many of those people would not quite qualify for the Department for Work and Pensions triggers to be put forward for a social tariff. However, we still look at them and say, “I bet you need help.” We need to mobilise. All of us—the Government—need to think about getting people access to social tariffs. It is about information, and working through local authorities and, maybe, banks. Who knows? There could be a huge, much bigger take-up, which would help families all over the UK to balance their budgets.

3.35 pm

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Nokes. I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones) on securing today’s debate and the passionate way in which she started the case.

It is clear that the Government have a case to answer for their cost of living crisis, which is so damaging for people in Wales and across the UK. The Government’s response to the deepening crisis has been hugely disappointing. At the moment, they are too wrapped up in internal wrangling to care about dealing with the issues that matter to people. It is clear that the Government are out of touch, out of ideas and out of excuses. After 12 years of Conservative Government, we have a high-tax, low-growth economy, with the country suffering the biggest drop in living standards since records began, and the highest tax burden since world war two.

The Government initially refused to implement Labour's policy of a windfall tax, until the pressure was too much and they finally caved in and had to take action. The Labour party's plan to deal with the cost of living crisis would cancel the rise in national insurance contributions, which has come in during hugely challenging times. Labour would also cut VAT on home energy bills, and the red tape that has been created by the Prime Minister's chaotic Brexit. Our policies would make it easier to buy, make and sell more in Britain.

We have had a passionate debate this afternoon. It is disappointing, though not surprising, that we have yet to hear a Tory voice. There are no Tory MPs here to defend their record. We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West, who talked about the worry and fear faced by many of her constituents. She put the blame for people not being able to provide for their families squarely on the crisis in Downing Street. She highlighted that prescription charges in Wales ease the burden somewhat, compared with the £9.35 cost in England, and that council tax band D properties on average pay £167 less than in England. There is also the £244 million council tax reduction scheme that helps 270,000 households in Wales. All those are policies of the Welsh Labour Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Dame Nia Griffith) talked about the massive growth in inequality, the need for a redistributive tax policy, and the fact that the UK has the firepower and capacity to take action, but not the will. She gave examples of the work of the previous Labour Government, and some ideas that could be taken forward, such as cutting VAT on fuel. She, along with other Members, talked about the need to tackle issues around universal credit, particularly the five-week wait that causes so much hardship for our constituents.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) talked about the impact of the cost of living crisis in Wales, along with the energy price cap. He spoke of his concern, which I we share, about the possible outcome in the autumn, with further increases in the price cap. He talked about the challenges facing rural communities with off-grid energy costs, and the need to tackle the rise in fuel costs. Like other hon. Members, he talked of the need to address universal credit and restore the £20 uplift.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) talked about how this Government never take their responsibility to Wales seriously, and about the economic firepower of the UK Government—if only they had the will. She talked of her pride, which many of us share, in the Welsh Government, who work so hard and shoulder-to-shoulder with our constituents, to support them through these troubling times. She highlighted the fact that the windfall tax was too little, too late.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter) talked of how we are in a cost of living emergency, and that the freeze on pay over the longer term has caused so many issues. She again highlighted that the Welsh Government are doing as much as they can, doubling the investment over and above the devolution settlement. She raised her concerns about poverty becoming normalised in the fifth richest country in the world, gave examples of parents not being able to buy stationery for children to go to school, and spoke about the need for proper pay for our public servants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) talked about the impact of the massive cuts on poverty and the family lives of many of our constituents, and pressed the Government to act now. He also spoke about local housing allowance and the recent report by the Bevan Foundation that said that many people are unable to find properties within the local housing allowance rate. Finally, the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone) talked about digital poverty and the need for a cap on the price of heating oil in Wales—and, of course, in Scotland.

In about two weeks' time, I will host a cost of living crisis event in my constituency, and I know many others are doing the same. We are bringing providers and support agencies together to offer our constituents support and advice during this awful time.

In recent weeks, I have talked to constituents who have raised concerns. I talked to a young family a few weeks ago. Both parents work full time, and by the middle of the month they rely on the support of the food pantry to get them through the rest of the month—to feed themselves and their young child.

**Carolyn Harris:** I am sure my hon. Friend is aware of the food and hamper scheme that I have run in my constituency for the past six years. We provide food and hampers at Christmas and Easter, and during the summer. This year, more people who were previous contributors are becoming dependants. Does he agree that we are at a dangerous point, and that demand will eventually outstrip supply and we will not be able to help people?

**Gerald Jones:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on the excellent work she has done over many years on this issue. I absolutely agree that we are in danger of demand outstripping supply. I have talked to food banks and food support organisations in my constituency in recent weeks, and they all tell me of that concern. Week on week, they are extremely worried that their supplies of food will not be able to meet the ever-increasing demand.

Last week, I spoke to another couple, who go for a swim three times a week, which obviously helps with their health and wellbeing—it is supported by Welsh Government funding—but they use that opportunity to have a shower in the baths to save on water and heating at their home. The danger is that such examples are becoming normalised in 21st century Britain. That is worrying, scary and shameful.

I want to contrast the Tories' record with that of the Welsh Government. As we have heard, the Welsh Labour Government have invested more than twice what they received in consequential funding to support households with the cost of living crisis. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley talked about the delivery of the £51 million household support fund, which is targeted at people who need the most support. The Welsh Government have doubled the winter fuel support payment to £200, which has helped 150,000 people across Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport West said that, from September, all primary schools in Wales will begin to receive free school meals; an additional 180,000 primary school children will benefit from the scheme. The Welsh Government's warm homes programme has invested almost £400 million in more than 67,000 homes since 2011 to improve home energy efficiency across Wales,

[Gerald Jones]

saving families money on energy bills. More recently, 57,000 unpaid carers across Wales became eligible to receive a £500 support payment.

The budget available for the Welsh Government to support the people of Wales is hampered by the reality that, over the spending review period, it is likely to be worth at least £600 million less than it was when it was first announced last autumn because of rocketing inflation. The Welsh Government's spending power is likely to deteriorate further because of that. That is why they have called on the UK Government to update their settlement to reflect the significant impact that inflation is having on important budgets in Wales.

We have seen the smoke and mirrors, and sheer uncertainty, around the shared prosperity fund. There has been a lack of investment, despite the explicit manifesto promise in 2019 that Wales would not be a penny worse off; investment would make a huge impact on the cost of living crisis in Wales. As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea West, designating HS2 as an England and Wales project, which it clearly is not, also denies Wales an extra £4.6 billion in consequential funding. The Welsh Affairs Committee and even the leader of the Welsh Conservatives agree with that assessment, but instead the Government are intent on short-changing Wales again. Once again, that money could significantly help to tackle the cost of living crisis in Wales.

What we have seen from the Tories at every turn is that they seem to make decisions to take money from people who can least afford it, such as voting to cut the £20 universal credit uplift, which Welsh Conservative MPs all voted for. They also voted to increase tax during the cost of living crisis, but voted against a windfall tax until they were forced by Labour to perform a screeching U-turn.

Our farming communities are suffering, too. Wales faces a UK Government who have broken their promises to the people of Wales. It has become clear that when providing a replacement for EU farm funding, the Government deducted EU receipts that were due to Wales for work that was due as part of the 2014 to 2020 rural development programme. That means that rural communities in Wales are £243 million worse off. Again, that is devastating for farming communities and the livelihoods of our farmers.

It is clear that this Government have no answers. Although the removal of the current Prime Minister is a step forward, none of the candidates for his job has any meaningful ideas to tackle the cost of living crisis and really make a difference to the lives of people in Wales. Rather than playing musical chairs and having the fourth Conservative Prime Minister in six years, what we really need is a UK Labour Government who will build a stronger, more secure economy, working hand in hand with the Welsh Labour Government for the benefit of everyone in Wales, and getting the cost of living crisis under control.

3.46 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (David T. C. Davies):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes.

I thank the hon. Members for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones), for Newport West (Ruth Jones), for Llanelli (Dame Nia Griffith), for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), for Ceredigion (Ben Lake), for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter), for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin), for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris), for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Gerald Jones), and—last but certainly not least—for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone). I may have left somebody out; if I have, I apologise. A lot of points were raised during the debate and I will try to deal with them as best I can within the confines of the time that I have.

First of all, may I make it absolutely clear that, although I am pleased that we are having a debate on this matter, there is absolutely no doubt at all in my mind or the mind of anyone in Government not only that we have a cost of living challenge, but that it is a global matter? Hon. Members can just look at the statistics for any countries across western Europe or the rest of the world to see that the problem is not an isolated one; it has come about for reasons that I will turn to in a minute. Before I go into detail on the UK Government's commitments to support the people of Wales, I just want to make it clear that things such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have had a significant effect on the global economy.

The UK Government have been steadfast in our support for the people of Wales throughout these global economic challenges. We have certainly not been asleep on the matter of Wales—far from it. My right hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart), who is my former ministerial colleague, and his successor as the Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland), who of course is from Llanelli, are well aware of the problems in Wales and have been raising them at all times in Cabinet.

I often stood in for Mr Hart when he was unable to attend meetings—

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. Could you please use Members' constituency names and not their own names?

**David T. C. Davies:** Yes. He is one of the Pembrokeshire seats—[Laughter.]

**Alex Davies-Jones:** Carmarthen West.

**David T. C. Davies:** Yes, Carmarthen West.

As I was saying, I stood in for my right hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) many times in Cobra meetings and I know how hard he was working. Incidentally, on the matter of Cobra—I know this issue came up earlier; it may have been the hon. Member for Newport West who mentioned it—it is not normal for the Prime Minister to attend all Cobra meetings, any more than it is normal for the First Minister to attend all Cobra meetings. I attended a number of them during the covid crisis, when—quite rightly—the Welsh Government were represented by the Health Minister, or sometimes by another Minister from the Welsh Government. That is normal, because the principle of Cabinet Government is that Cabinet Ministers, whether they are in the Welsh



Government or the UK Government, are there to take decisions. Therefore, quite correctly, we did not always expect to see either the First Minister or the Prime Minister at Cobra meetings. Sometimes they were there; sometimes they were able to allow other Ministers to take their place.

**Ruth Jones:** Although I understand the point that the Minister just made, the last two Cobra meetings have been all about the climate emergency, which is happening now. I am surprised that the Prime Minister should not be in his place at these Cobra meetings and I suspect the whole country is surprised, too.

**David T. C. Davies:** I do not know whether the First Minister was at those meetings, but I imagine that somebody from the Welsh Government was. Does the hon. Lady know whether the First Minister was there, or did the First Minister send a representative? I do not know, but it would be interesting to find out, because the point is valid: the First Minister of Wales should have enough confidence in his Cabinet Ministers to know that they can go along and represent the Welsh Government at Cobra meetings, just as the UK Prime Minister does. Anyway, let us not go down that—

**Geraint Davies:** Will the Minister give way?

**David T. C. Davies:** Okay. I am only one page into my speech, but why not? The hon. Gentleman was honourable enough to give way.

**Geraint Davies:** The Minister's basic proposition is that this cost of living crisis is some sort of global issue. Will he accept that the issue is about the level of underlying resilience before these global shocks occur? If the rate of growth under the Labour party had continued thereafter, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the average wage would be something like £13,000 better, so we would be in a much better place to take the shocks. Instead, we are impoverished by the Minister's party.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. I remind hon. Members and the Minister that they should stick to the question.

**David T. C. Davies:** If we are going to have an economic history lesson going back to 2010, we will have to look at the enormous amounts of money that the then Labour Government borrowed, the financial crisis and its impact, and then the impact of covid and then a war. Generally speaking, every 10 years or so, a Government will face a serious crisis of global proportions. It could have been the fall of the wall in 1989.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Perhaps the cost of living in Wales, Minister.

**David T. C. Davies:** Let me go back to what the Government have been doing. We have been steadfast in our support. We have provided more than £37 billion across the UK to help people with the cost of living challenge. Millions of the most vulnerable households across the UK will receive at least £1,200 of one-off support in total this year to help with the cost of living. The maximum possible benefit for a household is more than £1,600. We put in place a targeted £12 billion

energy bill support scheme for domestic electricity customers in Great Britain to help with rising energy prices. We are supporting people across the UK with one-off cost of living payments, including £650 for 8 million households on means-tested benefits, £300 for more than 8 million pensioner households and £150 for around 6 million people who receive disability benefits. We are increasing the national living wage by 6.6% to £9.50 an hour, which was also mentioned here. Along with increases to the national minimum wage, we expect to be able to give a pay rise to 120,000 workers in Wales.

We also want to ensure that people across Wales keep more of what they earn. We are raising income tax personal allowances and freezing alcohol and fuel duty, saving car drivers up to £15 every time they fill up. We have reduced universal credit taper rates from 63% to 55% and we are increasing universal credit work allowances by £500 a year. Those together will see households keep an extra £1,000 a year on average. This July, we raised the national insurance contribution threshold to £12,570, meaning a typical employee will save more than £330 this year. Frankly, I could go on and on.

Opposition Members may say we are not doing enough, but to say that we have slept through this crisis and do not care is ridiculous and outrageous. I have lists and lists of stuff that the Government have been doing to support people across Wales. It is a £37 billion package. To try to suggest that there is not an enormous amount of work going on or that we do not recognise the problem is unfair. We absolutely recognise the problem—I cannot say it enough times. There is a cost of living challenge out there and there are people suffering. I do not want to hide from that in any way. At the same time, it would be nice if Opposition Members could at least recognise that when we put £37 billion into a whole host of schemes, it is deeply unfair to suggest we do not know about the challenge, we do not care about it and we are doing nothing about it. That is simply incorrect.

To take one example, the hon. Member for Newport West, who I greatly respect and who I appreciate is a hard-working MP, made a point about prescription charges. Yes, prescription charges are free to everyone in Wales. Wonderful. I get a free prescription as a Member of Parliament. In England, the number of people who get free prescriptions is very large. People in full-time education, who are pregnant, who have certain medical conditions, NHS in-patients and people on income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, employment support allowance, pension credit guarantee or universal credit. Anyone who faces difficulties will not have to pay for their prescription in England, but the hon. Lady did not make that point. She gave us half the story and gave the impression that everyone is paying for their prescriptions in England. That simply is not true. In fact, it is rather more progressive to target free prescriptions at those who need them because they cannot afford to pay than just to give them out to everyone.

It has taken me probably a minute just to rebut that single point. That is the problem I face. There are quite a few other points I would not mind rebutting if I get the chance to do so.

**Carolyn Harris:** I want to raise a point about the English prescription charge. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that men in England who need Viagra are able to get it on prescription?

**David T. C. Davies:** I was not aware of that, although I would be registered for it in Wales if I was. I do not think the hon. Lady got around to making her fair comment—no doubt the press can have some fun with that. I think she was also going to lead into the situation with women and the menopause; there is possibly an unfairness that needs correcting. She has been very good at raising that issue, and I praise her for it. I am not pretending that we get everything right all of the time, so I always listen to the hon. Lady with interest, because she can sometimes shed light on things that need changing. There might be an unfairness, but I am not here to discuss health policy; I am sure the hon. Lady will raise her point elsewhere.

To go back to Wales, this July we raised the national insurance contributions and I am also pleased that the Welsh Labour Government have used the £180 million Barnett consequential from the UK Government to match the UK Government's £150 council tax rebate offer in England. Frankly, that was a scheme brought about by the Conservative Government: the money was given to Wales, and I am delighted that Welsh Labour are following our lead in this. If hon. Members want to take the credit for it, that is fine, but let us remember that it was a Conservative Government policy, brought about by a recognition of the problems that the current crisis creates.

Our support does not end there. We are expanding eligibility for the warm homes discount by almost a third, meaning that 3 million vulnerable households across the UK will benefit as a result. We are increasing the extension of the warm home discount, and shielding the most vulnerable across the UK from the impact of global recessionary forces. I am somewhat concerned because I think, Ms Nokes, you are about to inform me that I am about to run out of time.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Ninety seconds.

**David T. C. Davies:** Thank you, Ms Nokes. There are still concerns about the cost of living and the challenges ahead, not only for Wales but for the whole of the UK. The one simple thing that I want to do is reassure hon. and right hon. Members present that the measures we have put in place recognise that, and we will continue to put more in place over the next year. We recognise the cost of living challenge, and we want to see our great nation through all adversities. Thank you; diolch yn fawr.

3.57 pm

**Ruth Jones:** I thank you, Ms Nokes, for your astute and wise chairing this afternoon. I thank the Minister for his speech; I am quite sure that the debate could have gone on all afternoon. I also thank all hon. Members who have spoken on the Opposition side: they have made such powerful speeches and interventions—intelligent, knowledgeable contributions—and demonstrated that they are in touch with their constituents. It is so disappointing to see that not a single Member from the Government side felt able to make time for this debate—I do not include Parliamentary Private Secretaries in that. I am sure they have good reasons for not being here, but I am sure their constituents will equally be asking why they were not.

This has been a collegiate debate, but make no mistake: the friendliness of the debate cannot hide the stark underlying message that the people of Wales are suffering massively from the cost of living crisis. Our Prime Minister has been asleep at the wheel, and we need him to go now. We need solutions for the Welsh people, and we need them now.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the impact of the cost of living crisis in Wales.

## Leaving the EU: UK Language Schools

4 pm

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the impact of the UK's departure from the EU on language schools in the UK.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Nokes. It is that time of year again when in seaside towns or big cities, the traditional sight of be-rucksacked groups dressed in fashionable attire—often pastel colours—descending on the streets is common.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster):** There are loads in Torbay.

**Dr Huq:** There are loads in Ealing as well, although a lot less than there used to be. Local householders—as the Minister will know as a local—also get leaflets through the door asking for a spare room or two, saying there are posts going as host families and promising pretty decent money. The reason for all that is English language teaching and English language schools. It is a phenomenon that peaks in the summer months. They offer an all-round experience, typically to teenagers, for a number of weeks. Students get the full immersion: an English breakfast with a typical English family, English lessons during the day, perhaps a spot of early evening work as a barista or pulling pints before dinner en famille and then a bit of sightseeing and cultural programme built in as well—maybe visiting London, Oxford and Southend.

Either side of the weekend I have had an insight into that subculture. I visited two English language schools in Ealing: Edwards Language School and West London English School. They tell me that the two weeks from now are set to be the busiest of the year for them. However, the story is mixed. At WLES, where I was yesterday, I saw multiple classes. It has outgrown the couple of rooms it takes in an office block on Uxbridge Road. Edwards Language School is in a large Victorian house on the same road—although the road is called something else at that point. It used to span two houses, but it is in one now. It has halved in size. The school was set up by lecturers from the University of West London, which is also in my constituency, 30 years ago. It then got swallowed up by a chain, and that chain's operations in Brighton have not survived.

I keep saying what used to be because although in 2019, the sector's last normal year of trading, there were 550,000 students, half of them under 18, contributing £1.4 billion into the UK economy, supporting 35,000 jobs and underpinning the wider £20 billion education market, it feels dangerously at risk of decline because of the end of freedom of movement and visa changes. After I spoke to the trade body English UK, and exchanged emails with the Association of British Travel Agents, the Tourism Alliance and the British Educational Travel Association—they have all been falling over themselves to brief me for this short debate—some startling figures emerged.

The BETA says that between 2019 and 2022 the number of student groups coming from the EU dropped by 84%. In Ealing, not that long ago, I would have had a choice of five different schools to visit and sample, but

two of them—one had been there since 1980—have completely bitten the dust. A third exists on paper as an online operation, leaving only its Wimbledon branch; the Ealing branch has gone.

For context, while West London College, which has an Ealing campus, offers some English language teaching, and some universities offer it too, the bulk of the provision locally and across the country comes from private businesses. That means they have sometimes been viewed with suspicion, although the British Council accreditation—the regulatory framework that they have to go through—is among the most stringent in the world. To attain trusted status is not cheap either; it weighs in at £20,000.

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD) *rose*—

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP) *rose*—

**Dr Huq:** The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) was first.

**Wera Hobhouse:** As a former language teacher in a secondary school, I take a huge personal interest in the subject. Language schools are an important part of Bath's rich tourism industry, which depends on language schools and young people visiting, so it is important to address that issue with the Minister. Does the hon. Lady agree that the passport requirement for each individual student creates a barrier? We need to ask for a new youth travel scheme or collective passports to overcome some of the barriers for such fantastic businesses in my constituency. Without them, we could see the collapse of that industry.

**Dr Huq:** The hon. Lady, who is from the lovely city of Bath and is a polyglot herself, is completely right. When I was a kid in 1984, we did a trip to Le Touquet on a group passport of that nature. The teacher had it and everyone was waved through. I think the kid with slightly dodgy status ducked at the moment when we did the headcount—I am only revealing this now. The hon. Lady is right that we have to find a solution. The majority of European kids under 18 do not have passports, because they travel on ID cards. The Government have said that they will not budge, so that would be a sensible solution. I think Jim Shannon wanted to intervene next.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. Can we not use colleagues' names, please?

**Dr Huq:** My apologies: I think the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) wanted to intervene next.

**Jim Shannon:** I thank the hon. Lady for bringing the debate forward. Does she agree—I think she does—that there is undoubtedly work to do to highlight the benefits of learning English and other languages in the superior schools that we have? Consideration must be given to fast-track visas and discounted fees, which may be a necessary push to make that happen and to bring about what she is trying to achieve.

**Dr Huq:** I completely concur with the hon. Member. We have all heard about the backlog—perhaps the Minister will talk about it—of people waiting to get passports at this time of year when they want to go on holiday. The laborious, ponderous hoops that people have to jump



[Dr Huq]

through seem a bit too much, compared with what used to be a relatively simple thing when we had freedom of movement.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): I would point out that the groups do not just come to England; they also come to Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom, including to Peartree Languages in my constituency. During the Brexit debate, I do not remember a slogan on the side of a bus saying, “Vote Brexit to stop all these schoolchildren absconding when they come to visit our language schools, castles, museums and other tourist attractions.”

My fear and that of other members of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, including my hon. Friend, is that this has become an ideological issue about Brexit and immigration, when it has absolutely nothing to do with that. There is no problem with under-18s absconding when they come, so the Government and the Minister, who is a reasonable person, should look again at this and let schoolchildren come as they always have done—in a group, using their ID cards, with a responsible adult or adults with their passports. That would not undermine the stance on freedom of movement or our immigration system, but it might help our tourism sector and language school sector, which are begging for action from the Government, because the woods are burning out there and they are doing nothing about it.

**Dr Huq:** My hon. Friend is so right. He is from a capital city; I mentioned cities at the beginning. I understand that the number of language schools in Cardiff has boomed from a small number a decade ago, but they are in jeopardy now. We are meant to be going for global Britain, so, as he said, shrivelling up and putting the barriers up seems completely wrong. We should enable students to study these languages on our shores, not the complete opposite, which is what seems to be happening. That may be an unintended consequence, but I know the Minister is a reasonable man. When I come to my list of demands, I hope that he will see sense.

The fact that we had a global pandemic that nobody foresaw means that it is difficult to disentangle what was Brexit and what was covid, but a bit of Brexit-proofing would not go amiss. Surveys done by English UK show that the ID card issue is a major factor. We should of course be proud of the English language; it is our greatest export, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) says, there is a danger of killing off the market for these schools, even though as recently as 2019, we had twice as many as any other English-speaking competitor country. The business operates on pretty tight margins. One school owner I spoke to said, “I’m paid the highest of everyone here, but I like doing this. I want to spread the English language. Money doesn’t matter to me.” However, we are in danger of losing this lucrative category of student to Ireland and Malta, even though they are both pretty tiny, have capacity issues, and actually cannot cope.

To be fair, I must admit that the sector suffered multiple hits long before Brexit. Ben Anderson, of the Edwards Language School, said:

“There were a tiny minority of visa shops in the 1990s created by the old Tier 4 visas. Gordon Brown ramped up regulation.”

So the problem did not start with Brexit—it started long ago—but all this stuff has been put on steroids with the end of freedom of movement. Further tightening occurred under the coalition: until about 2014, this long-time form of soft power became conflated with immigration targets to get net migration down to the tens of thousands, which were never achieved.

Asif Musa of West London English School said:

“There was a problem and so a crackdown was needed, rightly private schools lost their licences but then UKVI went OTT”.

In 2012, London Metropolitan University temporarily lost its right to recruit international students from outside the EU because of, in the Government’s words, “serious, systematic failure” of its monitoring of its international student body. New checks were added on monitoring. The problem is conflating language students, who are temporary and have more in common with tourists, and cutting down on bogus net migration. The legacy of that whole period, which persists to today and has been added to by Brexit, is that there is now a presumption of guilt. As one of the school owners said, “Basically, it is as if they are looking to shut you down; they are looking to suspend your licence.”

There is a danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. English is indisputably the lingua franca of the world, so why are we creating unnecessary obstacles when a hungry young public are eager to take courses in English on our shores? VisitBritain, in 2020, found that language school students stay three times as long as the standard tourist and spend twice as much—crucially, in local communities, on accommodation, local transport, cafes and attractions. In “Everyday Is Like Sunday”, Morrissey sang about the seaside towns they forgot to close down. They used to have a bit of a “God’s waiting room” reputation, but many have been revitalised by this vibrant business, and rejuvenated by the youngsters coming in. I feel that we cannot just do nothing while the sector is hitting the rocks.

Ealing, in losing three out of five colleges, is not alone; *The Guardian* says that there are just seven out of 20 left in Hastings. The Minister, I am sure, shares my concern that both LAL Torbay and the Devon School of English have closed their doors. They are no more; their websites say they are permanently closed. While some post-covid recovery is under way, English UK reckons that by the end of this year, we will be at 40% to 60% of pre-pandemic volumes, but that is after an average 88% decline in student numbers over the past two years. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West and I are on the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, and we know that that is far worse an outcome than for any other type of tourism, with £590 million of lost revenue on 2021.

I talked about one school that looked like it was booming yesterday, but a lot of that is courses left over from 2020 that could not be taken and are now being realised. West London English School calls it pent-up demand because they honoured all courses, whereas I think other schools gave vouchers, which turned out to be pretty meaningless. As I said, these schools operate on tight margins—one of them said they were “almost non-existent”. Of those that have not gone under, many are crippled by debt. That is a shame when the power of English throughout the world is an inestimable good and a key component of soft power. Those attending UK language schools, often as children or adolescents,

are much more likely to go to a UK university. I know from working in universities that we were always encouraged to get overseas students with their lucrative fees. Language schools are a linchpin of an important pipeline, which is coming under strain. At one end are school exchange visits that might see overseas students go into one of these schools; at the other end, they return for higher education. It should be noted that 57 of our current world leaders have studied at UK universities, and there is often a language component there.

The pipeline of host families is also under pressure. The cost of living makes the £200 to £250 a week per student, which used to be good money, go less far. I am told that in Ealing there used to be established residents who could be relied on, but now that houses change hands for £2 million, the new generation of homeowners is a bit befuddled at why anyone would want kids in their face. There are also things like Airbnb which are less intrusive.

What has Brexit got to do with it? I have a list of three main recommendations that I would like the Minister to take away. Enabling ID card travel is not happening, as we have heard. Ninety per cent. of under-18s in mainland Europe travel using only their ID. What about the idea mentioned by the hon. Member for Bath—the group travel option, with a group leader in charge of the rest? There is no risk that these people would abscond; they did not with the previous EU list of travellers option. We could try youth mobility schemes. The Government already have bilateral deals with New Zealand, Australia, the USA, Japan, South Korea, Canada, and others; they could sign deals with EU countries—the big ones, such as France, Germany and Italy. It can be done; I can supply the Minister with the paperwork.

I do not know if the Minister has seen in today's *Standard* that our hospitality sector has loads of vacancies. Traditionally, part of the experience for overseas students was for the adult, non-minor students to spend about 10 hours a week pulling pints, as part of their immersion. These are valuable work and life skills. Limited work rights should be loosened up. People used to be able to do this as university students. Seventy-five per cent. of all English language teaching business in the UK is conducted in the summer bulge months of June to August. That is when these seasonal vacancies need to be filled. It has been done for fruit picking; it is something that the Minister could do here too.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. I remind the hon. Member that she will want to give the Minister time to respond.

**Dr Huq:** Okay. Minister, I had a bit more, which I will try to cover in a couple of sentences.

The other thing that worries me is that this hostile environment has prevailed at other levels, too. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West said, there is no danger of 11-year-olds absconding and becoming minicab drivers in Eastbourne, so there is no need for Border Force to treat them as risks, yet there seems to be a presumption that everyone is a criminal. Sometimes people are asked at the border to provide means for their stay, and they have an all-inclusive package with meals.

The last time this sector lobbied MPs, the discussion was about coronavirus. The Government acceded to the additional relief fund, so I am hoping they can do it again.

Ealing Council has administered loads; I get praised for it. The Minister cannot do anything about the cost of living and business rates, so I will leave those out of it, but let us have a concerted effort to improve our visa regime to eliminate the xenophobic attitudes towards overseas students. There were two really horrible incidents in Canterbury and Cambridge in 2019, at the height of the papers saying that MPs were not allowing Brexit to happen. We need to have a better climate. After all, we want levelling up, global Britain, Brexit opportunities, and this is a lucrative sector that includes all of those. What is not to like?

4.18 pm

*Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.*

4.54 pm

*On resuming—*

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** The sitting is resumed and the debate may continue until 5.6 pm.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster):** It is an absolute pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I thank the hon. Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq) for securing the debate. This is a subject that I have a strong personal interest in, as my Torbay constituency is home to several excellent English language schools. The Government and I therefore fully appreciate the important contribution they make to the economy and the cultural value of all educational visits and exchanges between the UK and other nations.

I suggest from my own experiences that simply focusing on language schools and the issues raised today misses the range of factors that affect the sector. I noticed that the hon. Member referred in her opening speech to institutions that have closed in my constituency. I am not sure whether she is a regular reader of our newspaper *Herald Express*. Sadly, one language school closed down following a significant fraud involving one of its employees, which has been well publicised, and another building is hosting a local state school. Looking at things in isolation and then drawing conclusions from them may not be the best approach to this type of debate, without the local knowledge that a constituency Member of Parliament has.

**Dr Huq:** There may be bad apples out there, but that does not detract from the fact that during the votes my hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) and for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield) were saying there has been a contraction in numbers. There is a problem—let us not ignore that.

**Kevin Foster:** Again, when we cite specific examples, we perhaps need to check them out first.

In terms of understanding the pressure on the visitor economy, we have ambitious plans for the improvement and digitalisation of our future border and immigration system, alongside its simplification to make the UK an increasingly attractive destination for visitors from around the world and to support our tourism and language teaching sectors. Reference was made to processing passports, but those coming to the UK to study on a language course—the hon. Member focused mostly on EEA nationals—would not be applying for a UK passport, so those would not have any impact either.

[Kevin Foster]

Ending the use of EU/EEA national identity cards was touched on several times, and we have moved to end their use at the border. It is worth noting, however, that some EU identity cards were among the least secure documents seen at our border, and until this policy was implemented, they absolutely dominated detection figures for document abuse at the border, with just under half of all false documents detected at the border being EEA identity cards. To deal with this oft-abused hole in our border security, since October 2021, EU, EEA and Swiss visitors, like all others entering the United Kingdom, have been required to have an individual passport.

**Dr Huq:** Will the Minister give way?

**Kevin Foster:** I will not continually give way, given that I have already had the time reduced for my reply as the intro was slightly longer than the normal 15 minutes. I will go through my next arguments, then perhaps I will have the chance to take some more interventions.

We provided a year's notice for the change to allow people and groups in Europe to plan ahead and obtain passports before they travelled. The indications are that the change has been understood and complied with. I note that before the change, the vast majority of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens arriving in the UK were already using their passports. One of the biggest benefits of using a passport is that it enables people to use the e-passport gates available at many of our ports. To link directly to the debate, we are actively working to change the system to allow the minimum age for their use, which is 12, to be reduced. That has the welcome side effect of reducing queues at immigration desks on arrival by using a more automatic process, rather than people needing to be seen in person by a Border Force officer.

Looking at the issue in isolation misses the chance to look at some of the wider changes we are making to the immigration system, particularly in relation to this sector. I highlight our extension of the electronic visa waiver scheme to Saudi and Bahraini citizens. That simplifies and reduces the cost of the visa process by allowing them to obtain an online visa waiver, rather than going through the full visa application process. Put simply, instead of paying about £100 and going to a visa application centre, they pay £30 and apply from home. I know Saudi nationals have been regular customers of language schools in Torbay, so this measure will help the sector.

In 2021, directly linked to feedback from the language sector and universities, we changed the immigration rules, to allow for most short-term study activities to be included in the general visitor category, under which most tourists arrive in the UK, reflecting that much of this activity is more like tourism than coming to study a degree for three or four years. Now, non-visa national students coming for a course of study of up to six months do not need to apply for a separate short-term study visa, and visa nationals can simply apply for a visitor visa, or if they already hold one, arrive under a long-term visitor visa.

We are introducing a permission to travel requirement, which will eventually require everyone travelling to the UK, except British and Irish citizens, to seek permission

in advance of travel. Those permissions will include electronic travel authorisation for passengers visiting the UK who do not need a visa for short stays, or do not have an immigration status prior to travelling. Similar systems are used by the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The EU is also planning on introducing its own system for the Schengen zone.

We recognise there will be challenges around electronic travel authorisation and a need to engage with sectors about how it will be used, just as many of those sectors already engage with the US electronic system for travel authorisation, but there are also clear benefits. The Government have announced that citizens of the Gulf Co-operation Council nations will, in 2023, be able to obtain an electronic travel authorisation rather than have to use the current electronic visa waiver, simplifying the process and making the UK a more attractive destination for them. To be clear, permission under the electronic travel authorisation will be similar to arriving as a non-visa national now, giving up to six months under the visitor route. That all links to our move towards increased automation.

We are clear that we have a global immigration system. We moved to end the use of the list of travellers system, which is an EU scheme allowing visa nationals to travel to another EU member state. It should be noticed that we provided a slightly longer grace period for people coming to the UK than was allowed for our residents travelling to Europe. That was an EU system and we have now moved towards a single global system.

There was some reference to collective passports. It is probably worth noting that we remain a signatory to the 1961 Council of Europe treaty, which provides for collective passports for young people. The Council of Europe is separate from the European Union. We continue to accept passports from those who have ratified the treaty, although it is worth noting that few countries other than the UK continue to issue them. A number of EU countries have declared that they will no longer accept UK collective passports. It is worth considering, with the EU's European travel information and authorisation system and our ETA system coming in, how much longer travel documents based on a treaty that is now more than 60 years old will continue. That has to be seen alongside the various issues that can come with issuing collective passports. However, we continue to issue them for now.

I feel this debate was a slightly missed opportunity for a sector that plays a large part in the economy of my constituency and our country. By simply focusing on the Home Office and immigration requirements, we miss the range of factors that drive student choices to study, from the quality of the course to the types and quantity of accommodation available—something that I know is a challenge for language schools in my area. Many families have hosted in the past and more have come forward. It is again about how we move forward, for instance, to having dedicated student accommodation, particularly for those coming for a longer period, who will still use the short-term study visa if they are looking to study a language course of up to 11 months.

We must not send out unhelpful, inaccurate and counter-productive messages of it being hard to come here, when in reality our short-term study rules are some of the most generous globally, allowing up to six months' study without applying for a separate visa to



do that. I contrast that ability to be in the UK for up to 180 days, including doing a short English language course for up to 180 days, with the Schengen area's 90 out of 180 days applying to non-visa nationals, or the US visa waiver system, which is 90 out of 180 days and a maximum stay of 90 days. Our system is much more generous.

That is driven by the type of open economy we want to have, and as we move forward with ETA, we expect slightly more countries to move to non-visa ETA national status, which will benefit the sector directly. I want to make it very clear that the rules on ID card use at our border will not be changing, but our generous short-term study offer will remain and that is what the focus of future debates should be.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## Nigeria: Security Situation

5.6 pm

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Due to Divisions in the House, this debate can now continue until 6.6 pm.

**Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con):** I beg to move,  
That this House has considered the security situation in Nigeria.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes, and to see so many valued colleagues here today. In October 2022, Nigeria will celebrate its 62nd year of independence. In those six decades, the country has experienced civil war, alternating periods of military and civilian rule and—in 2015—its first peaceful transfer of power. That progression should have laid a foundation for continuing success, but Nigeria is at a crossroads. As Ayo Adedoyin, the chief executive officer of the International Organisation for Peace-building and Social Justice, who is in the Public Gallery today, has said,

“Nigerians are a very resilient people. However, it is that very same virtue which explains why the nation's insecurity crisis is not yet such a national and international issue.”

Those are words I certainly agree with.

It is known that almost half the population would like to leave the country. The reasons for that will be wide and diverse, but there are underlying conditions that apply to every single person who lives in the country and is a member of the nation. Nigeria is home to one of the world's largest populations living in extreme poverty. It has become synonymous with political inertia and corruption, widespread insecurity and a loss of public confidence in its politicians. Worst of all is the increasing death toll. Last year alone, 1,000 people were killed in violent terrorist incidents and the death of Boko Haram's leader at the hands of Islamist rivals has brought further insecurity.

It is no exaggeration to say that Nigeria's security situation has now reached crisis levels, and in the next few minutes I will outline six issues that have not only caused the situation but are perpetuating it. They are Islamic extremism, kidnappings for ransom, intercommunal and religiously motivated violence, human trafficking, electoral violence and extreme poverty. There can be little doubt that the Nigerian security crisis is having a calamitous economic impact, deterring foreign investment and undermining prospects for economic growth, which will result in a regional crisis in the future.

On the first of the six issues, violence perpetuated by Islamic extremists has increased, with the Islamic State West Africa Province surpassing Boko Haram as the deadliest terrorist organisation in the province. ISWAP is believed to have recruited a militia of as many as 5,000 into its ranks, compared with Boko Haram's one-time strength of around 2,000 men. This new organisation emerged after a division of loyalty from the leadership of Boko Haram, with ISWAP founder Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the eldest son of former Boko Haram spokesman Mohammed Yusuf, declaring allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, rather than to the former leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, who was killed last year by ISWAP.

The group has focused its activities against state targets, which has resulted in a reduction of the military police and security service's capability. Its attacks have demonstrated a level of tactical and strategic attitude,

*[Dr Matthew Offord]*

with ISWAP combatants better armed and trained than their predecessors. There are unconfirmed reports that many are heard to speak Arabic instead of Hausa, which indicates the growing participation and influence of extremists from the Sahel and beyond. The decision to reduce attacks on civilian targets has resulted in a rise in public support for the group, which resulted in a Government intervention that began in 2013 in three states having to widen its remit across several territories in northern Nigeria.

In the last 12 months, Nigeria has also seen a large rise in kidnappings for ransom. In the first nine months of 2021, some 2,200 people were kidnapped for ransom—more than double the number abducted the year before. Many that occur are in the north-eastern states and are perpetrated by Islamic extremists, but others have been conducted by groups that are widely characterised as bandits—sometimes in conjunction with the extremists. The motivation remains financial gain. Violence conducted by Islamic extremists was highest in the state of Borno, but last year, more Nigerians were killed by criminal gangs in the north-west than by jihadists in the north-east.

For many years, there has been conflict in the middle belt region that illustrates social divisions in Nigeria. In two decades, more than 17,000 people are believed to have been killed in the region, and more than 10,000 people have fled their homes. That violence receives scarce media attention, particularly in the west, but when it does, it is attributed to disputes between farmers and herders about resources. It is undoubtedly true that in the last 10 years, 60% of Nigerian territory has been characterised as experiencing some form of desertification, which has reduced the amount of land available for agricultural production through a decline in the water supply.

Fulani herdsman traditionally migrated through pasture lands in the middle belt region. The geographical conditions now require a greater migration further south, which brings them into conflict with settled farms. The Fulani herders come from a nomadic, predominantly Muslim tribe, but greater numbers of people in the south are practising Christians. That ensures that public opinion in Nigeria increasingly characterises the conflict as a geographical one between the country's two dominant religions—Christians in the south and Muslims in the north. That is reinforced by the fact that Fulani militia target non-Muslim communities, particularly Christians.

In the last decade, more than 500 churches in Benue state have been destroyed by Fulani militia. In just one year, 2014, more than 100 churches were destroyed in Taraba state, with another 200 abandoned through fear of attack. In October 2021, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom raised concerns about a spate of lethal attacks against Christian communities in Kano and Kaduna states. Central Nigeria is known as the breadbasket of the nation, but because farmers are being killed in their fields, they are afraid to go out to work. With nobody to tend their crops, they fail, which contributes to the greater food shortage in the country.

Human trafficking ranks as the third most common crime in Nigeria after drug trafficking and economic fraud. It is estimated that up to 1 million people are trafficked annually, with 98% moving internally. The

International Organisation for Migration estimates that at least 1.4 million continuing victims of human trafficking are living within Nigerian borders. Most victims are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and forced labour.

In the past three decades, an estimated 30,000 Nigerian women have been forced into prostitution here in Europe, with more than 85% originating from just one state—Edo. Migrants are typically unable to afford to pay the price of their transit and are forced to enter into servitude, which ensures an indefinite period of effective slavery or sexual exploitation, which is often reinforced by the use of revered juju rituals that compel those subjected to trafficking to comply with their traffickers. Those rites are used to intimidate people to stop them reporting their trafficking and to ensure their compliance.

On elections, Nigeria has a long history of electoral violence. In the 20 years since returning to civilian rule, it has held 16 elections, all of which have been marred by violence and bloodshed. In 2003, 100 people were killed; in 2007, 300 were killed. But the worst election-related violence occurred in the three days after the 2011 election, when there were more than 800 fatalities. Some 700 were killed in Kaduna alone.

Next February will see the country's next general election. It is estimated that 87 million Nigerians—around 40% of the country—live on less than \$1.19 a day. The country desperately needs to provide economic opportunity for a rapidly growing population. The United Nations projects that Nigeria's population will almost double by 2050, reaching an estimated 400 million people. Job creation has failed to keep pace with the country's high birth rate. That ensures that many people, especially the young, become highly vulnerable to manipulation by extremists and criminal networks.

It is not the role of the United Kingdom Government to enter Nigeria and provide military aid, but as a Commonwealth country we have a duty to assist our friends. The Minister, who is in her place, recently responded to my written question and advised that the official development assistance bilateral spend in Nigeria last year was more than £100 million. We have a lot invested in the country. To stand back and watch it become a province of Daesh is unacceptable.

The UK Government are supporting Nigeria to respond to the increasing conflict by supporting regional stabilisation and increasing inter-agency co-operation, delivering training to tackle terrorist financing and in defection, demobilisation, disengagement and deradicalisation processes, which will provide a genuine pathway for members of violent extremist organisations to defect and to reintegrate into their communities and families.

As recently as February, the bilateral Security and Defence Partnership dialogue witnessed the UK's commitment to support Nigeria as it responds to these security challenges. However, it would now be appropriate to review what political, diplomatic and military support the UK can offer the people of Nigeria. I ask the Minister to consider reviewing the ODA to allow spending to be focused on non-lethal security co-operation measures. It is useless to provide money to ensure that girls can access education if terrorists are kidnapping those very same children.

After the elections next year, the Nigerian Government should convene an international summit to outline specific actions they intend to take, and to make requests of the

international community for material development and technical support. If a proactive action plan is not made and implemented, the tentacles of Daesh will extend into and find a base on the African mainland that will allow terror attacks to occur across Africa and into mainland Europe. We need to draw a line to stop Nigeria becoming a failed state, to stop a regional conflict becoming an international one, and to protect the peoples of the Commonwealth. That line is Nigeria.

5.17 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) on securing this debate and on setting the scene so well. I declare an interest as a chair of the all-party parliamentary group for international freedom of religion or belief. The APPG speaks up for those with the Christian faith, those with other faith and those with no faith. Nigeria encompasses all three.

Nigeria is a topic very close to my heart; as many Members know, I had the privilege of visiting Nigeria five or six weeks ago, during my time as chair of the APPG. That visit happened to take place in late May. In Nigeria, we met people of Christian faith who had been displaced. We met those of Muslim faith who had been displaced. We met those who are humanists and had no faith at all. We took that opportunity to interact with all of them. I am pleased to see the spokesperson for the Scottish National party, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Brendan O'Hara), in the debate. He and I were part of that deputation.

Shortly after we came back, the Minister responded to an urgent question on Nigeria. I think it was to do with the murder of Christians. It is hard for us to believe that we came home on a Thursday, and on the Sunday there was an absolutely terrible, horrific attack on Christians worshipping in their church, where 40 men, women and children were murdered. If we needed any reminding, that brought back to us with great force what it means to be a Christian in Nigeria.

During that recent visit I spoke, through the APPG and through the deputation, to people who had suffered at first hand the horrific consequences of the deteriorating security situation in Nigeria. They shared stories of unimaginable violence and intimidation, of family members murdered or mutilated, of women and children who were subject to all sorts of abuse, who had their property stolen, had lost their education, their opportunities and their jobs, and were in the internally displaced camps. We visited one of those camps where there were both Christians and Muslims; they had been there for eight and nine years. I find it hard to take that case in, to be honest. It was one that left a lasting impression on myself and others, because there were many who just wanted to do something and achieve something in their life but they were in a displaced camp and when they got there, they seemed to be forgotten about. They were there and food and water had been set down for them, but that is not okay because what they need is an education.

We went with a charity called Bellwether International. They provided finances so that we were able to take some food to those in the camp and to take some things for the children's education. Within that camp—I know that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute was moved by this, as I was—we had some people who were trying

to provide education for the young people. Others were trying to find job opportunities. There was a very rudimentary medical centre; to be honest, it was like a garden shed that had fallen into disrepair over a number of years, but the important thing was that there were people trying to do something. What we need to do, and what I hope we can do through our Minister and Government, is to reach out to those non-governmental organisations that reach out to people and give them the opportunity, hope and vision that they need, and which we have seen through the eyes of those who were there.

On many occasions, we met people and we did not actually have to ask them what their stories were; we just had to look at their eyes. Their eyes told us their stories. Their stories were stories of pain and agony. All those stories were made all the more bitter and unjust due to the lack of impunity and the inaction on the part of the Nigerian Government. Three million people have been displaced in Nigeria and we met some of them—from academics to NGO workers and victims. Many of the people I met in Nigeria shared concerns about impunity from the ongoing violence, where the army and the police on many occasions just stood aside and did nothing. There needs to be a strong-arm approach to dealing with terrorism, and the army and the Government need to push that very hard.

I heard, for example, that the Federal Government built a local primary school in the new region and named a school after a Fulani chief, in an area where numerous Fulani attacks have resulted in the murder of many people. If that does not spit in your eye, I would like to know what would. Again, this shows that Government in Nigeria seems to be out of touch and seems to have an unwillingness or an uncertainty when it comes to reducing the level of impunity, which has heightened in recent years as the violence in Nigeria has increased and spilled into southern states that were considered safe.

We had hoped to visit north-east Nigeria. That was not possible because of the security situation, but what we did do was to bring people from north-east Nigeria in planes down to Abuja. We met church leaders and community leaders. We were able to hear their stories and we tried to help out. Buhari's positioning of Muslims in senior Government roles also makes it even more difficult for Christians and other minorities to speak out, thereby perpetuating a culture of impunity and a sense of being left behind. It is so sad to see a country of the magnitude of Nigeria, which has a population of 200 million and has great potential, great reserves and great economic opportunities, now lagging behind in the world watch list. Nigeria is No. 7 in the Open Doors world watch list. That means it is the seventh worst country in the world to be a Christian, with Christians facing severe levels of persecution.

The situation in the middle belt of the country is particularly concerning. Violence in the middle belt has become one of Nigeria's most serious security challenges. Reportedly six times deadlier than Boko Haram in 2018, Fulani militant violence has displaced hundreds of thousands of Christians, and intensified religious and ethnic divisions in the country. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute said that everything in Nigeria seems to be measured by religious status, which tells us that everything is coming from that thrust; that is what



[Jim Shannon]

we need to address. It is true not only for Christians, but for those of other beliefs—indeed, for Muslims and those belonging to ethnic groups.

Connected to the Nigeria visit, we heard from Leo Igwe, founder of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, who told us that, due to the extremely precarious situation of humanists in Nigeria, they do not always know where fellow humanists are and that trying to get in contact with them poses a serious threat. The APPG delegation made contact with Mubarak, a humanist who had been in prison for some 24 years. We felt that the Government were making some steps in the right direction. We would all be very happy if the Minister could properly reassure us on that.

To conclude, I will share the remarks of a Boko Haram survivor. Martha, a Christian from Gwoza, Borno state, told the delegation:

“Sometime in 2014, we were home when information reached us that a group of armed men were attacking houses and killing men in our village. My family and I tried escaping when my father-in-law and husband were caught by the Boko Haram men. The two were murdered, while my life and that of my 8 children were spared.”

Although it is a blessing that Martha managed to survive, eight years later this lady is still in a camp for internally displaced persons and has no stable source of income. Not too far from the IDP camp where we were, they had identified a portion of land where farmers—because they were farmers—could have produced their goods. It could have given them a reason to get up in the morning and a way to become sustainable. There are things that can be done.

If the security situation is not improved, however, and attacks by extremist groups are not prevented, more people will face this devastating situation. We were aware of attacks in the south-west of Nigeria, and in the middle belt where we were. I hope that this debate goes some way to communicating the gravity of the situation to our Government, so that they will do what they can to ensure that no one else has to suffer in a such a way.

We met some of the Nigerian authorities, including high commissioners and those in civil service positions within Government. We impressed on them very strongly that the one thing that they have to address first is the security situation, prevent terrorism and let people who wish to live together and who have lived together to do so. I will use Northern Ireland as an example because I have lived there for many years. The two communities were at each other's throats for a long time, but they both realised that, in order to go forward, we had to come together. To make that happen, the first thing to do is to provide security and do away with terrorism. I suggest that the first thing the Nigerian Government do is address the terrorism issue in Nigeria.

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Just to let Members know, we will come to the Front-Bench spokeswomen by 17.45 at the latest.

5.28 pm

**Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes, and to follow the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon),

who is always so faithful in his commitment to these debates. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) for securing this debate and for his excellent speech. I look forward to the Minister's responses to his incisive questions.

There was a tale of two speeches at the international ministerial conference on freedom of religion or belief here in London two weeks ago. First, in her keynote speech introducing the conference, the Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Liz Truss MP—

**Caroline Nokes (in the Chair):** Order. May I remind Members to not use colleagues' names?

**Fiona Bruce:** The Foreign Secretary commendably called out last month's atrocity in Nigeria, when over 40 people were killed simply for being in a Catholic church in Ondo state, celebrating Pentecost. But that was no isolated incident, because on the same day, 5 June, there were reports from Kajuru in south Kaduna of Fulani bandits attacking the indigenous Adara people, aided by an air force helicopter, killing 32 and destroying a church of the Evangelical Church Winning All. Not a single terrorist was killed; 32 members of that church were. The following Sunday, 12 June, there were further reports of approximately 50 Catholics killed just before morning mass in Edumoga in Benue state, north-central Nigeria. In one week alone, over 120 innocent civilians were slaughtered in north-west, north-central and south-west Nigeria.

**Jim Shannon:** I apologise for not mentioning this earlier, but when a town was under attack right outside the gate of an army barracks, the army did not respond because it was waiting for the okay from superior officers. Does the hon. Lady agree that one of the major issues in Nigeria is the need to address terrorism on the ground? Only then can the local community get back to living a normal lifestyle in peace.

**Fiona Bruce:** Indeed, it has to be addressed on the ground. It is heartrending that night after night, people are going to bed fearful of whether they will wake up.

The International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law noted in April 2022 that 4,650 Christians were killed in Nigeria between November 2020 and October 2021. That is higher than the 3,530 deaths recorded in the previous year of October 2019 to November 2020. It also noted that 2,500 Christians were abducted between November 2020 and October 2021, compared with 900 in the previous year.

The Minister will no doubt be keen to throw something of a contextual narrative on my emphasis on religious-based violence and religious targeting of mainly Christian victims. She will also likely note that religious identity can be a factor in incidents of violence in Nigeria and that Christian communities have been victims but emphasise that root causes are often complex and frequently also relate to competition over resources, historical resources and criminality. She might also factor in the pressing challenges of climate change and global food shortages. I ask her, however, to interrogate the repeated number of attacks going on in the central and north-west regions of Nigeria. They are executed and co-ordinated by well-organised and well-funded groups, including the Fulani Islamist militia groups, as well as other terrorist groups, such as Ansaru in Kaduna state.

The appalling atrocities by those perpetrators, using sophisticated equipment including a helicopter, cannot simply be characterised as atrocities by local bandits. The killings going on, such as those last month, are not simply a clash between farmers and herders. Much attention is given to the security challenges in north-east Nigeria, rather than the central parts of Nigeria experiencing such devastating attacks. Many villages have been destroyed, and thousands of people are displaced. Some reports say that the Fulani Islamist groups have killed more people than Boko Haram in the last two years and are more vicious in executing their atrocities.

Efforts to rightly avoid simple descriptors of Nigeria's insecurity as a religious conflict should not fail to properly diagnose the security situation facing Nigerians who get in the way of Islamist militants. The Minister will rightly reference that the nearly 350,000 Nigerians who have died as a result of Islamic insurgencies include a large number of Muslim victims, as well as indigenous, humanist and Christian believers. As the Foreign Secretary recognised two weeks ago, those are grievous violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief, a right that should be available for everyone, everywhere—a universal right that only 10 days ago brought together over 1,000 delegates from 100 countries for the London international ministerial conference on freedom of religion or belief. However, a country whose representative at that conference sadly does not truly get what is happening in Nigeria is Nigeria.

The second speech to which I wish to draw the House's attention is that of the Nigerian high commissioner to the UK, who pledged to uphold freedom of religion or belief without hindrance, as guaranteed in Nigeria's constitution, but then declared that insecurity has nothing to do with religion—refusing to recognise religious-based and targeted violence. Sadly, that speech risks perpetuating impunity for religiously motivated violence across Nigeria. It means that when the young student Deborah Samuel was horrifically lynched in Sokoto on 22 May of this year, having been accused of blasphemy—which was rightly condemned by religious leaders—no one has been held accountable for the severity of that crime. It is why there are reports of security services being at best absent and at worse complicit in violence perpetrated by militants.

In conclusion, I ask that, rather than follow the line of the Nigerian Government on security and freedom of religion or belief, the Minister follow the recommendation of the Foreign Affairs Committee's April 2022 report. It stated:

“The integrated delivery plan should include concrete steps for how the UK Government will support the Nigerian Government in promoting freedom of religion and belief, as well as preventing violence against women and girls, across their engagement activities in Nigeria.”

5.37 pm

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair for this afternoon's debate, Ms Nokes. I thank the hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) for the thoughtful and considered way in which he opened the debate, and I thank Members for all their contributions. It has been a useful and worthwhile exercise.

As the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said, the debate is timely and important, because this is a crucial time for Nigeria. We visited Nigeria just a few

weeks ago with Baroness Cox as part of the APPG for international freedom of religion or belief. The purpose was to follow up on the APPG's 2020 visit, and see what had been done in response to the report, “Nigeria: unfolding genocide”, which had concluded that Christians were experiencing mass atrocities and violent acts including killings, kidnappings and the destruction of property.

As we have heard, it was a challenging visit, particularly because we were unable to travel beyond the city limits of Abuja, and those who wished to speak to us had to travel vast distances to do so. Such was their desire that they did come; they came from Sokoto, Kaduna, Jos, Maiduguri, Lagos—everywhere. They came to ensure that the UK and UK politicians did not forget about Nigeria, and that they understood and accepted the historical and colonial responsibility that this country has for that beautiful state.

What was striking was that no matter where they came from, and irrespective of their religion, their stories were similar. They were all about endemic corruption, a lack of security, a culture of impunity, an absence of meaningful civil society and extreme poverty, coupled with the emergence of radical Islam. That has seen Nigeria at a tipping point, which could descend into chaos and civil war if nothing is done.

At one meeting, we spoke to Rebecca and Kadigea, two women who had devoted their lives to building peace and bringing justice to their community. Their assessment was simple. They said that the Government “is totally oblivious to our reality”, that politicians have nothing to offer except division, and that people, particularly the young, have been left without hope. That exclusion is one of the major drivers of the conflict.

As the hon. Members for Hendon, for Strangford and for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) have said of the escalation of violence, there are of course religious leaders who are doing their very best, but because of rampant Government corruption, people have lost faith. They have lost faith in the institutions that should be there to protect them, and as a result, far too many now follow the voice of the cleric, no matter how radical that clerical voice is, because it has replaced the Government as the voice of authority.

In a country where everything is seen through the prism of religion, it is almost inevitable that religious violence will follow. I recall one person we spoke to making the very shrewd observation that in Nigeria, his homeland, there has been a big increase in ostentatious displays of faith—the prayers are louder, the churches and mosques are fuller—but there is less God. He concluded that religion is not about what you do, but how you treat others. How true that statement is.

A tipping point has almost been reached. Next year, 2023, when the presidential election will take place, will be absolutely pivotal for the future of Nigeria. Both sides have chosen their candidates, and we have a responsibility to ensure that that election is free, fair and peaceful. Regardless of the result, we have to support the new Government. What plans have the UK Government put in place ahead of those elections, because the clock is ticking and Nigeria needs real, meaningful change? Unless Nigeria is transformed quickly, it will be too late, and the nightmare scenario of religious-based violence descending into civil war could become a reality. Should that happen, the consequences for Africa, for Europe

[Brendan O'Hara]

and for us would be unthinkable. I ask the Minister to think seriously about what this Government can do to support Nigeria in avoiding that catastrophic end.

5.41 pm

**Ms Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): It is an absolute pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I thank the hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) for securing this debate, as well as all those who have spoken today.

The potential of the people of Nigeria to shape our world for the better is enormous, but that potential is being shattered by terrible violence with increasing frequency and scale. The fear and chaos even risks the political stability of Nigeria, one of our most important partner countries. Many of us represent wonderful Nigerian diaspora communities, so we have a vivid sense of those links and the benefits that are on offer, but at the same time, we hear increasing concern from constituents worried about the safety of their families and terrified for the beautiful country that they love. We have heard about some of the atrocities that have been perpetrated on the people of Nigeria; perhaps the worst attack of all was in Owo on 5 June, which has taken the lives of 41 churchgoers to date, with 17 still in hospital. I reiterate the Labour party's solidarity with the victims, their families and their communities. As colleagues have mentioned, there have been other targeted attacks on religious sites and leaders.

We need to see all of this in the context of wider conflicts and violations of religious freedoms for Christian denominations and others. In January, 571 instances of kidnapping and 314 killings of people were reported in Nigeria; the majority took place in the north-west, particularly in Niger and Zamfara states. Much of the insecurity is affecting mainly Muslim communities in the north of Nigeria, and we need to be clear that insecurity is affecting people across religious, ethnic and geographic lines in Nigeria. We need to support healing and peacebuilding, which means not fuelling narratives that are being used to stoke further hatred and violence. I hope that with the Minister, we can send a unanimous message of solidarity with all the Nigerian communities struggling in the face of that insecurity.

Nigeria is a named priority in both the Government's integrated review and the international development strategy. I hope that we will hear more from the Minister about what fresh work is being done to put that priority into action. What strategic assessment have we made of whether the forms of support within the security partnerships are the right ones? Are they at the right scale to make a real difference?

I note that the security partnership is expanding to include programming on civilian policing and civilian-military co-operation, which are desperately needed. However, when it comes to UK aid, the cuts were brutal. Funding for bilateral Nigeria programmes was cut by more than half last year. So there have been specific requests for more assistance with tackling the drivers of insecurity. However, does the Department have the resources to meet those requests? How will we manage the sensitivities of the pre-election period while hopefully ramping up

our support for security in Nigeria? How are we working with other countries, particularly with Niger and Chad, on some of the big cross-border drivers?

I know that the Minister will rightly talk about the work being done as part of the Lake Chad stabilisation strategy, but frankly the geographic scale of this issue has expanded. It is alarming to read the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership's communiqué from February and to see north-eastern Nigeria being highlighted constantly. I am sure that the Minister will recognise that the security challenges of recent months have primarily been in the north-west of Nigeria and the country's middle belt, and I hope that she will be able to say a little more about what co-ordinated cross-border work is planned to address the drivers of insecurity.

Those drivers are not new; they will not go away overnight; and we have to face the fact that climate heating is creating intense conflicts for dwindling resources such as water and fertile land. That situation interacts with religious and ethnic differences that mirror the divide between farming communities and herders who are often nomadic. At the most basic level, people struggling to survive are more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups—not just terrorists, but bandits, too. The UK has a role to play in supporting the Nigerian Government to provide an effective response and I believe that we need steady peace-building, enabling the state to build public service provision in marginalised areas and, above all, to enforce the law and protect people.

We really have to be conscious of what happened in Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso, and the risk to democracy when security deteriorates. There is promising leadership against insecurity, especially in Niger, and I would like to hear how we are getting behind those efforts to expand and adapt the more effective approaches.

We know that independent, proudly African, human rights-respecting, democratic states can provide real security for their people, but we need to support states in demonstrating that against the challenges they face. Surely, that is the task, and if there is not success in that task, we are likely to see more military coups in the region, more terrorism, more frightful atrocities, more humanitarian disasters and more exploitative interference by Russia. If that happens, the enormous promise of Nigeria risks being lost and UK interests will be woefully damaged in the process. Let us work together to stop it happening.

5.48 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Vicky Ford):** It is an absolute pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon, Ms Nokes.

I am really grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) for securing this debate and to the other hon. Members who have spoken for their comments; I will try to respond to as many of their points as I can.

Nigeria is, of course, a priority partner for the United Kingdom; its success matters. Nigeria is Africa's largest democracy and its largest economy, and it has the highest number of people living in poverty of any country on the continent. What happens in Nigeria has far-reaching repercussions, particularly, as the hon. Member for West Ham (Ms Brown) said, in the surrounding region, so the region matters as well. She also mentioned



the vibrant Nigerian diaspora that we have in the UK. Indeed, the Nigerian diaspora is one of the largest in the entire United Kingdom, with more than 200,000 people.

The Government are committed to maintaining a strong partnership with Nigeria—one that furthers the links between our people and that delivers our economic, security and development objectives. As Members here in Westminster Hall today have so correctly pointed out, rising insecurity in Nigeria is a very significant concern and the country faces multiple and complex challenges, from terrorism in the north-east to intercommunal conflicts and criminal banditry in the north-west and middle belt, violence in the south-east and south-west, as well as much serious and organised crime.

Many of those challenges are long standing, and the causes are complex and varied. Competition over resources, historical grievances and criminality are key drivers, and religion can be a factor. It is notable that 2021 was the worst year on record for levels of conflict and deaths resulting from political violence. I know the entire House shares my sympathy and concern for the families and communities affected.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Brendan O'Hara) and others asked what our Government are doing to support Nigeria. My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon mentioned elections. The 2023 elections will be a significant test for Nigerian democracy. The UK Government will continue to publicly stress the importance that all actors work together to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in 2023. The importance of having a peaceful transfer of power in Nigeria is raised with me not only in Nigeria, but in many of my other discussions with other African nations. We are supporting the Independent National Electoral Commission to deliver credible elections. We are supporting civil society to encourage women and young people to participate more meaningfully in the election process, and we are working with the National Peace Committee and a range of civil society partners to promote peaceful elections, which includes countering divisive narratives, fake news and disinformation, because they can drive violence.

On our security and defence partnership, it is important to remember that security is of course the responsibility of the Nigerian Government, but we support them in a number of ways. The UK's Security and Defence Partnership with Nigeria is the cornerstone of our bilateral relationship. In January, the UK hosted Nigeria's national security adviser for the inaugural dialogue in support of our security and defence partnership, and we committed more support to help Nigeria tackle its security challenges, including police reform, tackling serious and organised crime and countering terrorism. I discussed the rising insecurity with Nigeria's national security adviser during that dialogue, which was very in-depth and took place over a number of days, and I raised those issues with the Nigerian Vice President and the Foreign Minister during my visit to Nigeria in February. The Prime Minister raised insecurity again with President Buhari at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting last month.

Although we recognise that Nigeria is responsible for resolving its security challenges, we can and do help it to respond to insecurity and shared threats in a way that is compliant with human rights. That includes delivering

accountability and justice to victims of violations and abuses. To support the Nigerian authorities, we are providing training, technical assistance and advice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon raised the situation in north-east Nigeria, where extremist groups including Islamic State West Africa Province and Boko Haram, and the ongoing conflict with them, are having a particularly devastating impact on communities. Those groups continue to target anybody who does not agree with their extremist ideology. The conflict has lasted for more than a decade, causing more than 35,000 deaths and leaving 2 million people internally displaced. It has caused an alarming humanitarian crisis: 8 million people living in north-east Nigeria are in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The problem is not just limited to Nigeria; it also hurts communities across the wider Lake Chad basin region, and that has even wider implications. We take a co-ordinated and regional approach to supporting Nigeria and its neighbours to address the causes and effects of the conflict. We provide global leadership, and the UN Security Council is working with others to encourage a regional approach to peace. Through the regional stabilisation facility, we are supporting initiatives to improve security services and economic opportunities for all people in Boko Haram-affected areas. Over the past five years, we have provided £425 million of humanitarian aid in north-east Nigeria, reaching about 1.5 million vulnerable people. That includes food aid, malnutrition prevention support and protection services to the 1.3 million children under the age of five, pregnant and lactating women and at-risk boys and girls.

My hon. Friend also raised the situation in north-east Nigeria, which has also rapidly deteriorated due to banditry, kidnapping and violent crime. Around 14,000 people have been killed in the last decade in the north-west, and that situation is spilling over into other regions. We recently launched projects alongside Nigerian stakeholders to tackle crime and banditry and counter illicit financial flows, and we are also using our development budget to support work to build social safety nets for the most vulnerable, including those displaced by conflict and violence in some of the worst-affected states.

Regarding human trafficking, which my hon. Friend also raised, between 2017 and 2022 the Home Office's modern slavery fund invested just over £6 million in Nigeria in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration and the Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons. That increased the capacity to pursue and secure the convictions of traffickers, and supported around 444 victims of trafficking.

My hon. Friend also mentioned kidnappings. Those occur across Nigeria, and are carried out by criminal gangs and violent, extreme organisations. We condemn all kidnappings and call for the release of all those held captive, and we are providing mentoring and capacity-building support to Nigerian police force units, which helps them to prevent kidnapping, protect victims and hold those responsible to account.

Intercommunal violence is having a devastating effect on those communities, and the conflicts are highly localised and varied. As raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), who is very wise, it is clear that religious identity can be a factor in instances of violence. In some instances, it can be the main factor; indeed, in some instances it is the main factor. I discussed

[Vicky Ford]

this with religious leaders, non-governmental organisations and regional governors during my visit to Nigeria in February. They made it clear that the root causes of these tensions are often complex, and also include competition over resources, historical grievances and criminality. That is why it is right that the UK is supporting local and national peace-building initiatives to tackle intercommunal violence, including through our work with the Nigeria Governors' Forum and National Peace Committee.

However, the UK remains resolute in its commitment to defending freedom of religion or belief for all, and to promoting respect between religious and non-religious communities. We hosted a successful international ministerial conference the week before last, bringing together over 500 delegates from more than 60 countries across the world. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton for the tireless work that she does; the conference would not have been the success that it was without her work. Her role as the Prime Minister's special envoy for freedom of religion or belief has had very far-reaching consequences, and I know that everybody across the House is deeply grateful for her work.

The Nigerian high commissioner attended the conference, but so did many representatives from across Nigeria, from groups promoting peace building, social justice and interfaith relations. I understand that the conference was incredibly helpful in helping different organisations to listen to those from other countries—to discuss their issues and similarities, to see what has and has not worked, and to support those networks.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) raised the case of Mubarak Bala. The UK Government continue to follow Mr Bala's case closely, and I have raised his sentencing with the Nigerian Foreign Minister. We believe it is the right of individuals to express opinions, and that that right is essential in any free and open society.

To conclude, I welcome hon. Members' comments. I am pleased that they remember that, despite the challenges that Nigeria faces, it is a country of huge potential, and the UK will continue to support a more stable and prosperous future for it. Our aid is important: it has supported more than 2 million Nigerians to improve their incomes or jobs since 2015, and it has supported education in 11 states, reaching more than 8 million children since 2009. Indeed, the importance of education was specifically raised in my meeting with the regional governors. They absolutely believe that, to improve stability across some of the fragile regions that they represent, education remains key because it will unlock opportunities.

The Government remain firmly committed to education and to our economic partnership to promote mutual prosperity. We will support Nigeria to respond to its responsibility to tackle rising insecurity, and to do so in a way that conforms with international human rights standards and humanitarian law. We will continue to

encourage the Nigerian Government to implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of violence and insecurity. That is how we will work together towards a safer and more prosperous future for all our countries. I encourage all hon. Members present, and those with Nigerian diaspora living in their constituencies, to call for peace in Nigeria, especially through the election process next year.

6.1 pm

**Dr Offord:** I thank the Minister for her comments, and congratulate hon. Members on the wealth of experience and knowledge that I have heard in the debate. I thank in particular Ayo Adedoyin and his team for allowing me to understand such a complex issue—although I must apologise to some of them for mangling their names.

To respond to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), the asymmetry of the weaponry and the frequency of the attacks appear to constitute an ethno-religious cleansing. As someone who represents many constituents who have direct experience of the holocaust, I am guarded about using such language and I do not do so lightly.

I am pleased that the Prime Minister's special envoy for freedom of religious belief, my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), was able to come along to the debate, and that her deputy, David Burrowes, who was not here himself, was giving me updates throughout. He has visited Nigeria, and has concluded that it is on the brink of crisis.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton would agree that the arming of certain groups makes it clear that organisations and individuals are receiving weaponry from outside the country. In July, a Nigerian air force Alpha jet was downed by what was termed a "non-state actor", but those weapons clearly came from outside the country.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Brendan O'Hara) shared his experience of visiting Nigeria, which showed that the amalgamation of those groups into a terrorist group is a real threat to the country. If he was not able to travel outside the cities that he was visiting, something is very wrong. He mentioned support for the country, which is necessary for everyone.

The hon. Member for West Ham (Ms Brown) spoke about official development assistance, which is important. It has always been my view that we should use ODA, not because international development is a charity, but because our spending should allow countries to prosper—it is in our own security and economic interests.

The Minister covered a large range of issues, for which I am grateful. I do not have time to go any further, so I will reflect on what she said.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the security situation in Nigeria.

6.3 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

# Written Statements

*Tuesday 19 July 2022*

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Advanced Research and Invention Agency

**The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):** The Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) is the Government's new science funding agency. Backed by £800 million out to 2025-26, ARIA will pursue the scientific and technological discoveries that have the potential to profoundly change our world for the better.

Today, I am delighted to update the House on ARIA'S leadership and confirm that I have appointed Ilan Gur as ARIA'S first CEO, and Matt Clifford MBE as ARIA'S Chair.

Ilan Gur is Founder and CEO of Activate, a non-profit organisation that empowers scientists and engineers to bring ground-breaking research to market.

Ilan Gur previously founded two science-based start-ups and served in the first cohort of Programme Directors at ARPA-E. He obtained his PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from the University of California, Berkley. He will take post on 15 August for an initial fixed term of two years.

As ARIA'S founding CEO, Ilan Gur will play a pivotal role in setting the agency's paradigm-shifting research agenda and establishing ARIA's culture and organisational structure. He will be tasked with identifying, recruiting and inspiring a team of exceptional technical talent to tackle the world's greatest challenges.

To support Ilan Gur, Matt Clifford MBE will take the helm as ARIA's first Chair. Matt Clifford is co-founder and CEO of Entrepreneur First, an international investor in technical talent that has helped to build technological companies worth over \$10 billion.

Matt Clifford is co-founder and non-executive director of Code First Girls, has served as a Council member at Innovate UK, and a Trustee of the Kennedy Memorial Trust. Before starting Entrepreneur First, Matt Clifford worked at McKinsey & Co and earned degrees from the University of Cambridge and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Matt Clifford will take post on 15 August for a fixed term of four years.

Both appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments following a fair and open competition overseen by an Advisory Assessment Panel.

These appointments mark an important milestone in ARIA's creation, ahead of the agency becoming fully operational later this year.

[HCWS218]

## Companies House: Public Targets 2022-23

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Jane Hunt):** My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility (Lord Callanan) has today made the following statement:

I have set Companies House the following targets for the year 2022-23:

### *Register of Overseas Entities*

Introduce a Register of Overseas Entities: contributing towards the fight against economic crime.

### *Complete and up to date data*

The 97% of companies on the register have filed a confirmation statement: high levels of compliance are essential to ensure the register holds timely and accurate data.

### *Digital service availability*

Digital services are available for a minimum of 99.9% of the time: Very high service availability enables our customers to use our services when they need to, inspiring customer confidence and supporting high satisfaction levels.

### *Customer satisfaction*

We will be in the top 20% of public sector organisations for customer satisfaction: high levels of customer satisfaction will demonstrate we are meeting customer expectations and will further build reputation as a centre of excellence.

### *Diversity*

We will increase the number of staff recruited to Companies House from under-represented groups by 10%: increased diversity will help Companies House be more representative of its customer base and help it to be a more interesting and desirable employer, thus increasing the talent pools to which we have access.

### *Delivering value*

We will manage expenditure set out within budgetary limits: delivering the priorities defined in corporate targets whilst keeping expenditure within delegated limits ensures public value is maintained.

[HCWS219]

## Statutory Review of the Groceries Code Adjudicator

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Jane Hunt):** As part of the third statutory review of the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will today publish a consultation seeking the views of stakeholders on the performance of the GCA.

The GCA was established by the Groceries Code Adjudicator Act 2013 ("the Act"). Its role is to monitor and enforce the Groceries Supply Code of Practice ("the Code"), which the UK's designated large grocery retailers must comply with when dealing with their direct suppliers.

Section 15 of the Act requires the Government to review periodically the performance of the GCA. The first review covered the period from the creation of the GCA—in June 2013—to 31 March 2016 and the second review covered the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2019.

The statutory review is not a review of the Code nor the remit of the GCA. The Code is a competition measure owned by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) as the UK's independent competition authority.

The third review will look back over the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022 and seek views and evidence which will allow the Secretary of State to make



an assessment of the performance of the GCA against the measures set out in the Act. These measures are explained in the terms of reference.

The first statutory review also considered whether the functions of the GCA should be transferred to another public body or be abolished and the Government is again seeking views on these questions as part of the third review, in particular whether the GCA should be transferred to the CMA.

The Act requires us to consult with the following:

- the GCA;
- the Competition and Markets Authority;
- the retailers subject to the Code;
- one or more persons representing the interests of suppliers;
- one or more persons representing the interests of consumers;
- and
- any other appropriate person—we have not identified any specific person or persons here and welcome contributions from any interested person.

The invitation to submit comments and evidence can be accessed through gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/groceries-code-adjudicator-statutory-review-2019-to-2022>

and stakeholders have until 11 October 2022 to respond. Following this, BEIS will analyse the responses. A report on our findings will then be published and laid before Parliament.

The terms of reference for the GCA review have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

[HCWS217]

## CABINET OFFICE

### Cabinet Office Update

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mrs Heather Wheeler):** I am today announcing the Government's decision on pay for the Senior Civil Service.

The Government received the Senior Salary Review Body's (SSRB) 2022 report on 28 June 2022. This will be presented to Parliament and published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The Government value the independent expertise and insight of the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) and take on board the advice and principles in relation to the Government's recommendations. The Government partially accept the SSRB's recommendations for 2022. In reaching this decision, the Government have carefully considered the need to maintain an effective senior civil service, affordability and fairness between senior pay and the delegated pay award of 3% set out in the pay remit guidance.

SSRB recommendations set a 3.5% pay award with money allocated in the following priority order:

An across-the-board increase for all senior civil servants of 3% from 1 April 2022.

Increasing the pay band minimums from:

SCS pay band 1: £71,000 to £73,000

SCS pay band 2: £93,000 to £95,000

SCS pay band 3: £120,000 to £125,000

A further 0.5% to address pay anomalies.

The Government's responses to each of the SSRB's recommendations are as follows:

The overall figure should be limited to an across the board 2% increase in line with the lower end figure contained in the delegated pay remit guidance.

The Government accept the recommendation to increase the pay band minimums.

The recommendation of the anomalies pot is partially accepted and will be increased from 0.5% to 1%.

Pay awards this year strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, while delivering value for the taxpayer, not increasing the country's debt further, and being careful not to drive even higher prices in the future. Public sector workers benefit from some of the most generous pensions available. Sustained higher levels of inflation would have a far bigger impact on people's real incomes in the long run than the proportionate and balanced pay increase set out.

[HCWS233]

## DEFENCE

### Combat Air Strategy

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):** The 2018 combat air strategy set out how the UK will deliver the military capability we need to operate in highly contested environments, boost our industrial capability and maximise our international influence. My Department actively maintains our Typhoon and F-35B Lightning fleets at the cutting edge. This enables them to project UK influence and uphold international security from the south Atlantic and north sea, where Typhoon is responsible for controlling the UK's skies through sustainment of a quick reaction alert capability, to East Asia, where in 2021 our F-35s, on board HMS Queen Elizabeth, undertook their first embarked operational deployment. The Future Combat Air System programme is undergoing important progress as we collaborate with international partners to design next generation technologies.

The RAF's combat aircraft have been key to our ability to deal with the most pressing security issues of our time, from degrading Daesh, to policing NATO airspace, to deterring Russia.

Indeed, the operational need for advanced, capable, agile combat air is as evident now as it ever has been. In east Asia, the carrier strike group took part last year in exercises with air and naval forces from the United States, the Netherlands, Australia, France, Japan, New Zealand, India, Malaysia, Singapore and the Republic of Korea, building interoperability, demonstrating the reach of UK combat air, and putting into practice the integrated review's commitment to the Indo-Pacific. As I submit this update to the House, RAF Typhoon aircraft are patrolling the skies above eastern Europe, at the vanguard of NATO's collective security. There could be no clearer demonstration that we are steadfast in the defence of our shared values following Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

We must maintain the RAF's ability to undertake these vital missions for decades to come and are working with close international partners to determine how FCAS could fulfil this role. The combat air strategy highlights the importance of air power in delivering our national security, but also the Government's vision for a strong, prosperous and influential Global Britain, underpinned by a world-leading combat air sector. Combat air has a vital role to play in the UK's national security, defence industrial capacity and international influence.

#### *Military capability*

The integrated review highlighted that there is a systemic competition under way to shape the international environment. From a combat air perspective, the key features of this competition will be efforts to dominate the operating environment and preserve or deny freedom of action, the rapid pace of technological change, and proliferation of advanced capabilities. This is the strategic context in which the integrated review said we would continue to develop FCAS and why the defence Command Paper reaffirmed that we will invest more than £2 billion in the programme out to 2025. This is part of a budget of more than £10 billion over the next 10 years, although the ultimate amount we invest will depend on key programme choices and the role that our international partners take in the programme.

Given the rate of technological advance, it is crucial that we have a system that can maintain its effectiveness against tomorrow's threats. Our entire approach to military capability acquisition must respond to this reality. Consequently, we are designing a capability with truly 21st-century characteristics. These include an open systems architecture that will allow modularity and rapid upgrade, the exploitation of machine learning to augment and support human operators, and the use of digital networks and data to ensure operational advantage.

The next generation of combat air will be defined as much by the "how" as by the "what". For example, we are exploring how our future capability could be more than a traditional combat air platform, but the vital connected heart and mind of an integrated combat air system. This will mean the ability to contribute to and utilise wide-ranging capabilities, from intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to command and control and air defence. The core platform would be one vital element of a broader combat system that links seamlessly with other units in the air, on land and at sea, bringing these together to maximise effect. Central to the strides we are taking are advances in data processing, communication networks, sensor fusion and sophisticated effectors. We will continue to exploit technology in the way we train, using synthetic training for an expanding number of professions from aircrew to air traffic controllers and battlespace managers.

Last summer we awarded a national contract, initially worth £250 million, for concept and assessment work under the FCAS acquisition programme. This will define and begin design of FCAS and secure the infrastructure to underpin cutting-edge digital engineering, data and software-based systems, to enable major programme choices by 2024. The contract was awarded to BAE Systems, with flow-through to Rolls-Royce, Leonardo UK and MBDA UK, collectively known as Team Tempest, and a wider supply chain of UK of small and medium-sized enterprises and academic institutions.

To drive forward further development, a series of demonstration and test activities are being planned throughout this decade. At the centre of this activity will be a next generation flying demonstrator, currently being developed by the MOD and Team Tempest industry partners. It will be a crewed core platform concept capable of supersonic flight and is expected to take to the skies for the first time within the next five years. This UK project is now being expanded to include involvement from Italy.

While we press ahead with work to develop concepts for FCAS, we are also enhancing the capability of our existing combat air fleet. The continued development and production of Radar 2, Typhoon's new electronically scanned array, will deliver a step change in capability. It will enable Typhoon to keep ahead of versatile and proliferating threats well into the next decade and offer a pathway for incremental development that will prepare Typhoon to operate in heavily contested and complex electro-magnetic environments. Our F-35 fleet reached initial operating capability (maritime) in 2020 and put this into practice in the carrier strike group in 2021, giving the UK its first low-observable, carrier-based, fifth-generation combat air capability. We also continue to develop cutting-edge complex weapons, including the Future Cruise/Anti-Ship Weapon and the SPEAR family of missiles.

#### *Industrial capability and levelling up*

The question of how is equally important to the design, development, and manufacturing processes for our future combat air capability. The UK must break the boom and bust acquisition cycles that have been a hallmark of previous combat air programmes and move the sector to a more stable footing. In line with the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, this would help us to sustain the UK's defence industry as a "strategic capability" and safeguard our operational independence, the ability "to conduct military operations as we choose without external political interference, and to protect the sensitive technologies that underpin those capabilities".

Cutting-edge design and manufacturing capabilities will also be increasingly central to how UK combat air capability is delivered, maintained and upgraded. We have partnered with industry to develop advanced Industry 4.0 technologies, such as digital design and additive manufacturing.

BAE Systems' new factory of the future in Lancashire is illustrative of this progress. It demonstrates integrated and agile manufacturing capabilities including advanced 3D printing and autonomous robotics. It is a team effort with more than 40 blue chip and SME companies and academic institutions collaborating, driving the best of UK innovation and highlighting what it can achieve.

A digital-first approach, whereby we maximise the extent to which we design and test in the digital world, will be central to fast and affordable delivery. For example, additive manufacturing is reducing the number of components needed to manufacture key parts, while digital testing means that aerodynamics can be trialled more quickly and to a greater level of fidelity before the need to produce models for testing in wind tunnels. These technologies are already delivering in weeks what previously took months, and in days what until recently took weeks.

This approach requires people throughout the enterprise who can truly understand, seize and exploit the benefits of digital working. The people designing FCAS today, whose careers in science and industry are being launched by the programme, represent our vision for a “generation tempest”. Our core industry partners employ 1,000 apprentices and graduates working on FCAS, and this figure is growing. The tempest early careers network gives opportunities to the next generation of leaders to work together across Government and industry to solve design and engineering challenges. To drive the skills agenda forward, Team Tempest partners are launching a national recruitment and skills initiative to attract the diverse talent and expertise needed across the country to support the programme. This will see a substantial expansion in the recruitment of apprentices and graduates.

More broadly, the FCAS Enterprise now employs around 2,500 personnel including engineers and programmers and recruitment is set to expand. This is part of a wider industrial eco-system focused on combat air, with hundreds of companies and academic institutions across the UK and key workforce clusters in the north-west and south-west of England and in Scotland. The defence Command Paper noted the many thousands directly employed by the sector and the tens of thousands more in the supply chain.

Indeed, combat air has a key role to play in supporting the Government’s levelling-up agenda. For example, as noted in the levelling-up White Paper itself, the FCAS technology initiative, a research and development programme in partnership with industry and SMEs, has already invested £1 billion in R&D across the UK and will invest a further £1 billion over the coming years. There have been impressive developments in many technology areas, including power and propulsion, airframes, sensors, open mission systems, communications, and weapons integration. This work is now fully embedded into the FCAS acquisition programme as we draw on those crucial technology areas. Vitality, a close link exists between FCAS and Typhoon, allowing future FCAS technologies to be considered for integration into Typhoon as part of Typhoon’s long-term evolution.

F-35 and Typhoon continue to play key roles in supporting defence industrial hubs across the UK and hundreds of companies in the broader supply chain. In north Wales, Sealand Support Services Ltd has declared a repair capability that will support F-35 for years to come. Key elements of the thousands of F-35 aircraft being manufactured for air forces across the globe continue to be made in the UK, such as the aircraft tails at BAE System’s site at Samlesbury. Meanwhile, the Typhoon long-term evolution study has entered its second phase and, alongside Radar 2, will secure hundreds of highly skilled jobs at Leonardo’s sites in Edinburgh and Luton, BAE Systems’ sites in Lancashire and with Meggitt in Stevenage. The Typhoon Total Availability Enterprise (TyTAN), an innovative agreement with UK industry, continues to see substantial reductions in Typhoon’s support costs while enhancing its availability for crucial operations, such as QRA. BAE Systems continues to provide essential sustainment support to both Typhoon and F-35B Lightning at RAF Lossiemouth, Coningsby and Marham.

#### *International influence*

The UK has extensive experience in delivering combat air programmes through global partnerships, from Tornado, to Typhoon and F-35, built on strong political, industrial,

operational and training relationships. Continuing in this vein, and to maximise the synergies of working with close partners, we are exploring means to deliver FCAS under a UK-initiated international partnership, to achieve an affordable state-of-the-art capability and support the UK’s sovereignty, freedom of action and industrial base. This approach supports the DSIS international co-operation objectives of delivering effective capability based on common requirements, improving value, attracting international investment and bolstering UK influence. The UK is now conducting joint concept analysis with Italy and Japan to understand each other’s military requirements, areas of commonality, and to explore potential future combat air partnership options. We and our partners intend to make further decisions on this by the end of 2022. We will also continue to explore working with other allies and strategic partners on future combat air.

This will build upon the substantial work already undertaken. In line with the integrated review, we have continued to work with Italy and Sweden, as underpinned by our trilateral memorandum of understanding. Both countries have a strong record in the development of combat air and our industries have a history of close collaboration, as demonstrated by Italy’s central role in the Eurofighter programme and Sweden’s development of the Gripen aircraft. Building on our respective expertise, we have worked with both countries and learned from regular exchanges and collaboration between our engineers and technical experts.

Over the past year, we have also worked increasingly closely with Japan and have agreed to develop a joint engine demonstrator, supported by Rolls-Royce’s world-class capabilities, and to explore expanding the relationship. This partnership is underpinned by an overarching memorandum of co-operation signed in December 2021. In February, we followed this up by announcing an agreement to jointly conduct co-operative research on a world-leading fighter jet sensor, supported by Leonardo UK’s highly skilled engineers.

Our next step in the development of FCAS is to complete the concept and assessment phase of the programme by 2025. This means maturing technologies currently under development, such as the propulsion system, working with industry to grow our national digital design and testing capabilities, and increasing the recruitment of people with the right skills. At the same time, we will continue to invest in our Typhoon and F-35 fleets, ensuring that the UK’s combat air capability is always ready to undertake the missions required of it and meet the goals set out in the combat air strategy.

[HCWS228]

### **Armed Forces Pay Award**

#### **The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**

I am today announcing the Government’s decision on pay for the armed forces for 2022-23.

The Government are taking the opportunity to support our aim to reshape defence and grow 21st-century skills, as outlined in the integrated review’s “Defence in a competitive age” Command Paper, and they also look forward to the recommendations of the Haythornthwaite



review of armed forces incentivisation next year. This pay award supports wider recruitment and retention and addresses the requirements of smaller but highly skilled armed forces while recognising affordability.

The Government received the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body report on 2022 pay for service personnel up to and including 1-star rank on 13 June 2022. This has been laid before the House today and published on gov.uk. The Senior Salaries Review Body's 2022 report, which includes recommendations for the senior military, has been laid today by my colleagues in the Cabinet Office.

The Government value the independent expertise and insight of the AFPRB and SSRB and take on board the useful advice and principles set out in response to the Government's recommendations outlined in the report.

The Government are accepting the AFPRB's and SSRB's recommendations in full for the 2022 pay round. This award will benefit the whole of the armed forces and is the biggest percentage uplift in 20 years, recognising their vital contributions and the cost of living pressures facing households.

Pay awards this year strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, while delivering value for the taxpayer, not increasing the country's debt further, and being careful not to drive even higher prices in the future. Sustained higher levels of inflation would have a far bigger impact on people's real incomes in the long run than the proportionate and balanced pay increases recommended by the independent pay review bodies now. Pay awards should be viewed in parallel with the Government's £37 billion support package for the cost of living, which is targeted to those most in need.

In addition to this package, the MOD has frozen the daily food charge for our personnel. We are also limiting the increase in accommodation charges to 1%, ensuring the council tax rebate reaches those in military accommodation, and we are increasing the availability of free wraparound childcare from the start of the new academic year. Any service families facing hardships of any kind should approach their welfare officer so that further support can be discussed.

This year the AFPRB have recommended:

- a headline increase in base pay for all members of their remit group (including medical and dental officers) of 3.75%;
- that all accommodation charges are capped at 1%; and
- raises and changes to other targeted forms of remuneration, and some increases to compensatory allowances. Where specified, these recommended changes are to be backdated to 1 April 2022.

The SSRB have recommended:

- all members of the senior military, including medical officers and dental officers (MODOs), should receive a 3.5% consolidated increase to base pay;
- no change to the current pay arrangements for MODOs:
- 2-star MODOs should continue to be paid 10% above the base pay at the top of the MODO 1-star scale, plus X-factor;
- 3-star MODOs should continue to be paid 5% above the base pay at the top of the MODO 2-star scale, plus X-factor.
- that the minimum guaranteed increase to base pay (excluding X-factor) on promotion from
- 1-star to 2-star does not fall below 10%;

that the minimum guaranteed increase to base pay (excluding X-Factor) on promotion from 2-star to 3-star does not fall below 10%.

In the last five years the armed forces have received a cumulative pay award of 11%. This, combined with the 1% cap on accommodation charges, no rise in food charges, and 33% of service personnel also benefiting from an incremental rise in pay and an increase in the starting salary, after training, to £21,424, demonstrates how much the Government value the armed forces and their families.

Most overall pay awards in the public sector are similar to those in the private sector. Survey data suggests that median private sector pay settlement, which is the metric most comparable to these pay review body decisions, was 4% in the three months to May. Median full-time salaries are higher in the public sector, and public sector workers also benefit from some of the most generous pensions available.

Attachments can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2022-07-19/HCWS237/>

[HCWS237]

### **Defence Committee Report on Women in the Armed Forces: Government Response**

#### **The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**

I am delighted to provide an update on developments one year on from the publication of the comprehensive report of the Commons Defence Committee's inquiry "Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life". We would like to put on record our thanks for those who have enabled us to build on existing initiatives, develop new and innovative interventions and increase the pace of change. This includes the Defence Committee, the Ministry of Defence's Diversity and Inclusion Team, the servicewomen's networks and, in particular, Air Chief Marshal Wigston for his review on inappropriate behaviours in July 2019.

An extensive programme of further work has been delivered across Defence as part of the Government's response to the inquiry. This includes training developments around the concept of consent, the transformation of the service complaints system, the stand-up of the Defence Serious Crime Unit HQ, the delivery of improvements to uniform and equipment for women, and the Servicewomen's Health Improvement Sprint, all of which reinforce the commitment of our armed forces to being a truly inclusive employer.

In addition, two new policies and a strategy have been published today on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) as part of Defence's commitment to deal with unacceptable sexual behaviour. These are the:

- Zero Tolerance to Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour policy: a victim/survivor focused approach;
- Zero Tolerance approach to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) policy; and
- Strategy for Tackling Sexual Offending in Defence.

They build on measures that Defence introduced in March 2022, which provided for mandatory discharge for anyone convicted of a sexual offence, and which also prohibited sexual relationships between instructors and trainees.

We recognise the need to tackle unacceptable sexual behaviour robustly at the earliest opportunity before it reaches criminal behaviour, and we have addressed this in the Zero Tolerance to Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour policy. The policy applies to all UK armed forces personnel and makes it clear that there is no place in Defence for unacceptable sexual behaviour. The policy places an emphasis on the support of victims/survivors, with a presumption of discharge from the armed forces for any person who has behaved in a sexually unacceptable way. Additionally, as set out in a previously published policy, any person in authority having a sexual relationship with a trainee or recruit will be discharged, and a new service offence is being developed which will reinforce this policy.

When personnel are working on behalf of Defence outside of the UK, the new SEA policy prohibits all sexual activity which involves the abuse of power, including the use of transactional sex workers. It ensures that every allegation will be acted upon and that administrative, disciplinary, or criminal proceedings will be pursued if there are grounds.

The strategy for tackling sexual offending in Defence also prioritises the victim/survivor and aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of sexual offending in the armed forces through increased reporting, engagement and successful prosecutions in the service justice system.

The armed forces offer a fantastic career opportunity for men and women, but, as the Committee's report highlighted, their experiences are not always equal and in some cases are unacceptable. I am proud we have been able to deliver such important progress over this past year and am confident that the Ministry of Defence will continue to deliver further change at pace.

[HCWS230]

## EDUCATION

### Department for Education Update

**The Secretary of State for Education (James Cleverly):** The 32nd report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is being published today. Its recommendations cover the remit issued in December 2021, regarding the pay awards for teachers for each of the next two academic years, 2022-23 and 2023-24. The report will be presented to Parliament and published on gov.uk.

The Government values the independent expertise and insight of the STRB. We know that pay and the pay system has a crucial role to play in ensuring teacher quality, and therefore improving pupil outcomes. As set out at the 2021 spending review, public sector workers will see pay rises as a result of the return to a normal pay setting process. However, it remains important that public sector pay awards are appropriate and affordable to safeguard wider investment in continued improvements in public services. Teachers' pay awards therefore need to be appropriate in the context of the wider economy.

In line with our proposals, the STRB has recommended an 8.9% uplift to starting salaries outside London in 2022-23. This keeps us on track for delivering our manifesto commitment of a £30,000 starting salary. It then recommends uplifts of between 5% and 8% along the rest of the main pay range, including advisory

points. The STRB has also recommended a 5% pay award for experienced teachers and leaders in 2022-23, as well as for other pay and allowance ranges.

I am accepting the STRB's recommendations for 2022-23 in full. These recommendations rightly target the highest uplifts—up to 8.9%—at early career teachers, where we know pay has most impact and where cost of living pressures are felt most acutely, whilst still providing a significant uplift to experienced teachers and leaders. This is the highest pay award for teachers in the last 30 years. Together these awards recognise the importance of investing in teachers and delivering a motivating career path for the whole profession, whilst also considering what is an appropriate award in the context of the wider economy and public sector finances, and the cost of living pressures facing households. These pay awards should be viewed in parallel with the Government's £37 billion package of support for the cost of living, which is targeted to those most in need. I am grateful to the STRB for showing consideration of this need to balance these challenging issues.

Pay awards this year strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of teachers, whilst delivering value for the taxpayer, not increasing the country's debt further, and being careful not to drive even higher prices in the future. Sustained higher levels of inflation would have a far bigger impact on people's real incomes in the long run than the proportionate and balanced pay increases recommended by the independent pay review bodies now.

My Department originally sought a two-year remit for this year's pay round. However, after careful consideration, I believe it is not appropriate to determine pay awards for 2023-24 at present. The Government intends to remit the STRB for the 2023-24 pay year in line with other public sector workforces.

This means that, whilst I thank the STRB and all statutory consultees for the work that went into considering pay awards for 2023-24, I will not be making a pay award for that year at this time.

I am pleased to confirm that the uplift to starting salaries that I have accepted for 2022-23 will deliver the progress we set out towards delivering our commitment to a £30,000 starting salary—with all new teachers outside of London earning a salary of at least £28,000 from September.

This is a £2,286 uplift. Those in inner London will earn at least £34,502 from September. We remain firmly committed to uplifting starting salaries to a minimum of £30,000, with these uplifts making good progress to delivering this commitment. This competitive graduate starting salary will attract the best and brightest graduates to consider a career in teaching. We will put forward our proposal for how we intend to reach this through the pay round next year, as per the usual process.

Funding for this pay award will come from the core schools budget settlement that was agreed at the 2021 spending review, which will deliver a £7 billion cash increase to core schools funding by 2024-25. Increases in funding have been frontloaded to get money rapidly to schools, meaning that in 2022-23 core schools funding is increasing by £4 billion compared to 2021-22.

Most overall pay awards in the public sector are similar to those in the private sector. Survey data suggests the median private sector pay settlement, which is the

metric most comparable to these pay review body decisions, was 4% in the 3 months to May. Median full-time salaries are higher in the public sector, and public sector workers also benefit from some of the most generous pensions available.

A full list of the recommendations and my proposed approach for implementation can be found at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-07-19/HCWS235>

Academies have the freedom to set their own pay policies. Many teachers will be eligible for performance related pay progression and pay rises from promotion; typically around 40% of experienced teachers below the maximum of their pay range receive a pay rise over and above the pay award as a result.

My officials will write to all of the statutory consultees of the STRB to invite them to contribute to a consultation on the Government response to these recommendations and on a revised school teachers' pay and conditions document and pay order. The consultation will last for 10 weeks.

[HCWS235]

### **Schools, High Needs and Central School Services: Provisional Funding Allocations 2023-24**

**The Minister of State, Department for Education (Will Quince):** Today I am confirming provisional funding allocations for 2023-24 through the schools, high needs and central school services national funding formulae (NFF). Overall, core schools funding (including funding for mainstream schools and high needs) is increasing by £1.5 billion in 2023-24 compared to the previous year, on top of the £4 billion increase in 2022-23.

High needs funding is increasing by a further £570 million, or 6.3%, in 2023-24—following the £2.6 billion increase over the last three years. This brings the total high needs budget to over £9.7 billion. All local authorities will receive at least a 5% increase per head of their 2-18 population, compared to their 2022-23 allocations, with some authorities seeing gains of up to 7%. Alongside our continued investment in high needs, the Government remain committed to ensuring a financially sustainable system where resources are effectively targeted to need. The consultation on the SEND and alternative provision Green Paper closes on 22 July, and the Government will confirm the next steps in implementing our reform programme later this year.

Funding for mainstream schools through the schools NFF is increasing by 1.9% per pupil compared to 2022-23. Taken together with the funding increases seen in 2022-23, this means that funding through the schools NFF will be 7.9% higher per pupil in 2023-24, compared to 2021-22.

The NFF will distribute this funding based on schools' and pupils' needs and characteristics. The main features in 2023-24 are:

- The core factors in the schools NFF (such as basic per-pupil funding, and the lump sum that all schools attract) will increase by 2.4%.

- Funding for disadvantaged pupils will see greater increases—with funding for two deprivation factors in the NFF increasing by a greater amount than other factors. These two factors (relating to pupils who have been eligible for free school

meals at any point over the last six years, and the IDACI factor which relates to relative deprivation between local areas) will increase by 4.3% compared to their 2022-23 values.

- The funding floor will ensure that every school attracts at least 0.5% more pupil-led funding per pupil compared to its 2022-23 NFF allocation.

- The minimum per-pupil funding levels (MPPLs) will increase by 0.5% compared to 2022-23. This will mean that, next year, every primary school will receive at least £4,405 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £5,715. Academy trusts continue to have flexibilities over how they allocate funding across academies in their trust. This means, in some cases, an academy could receive a lower per-pupil funding amount than the MPPL value. This may reflect, for example, activities that are paid for by the trust centrally, rather than by individual academies.

- The 2022-23 schools supplementary grant has been rolled into the schools NFF. Adding the grant funding to the NFF ensures that this additional funding forms part of schools' core budgets and will continue to be provided.

We are targeting a greater proportion of schools NFF funding towards deprived pupils than ever before—with 9.8% of the schools NFF allocated to deprivation in 2023-24. This will help schools in their vital work to close attainment gaps and level up educational opportunities. In 2023-24, schools in the highest quartile of deprivation (measured by the percentage of pupils who have been eligible for free school meals over the past six years) will, on average, attract larger per-pupil funding increases than less deprived schools.

As previously confirmed in the Government's response to the consultation on completing our reforms to the NFF, 2023-24 will also be our first year of transition to the "direct" schools NFF—with our end point being a system in which, to ensure full fairness and consistency in funding, every mainstream school in England is funded through the same national formula without adjustment through local funding formulae. In 2023-24 local authorities will only be allowed to use NFF factors in their local formulae, and must use all NFF factors, except the locally determined premises factors. Local authorities will also be required to move their local formulae factors 10% closer to the NFF values, compared to where they were in 2022-23, unless their local formulae are already so close to the NFF that they are classed as "mirroring" the NFF. This follows the positive response to these proposals in the consultation last year. Alongside the NFF publications, today we have published an analysis of the impact of this initial move towards the direct NFF in the national funding formula for schools and high needs 2023-24 policy document.

Central school services funding is provided to local authorities for the ongoing responsibilities they have for all schools. The total provisional funding for ongoing responsibilities is £292 million in 2023-24. In line with the process introduced for 2020-21, to withdraw funding over time for the historic commitments local authorities entered into before 2013-14, funding for historic commitments will decrease by a further 20% in 2023-24.

Confirmed allocations of schools, high needs and central schools services funding for 2023-24 will be published in December. These will be based on the latest pupil data at that point.

[HCWS225]



### National Tutoring Programme: Performance Data

**The Minister of State, Department for Education (Will Quince):** This update presents the latest performance data for the National Tutoring Programme the Government are publishing today. On 26 May, the Secretary of State for Education (James Cleverly) announced an estimated 1.2 million courses had been started through the programme since the start of this academic year. I am now pleased to advise the House our latest estimates show that, up to 26 June, 1.78 million courses have started this year, and just over two million since the programme's launch. This increase of more than half a million represents good progress towards the Government's ambitious target of delivering up to six million courses by the end of the academic year 2023-24. My Department estimates that more than 80% of schools are now participating, and more than three quarters of the courses started this year are being delivered through the "School-Led" option, by schools using grant funding directly allocated to them. I will update the House on the complete year's performance by the end of 2022.

The Secretary of State for Education also advised the House on 26 May that we had launched procurement activity to appoint delivery partners for the '22-23 and '23-24 academic years to support schools to develop and deliver a high-quality tutoring offer. I am pleased to report that, following the open competitive exercise, we are today announcing the successful applicants. To quality assure Tuition Partners, we are appointing Tribal, with whom the Department currently has various contracts, including for moderating NPQ awards, and the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics. To train new tutors, we are appointing the Education Development Trust, which currently delivers NTP tutor training to staff already employed in schools who want to become SLT tutors, ECF/NPQs and the Behaviour Hubs programme. To recruit and deploy academic mentors, we are appointing Cognition Education, with which the Department currently contracts for the Career Change Programme, and which provides subject matter expertise to T Level providers.

Following our 26 May announcement of the methodology for allocating tutoring funding to schools next year, this week we will publish academic year '22-23 National Tutoring Programme funding allocations for each school.

[HCWS226]

### FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

#### GNI / ODA Target 2021

**The Minister for Asia and the Middle East (Amanda Milling):** In November 2020, my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister, then the Foreign Secretary, delivered a statement outlining that, due to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the economy and as a result the public finances, the UK would temporarily reduce the official development assistance (ODA) budget from 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to 0.5% from

2021, returning to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. With the UK having experienced the worst economic contraction in almost 300 years, it is with regret that we have had to take this temporary measure.

The International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 ("the 2015 Act") envisages situations in which a departure from meeting the target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA may be necessary: for example, in response to

"fiscal circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of meeting the target on taxation, public spending and public borrowing".

The FCDO's annual report and accounts 2021-2022, published today, report that the 0.7% target was not met in 2021, on a provisional basis, and a statement was laid before Parliament, as required by section 2 of the 2015 Act. This statement is in the same terms as that statement, which is published as an unnumbered Act Paper.

In a written ministerial statement on 12 July 2021, my right hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer reaffirmed that the decision to reduce the ODA budget to 0.5% is temporary, and that the Government are committed to the 2015 Act and to return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA once the fiscal situation allows. Consistent with the Government's fiscal rules, the Government commit to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA when the independent Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) fiscal forecast confirms that, on a sustainable basis, we are not borrowing for day-to-day spending and underlying debt is falling, as set out in July 2021.

Each year during this spending review period SR21 from 2022-23 to 2024-25, the Government will review, in accordance with the 2015 Act, whether a return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast provided by the OBR.

The House of Commons voted to approve this approach to returning to 0.7% on 13 July 2021.

[HCWS231]

### Humanitarian Situation in Afghanistan

**The Minister for Europe (Graham Stuart):** My noble Friend the Minister for South and Central Asia, North Africa, United Nations and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following written ministerial statement:

The UK has committed £286 million in financial year 2022-23 for Afghanistan. This aid will provide life-saving support to the most vulnerable, especially women and girls. We are working with aid agencies to ensure that marginalised groups have equal, safe and dignified access to assistance and services. Our funding has included support for access to sustainable clean water and sanitation, nutrition treatment and primary healthcare services, as well as support in response to gender-based violence.

The earthquake in Paktika and Khost provinces in eastern Afghanistan on 22 June exacerbated the humanitarian situation and killed over 1,000 people and injured over 2,900. The Government offered support only hours after the earthquake struck. UK aid was already being delivered to the affected areas prior to the earthquake via the UN, non-Government organisations and the Red Cross. The Government rapidly allocated £3 million for immediate life-saving support to people affected. £2 million has been disbursed to the International Federation of the Red Cross, £500,000 to the Norwegian

Refugee Council and £500,000 to the International Rescue Committee to provide shelter, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene support.

The Government's response to the earthquake is part of our concerted ongoing humanitarian support. Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is affecting just under half of the population, with 18.9 million facing acute food insecurity. Afghanistan remains one of the world's most severe food security crises. People continue to turn to drastic measures to feed their families. Over 6 million people have been internally displaced and millions of children are out of school, in part because the Taliban still prevent girls from attending secondary school.

The UK has disbursed £140 million in humanitarian aid since April 2022 including £50 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, £70 million to the World Food Programme and £12 million to the United Nations Children's Fund. Through the World Food Programme, the UK aims to support over 4 million people with food assistance. All our funding is provided directly to humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan. All UK aid is subject to strict monitoring and verification to ensure it is only used to help the vulnerable people it is intended for.

Humanitarian partners report they are increasingly facing interference attempts by the Taliban and other armed groups in the delivery of independent, equitable and safe humanitarian assistance. There have been instances of periodic disruption in aid delivery in specific locations, however to date, UK funded agencies continue to deliver. The UK regularly emphasises to the Taliban the need for humanitarian organisations to operate independently in the delivery of assistance and to respect the rights of women and girls.

The UK continues to engage closely with donors and played an instrumental role in supporting the World Bank Board's decision to make the remaining \$1 billion in the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund available. \$793 million of programming is currently in the process of being mobilised, focusing on community projects and livelihoods, health and food security.

The Foreign Secretary and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon are in regular contact with their international counterparts on Afghanistan. At the G7 Foreign Ministers meeting in May, the Foreign Secretary discussed the current security, humanitarian, and human rights situation as well as longer term prospects for the country and region with her counterparts. Ministers have regular discussions with humanitarian actors working in Afghanistan, most recently during Lord Ahmad's trip to Geneva in June 2022, where he met the Red Cross and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

[HCWS222]

### **Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan: Annual Report to Parliament 2021**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Vicky Ford):** I wish to inform the House that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, together with the Ministry of Defence, is today publishing the 2021 annual report on progress against the UK's fourth national action plan on women, peace and security.

Published on 18 January 2018, the national action plan sets out the Government's objectives on the women, peace and security agenda for the period 2018 to 2022. This is the UK Government strategy for how we will meet our women, peace and security commitments, under UN Security Council resolution 1325, to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution and in building peace and security.

The report published today outlines our progress against the national action plan over the last 12 months, including our work in the nine focus countries of Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Syria, and Yemen as a priority country. It is centred around seven strategic outcomes where we expect to see progress over the five-year duration of the NAP.

The progress report will be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS216]

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration**

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):** The 50th report of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB), the 35th report of the NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB) and the 44th report of the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) are being published today. The reports will be presented to Parliament and published on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk).

I am grateful to all the chairs and members of the review bodies for their reports, and I welcome their robust, independent recommendations and observations. I am accepting the pay bodies' recommendations in full, recognising the vital contributions NHS workers make to our country.

This pay award comes on top of the 3% last year for staff under the remits of NHSPRB and DDRB, when pay uplifts were paused in the wider public sector. This year, most overall pay awards in the public sector are similar to those in the private sector. Survey data suggests median private sector pay settlement, which is the metric most comparable to these pay review body decisions, was 4% in the 3 months to May.

The NHSPRB has recommended a £1,400 consolidated uplift to the full-time equivalent salary for all Agenda for Change (AfC) staff. This will be enhanced for pay points at the top of band 6 and all pay points in band 7 so it is equal to a 4% uplift.

The DDRB has recommended a 4.5% increase to national salary pay scales, pay ranges or the pay elements of contracts for all groups included in their remit this year (consultants, speciality and associate specialist (SAS) doctors on the closed 2008 contracts, salaried general medical practitioners (GMPs) and general dental practitioners).

The SSRB has recommended a 3% increase for all very senior managers (VSMs) and executive senior managers (ESMs), with a further 0.5% to ameliorate the erosion of differentials and facilitate the introduction of the new VSM pay framework.

After careful consideration of the pay review body reports, we have decided to accept the pay review bodies' recommendations in full. In doing so, we have committed to:

uplifting the full-time equivalent salaries of staff on Agenda for Change contracts—over 1 million NHS staff—by £1,400 on a consolidated basis, and enhanced for staff in bands 6 and 7, those with full-time equivalent basic pay up to £45,839,

so it is equal to a 4% pay uplift. This means the lowest paid will receive a 9.3% increase compared to 2021-22; uplifting the salaries of consultants (c.55,000 doctors) by 4.5% on a consolidated basis; uplifting the minimum and maximum pay range for Salaried GMPs (c.15,000 doctors) by 4.5% on a consolidated basis; uplifting the GMP trainers grant and GMP appraisers grant by 4.5%; uplifting the pay element of the general dental practitioners contract (c.24,000 dentists) by 4.5% on a consolidated basis; increasing the overall investment in the SAS workforce (c.12,000 doctors) on average, by 4.5%. The detailed arrangements for implementing this increase alongside the reformed 2021 SAS contract will be set out in due course; and

uplifting the salaries of all very senior managers and executive senior managers (c.2,500 staff) by 3% and providing NHS organisations with additional flexibility to provide a further 0.5% to ameliorate the erosion of differentials and facilitate the introduction of the new VSM pay framework. Further information will be shared with NHS employers in due course.

All pay awards will be backdated to 1 April 2022. This pay award is only applicable to NHS staff in England. The 2022-23 pay uplift for NHS staff directly employed by NHS providers will be funded by NHSE through system allocations.

The DDRB was not asked to make recommendations for staff groups in multi-year deals (contractor GMPs, doctors and dentists in training or SAS doctors on the 2021 contracts). However, we note the wider comments made by the DDRB regarding these groups.

This is an annual process and as is always the case, decisions are considered in light of the fiscal and economic context and ensuring awards recognise the value of NHS staff whilst delivering value for the taxpayer.

While it is right that we reward our hard-working NHS staff with a pay rise, this needs to be proportionate and balanced with the need to deliver NHS services and manage the country's long term economic health and public sector finances, along with inflationary pressures. Sustained higher levels of inflation would have a worse impact on people's real incomes in the long run, which is why we need proportionate and balanced pay increases recommended by the independent pay review bodies.

In written and oral evidence to the pay review bodies, the Government set out what was affordable within the NHS's spending review settlement. The pay review bodies have recommended pay awards above this level. This Government are committed to living within its means and delivering value for the taxpayer, and therefore we are reprioritising within existing departmental funding whilst minimising the impact on frontline services.

The pay awards should be viewed in parallel with the £37 billion package of support the Government have provided for the cost of living, targeted to those most in need.

#### *Salaried general medical practitioners*

For salaried GMPs the minimum and maximum pay range set out in the model terms and conditions will be uplifted. As independent contractors to the NHS, it is for GMP practices to determine uplifts in pay for their employees.

#### *Clinical excellence awards and clinical impact awards*

The Government have recently reformed the national awards in England, now named national clinical impact awards. The reforms aim to address issues with inequality previously raised by the DDRB.

Government acknowledges the DDRB's comments on local clinical excellence awards and their reasons for not recommending an increase in their value this year.

[HCWS236]

### **Access to NHS Dentistry**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (James Morris):** Access to dentistry was severely impacted by the pandemic. The Government provided unprecedented financial support to the sector during the covid-19 pandemic to ensure that practices remained viable and able to offer treatment during the pandemic and to continue now, as we learn to live with covid-19.

Taking into account the evolving guidance on infection and prevention control NHS England has worked, throughout the pandemic, with the sector to increase levels of dental activity, while keeping dentists, patients and their teams safe. From the beginning of July this year, NHS England has set the expectation that practices will return to delivering treatment at pre-pandemic levels.

With NHS dentists operating at below 100% capacity for over two years, many people have not been able to regularly access a dental professional. We are taking action to address this, in a way which is fair for patients, dentists and the taxpayer.

In April 2021, the Government set out that any changes to NHS dentistry must meet six tests:

- Be designed with and enjoy the support of the profession
- Improve oral health outcomes (or, where sufficient data are not yet available, credibly be on track to do so)
- Reduce perverse incentives for dental care that is not clinically necessary
- Demonstrably prevent the loss of NHS commissioned dental activity to private pay
- Improve patient access to NHS care, with a specific focus on addressing disparities, particularly those linked to deprivation and ethnicity
- Be affordable within available NHS resources made available by Government, including taking account of dental charges

NHSE fully engaged the profession and patient representatives through an advisory board, technical groups and engagement events from May to September 2021 to fully understand the issues and potential solutions. The improvements set out here result from that engagement and have been refined through consultation with the British Dental Association and wider dental sector representatives.

These initial changes are aimed at improving information for patients; improving the incentives in the contract to deliver more complex care; and enabling the NHS to better work with the sector to ensure that dental care is delivered.

#### *Improve care for high-needs patients*

We have responded to the call from dentists to improve the remuneration system to incentivise complex preventive and restorative treatment. We will make changes to the way dentists are remunerated for the range of treatments that are currently covered in band 2 treatments. Dentists will be paid more when they need to do three or more fillings or extractions and provide endodontic care.



To provide the capacity to deliver the additional care required by higher-needs patients, we will support practices to adhere more closely to the National Institute of Clinical Excellence guidance on recall intervals which indicate that a healthy adult with good oral health need only see a dentist every two years and a child every one year. We want to decrease the volume of any low-value clinical care provided through NHS dentistry, for the NHS and patients themselves.

These changes will support dentists and patients in getting the care they need as we start to tackle the pandemic backlogs in care.

#### *Promote more effective use of skill mix*

Dental care can be provided by a wide range of dental professionals including dental nurses, dental hygienists, and dental therapists. We will make clear that there is no legal barrier to the increased use of these professionals in the provision of NHS care and seek to increase their use in the provision of NHS care, as is already the case in private practice. NHS England will issue clear guidance on how to utilise these team members to provide NHS care that is within their scope of practice and which they have the skills, competence and experience to deliver safely and effectively in the best interests of patients. We will also work with the NHS Business Services Authority to make sure there are no administrative barriers to more effective use of this skill mix in practices providing NHS care.

This will help improve access to NHS care and make dental care professional roles including dentists more fulfilling and rewarding, and help to tackle workforce challenges in underserved areas.

#### *Maximise patient access from available dental resources*

NHS England will work with local commissioners to help ensure that dentists are able to deliver high-quality care to patients. Most dental practices consistently deliver their contracted amount of dental activity, but there are some that do not, and some that want to deliver more NHS dentistry.

We want to enable high-performing practices to expand to deliver more NHS care, particularly in those areas where NHS dentistry is less prevalent. To incentivise this, we will enable, subject to commissioner agreement, practices to deliver up to 110% contracted activity.

Where contractors are unable to deliver their contracted activity in-year or persistently across years, re-commissioners are currently limited in their ability to re-commission that activity to contractors better able to do so. In 2019-20, 13% of contractors had consistently failed to deliver. This lost activity represents around 4.6 million units of dental activity per annum.

As an initial step NHSE will encourage commissioners and contractors to work together so that where a practice has not delivered 30% of contracted activity by mid-year, 10% of annual activity will be rebased with agreement of the contractor. For contractors that consistently do not meet their targets over a number of years, we will enable NHSE to rebase contracts to achievable levels and release unused funding to commission care from other providers.

#### *Improve communication with patients*

Patients told us that they have difficulty finding an NHS dentist, in part because of the limited information on the NHS website. We will make the updating of the

NHS website and directory of services a contractual requirement for dental practices. This will make it easier for patients to find a dentist who can deliver the care they need and for the system to refer patients to practices with capacity.

#### *Recruitment of dentists*

International professionals form a large proportion of joiners to the General Dental Council (GDC) register—indeed, in 2020, 35% of new GDC dentist registrants qualified outside the UK. They are a vital part of the UK's dentistry workforce, ensuring that there is more capacity for dental treatment than UK graduates can provide alone

As part of the ongoing reforms to healthcare professional regulation, officials have identified prescriptive detail which restricts the GDC from modernising its international registration processes. This may in turn deter safe and competent professionals from seeking registration to practise in the UK. The Department is therefore taking forward a legislative change which will:

- support flexibility for the GDC to ensure that international processes are proportionate and streamlined, while continuing to robustly protect patient safety;

- enable the GDC to increase the number of overseas registration exam (ORE) seats it offers by charging a fee which covers the cost of the exam, explore alternative ORE providers, and make changes to the structure of exam and applicant information which will support an increased pass rate; and

- allow the GDC to explore alternative pathways to international registration, such as recognition of programmes of education delivered outside the UK, or registration based on recognition of the qualification held by an applicant, as it considers appropriate.

Current arrangements ensure that UK regulators continue to automatically recognise relevant European economic area (EEA) qualifications of healthcare professionals, including dentists. This enables qualified dentists from other EEA countries to continue to practise in the UK and we want to continue to facilitate their vital contribution to the dentistry workforce. EU exit legislation places a duty on the Secretary of State to carry out a review of the operation of these provisions at the start of 2023. The system of automatic recognition will not terminate unless further legislation is made to bring the current system to an end.

#### *Next steps*

These changes are the first steps in our work to support NHS dentistry and patients in areas where they continue to struggle with access. We are committed to working with the sector to consider any further changes which meet the six tests set out above, in particular regarding improved access to urgent care and further workforce and payment reform.

[HCWS223]

### **Draft Down Syndrome Act Guidance: National Call for Evidence**

**The Minister for Care and Mental Health (Gillian Keegan):** Today, I am delighted to announce the launch of a national call for evidence to inform the development of the draft Down Syndrome Act Guidance.

There are around 47,000 people with Down's syndrome in the UK and we know that people with Down's syndrome often face significant challenges and can struggle to access appropriate services and support.

I am grateful to the right hon. Dr Liam Fox MP for bringing forward the private Member's Bill which is now the Down Syndrome Act. This important legislation aims to improve access to services and life outcomes for people with Down's syndrome. It does this by requiring that relevant authorities when providing certain health, social care, education and housing services take account of guidance issued by the Government—the guidance. The guidance will set out the steps it would be appropriate to take to meet the specific needs of people with Down's syndrome.

Since the Act received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022, we have been engaging with stakeholders and developing the national call for evidence which will inform the guidance.

This call for evidence is an important stage in the process leading to the publication of the guidance in 2023. It will allow us to collect invaluable information over the next few months, which will then be used to inform and support the production of draft guidance. The draft guidance will in turn be published for full public consultation before final guidance is published next year.

Through the call for evidence, we want to hear about the specific support needs of people with Down's syndrome and examples of best practice in service delivery from across the country. We want to hear views on other areas that guidance could cover such as employment support and potential linkages with other genetic conditions that we committed to explore during the Act's passage through Parliament.

We want to hear from all relevant stakeholders including people with Down's syndrome, their families and carers, organisations that represent them, and professionals such as those working in health, social care, education and housing.

The process must be as accessible as possible and therefore the call for evidence will run for the maximum duration of 16 weeks. Alongside the online questionnaire and an easy read version, we will work with voluntary sector organisations to undertake workshops and focus groups to input into the call for evidence. We want to make sure we gain the views of everyone, including children and young people with Down's syndrome, their families and carers.

Following this national call for evidence, we will continue to engage with people with Down's syndrome and other stakeholders to develop the guidance. The draft guidance will also be subject, in due course, to a full public consultation.

The guidance represents a real opportunity to improve the way that services are arranged and delivered but it is essential that it is based on the views and expertise of those it will affect. I therefore strongly encourage everyone to complete the call for evidence and share widely.

I am determined that people with Down's syndrome should have the opportunity to be fully included in our society and to have access to the services and support that enable that, throughout their lifetime.

[HCWS224]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Police Remuneration Review Body Eighth Report: Police Officer Pay and Allowances

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):** The eighth report of the Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) was published today. The body considered the pay and allowances for police officers up to and including the chief officer ranks in England and Wales. The Government value the independent and expert advice of the PRRB. We thank the Chair and members for their thoughtful commentary and observations.

Our police officers play a vital role in this country, fighting crime and keeping us safe. They do an extraordinary job under increasingly extraordinary circumstances, and it is right that they are fairly rewarded.

The review body recommends a consolidated increase of £1,900 to all police officer pay points for all ranks from 1 September 2022, equivalent to 5% overall. It is targeted at those on the lowest pay points to provide an uplift of up to 8.8%, and between 0.6% and 1.8% for those on the highest pay points. The Government recognise that increases in the cost of living are having a significant impact on the lower paid. It is within this context and after careful consideration that we have chosen to accept this recommendation in full. As at March 2022 there are 142,526 police officers who will receive this consolidated increase.

The PRRB also recommends that the Police Constable Degree Apprentice minimum starting salary—currently £19,164—should be raised to pay point 0—£23,556 with effect from 1 September 2022. This recommendation is accepted in full.

The review body further recommends an increase to London weighting and the dog handlers' allowance of 5%; and that parties should review the requirement and appropriate level for the dog handlers' allowance. These recommendations are also accepted in full.

To support this, the Home Office will, from within its existing budgets, provide forces with additional funding for pay over the spending review period of at least £70 million in 2022-23, £140 million in 2023-24 and £140 million in 2024-25.

Pay awards this year strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, while delivering value for the taxpayer, not increasing the country's debt further, and being careful not to drive even higher prices in the future. Sustained higher levels of inflation would have a far bigger impact on people's real incomes in the long run than the proportionate and balanced pay increases recommended by the independent pay review bodies now. These awards should be viewed in parallel with the Government's £37 billion package of wider support for the cost of living, which is targeted towards those most in need.

Most overall pay awards in the public sector are similar to those in the private sector. Survey data suggests the median private sector pay settlement, which is the metric most comparable to these pay review body decisions, was 4% in the three months to May. Median full-time salaries are higher in the public sector, and public sector workers also benefit from some of the most generous pensions available.

[HCWS238]

## PCCs and PFCCs: Pay and Allowances

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):** The Senior Salaries Review Body published its report today. The SSRB considered the pay and allowances for Police and Crime Commissioners and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales. The Government value the independent and expert advice of the SSRB. We thank the Chair and members for their thoughtful commentary and observations.

The SSRB's report recommends:

PCCs should move to three pay groups, in line with the proposals for chief constables.

With effect from 1 May 2022, PCC pay should be increased to:

Group 1: £108,800

Group 2: £94,300

Group 3: £83,200

PCC pay increases in future years in line with the SSRB-recommended annual pay increase for chief police officers between formal SSRB reviews in line with the electoral cycle.

A pay supplement of 7.5% for PCCs taking on the additional responsibility for fire and rescue governance.

A loss-of-office payment for PCCs in line with that available to Members of Parliament.

That home security for PCCs is treated as a business expense and not a personal benefit.

PCCs and PFCCs play an important role in reducing crime and protecting the public, providing their communities with the opportunity to have a direct say in policing in their area through their locally elected and accountable PCC or PFCC.

It would be inappropriate for me to make significant or structural changes to PCC remuneration. I believe these issues should be considered when the future structure of chief police officer pay is settled. Therefore, we have chosen not to accept in full the SSRB's recommendations.

The Government have decided that with effect from 1 May 2022, the current PCC salary pay bands will be increased by £1,900, in line with the award for all police officers.

[HCWS239]

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### Canada Trade Negotiations: Update

**The Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):** The second round of UK-Canada Free Trade Agreement negotiations began on 20 June and concluded on 24 June. Owing to concurrent negotiations with India and CPTPP, a limited number of sessions will be held outside of this week, including goods market access, scheduled for mid-July.

The negotiations were hosted by Canada and conducted in a hybrid fashion; 40 UK officials travelled to Ottawa for in-person discussions and a further 145 attended virtually from the United Kingdom. Technical discussions were held across 34 policy areas over 52 separate sessions.

During this round, the UK set out its policy positions, having tabled text for the majority of chapters. Discussions were constructive, reflecting a determination from both sides to make progress, although we are only in the early stages of negotiations.

The negotiations continue to reflect our shared ambition to secure a progressive deal which looks to build on the UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement, and strengthens our existing trading relationship, already worth over £21 billion in 2021.

The third round of negotiations is due to take place in September 2022.

We remain clear that any deal the Government strike must be in the best interests of the British people and the economy.

The Government will keep Parliament updated as these negotiations progress.

[HCWS220]

## JUSTICE

### Judiciary Pay Award

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab):** I am today announcing the Government's decision on pay for the judiciary.

The Government received the Senior Salary Review Body's (SSRB) report on 28 June 2022. This will be presented to Parliament and published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The Government value the independent expertise and insight of the SSRB and have considered the advice in the report.

The recommendation made by the SSRB for the judiciary is for a pay award of 3.5% for all judicial office holders within the remit group for 2022-23, applied equally to all salary groups.

I intend to reject the SSRB's recommendation and propose a 3% pay award for all judicial office holders within the remit group for 2022-23. This ensures that the judiciary are not receiving a pay award in excess of what is on offer to court staff and senior civil servants.

This increase, together with the Government delivering on their commitment to introduce a new judicial pension scheme, demonstrates the value the Government place on our independent judiciary.

[HCWS234]

### Prisons Update

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab):** I am today confirming the Government's decision on pay awards for prison staff. Throughout the pandemic and beyond, our officers (alongside all Prison Service staff) have gone above and beyond to protect the public and give prisoners the best possible chance at a new start. Their efforts are hugely appreciated.

We have carefully considered the Prison Service Pay Review Body's (PSPRB) recommendations on the 2022-23 pay award, given the economic context, and I am announcing that we are accepting in full the recommendations made by the review body for all prison staff between operational support grade and governing governor for implementation in this financial year. For



clarity, this means accepting all recommendations from the Prison Service Pay Review Body, excluding recommendation 4.

This will deliver a pay rise of at least a 4% base pay increase for all prison staff between operational support grade and governors (bands 2-11). This pay award will be paid this autumn and will be backdated to 1 April 2022.

In addition, a number of targeted pay rises will be made for our lowest paid staff.

Band 2 operational support grades on modernised terms and conditions will receive an increase of £1,500 (recommendation 3). This fully replaces the market supplements for those band 2 staff who currently receive them.

Band 3 prison officers will receive a base pay increase of £2,500 (£3,000 for operational staff when the linked unsocial hours payment is included) from September 2022 (recommendation 5), offset against market supplement payments for those that receive them.

This reflects my commitment to supporting the recruitment and retention of prison staff and recognises the essential contribution they make every day.

Pay awards this year strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, while delivering value for the taxpayer, not increasing the country's debt further, and being careful not to drive even higher prices in the future. Sustained higher levels of inflation would have a far bigger impact on people's real incomes in the long run than the proportionate and balanced pay increases recommended by the independent pay review bodies now. These pay awards should be viewed in parallel with the £37 billion package of support the Government have provided for the cost of living, targeted at those most in need.

I will not be accepting the PSPRB's recommendation for a 5% pay increase for prison group directors (band 12), recommendation 4. Such an increase would be inconsistent with the approach taken for other senior roles across the public sector. However, I am pleased to announce that prison group directors will still receive a 3% pay rise, to ensure parity and fairness with their contemporaries in the civil service.

Most overall pay awards in the public sector are similar to those in the private sector. Survey data suggests median private sector pay settlement, which is the metric most comparable to these pay review body decisions, was 4% in the three months to May. Median full-time salaries are higher in the public sector, and public sector workers also benefit from some of the most generous pensions available.

I would like to thank the Prison Service Pay Review Body for its valuable advice and response to the Government's evidence.

The report has been laid before Parliament today, and a copy can be found as an attachment online. I am grateful to the chair and members of the review body for its report.

Attachments can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2022-07-19/HCWS232/>

[HCWS232]

## TRANSPORT

### Jet Zero Strategy

#### **The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

Today I am launching the jet zero strategy—setting out this Government's approach for achieving net zero aviation by 2050.

It builds on the Government's net zero strategy, as well as the transport decarbonisation plan, which outlines the commitments and actions needed to decarbonise the entire transport system.

The jet zero strategy sets a trajectory for the sector to reach net zero by 2050—or jet zero, as we define it. Its delivery will see UK aviation emissions reduce even further than the levels called for by our climate advisors, with a pathway that should see emissions never again reach the pre-pandemic levels of 2019.

To deliver this outcome, alongside our jet zero target we aim for domestic aviation and airports to be net zero and zero emission respectively by 2040.

It is a strategy that will both decarbonise the sector and allow people to keep flying. Pre pandemic, aviation contributed at least £22 billion to our economy and 230,000 direct jobs across the country. It is crucial that we support the rapid development of technologies that maintain the benefits of air travel while maximising the opportunities that decarbonisation brings to the UK.

Those opportunities include the domestic production of sustainable aviation fuels, which could support up to 5,200 jobs by 2035 and help regenerate industrial sites across the country, notably in areas outside London, such as the north-east, contributing to levelling up the UK and improving our fuel security. We have today set out a new commitment of having at least five commercial SAF plants under construction by 2025, and we have also confirmed that the Government will mandate at least 10% SAF to be blended into conventional aviation fuels by the end of the decade—one of the most ambitious targets globally.

Bolstering that effort means investing in pioneering projects. This is why today we are also launching the advanced fuels fund with a £165 million competition, building on previous funding such as the £15 million green fuels, green skies competition, to stimulate the start-up of commercial SAF production facilities in the UK. Alongside this, we have also announced that we are progressing to the next phase of our £1 million competition to deliver the first ever net zero transatlantic flight powered by 100% SAF.

The goal of reaching net zero aviation emissions by 2050 sets a clear objective, but meeting our ambition requires us to drive forward the multiple solutions necessary for its delivery. Therefore, our approach to implementing this strategy is founded on three key principles:

**International Leadership**—this strategy restates our commitment to taking a leading role in tackling international aviation emissions through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

**Delivered in Partnership**—the Government will need to work collaboratively with all partners, from the aviation industry to the public, through our pioneering jet zero council, as well as other initiatives.

Maximising Opportunities—the jet zero transition presents unique opportunities to create new jobs, industries and technologies across the entire UK sector, decarbonise air travel, and level up the economy.

These principles will influence our activity to make sure we pursue the right options and will guide our progress on six clear policy measures launched in the strategy today.

We intend to improve the efficiency of our existing aviation system, from aircraft to airports and airspace. For example, we will improve fuel efficiency by 2% every year, providing a further £3.7 million in 2022-23 to support airports to modernise their airspace.

There will be increased support for sustainable aviation fuels, by creating secure and growing UK SAF demand through a SAF mandate that will require at least 10% of jet fuel to be made from sustainable sources by 2030.

This strategy outlines our ambition to expedite the development of zero-emission aircraft, with the aspiration of having zero-emission routes connecting places across the UK by 2030.

We will invest in greenhouse gas removal technologies to drive decarbonisation and offset any residual emissions, and enhance the UK emissions trading scheme.

And lastly, we will increase our understanding of the non-CO<sub>2</sub> impacts of aviation, the effects of which remain uncertain.

As we act in each of these areas, we will give ourselves the headroom to evolve. The Government are committed to reviewing the strategy every five years, and, if necessary, adapting our approach based on the progress we make.

The UK is setting an example of the ambition needed to tackle climate change, and the launch of today's plan provides a clear path to building a sustainable aviation sector for generations to come.

The jet zero strategy will future-proof the aviation industry, securing the economic benefits of new green jobs and industries, and delivering the technologies and fuels that will keep passengers flying in a decarbonised world.

[HCWS229]

### **Contingent Liability: Space Industry Act 2018**

#### **The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

The Government have bold spaceflight ambitions that we outlined in the national space strategy that we published last September. The UK has a thriving satellite manufacturing industry and we excel at providing satellite-based communications and high-end navigation services. The space sector directly employs 45,000 people in the UK and satellites support at least £360 billion of UK GDP.

However, the UK is currently reliant on other launch countries to put UK-built and UK-operated satellites into space—including those critical to our defence and security. Through the Space Industry Act 2018 (the 2018 Act) and the Space Industry Regulations 2021 (the 2021 Regulations), we have established the regulatory framework and appointed the Civil Aviation Authority as the spaceflight regulator, to enable the licensing of spaceflight activities from UK spaceports.

Space-based technologies provide fundamental services to the daily lives of everyone in this country—from supporting defence and security, enabling faster and more efficient travel, enabling our smart phones and providing television services to receiving better weather forecasts. Having a UK launch capability will generate and support many additional high-skilled jobs up and down the country—and give the UK greater control and increased options for getting our satellites into space, which can provide benefits for all.

I have therefore today laid a departmental minute describing a new contingent liability that the Department for Transport plans to undertake in respect of future launch operator licences granted under the 2018 Act.

The liability arises from a combination of the UK being a party to the United Nations convention on international liability for damage caused by space objects 1972, powers and obligations under the 2018 Act to indemnify operators and those who sustain injury or damage in the United Kingdom as a result of spaceflight activities, and limits placed on a launch operator's liability by or under the 2018 Act and the 2021 regulations. The circumstances giving rise to the contingent liability are fully explained in the departmental minute.

A potential contingent liability will be created each time a launch activity is conducted under the 2018 Act. The liability is unquantifiable—but we anticipate the likelihood of any liability arising above an operator's liability limit to be very low.

The Department for Transport will keep Parliament informed of the specific indemnities entered into under this notification by reporting on them in our annual report and accounts, which are laid before Parliament.

HM Treasury has approved the contingent liability in principle. If, during the period of 14 parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before Parliament, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a parliamentary question or by otherwise raising the matter in Parliament, final approval to proceed with incurring the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

The action I have taken today is another step towards achieving the first small satellite launch from Europe this year—and re-affirms this Government's bold commitment to establishing the UK as one of the most attractive and innovative space economies in the world—and the leading provider of commercial small satellite launch in Europe.

[HCWS221]

### **Transpennine Route Upgrade**

#### **The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

Today, 19 July 2022, the Government have made available £959 million of additional funding to continue to progress the delivery of the ambitious Transpennine Route Upgrade.

This funding is a significant milestone, and another step towards upgrading the key East-West rail artery across the North of England to further this Government's levelling up and decarbonisation objectives.

In addition to progressing the design of aspects of the upgrade, this funding will enable further on-the-ground delivery of electrification and journey time improvement works, mostly west of Leeds. One of the first tangible

benefits will be enabling electric trains to run between Manchester and Salford by the middle of the decade. We are also developing scope that will enable the Transpennine Route Upgrade to become the first phase of Northern Powerhouse Rail, including plans to unlock freight flows and take thousands of lorries off our roads.

We are also more than trebling the investment in the Transpennine Route Upgrade from £2.9 billion to between £9.0 billion and £11.5 billion. This additional investment will enable the roll out of digital signalling technology,

electrification of the full route and the provision of additional tracks for commercial and freight services, giving rail users more reliable, more punctual, more comfortable and greener rail journeys.

To date, the Government have approved over £2 billion of funding for the upgrade. The further £959 million of funding reiterates this Government's commitment to transforming rail connectivity across the north, as part of the Integrated Rail Plan.

[HCWS24]



# Petition

*Tuesday 19 July 2022*

## PRESENTED PETITION

*Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor*

### **Issuing of passports by the Home Office**

*The petition of residents of the constituency of Glasgow North,*

Declares that many people in Glasgow North and across the country are experiencing significant delays in the processing of their passport applications by the UK Home Office; further that many are waiting for considerably longer than the advisory 10 week processing time, and

that access to premium and expedited services is difficult and does not guarantee the timely processing of an application; and further that as a result many plans for travel have been altered or cancelled, with people missing out on long planned holidays, business opportunities, or visits to family and friends which have not been possible during the years of the pandemic.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to significantly increase the capacity of the Home Office to process passport applications and ensure its commitments to processing times and customer service are met in all possible circumstances.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[*Presented by Patrick Grady.*]

[P002759]



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# PETITION

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No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons*,

**not later than  
Tuesday 26 July 2022**

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PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

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