HER MAJESTY’S GOVERNMENT

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(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. GORDON BROWN, MP, JUNE 2007)

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5 January 2010
PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to report to the House the death of David Leslie Taylor, Member for North-West Leicestershire. David was a highly assiduous, principled and independent-minded Member who respected the House and was respected by it. Truly, he was a House of Commons man, and I am sure that Members on both sides of the House will join me in mourning the loss of our colleague and in extending our sympathy to his widow Pam, his daughters Rachel, Sarah, Jessica and Catherine, his wider family and his many friends.

Oral Answers to Questions

JUSTICE

The Secretary of State was asked—

Drug Misuse (Prisons)

1. Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): What recent steps his Department has taken to reduce the level of drug misuse in prisons. [308920]

15. Mr. Shailesh Vara (North-West Cambridgeshire) (Con): What steps his Department has taken to reduce the level of drug misuse in prisons. [308934]

16. Ann Winterton (Congleton) (Con): What recent steps have been taken by his Department to reduce the availability of illegal drugs in the prison system. [308935]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Maria Eagle): I begin by echoing your views, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the House, and to say how sorry we are not to see David Taylor in his place today. As well as a valued colleague, he was a magistrate and an assiduous attender of Justice questions. I am sure that he will be missed on both sides of the House.

Drug misuse in prisons, as measured by random mandatory drug testing, has fallen by 68 per cent. since 1996-97. A comprehensive framework is in place in prisons both to reduce the supply of drugs and to provide drug treatment. Good progress has been made in implementing the Blakey recommendations to improve measures to reduce the supply of drugs in prisons.

Philip Davies: Our proceedings certainly will not be the same without David Taylor, and he will be missed on both sides of the House.

Given that so many drugs are brought into prison by visitors to prisoners, why do the Government not do more to encourage or make mandatory closed visits behind screens in order to stop drugs being brought into prisons?

Maria Eagle: Visitors are one means by which drugs and other contraband can be brought into prisons. We have a number of ways of making sure that we detect such things—for example, active and passive drugs dogs, random searches and intelligence-based action. We believe that that is the best way of identifying these difficulties. Where there is cause for concern, visits are closed, and they can be restricted in various ways, but it would be difficult, in keeping with our attempts to
ensure that prisoners can keep in touch with their families, to impose such restrictions on all prisoners in
every circumstance.

**Mr. Vara** May I join colleagues who have expressed their
sentiments about David Taylor—a true parliamentarian
in every sense of the word?

With 20,000 prisoners on long-term methadone
prescriptions and only 1,000 on an abstinence programme,
have the Government got the balance right in their
drugs programme in prisons?

**Maria Eagle** It is perfectly legitimate to ask whether
the balance is correct between methadone maintenance
and other forms of treatment designed to cure drug
addiction and get people drug-free. It is not the case,
however, that all methadone prescription is about
maintenance. The only people who get methadone
maintenance treatment in prison are those with short
sentences that would not allow a proper length of time
for detoxification and removing them from drugs. It is
important that we have a balance between different
types and lengths of drug treatment, and appropriate
treatment for each individual. Individuals can have low
and high levels of dependency on drugs and we need
treatments that will deal with all.

**Ann Winterton** In an official report published last
October, was it not a positive disgrace that the drugs
trade in Wandsworth prison amounted to £1 million a
year? Is it not time that, in a secure environment, this
trade was stamped on and, as my hon. Friend the
Member for North-West Cambridgeshire (Mr. Vara)
suggested, longer-term prisoners are enabled to give up
their habit completely?

**Maria Eagle** I agree that longer-term prisoners should
be detoxified and encouraged to become drug-free for
life. That is what our policy is aimed at achieving in
prisons. We have increased fifteenfold the funding for
treatment to get people off drugs in prison over the past
12 years, so there are substantial improvements. It is
always difficult to be precise about the value of an illicit
trade, but we are implementing policies to prevent illicit
drugs from being taken into prison by whatever method.
We use drugs dogs and various technologies, including
body orifice scanners, which will detect illicit substances
being taken into prison. It is a constant fight, but I
believe that we are winning it and we have to continue
to do so.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): I cannot think of any
section of any business anywhere in my area or elsewhere
that is as badly managed as the prisons. What is the
Minister doing about poor management in prisons, so
that the excellent prison officers can be given more
support both in improving their morale and in developing
the skills required to recognise and deal more effectively
with drugs in prison?

**Maria Eagle** I pay tribute this afternoon both to
prison officers, who do a difficult and dangerous job,
and generally do it well, and to prison managers, who
do the same. They are all part of the same team, and I
cannot accept my hon. Friend’s analysis that one element
of our staff is brilliant and the other is not. They are all
our staff and they all do a brilliant job.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport, West) (Lab): May I add a word
of sorrow about the death of David Taylor? He has left
us a legacy, through his independence, courage and
hard work, that will act as a model for all future Back
Bencheers.

My question about prisons relates to the experience
of two of my constituents, whom the Prison Service had
now as models of behaviour and success. They went in
as drug users and emerged clean. Tragically, one of
them lived for a week afterwards and the other for just a
day. Is not the greatest danger for prisoners the point
when they leave prison and go back to their old haunts?

**Maria Eagle**: My hon. Friend is correct in the sense
that there are obvious dangers. Drug abuse and drug
dependency tend to have the capacity to produce chronic
and repeated relapsing behaviour among those who
become dependent on drugs. There is a danger that
having been detoxified, there can then be a difficulty,
which is why for short-term prisoners who are in prison
for only a few weeks methadone maintenance is appropriate.
Such treatment can reduce the risk of infection from
blood-borne diseases and prevent accidental overdose
on release, as well as reducing reoffending. We need to
have a wide range of policies that deal with all those
issues and proper through-care, from prisons into the
community, to make sure that people who come out of
prison continue to have appropriate treatment in the
community.

**Stephen Pound** (Ealing, North) (Lab): Further to the
question raised by my old sparring partner, the hon.
Member for Shipley (Philip Davies)—on whose birthday
we congratulate him today—may I tell my hon. Friend
that in my experience of prisoners nothing is more
calculated and structured to encourage one to take
drugs than lying around and doing nothing all day?
Will she realise that education in prison is often the best
cure for the problems that lead to the taking of drugs in
the first place?

**Maria Eagle** When my hon. Friend said he had a
sparring partner on the Opposition Benches I wondered
who on earth it might be.

**Stephen Pound**: All of them.

**Maria Eagle** My hon. Friend is probably right.
I agree with my hon. Friend that participation in
education provision is a tremendously important part
of reducing drug taking and reducing reoffending when
prisoners come out. Almost 40 per cent. of prisoners
now participate in offender learning and skills, and
38 per cent. enter employment on release. That indicates
a great level of success—greater than ever before in our
prison system.

**Mr. David Burrowes** (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): Have
the Government got the balance right in the integrated
drug treatment system? Senior
prison staff criticised the Government’s obsession with
maintaining opiate users. They were
“specifically concerned about the cocktail of illicit substances
which prisoners may have access to during time in custody which
may potentially be used combined with a daily dose of prescribed
methadone.”
Is that not a picture of a Government who have lost control of drugs in prisons, and given up on prisons and prisoners becoming drug-free?

**Maria Eagle:** No, I do not accept that analysis from the hon. Gentleman. It is fair to say that the drug treatment provided in prisons is clinically led under best practice arranged by the National Treatment Agency. It is the same inside prison as it is outside. It is perfectly legitimate for Members and others to question the balance of available treatment. I do not think there is a perfectly correct answer, so it is a good debate to have, but I do not accept in any way that the Government have lost control of drug treatment in prisons.

**Voting (Service Personnel)**

3. **Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure service personnel are able to vote at the next general election; and if he will make a statement.  

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills): May I, too, express my sadness at the tragic loss of David Taylor? His integrity and independence will be much missed.

If there are any barriers hindering the participation of service voters in elections, we must remove them. To that end, we are introducing new registration awareness campaigns and targeted registration arrangements. We are exploring using supply flights to support postal voting by personnel in Afghanistan. We have set up a working group consisting of officials from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice and the Electoral Commission, as well as representatives of the armed forces, to explore further improvements.

**Michael Fabricant:** Does the Minister agree that democracy needs to be exercised with responsibility? Will he therefore join me in condemning the crass and dreadful plans of Islam4UK to demonstrate against the Afghan war in Wootton Bassett, which would give so much grief and despair to the relatives of the fallen?

**Mr. Wills:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Anyone who has attended those repatriation ceremonies, as I have done, will have been humbled by the dignity and respect shown by the people of that town to those who have given their lives in the service of this country. Anything that displays anything other than the utmost sensitivity in such circumstances will, I think, be treated with repugnance by every decent person in this country—including, I should say, all those Muslims who serve so gallantly in our armed services.

**Rob Marris** (Wolverhampton, South-West) (Lab): Like you, Mr. Speaker, I shall miss David Taylor, a fellow Back Bencher of the year.

With reference to service personnel voting, will my right hon. Friend tell me whether any special steps are being taken in relation to the Territorial Army? There are particular issues there, with people being deployed overseas as well these days.

**Mr. Wills:** I thank my hon. Friend for that. We are looking at all service personnel whose deployment might mean that they are not able to exercise the vote to which they are entitled. It is very important that service personnel are registered and that they can exercise their vote. There are logistical problems in some areas of deployment overseas. We are exploring them vigorously and we have set up the working group. We will take every single measure that we can to make sure that service personnel can vote.

**Mrs. Eleanor Laing** (Epping Forest) (Con): The Minister always says that he is concerned about this subject. He has set up a working group, but it is too late. The Government changed the rules nine years ago to make it more difficult for service personnel to vote, and at the last general election 40 per cent. of service personnel were unable to vote. Only 60 per cent. of the people fighting for our country were able to express their democratic opinion. It is too late now. The Minister has come forward with kind words, working parties, promises and letters, but the Government have done nothing to make it easier for service personnel to vote. I am sure that at the coming general election, which we all hope will be soon, the situation will not be any better than it was last time, because the Government have taken no action.

**Mr. Wills:** I would be very happy to answer any question that the hon. Lady might have, but I did not hear one. She is wrong in almost every statement that she made. It is not the case that the Government have done nothing. As she well knows, we have extended the service declaration period from one year to three years, and it is to be extended again to five years. We have taken action already to make sure that our service personnel in Afghanistan are able to have an expedited service of postal voting. The hon. Lady well knows that the proxy vote system is available to every member of the armed services anyway, and we have taken other measures as well. Unlike the Government whom she supported, who for 18 years did nothing whatever to address the issue, we have set up a working group, including representatives of the armed services, to make sure that our armed services are able to vote.

**Court Cases**

4. **Mr. Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): What percentage of cases brought to court were not pursued for administrative reasons in the latest period for which figures are available.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Bridget Prentice):** I, too, add my condolences to the family of David Taylor, who was indeed an excellent parliamentarian.

The court has no power to end cases for administrative reasons. From July to September last year, of the 45,500 magistrates court trials, 44 per cent. went ahead as scheduled, 38 per cent. were cracked—in other words, the defendant pleaded guilty on day one—and 18 per cent. did not go forward for a variety of reasons, the most common being that a witness or victim did not turn up.

**Mr. Robertson:** In expressing my sadness at the death of Mr. David Taylor, I draw the attention of the House to the excellent work that he did on flood prevention, which is a subject very dear to my heart.
I thank the Minister for that response, but does she agree that the figures that she gives are alarming? The 18 per cent. of cases which are dropped for whatever reason must represent a huge cost to the court, clog up the courts system and prevent the most serious cases from being considered in a timely manner.

**Bridget Prentice:** The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point: 18 per cent. is still too high. However, that figure of 18 per cent. is significantly down on the percentage seven or eight years ago. The figures then were 23.7 per cent. in the Crown court, down to 13 per cent. in the latest figures, and 31 per cent. in the magistrates courts, down to 18 per cent., as I have just mentioned. We are absolutely committed to reducing those figures further, and good case management is of course part of that process.

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (North-West Norfolk) (Con): Surely the scandal is not just those criminals who escape justice through bureaucratic incompetence, but the cost to the legal aid budget. How much did aborted cases cost the legal aid budget last year? Has not the time come for the incumbent Director of Public Prosecutions to spend less time going around the country attacking Opposition policies and more time doing his day job organising proper prosecutions?

**Bridget Prentice:** I do not think that it is for me to comment on what the DPP says going around the country; that is a matter for him. If he has concerns about Opposition policies, perhaps it is right that he does not turn up. That is regrettable, and if we can persuade people to turn up we will ensure that those who are brought to trial for serious criminal offences are dealt with and dealt with seriously.

**Southview Probation Hostel**

5. **Hugh Bayley** (City of York) (Lab): How many residents of Southview probation hostel in York have been returned to prison for (a) breaking the hostel’s rules and (b) committing further offences in the last 12 months. [308924]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Maria Eagle): In the 12 months up to November 2009, out of the 110 offenders supervised at Southview approved premises, 27 were recalled to prison because their behaviour gave cause for concern and four were convicted of further offences, including one who was convicted of a serious further offence.

**Hugh Bayley:** It is good to know that hostel residents are returned to prison when they break the rules. My constituents are most concerned about the most dangerous offenders—people such as Richard Graves, who was convicted in November last year for a very serious offence committed while he lived at the hostel. He is now back in prison with an indeterminate sentence. What can the Government do to ensure that the courts make more use of indeterminate sentences so that serial offenders like Mr. Graves are kept in prison rather than in probation hostels?

**Maria Eagle:** The indeterminate sentence for public protection goes a long way to meeting some of the concerns that my hon. Friend has raised. That particular offender, Richard Graves, was in prison with a determinate sentence under the Criminal Justice Act 1991, and he was released on the last possible day that he could lawfully be held before being sent to approved premises where he was subject to serious licence conditions. He was being very closely supervised at MAPPA level 2, and even so he was able to offend further, as my hon. Friend has said. Mr. Graves will now not be able to leave prison until he can show that he has addressed his offending behaviour, and that is what will improve safety for the public. The fact is that, on his previous offence, he was able to leave prison before he had addressed his offending behaviour.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York) (Con): Does the hon. Member for City of York (Hugh Bayley) not highlight a very real problem with the MAPPA situation—that no one agency takes overall responsibility, that prisoners are not necessarily going to hostels, and that they are being allowed to reoffend? They should not be eligible for early release in those circumstances.

**Maria Eagle:** That man was not released early; he was released on the last possible day that it would have been lawful to hold him. The question is not about early release. MAPPA stands for multi-agency public protection arrangements, and the whole idea is that all agencies co-operate properly to ensure that somebody always leads in every individual case. The most recent figures indicate that 0.48 per cent. of people supervised under MAPPA level 2 and level 3 reoffended—they committed a serious further offence. That is a low level of reoffending. Obviously, it is a distressing level for those who are subjected to the extra offences, but it is a low level of reoffending given the very high risk of serious harm which those individuals present.

**Land Registry (Croydon)**

6. **Mr. Andrew Pelling** (Croydon, Central) (Ind): What recent discussions he has had with the senior management of the Land Registry on the closure of its office in Croydon. [308925]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills): I have recently met those at the Land Registry several times about their transformation programme, which includes the proposed closure of five of their offices, including in Croydon. This programme is intended to put the Land Registry in the best possible position to deliver its services cost-effectively. The consultation is open until 29 January, and all representations will be considered.

**Mr. Pelling:** Does the Minister appreciate that 57 per cent. of the employees at the very professional Land Registry office in Croydon are aged over 46, which offers the prospect of the loss of a tremendous amount
of experience at a time when the Government are expecting the economy to boom and therefore the need for the Land Registry greatly to increase?

Mr. Willetts: I recognise those arguments. However, the hon. Gentleman may be aware that the transformation programme began in 2006. Of course, its impetus has been accelerated by the decline in the property market, which we all expect to pick up at some point—there is no question about that. What is fundamentally driving the transformation programme is a strategic change in the way that the Land Registry delivers its services in future. That is what lies behind it, not the current state of the property market.

Electoral System

7. Kelvin Hopkins (Luton, North) (Lab): If he will make it his policy to retain the current electoral system for elections to the House of Commons. [308926]

The Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Jack Straw): David Taylor’s death, as has already been indicated, was a profound shock to every Member of this House, to the whole of his constituency and obviously to his family. It is particularly poignant for my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Kelvin Hopkins) and for myself, because we often joined David for dinner in the Members’ Dining Room, where I, not least, was a recipient of his robust advice on what we had got right, which was usually a brief part of the conversation, and what we needed to do better, which was quite a lengthy part of the conversation. There has been much reference to his being a Back Bencher. He was a Member of this House following in its most honourable tradition of representing fearlessly his constituents. He will be very sorely missed.

The Government have repeatedly made it clear that no change in the electoral system for the House of Commons would be made without a decision of the British people in a referendum. We published a comprehensive review of voting systems in January 2008. In his speech at our party’s conference in September last year, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said we believe that there is no good reason in the vast majority of cases why counting cannot take place on election night, and that has been offered is the need to verify postal votes. We believe that there is no good reason in the vast majority of cases why counting cannot take place on election night, and we will miss him.

Regardless of the electoral system, the votes will need to be counted. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to count them in this country, as traditionally we always have, is on election night rather than on a subsequent day?

Mr. Straw: Yes. I have made very clear our preference for vote counting to take place on election night, and there has been correspondence between myself and the chairman of the Conservative party on that issue. By law it is a matter for returning officers to decide on, but we believe that there is no good reason in the vast majority of cases why counting cannot take place on election night as it has in the past. The reason-cum-excuse that has been offered is the need to verify postal votes. We all accept that need, but good returning officers are showing that they can do the necessary verification before the close of the count in respect of the vast majority of postal votes, not afterwards.

David Howarth (Cambridge) (LD): May I add my own personal sadness at the death of David Taylor? He was always here, he always had something interesting to say, and he was unfailingly kind and courteous. He will be very greatly missed.

Will the Secretary of State not acknowledge that first past the post has led to a series of Governments with big majorities in this House, but with barely more than a third of the vote? It is entirely possible that we will get another one this year. How does it help to restore public confidence in politics at this time of all times to have, over and over again, a governing party with very little support in the country, with the vast majority of the electorate having rejected that party at the election?

Mr. Straw: It is a feature of majoritarian systems, and always has been, that it is rare for there to be an absolute majority of voters in support of the Government of the day. The difference is that majoritarian systems
ensure that the largest minority forms a Government. What the Liberals want is a system in which the smallest minority determines the Government. We know that from other countries, not least Germany, where the third party simply changed the Government of the day without there being an election to secure that change.

David Howarth: The Secretary of State is wrong even about whether the party with the largest number of votes always gets the largest number of seats under the present system. It does not. To call the system majoritarian when the leading party does not have a majority of the votes is rather a strange description. Is not the truth that both in 1997 and again in different words in 2001, the Labour party was happy to give the impression of being a reforming party, but as soon as it won the election under the existing system it reneged on its promises?

Mr. Straw: I remember exactly what we said in 1997, because the responsibility was mine. I never gave the impression of being someone who had suddenly had a Pauline conversion in favour of proportional representation, because I had not and have not. What we said was that we would establish a committee, quite properly, to examine new systems of voting. That committee duly reported under the chairmanship of the late Lord Jenkins, and the truth was that there was not a consensus for change, and had the matter gone to a referendum I think it would have been seen as a waste of public money. We now propose a choice for the British people that preserves the best of our system, and there is an opportunity for a great debate about whether we follow what the Australians have done, which in some respects has added to the robustness of their constituency-based system.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North and Sefton, East) (Lab): May I invoke the spirit of David Taylor and offer my right hon. Friend some robust advice? Does he accept that the alternative vote system does not necessarily produce any more proportional an outcome than the first-past-the-post system? The only way in which that can be remedied is through top-up seats, but does he accept that they would inevitably create two classes of Member in this House? Is it not too much of a risk to go ahead with such a system?

Mr. Straw: I accept what my right hon. Friend says—

Mr. Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con): Sit down then.

Mr. Straw: I was going to add a gloss to it. On my right hon. Friend's first point, no one has ever suggested that the alternative vote produces a proportionate result. However, by definition, it requires each individual Member to be elected by at least 50 per cent. of those voting, and many see that as one of its merits. It avoids the problems of so-called AV plus, which would lead to two tiers of Members of Parliament. I think that that would be anathema, and would never gain the support of the British people.

Compulsory Transfer Agreements

8. Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): With how many countries the UK has compulsory transfer agreements for the return of foreign national prisoners. [308927]

The Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Jack Straw): Changes made in the Police and Justice Act 2006 have enabled the United Kingdom to ratify the Council of Europe's additional protocol and to negotiate bilateral agreements to provide for compulsory transfer of prisoners. Arrangements are now in place with 35 countries for transfers without consent. Negotiations with other countries are continuing. Since the change in the law was brought into effect, the starting point for all negotiations of prisoner transfer agreements has been on that basis.

Mr. Hollobone: May I suggest to the Secretary of State that progress has been pathetically slow, given that foreign national prisoners now make up some 13 per cent. of the prison population in England and Wales? Does not give a hollow sound to the Prime Minister's pledge in July 2007, when he said:

“If you commit a crime you will be deported from our country. You play by the rules or you face the consequences”?

Mr. Straw: I do not accept either of the hon. Gentleman's points. First, the proportion of foreign national prisoners in United Kingdom jails—he cites 13 per cent.—is much lower than that in the vast majority of European countries. For example, in France the figure is 19 per cent., in Germany 26 per cent., and in Greece and Austria 43 per cent. We are far better than most European countries at managing our foreign national prisoner population.

There are two aspects to the hon. Gentleman's question. One is about prisoners who are serving their sentences: we wish them to be compulsorily transferred out to serve their sentence abroad. The second is about deportations of so-called time-expired foreign national prisoners, whom the conventions do not affect. We have significantly increased the number of time-expired prisoners who are deported.

Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his reply, but even though few bilateral transfer agreements have materialised so far, are they not, in many cases, an example of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted? How many foreign national prisoners who could or should be deported should not have been in the UK in the first place, but were here illegally, as a result of the Government's dysfunctional border policy?

Mr. Straw: I am happy to seek to provide the hon. Gentleman with an answer and lay it before the House. However, let me emphasise that we have greatly reduced the number of asylum seekers who come to this country—it is now around a third of the number with which I was faced when I became Home Secretary twelve and a half years ago. We have significantly tightened border controls—often with not much help from the Opposition on the practical policies that are required. We are also increasing year by year the numbers deported.

Voting Age

9. Mr. William Bain (Glasgow, North-East) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the merits of lowering the voting age to 16 years. [308928]
The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills): The Youth Citizenship Commission's report noted that opinions were divided on lowering the voting age to 16. The Government are now considering the report and how to make progress on it.

Mr. Bain: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that, 41 years after the previous lowering of the voting age, there are powerful arguments for considering a further reduction to give the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds? Under the current system, some young people have to wait almost until their 23rd birthday to vote in a UK general election. Surely someone who is old enough to pay tax in this country, and old enough to join the armed forces, is old enough to exercise the democratic right to vote.

Mr. Wills: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course he is right to say that there are arguments in favour of lowering the voting age, which is precisely why we asked the Youth Citizenship Commission to look at the issue. However, it found that opinion is divided, even among 16 to 18-year-olds. We have to proceed carefully. The only way that we can make radical changes in the voting age, as with anything else to do with the electoral system, is—as far as we possibly can—on the basis of consensus.

Departmental Staff Internet Usage

10. Mr. Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): What his Department's policy is on the private use of e-mail and the internet by its staff during working hours.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Claire Ward): May I add to the comments made by my colleagues, and offer my condolences to the family of David Taylor?

Private use of the Ministry’s e-mail and internet systems during working hours happens only with the permission of line management. Such usage must be reasonable, and there is strict monitoring by Ministry of Justice IT services. Any use must not interfere with the performance of official duties. Staff are not permitted to access social networking sites for personal reasons; they may access such sites only for professional reasons, if they can provide a strong business case that shows they need to use those media to perform their roles—such as when somebody was impersonating my right hon. Friend the Justice Secretary on Facebook. It was important as when somebody was impersonating my right hon.

Mr. Goodwill: It has been estimated that surfing the web in work time costs private business in the region of £624 million per year, and I suspect that that problem permeates most Government Departments and their agencies, too. May I commend to the Minister one possible solution to the problem, which has been adopted by Pindar, in Scarborough? That firm provides a separate work station, away from the rest of the work stations in the open-plan office, for private use—and that is the only place where private use can be made of the internet in work time.

Claire Ward: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting suggestion. Actually, the MOJ controls very strongly, and monitors, the access that staff have to browse or surf the web. Within the central area of the MOJ headquarters there are some computers that have much freer access, and those are available for staff to use in their private time, such as lunchtime and before or after work. However, I will certainly make sure that the MOJ IT services find out about the company to which he refers.

Prison Population

11. Mrs. Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): What recent representations he has received on reducing the prison population.

The Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Jack Straw): My Ministry regularly receives many representations on prison matters. The Government have undertaken the fastest ever prison building programme, increasing capacity by over 25,000 places since 1997—around 3,500 are planned for delivery this year—during a period in which crime has fallen by a third.

Overwhelmingly, the increase in the prison population has been of adult male prisoners. Since the publication of the Corston review, the number of women in prison has decreased by more than 4 per cent. We are also endeavouring to increase the transfer of prisoners with serious mental health problems to the NHS secure estate.

Mrs. Moon: May I too add my comments on the very sad loss of David Taylor? I was a new member in 2005, and he was unstinting in his support, and in giving advice, support and a friendly smile as we moved around this place throughout the years.

Ninety per cent. of our prison population have a mental health problem, 70 per cent. have two or more mental problems, and 16 per cent. have up to four or five different mental health problems. A young lady in my constituency has been in and out of prison following offences occasioned by her mental health problems. What steps can we take to work with those mental health charities that are urging us to look at how we improve services—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady, but we must make some progress.

Mr. Straw: About two years ago I established the Bradley review, which produced a series of important recommendations that we are now actively seeking to implement. My hon. Friend is right to say that a high proportion of offenders have mental health problems in one form or another. With the best will in the world, only those with the most serious mental health problems will be capable of transfer to the NHS secure estate, but we are now seeing, and have seen, much better collaboration between the prison medical services, which are now part of the NHS—that was a major reform that I introduced a dozen years ago—and the NHS outside, so that with luck, we can ensure that those with mental health problems do not fall into offending, and that if they do, they are better treated.
Mr. Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): On behalf of the Opposition Front Bench, may I join the Secretary of State in his expressions of condolence on the death of David Taylor?

The Justice Secretary was asked about reducing the prison population, but is not the principal tool that he has used one that has seen 70,000 criminals released early from prison under his watch? In the last three years, 40 convicted criminals avoided jail each week despite being assessed as at a high risk of causing serious harm to others. Is it negligence, incompetence or a concerted Government policy that is putting the public at risk?

Mr. Straw: None of those. I regret the fact that we had to introduce the early release scheme, but overall we have been far better at managing the prison estate and the prison population than ever happened in 18 years of Conservative Government. 3,500 prisoners were released in one go—I was in the House when it happened—in July 1997, conveniently just after a general election. There were also more escapes from close prisons per week in the early 1990s than there were last year in the whole 12-month period.

I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will tell us more about his plan to halve the number of prison places—

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the Secretary of State that the hon. and learned Gentleman is under no obligation to do that?

Mr. Grieve: The Secretary of State engages in classic displacement activity. The figures that I gave him are his figures, and they happened on his watch—6,000 offenders who were assessed as being at high or very high risk of causing serious harm avoided jail. He says that there is no deliberate policy, but it cannot be sheer incompetence. Some 10,000 prisoners have absconded from prison under this Government, he has pressured the judges not to give prison sentences because he failed to provide the capacity, and now he is offering foreign prisoners up to £5,000 to leave Britain. Will he confirm that that is his obligation to do that?

Mr. Straw: I have never pressured the judges one way or the other on their sentencing. Indeed, we now have a transparent system of sentencing guidelines. The fact that the prison population has increased so much—by 40 per cent. since 1997—is a testament both to the fact that the prison population has increased so much—by 40 per cent. since 1997—is a testament both to the fact that the prison population has increased so much and to the judiciary, magistrates and judges alike, speaking to us, and the Solicitors Regulation Authority, can do.

Topical Questions

T1. [308945] Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Jack Straw): As the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Bridget Prentice) announced in a written ministerial statement today, we have just published a consultation paper to require mortgage lenders to obtain a court order or the consent of the borrower before repossessing and selling residential owner-occupied homes. That would remove the so-called Horsham loophole. The latest figures show that more than 30,000 people across England were helped between October 2008 and September 2009 under court duty schemes. On average last year, four out of five people had the immediate threat of repossession halted following help from Government-funded court desks.

Bob Spink: Mr. Speaker, David Taylor was a personal friend. His hard work, his independence and his respect for this Parliament will be greatly missed.

Will the Secretary of State boost public confidence in the prison service by making prison regimes tougher, with more education and fewer drugs, and early release contingent on the prisoner’s behaviour and the likelihood of reoffending? That would boost public confidence.

Mr. Straw: What we want to see is prison made effective. It is tough, and those who recognise the reality of prison would not want to spend a day inside. We have dramatically increased the resources available for education and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Maria Eagle) has said, we have significantly increased the resources for drug treatment. Prisoners on longer-term sentences have to prove, by their good behaviour, that they are ready for parole. Those on indeterminate sentences cannot be—and are not—released unless the parole board judges that it is safe for that to happen.

Mrs. Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): A Wales Audit Office report has concluded that specialist services such as in-patient and forensic mental health services have been poorly managed and controlled in Wales. What steps can we take to ensure that mental health services provided in Welsh prisons for young people and children are vastly improved?

Mr. Straw: We can do a good deal. As I have mentioned already to my hon. Friend, we are implementing the Bradley report. Dealing with prisoners who have mental health problems is very challenging for all concerned, but we are in no doubt about the priority that we attach, and which has to be attached by all prison establishments, to doing it.

Mark Hunter (Cheadle) (LD): Wolstenholmes, a law firm first established in 1818 and based in my Cheadle constituency, was closed down last week by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. There is now an ongoing investigation into claims of dishonesty and account irregularities. Not surprisingly, many residents have contacted me, extremely concerned about documents and moneys held by the firm. Can the Secretary of State reassure my constituents that their documents and money will be safe, that they will be fully compensated as appropriate, and that there will be a full investigation into the circumstances?

Mr. Straw: I am happy to arrange to meet the hon. Gentleman. I understand the anxiety that will obviously be caused to former clients of Wolstenholmes in that situation. I am also happy to go through with him what we, and the Solicitors Regulation Authority, can do.
Dr. Phyllis Starkey (Milton Keynes, South-West) (Lab): May I refer the Minister of State back to his earlier reply about the reduction of the voting age to 16? I suggest that he look at earlier attempts to extend the franchise—for example, to non-property-owning men, and to women—and consider whether it might not be better to rely on democratic principles, rather than simply on a referendum among those who already have the vote.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills): Of course I am happy to take the historical reference, but I think that my hon. Friend will be aware that all the data show that, even among 16 to 18-year-olds, there is a profound division of opinion about whether the voting age should be lowered.

T4. [308949] Mr. Ben Wallace (Lancaster and Wyre) (Con): With the ever-growing tempo of operations, more and more veterans might find themselves in custody. Her Majesty’s Prison Lancaster Castledare has, under its own steam, started an initiative for supporting veterans in custody, through which it tries, across the north-west, to link veterans with agencies. The Minister with responsibility for veterans, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the hon. Member for North Durham (Mr. Jones), has been very supportive, but at the end of the day the money required comes from the Ministry of Justice. Will the Secretary of State agree to consider its proposal and see whether the small amount of funding required for the pilot scheme could be within his gift?

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Maria Eagle): I am very happy to look into what the hon. Gentleman says about Lancaster. Like many of us throughout the House, he is concerned about veterans of our armed forces ending up in custody. We have just completed a joint data-matching exercise with the MOD to identify the number of veterans in custody. The results show that 3 per cent. of the prison population have served in the armed forces. That will inform our policy development and enable us to provide greater support. We are providing new training for prison staff covering best practice, advice and support for veterans, and information on accessing specialist health treatments. However, I am more than happy to look into the particular instance that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Tom Levitt (High Peak) (Lab): As the assistant to the Minister for the East Midlands, I add to those of others my condolences to the family of David Taylor.

The Secretary of State will recall visiting Buxton magistrates court in September 2008, when he saw the terrible conditions under which magistrates, staff and others had to work. He will be pleased to know that the refurbished court reopened last week and that magistrates have expressed their satisfaction with it. However, we still need, at some point, a purpose-built court to serve the whole of High Peak. I would be grateful if he could tell me that this aspiration is still at least on the table.

Mr. Straw: I do indeed remember visiting my hon. Friend’s constituency, not least the magistrates court, which was in a poor condition. I am glad that, as a result of the representations I received then from him and those in the Court Service, we were able to do something about it. The proposals for new court buildings, which include some in my own constituency, are on the table, but some have had to be deferred because of the tight financial situation, which affects my Department.

Mr. Straw: Community punishments used to be a soft touch. When I became Home Secretary some years ago, it was almost voluntary as to whether offenders—or perhaps I should say miscreants—turned up for their punishment. One of the other reasons why there has been such a large increase in the prison population is that we have toughened up the breach arrangements, so that if offenders fail to turn up for their appointments with the probation service, or for unpaid work, they can be, and are, sent to jail. I am glad that that is happening.

We have also toughened up the perception of community punishments, not least by requiring that offenders on unpaid work wear high-visibility jackets, and by asking the public what kind of work they wish those offenders to undertake.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I gently say to the House that what should not be voluntary is the requirement for short questions and short answers, if we are to maximise the progress down the Order Paper?

Mr. Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): May I ask the Justice Secretary what advice he has offered the Prime Minister on the issue of pleural plaques?

Mr. Straw: A good deal. This is a difficult issue and involves potential expenditure by a number of Departments, but consideration by Ministers continues.

Mr. Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree with Sir Hugh Orde that his recent remarks about lazy police officers were not constructive and do not reflect the hard work and dangers that many police officers face? Has he not added insult to injury, having already cut police pay?

Mr. Straw: What I was seeking to do—I will send the hon. Gentleman a signed copy of the transcript of my interview—was to say what I hope every Member of the House understands, which is that for a given level of resources, some parts of the same public service do very much better than others. That is true for the health service, the courts and the prisons, and it is also true for the police service. I know that from my long experience—and interestingly, much of what I said was endorsed by a number of police officers, who understood what I was saying. I am a 100 per cent. supporter of the police and what they have done to reduce crime. That cannot, however, prevent us from saying, “This service is doing well; that one’s doing less well. Why is there a difference?”
Has the Justice Department examined the comparative costs and reoffending rates between keeping drug addicts in prison and providing residential accommodation with detoxification and rehabilitation facilities?

**Maria Eagle**: Over the past few years we have tried to ensure that drug treatment is available at the same level inside and outside prison, so that individuals can get the treatment suitable for their particular addiction problem, whether they are inside prison or out in the community. We have made great strides in ensuring that that is now possible.

**T7.** [308952] Simon Hughes (North Southwark and Bermondsey) (LD): In the light of the protests and the revelations by the National Association of Probation Officers, will Ministers now instruct their civil servants not to interfere in the drawing up of reports before sentence by probation officers—and in particular, not to ask people to exclude perfectly proper mitigating factors, such as the reason for the protest or the activity?

**Maria Eagle**: There have always been guidelines about how best to produce reports for the courts to ensure that the correct information is there. I am willing to consider any instance that the hon. Gentleman wants to draw to my attention, but it is certainly not the practice of the National Offender Management Service or of Ministers to interfere with precisely what should go into a particular report for the courts.

**Chris Ruane**: The Minister will be aware that under the Electoral Administration Act 2006, £17 million was allocated by his Department to the Department for Communities and Local Government to improve registration. That money was unhypothesated. Can he guarantee that the money that was sent for registration was spent on registration?

**Mr. Wills**: My hon. Friend will be aware that there are considerable variations in practice between electoral registration officers. Sadly, it appears that not all the money that should be spent on electoral registration is being spent on it. We have put measures in place to deal with that. My hon. Friend will be aware that we are determined to end the scandal of the 3.5 million people in this country who are eligible to vote but cannot do so because they are not registered—and we will.

**T8.** [308953] Norman Baker (Lewes) (LD): In the past few days there has been yet another suicide at Lewes prison. There have been far too many such cases in the past 10 years, and this seems to suggest a failure of duty of care at the prison, and a failure to deliver justice for the inmates through the courts. Will the Justice Secretary examine the circumstances of this particular suicide, and try to find out whether there are sufficient prison officers to handle the size of the population at that prison—and will he let me know the outcome of the investigation?

**Maria Eagle**: Each death in custody is examined carefully and closely by the prisons and probation ombudsman, and there will be the usual investigation in respect of this case. If the hon. Gentleman has particular points to make that he believes are of concern regarding the prison in his constituency, I would be more than happy to hear the details from him, and to take a close look myself.

**Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough) (Lab): I represent a constituency in which, two years ago, there was ballot stuffing—roll stuffing—by a Conservative local government candidate. Will the Ministry consider making resources available, on the basis of risk, to local authorities in which there might be a risk of ballot stuffing, in order to ensure that that does not occur in the forthcoming general election?

**Mr. Wills**: Of course we are always happy to look at any measures to deal with fraud. It is absolutely disgraceful when events such as those in my hon. Friend's constituency happen. Of course we will look at any concrete proposals. I want to reassure her that we are doing everything we can to combat fraud in our elections.

**Sir Alan Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (LD): Given that the Information Commissioner has today laid before Parliament a report criticising the Secretary of State's blanket veto on the release of Cabinet Committee minutes from 1997 relating to devolution, will the Secretary of State explain why those particular minutes were, in his opinion, an exceptional case, and why there were particularly pressing reasons to block their disclosure?

**Mr. Straw**: I set out the detailed reasons in a written ministerial statement, with appendices, which I laid before the House as I undertook to do. I am happy to provide the right hon. Gentleman with a copy. The fact is that section 33 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is a fundamental part of the scheme of the Act; it was on that basis that the Bill was agreed. The legislation provides for an appointed person to exercise a veto either after a commissioner's decision or after a tribunal. There is, however, no requirement in the law to wait for a tribunal decision.

**T9.** [308954] Miss Anne McIntosh (Vale of York) (Con): The Justice Secretary is aware of my concern about the growing incidence of shop theft. Will he therefore deplore the remarks made by the vicar in York in the build-up to Christmas condoning shop theft, as such remarks are contrary not only to Government policy but to the Bible?

**Mr. Straw**: They are also contrary to the ten commandments, as I recall—[HON. MEMBERS: “Those are in the Bible, too.”] Indeed. I missed the hon. Lady's last point, because one of my hon. Friends was trying to offer me some gratuitous advice. Anyway, I agree with her in every particular.
Yemen

3.34 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) (Lab): (Urgent Question): To ask the Foreign Secretary if he will make a statement on the situation in Yemen, including the closure of the British embassy and the position of British citizens in Yemen.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband): My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will address all the security issues arising from the Christmas incident immediately after this. I will now address the broader picture. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Keith Vaz) knows, the Government have been increasingly concerned about the situation in Yemen and about the number and scale of the challenges faced by the Yemeni Government and people. We believe that the increasing insecurity and instability in Yemen pose a threat to the Gulf region, to the wider middle east and to the UK.

Over the past 18 months, the situation has been a growing concern in the region and to Her Majesty’s Government. Our cross-Whitehall discussions and close working with international partners led, in September 2009, to the development of a renewed UK country strategy for Yemen. This strategy is currently being implemented by Government Departments across Whitehall, including the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence. It covers four areas. The first is support for democratic political structures; the second addresses the causes of the conflict—so-called counter-radicalisation; the third relates to building the Yemeni capacity to tackle security and terrorism issues; and the fourth is directed at helping the Yemeni Government to deliver the functions of the state, onshore and offshore.

To strengthen further the international community’s support for the Government of Yemen in meeting those challenges, the Prime Minister announced on 1 January that the UK would host a high-level meeting on Yemen later this month, and that will indeed take place. The meeting will focus on galvanising international support for Yemen’s fight against terrorism and co-ordinating assistance to address the longer-term economic and social factors underlying radicalisation and extremism.

As a symbol of the Government’s long-term commitment to Yemen, DFID signed a 10-year development partnership arrangement with the Government of Yemen in August 2007. The UK development spend is fully aligned to our Yemen strategy and to the priorities of the Yemeni Government’s national reform agenda. We will spend about £25 million in fiscal year 2009-10; £35 million to £40 million in fiscal year 2010-11; and, dependent on progress on reform of state structures in Yemen, up to £50 million in 2011-12.

The Government of Yemen are embattled on four different but related fronts: first, the tribal rebellion in the north; secondly, separatism and separatist movements in the south; economic decline across the country, which is particularly important in the context of a near doubling of the population of Yemen that is foreseen in the relatively near future; and also the growing threat from Islamist terrorism in the form of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which finds safe haven in Yemen. Urgent economic and political reforms are the only long-term solution to Yemen’s problems, but continued instability distracts from the Government’s short-term efforts to address these priorities.

As a result of ongoing security concerns, the British embassy closed this week on a precautionary basis for two days. The embassy is now open and staff are back at work. Currently, however, the public services sections of the embassy—the visa and consular sections—are closed. This is under regular review and I discussed the issue with our ambassador in a video conference yesterday morning.

I should point out that it is not unusual for embassies to close during times of heightened tension. During 2009, the British embassy in Sana’a closed on more than a dozen occasions. We have different procedures from other nations for assessing the safety and security of our staff. It would not be right to comment on the specifics of this closure, but I assure the House that it is kept under regular review to ensure that services are maintained. The embassy in Sana’a maintains regular contact with the British community through our wardens network and by regular factual messages to the British nationals who have registered with the embassy.

Finally, the overall threat level in Yemen has not changed. As we make clear in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice, the threat from terrorism in Yemen is high and remains of concern. We continue to recommend against all non-essential travel to the country.

Keith Vaz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing the question. I refer the House to the Register of Members’ Financial Interests and to my personal interest, as I was born in Yemen and lived there for nine years of my life.

In welcoming the London conference, will the Foreign Secretary state precisely what additional support has been given to Yemen as a result of this recent initiative? Will he also confirm that all the money pledged to Yemen in London in November 2006 has been paid over? Can we stop referring to Yemen as a failed state? It has the capacity to fail if Britain, America and the nearby Arab states do not support it. Can we also make sure that the Foreign Secretary visits the country as soon as possible?

David Miliband: There are three parts to my right hon. Friend’s question. First, the London meeting will not be a pledging conference, and I do not think that that is what is needed. However, as my right hon. Friend intimated in the second part of his question, some £5 billion was pledged at the London conference in 2006. A small proportion of it has been disbursed, in part because of concerns about how the money would be spent, but there are other issues. I understand that about 40 per cent. of it has been signed and 81 per cent. allocated to different programmes, although only a very small percentage has actually been spent.

In terms of my right hon. Friend’s attempt to send me to Yemen, I cannot quite promise him that just at the moment, but the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Lewis), will be on a recce to Yemen next month. That will allow us to take forward the conclusions of the London meeting in an appropriate way.

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Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks) (Con): On behalf of the Opposition, I welcome the calling of a conference on Yemen in London on 28 January. I agree that Yemen is a fragile state—I think we should call it that, rather than a failed state—and that that matters to British security.

I want to ask three brief sets of questions. First, in view of the closure of our embassy, is the Foreign Secretary confident that the right level of consular support can be given to British citizens and officials in Yemen in the event of further closures of the embassy, and that plans are in place to offer them protection?

Secondly, following the announcement of additional US-UK support for a special counter-terrorist police unit and for the Yemeni coastguard operation, may we express the hope that those arrangements will be conducted better than Downing street has conducted US-UK co-operation on related matters in the last 24 hours? Specifically, will the support be purely financial, or will it involve actual assistance on the ground in the form of training? What is the time scale for its delivery, and when is the new unit expected to be up and running? Is this an exclusively US-UK initiative, or does it involve other countries and partners, such as Gulf nations, that may be prepared to work with us?

Thirdly, it should be recognised that Yemen cannot be viewed solely through the prism of an al-Qaeda problem. The Foreign Secretary rightly referred to a mixture of issues. Yemeni internal conflicts are fuelled by political grievances, poverty, corruption and competition over depleted natural resources, issues that require political leadership from the Yemeni Government as well as assistance from the international community. Can the Foreign Secretary assure us that all those issues will be addressed at the conference in January, and will continue to be treated as a priority by his colleagues in DFID? Will he do his utmost to ensure that there is a focus on the Yemeni Government’s responsibility to work towards a political settlement in the country, and that we look to the longer term as well as to the immediate problems?

David Miliband: I am confident that the right procedures are being followed in terms of consular support for British nationals. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, there is a relatively small number of them, although the Yemeni diaspora in Britain is of long standing. There is a proud set of Yemeni communities, including, in South Shields, the oldest in Britain. There is obviously some need for consular support, but the ambassador has assured me that that is being dealt with in an appropriate way. The network of wardens that operates in many countries is there to alert us to any problems, but has not yet been notified of any.

The work that is taking place with the Yemeni authorities is more than paying out. The money includes finance for training, which has been an important part of the co-operation that is taking place. We will be discussing with a range of those attending the London meeting whether there is a way in which they could support the UK-US effort, and we will seek appropriate ways in which to use the skills and expertise that other countries can provide.

I was glad to hear what the right hon. Gentleman said about the breadth of the British programme in Yemen and the need to maintain it. The short term, the medium term and the long term are related. Most of the grievances that exist in Yemen are local rather than being related to the global jihad, and although al-Qaeda can try to find roots there, the vast bulk of the issues motivating Yemenis are what we would call bread-and-butter issues that a Government should be seeking to address. Certainly it is the prime responsibility of the Government of Yemen to do so.

Mr. Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Of course the actions of the Foreign Office in Yemen in closing the embassy and working with our allies in Yemen and the United States enjoy support across the House, but will the Foreign Secretary reassure us that, in supporting action against al-Qaeda in Yemen and elsewhere in the region, we are ensuring that local people are not inadvertently alienated by our actions and those of our allies? In giving military support and aid to the Yemenis, and in developing the cross-departmental strategy to which the Foreign Secretary referred, are we impressing on the Yemeni Government the importance of avoiding civilian deaths and of building a sustainable coalition against al-Qaeda across the whole country?

David Miliband: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely good and important point, which is highly relevant, and let me say two things on that. First, there has been a very wide welcome across the Gulf, as well as within Yemen, for the fact that the London meeting will not be focused simply on counter-terrorism, because that might play into the sort of dangers to which he rightly refers. The incubus that is al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula must not become a rallying point for the people of Yemen, because they become the unwitting or unwilling victims of attempts to tackle the AQAP presence there.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman is also absolutely right to insist that the economic, social and political issues at the heart of Yemen’s development need to be addressed. I think that I am right to say that Yemen’s oil wealth is likely to run out in 2015, and the dangers of water scarcity are very real. Those issues evidently are not amenable to a counter-terrorist solution, and require a much more deep-seated and effective role for government, supported by the international community. That is why the fourth priority that we mentioned—the functioning of the state—is so important to addressing those issues.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): The Foreign Secretary mentioned radicalisation; will he undertake also to have close talks with the Saudi Government? They have some programmes that may seem unorthodox to some western eyes, but that nevertheless seem to be working in the Saudi and Arab context. I think that we should learn from that.

David Miliband: My hon. Friend makes an important point. As it happens, the Saudi programme that was featured on this morning’s edition of the “Today” programme is one that I visited last year in Saudi Arabia. It is a counter-radicalisation programme, rather than a radicalisation programme—that is an important point to make—and is extremely innovative. I met a failed suicide bomber—

Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton) (Con): By definition—
David Miliband: Hence failed, but it is not a laughing matter, as he killed a lot of people in a market by blowing up a bomb in a truck that he was driving. He said that he did not know what its contents were and that he had been inveigled into driving the truck. He and a number of other people were going through that programme, which involved taking a comprehensive look at their lives, including in relation to religious instruction. A large number of innovative products are also available in terms of people’s return to normal life after the programme. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to this matter, and I congratulate the Saudi Government on how they are going about dealing with it. It is certainly something that we work closely with them on.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): May I also declare an interest as an officer of the all-party group that visited Yemen a couple of years ago? I found some very impressive Anglophile Ministers there, who think that Britain has a key role to play in that country and who want us to play a key role. I also found that the electoral gains made there by radical Islamists were in the areas of greatest poverty. We clearly need to do more to eradicate the terrorists, but can we also do much more to eradicate and rehabilitate their breeding grounds?

David Miliband: I am sorry to sound like a stuck record, but the hon. Gentleman also makes an important point. I hope that the House can be united in making the point that those who allege in today’s newspapers that we are wasting our money by spending development funding on anti-poverty measures in Yemen are wrong. The figures that I have read out are substantial by any stretch of the imagination, but the fact that they enjoy cross-party support is positive. He is right that if Yemen is to be prevented from becoming a more dangerous breeding ground for terrorism, it needs to develop the sort of life chances for people that he and I may take for granted.

Paul Flynn (Newport, West) (Lab): At an enormous cost in loss of British human lives, we joined America in its invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Before we commit even more human lives to another nightmare, should we not consider the possibility of having an independent British foreign policy?

David Miliband: We should certainly have a foreign policy that is decided independently by the Government and people of this country, but we should not have an isolated foreign policy that attempts to work on its own. I am proud that we are very close partners of the United States, European Union countries and a large number of countries in the Gulf, which are very concerned about the situation. The attention that we have been paying to Yemen in the past 18 months is in significant part a product of the growing concern, from 2008, of countries in the Gulf that wanted British help regarding their concerns about the situation in the Yemen. We are not unwelcome helpers in Yemen, and we certainly are not trying to recolonise it. That is an important point to emphasise.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (North Essex) (Con): Although I welcome this short discussion about Yemen, we are only having it because of al-Qaeda. Would it not be instructive if the Government were to produce a document about the international strategy against al-Qaeda, or hold a conference in London at which international partners could be invited to talk about that? That would be better than waiting for statements about other countries in which al-Qaeda is operating that may not be in the news at the moment.

David Miliband: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, although I think that he would be one of the first to recognise that it is wrong to talk simply about al-Qaeda and not to distinguish between its senior leadership based in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula or in the Maghreb. There are distinctive issues related to al-Qaeda’s senior leadership on the one hand and its so-called franchises on the other. They are certainly worthy of study and debate, and the more the better, as far as I am concerned. However, the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) made the good point that there was a meeting with parliamentarians on the situation in Yemen before the Christmas incident. The fact that there is a thriving all-party parliamentary group, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Keith Vaz), speaks for the close links that exist between Britain and Yemen, and long may they continue.

Mr. Paul Goodman (Wycombe) (Con): Given that a significant proportion of terror offenders turn out to have been radicalised towards extremism here in Britain rather than in the Yemen or elsewhere, should not the Prime Minister also consider calling a summit on the radicalisation towards extremism and terror that takes place here?

David Miliband: That is exactly what the Prevent strategy has been founded on over a number of years. A large number of meetings—I do not know whether they qualify as “summits”—have been held within Government and around the country to address precisely this issue.

Sir Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield) (Con): I agree with the Foreign Secretary about the importance of aid in removing what I call the “scourge” of the spots where terrorism can spring up, but my right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary described the Government of Yemen as fragile. Will the Foreign Secretary tell the House just how widely supported the Government of Yemen are among all the people, bearing in mind the tribal conflicts in the north and the separatist movement in the south?

David Miliband: Far be it from me to be a lawyer for the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), but in his defence—or at least in explanation of his position—I think that he said that Yemen was fragile, and not its Government. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Sir Nicholas Winterton) will know that President Saleh is in his second term of office, and that the constitution prohibits him from running for a third term. Parliamentary elections in Yemen are due in 2011, and they will clearly be a massive challenge. One issue that will need to be addressed is precisely those democratic elections and people’s ability to express their opinions in them. However, the number of Yemenis who are committed to violence—whether through the Houthis movement in the north or the secessionist movement in the south, and still less through links to al-Qaeda—are a very small minority.
Mr. Ben Wallace (Lancaster and Wyre) (Con): All over the world—in Afghanistan and Pakistan and next door in Somalia, for example—our armed forces and aid budgets are stretched. Why has Britain, or perhaps the Prime Minister, chosen to take a lead in Yemen, when our resources are so stretched? Might it not be time to let the US or our other allies take a lead with regard to Yemen? Is it perhaps not a country too far?

David Miliband: So much for an independent foreign policy. First of all, this country has a long-standing history with Yemen, and I think that that gives us an important role there. Secondly, we are in a group of pre-eminent donors that includes the United States, the Germans, the Dutch and the Saudis, and indeed I spoke to the German Foreign Minister today. In terms of the stretch, we have been careful to make sure that, in our funding in Yemen, we spend only what we know that we are able to spend properly there. The hon. Gentleman is right that there is a range of other problems. In my view, the situation in Somalia is best addressed through the security work of AMISOM—the African Union mission in Somalia—but, on a political level, through the UN Security Council. The meeting that has been called and the other forms of co-ordination that are being established befit the situation in the Yemen rather better. History in Somalia is rather different.

Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): The increase in international aid funding that Her Majesty’s Government have promised pales into insignificance against what the oil-rich Arab countries on the peninsula could and should provide. Should not Her Majesty’s Government make it clear to the countries on the Arabian peninsula that their priority should be dealing with potential problems from the Yemen, rather than spending millions of pounds on half-mile-high skyscrapers?

David Miliband: I am not sure whether it is the Government who are spending the money on the skyscrapers to which he refers, but he makes an important point. Some of the largest pledges at the 2006 conference were from Gulf countries, not western countries. It is important that those pledges are fulfilled. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East raised the question of which of those pledges had been paid, and that is a pertinent point.

The point of mentioning our aid programmes is not some vainglorious attempt to say that we have the biggest programme but to explain that there is a British commitment and it is proportionate to the sort of responsibility that we should bear. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that this is an issue that needs to be raised by countries of the region. I am pleased to say that in the past 18 months they have been doing so, and they have put us on alert about their needs.

Aviation and Border Security

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Alan Johnson): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the failed attempt to destroy a passenger plane at Detroit airport on Christmas day and its implications for national security. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make this statement in the other place.

On 24th December, Umah Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian citizen, travelled from Lagos to Amsterdam, where he boarded Northwestern Airlines flight 253 to Detroit. As the flight was approaching Detroit on Christmas day, he detonated a device that was strapped to his upper thigh and groin area which resulted in a fire and a small explosion. He was restrained and subdued by passengers and flight crew and he remains in custody in the US.

Authorities in the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Nigeria and Yemen are now doing everything they can to piece together Abdulmutallab’s movements shortly before this attack, and are considering what urgent steps need to be taken to prevent further attacks of this nature.

It is an issue of grave concern that the explosive device was not detected by airport security in either Lagos or Amsterdam. As has been widely reported, Abdulmutallab attended University college London between 2005 and 2008, where he completed a degree in engineering. During this time he was known to the Security Service but not as somebody engaged in violent extremism. His family and friends have stated their belief that he turned to this during his time in Yemen.

From the information we have currently, it is not possible to chart with absolute certainty Abdulmutallab’s exact movements after he left the UK in 2008. He is known to have spent several months studying international business at a university in Dubai and in August 2009 he travelled to Yemen, where he is thought to have stayed until December before returning to west Africa. He came to the attention of UK authorities again on 28 April 2009 when he applied for a multi-entry student visitor visa to attend an eight-day course provided by Discovery Life Coaching based in east London. The UK Border Agency refused his visa application because Discovery did not hold a valid accreditation with a UKBA-approved body and was not eligible to sponsor international students.

Since March 2009, only institutions which are either tier 4 sponsors or hold valid accreditation are permitted to bring in short-term foreign students from outside the EEA. Universities and colleges must be able to demonstrate that they are offering genuine courses that will benefit students seeking to study in the UK. This new regime has reduced the number of institutions able to bring students to the UK from over 4,000 to approximately 2,000. Following the refusal of his application, Abdulmutallab’s name was added to the UKBA watch list.

In the light of the serious questions that this incident has raised, I want to set out today, first, the immediate steps that we are taking to tighten aviation security, secondly, what measures we are taking to prevent radicalisation in our universities, and thirdly the actions
we are taking to disrupt al-Qaeda in countries where it is known to be active, in order to prevent future terrorist attacks, and to improve co-operation with our international partners.

It is of great concern that Abdulmutallab was able to penetrate airport security at Amsterdam. The device he used had clearly been constructed with the precise aim of making detection by existing screening methods extremely difficult.

Abdulmutallab underwent a security check at Schipol airport in Amsterdam, as do all passengers transferring from Nigeria to another flight. Although Schipol airport is trialling body scanners, they were not in use for that flight. He passed through a metal detection gate, which would have detected objects such as explosive devices with metallic components, and knives and firearms. However, certain types of explosive, without metallic parts and which can also concealed next to the body, cannot be detected by that technology, which is the reason why airports also search passengers at random.

To defeat the terrorist threat requires constant vigilance and adaptability. A great deal of progress has been made in enhancing aviation and border security since 9/11; but terrorists are inventive, the scale and nature of the threat changes, and new technology needs to be harnessed to meet new threats, while minimising inconvenience to passengers.

Last year, we issued new public guidance to the industry on our technical requirements for screening and the detection of improvised explosive devices. The Prime Minister instigated an urgent review of airport security following the incident in Detroit. My noble friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have been intensively engaged in the review, and we are today setting out our initial steps.

It is clear that no one measure will be enough to defeat inventive and determined terrorists, and there is no single technology that we can guarantee will be 100 per cent effective against such attacks. Airport security is multifaceted and needs to adapt constantly to evolving threats. We therefore intend to make changes to our aviation security regime.

Air passengers are already used to being searched by hand, and having their baggage tested for traces of explosives. The Government will direct airports to increase the proportion of passengers searched in that way. There may be some additional delays as airports adapt, but I am sure the travelling public will appreciate the reasons behind this.

The Transport Secretary has brought into force new restrictions that tighten up security screening for transit passengers, and is reviewing the support we provide for security standards in airports operating direct flights to the UK. Passengers will see an increased presence of detection or sniffer dogs at airports to add to our explosives detection capability.

We also intend to introduce more body scanners. The first scanners will be deployed in around three weeks at Heathrow. Over time, they will be introduced more widely, and we will be requiring all UK airports to introduce explosive trace detection equipment by the end of the year. We are discussing urgently with the airport industry the best way of doing all this, which will include a code of practice dealing with the operational and privacy issues involved.

BAA has started training airport security staff in behavioural analysis techniques, which will help them to spot passengers acting unusually and target them for additional search. Beyond that, we are examining carefully whether additional targeted passenger profiling might help to enhance airport security. We will be considering all the issues involved, mindful of civil liberties concerns, aware that identity-based profiling has its limitations, but conscious of our overriding obligations to protect people’s life and liberty.

These measures build on the substantial progress we have made in recent years to strengthen our borders. The roll-out of e-Borders, which will check passengers, including those in transit, against the watch list, will be 95 per cent complete by the end of this year, and makes us one of only a handful of countries to have the technology that can carry out advanced passenger data checks against our watch list before people travel to the UK. Those who apply for a visa—whether they do so from Bangkok, Lahore or Pretoria—have to provide fingerprints and their records are checked against our watch list, which holds over a million records of known criminals, terrorists, people who have tried to enter the country illegally or been detained abroad, and those who agencies consider a threat to our security.

Through the e-Borders programme and through screening passengers against the watch list, we have since 2005 made 4,900 arrests for crimes including murder, rape and assault. In addition, UK Border Agency staff based overseas, working with airlines, prevented more than 65,000 inadequately documented passengers from travelling to the UK during 2009.

Abdulmutallab’s failed attack highlights the importance of information sharing between the various agencies about people who pose a threat to our security. The UK watch list is managed by the UK Border Agency and incorporates intelligence from the law enforcement and the security and intelligence agencies into a single index. Nevertheless, although the integrated approach works very well, we want to see if we can further strengthen it. The Home Office will therefore be conducting an urgent review of the robustness of our watch-list. The review will report to me in two weeks and, subject to security restrictions, I will report the findings to Parliament.

The House will no doubt be concerned about the possibility that Abdulmutallab’s radicalisation may have begun or been fuelled during his time studying at University college London. It is important to remember that the values of openness, intellectual scrutiny and the freedom of debate and tolerance promoted in higher education are one of the most effective ways of challenging views which we may find abhorrent but that remain within the law.

However, we know that a small minority of people supporting violent extremism have actively sought to influence and recruit people through targeting learners in colleges and universities, and we must offer universities the best advice and guidance to help prevent extremism. As part of a measured and effective response to the threat, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has published guidance on managing the risk of violent extremism in universities, and is working closely with universities in priority areas to provide targeted support.

Alongside this, each university has a designated police security contact with which university management can discuss concerns. The Prevent strand of Contest, our
counter-terrorism strategy, works closely with the higher and further education sectors and funds a full-time Prevent officer at the National Union of Students. As I have said, Abdulmutallab’s family believe he turned to violent extremism after leaving the UK, but we need to ensure that this close co-operation continues in our efforts to stop radicalisation of young people in our colleges and universities.

Finally, I want to say something about our work internationally and the steps that the Government are taking abroad to disrupt al-Qaeda wherever they are active. Our success in tackling the international terror threat depends on strong relationships with our international partners. In our efforts to thwart al-Qaeda, we have a long-standing, productive partnership with the US.

I am not prepared to go into detail on this particular case about what was shared with the US and when. It is an established and accepted principle that we do not routinely comment on intelligence matters. Moreover, some of these issues are still current and are highly sensitive. However, I would like to clarify that although we did, in line with standard working procedures, provide information to the US linked to the wider aspects of this case, none of the information that we held or shared indicated that Abdulmutallab was about to attempt a terrorist attack against the US.

This morning, I met Jane Lute, the US Deputy Secretary for Homeland Security. We discussed how over the coming months, in the light of this failed attack, we will work together with other international partners to maintain public confidence in aviation security and deepen our partnership to disrupt al-Qaeda’s activities overseas. Pushed out of Afghanistan and under increasing pressure in the border areas of Pakistan, affiliates and allies of al-Qaeda—such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the group claiming responsibility for the Detroit bombing—have raised their profile. With the failed Detroit attack they have again demonstrated their intent to attack innocent people across the world.

The aim of our counter-terrorism strategy is not just to reduce our own vulnerability, but to dismantle those terrorist organisations which pose a threat to the UK, whether at home or abroad.

Al-Qaeda will take any opportunity to exploit ungoverned space and instability. Whether the threat is in the Sahel, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq or Afghanistan, we must support Governments and work with partners to address both the threat of attack and the underlying causes of extremism and instability. We have been working with the Yemeni Government, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary just said, for a number of years, helping to improve their law-enforcement, intelligence and security apparatus, and to disrupt al-Qaeda and deny them a safe haven in Yemen for the future. We are also one of the leading donors on development in the country—our current commitment standing at £100 million by 2011.

We recognise the need to strengthen further our partnership with countries in the region and beyond so that we can co-ordinate our efforts against al-Qaeda more effectively and provide greater support for the Yemeni people to reject violent extremism. International co-operation is critical to meeting what is a global threat, and the coming together of the international community in London later this month to discuss Yemen will be an important step towards security in Yemen and across the globe.

It is important to reiterate that the incident was a failed attack on the US by a Nigerian national—someone who was refused entry to the UK and who, it seems, was radicalised after he left this country. However, there are lessons to be learned by the international community, and the measures that I have outlined will provide the UK with greater protection from terrorist attack. Along with our work overseas and with our international partners, enhanced airport security and more thorough collation of intelligence, we will be able to strengthen our efforts to tackle the root cause of violent extremism and reduce the threat of future attack.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): I am grateful to the Home Secretary for providing me with an advance copy of his statement. I shall start with airport security.

We all accept that as we learn the lessons from the recent plot, happily an unsuccessful one, additional security measures will have to be taken. The use of more sophisticated scanning technologies is inevitable, although we will have to make sure that sensible measures are taken to protect privacy. However, the Home Secretary’s statement is ambiguous about scanners, so will he clarify whether he plans to make full-body scanners compulsory at all UK airports? He talked about e-Borders, so will he also clarify the situation with the European Union over the use of the e-Borders project? Will there be European legal restrictions on the use of the e-Borders database?

We believe that it is necessary to take a more intelligence-led approach to airport security, as well as to watch carefully for suspicious behaviour by passengers, so the Government will have our support in taking prudent measures to protect passengers. Those matters of judgment must be kept under constant review, even if there is public attention only when the security measures are challenged.

However, the person who should be before the House explaining himself this afternoon is not the Home Secretary but the Prime Minister. Twice in three days the Prime Minister has been caught out making false claims about the contacts that have taken place between Britain and the United States over the airline bomb plot and the security threat to our airports. On Sunday he admitted to the BBC that supposed discussions between himself and President Obama about the bomb plot and the situation in Yemen had not actually taken place. Then, yesterday, he claimed that Britain had supplied to the United States in 2008 intelligence about the bomb suspect and his links to extremists—a claim that Downing Street now admits was untrue. This Government, the House will remember, have systematically misused intelligence data over the years, most notably in relation to the so-called dodgy dossier. Does the Home Secretary agree that it is absolutely unacceptable for the Prime Minister—the man who leads our Government—to exaggerate, mislead on or spin intelligence information, particularly when it relates to a terrorist threat?

The Home Secretary told the House this afternoon: “It is an established and accepted principle that we do not routinely comment on intelligence matters.” Why did the Prime Minister and Downing street break that principle this week? Does the Home Secretary agree
also that it is damaging to our most important intelligence relationship, with the United States, for Downing street to disseminate information in such an inaccurate and cavalier way?

The entire House will be relieved that on this occasion the bomb plot was unsuccessful. It will serve as a strong reminder to Governments across the world of the ever-present terrorist threat and the fact that we all need to remain vigilant about that threat as well as united in a determination to defeat it.

It is also worth saying that the threat from a small group of Islamic extremists in no way represents the views and beliefs of the vast majority of decent, law-abiding Muslim people in this country and around the world. People of all faiths have been victims of terrorists over the past decade, and we must all stand together against that threat. However, that task has not been helped by the actions of Downing street in recent days.

**Alan Johnson:** I regret the fact that the hon. Gentleman uses this very tense time to score cheap party political points. I saw lots of faces among those on the Conservative Benches looking appalled that this situation should be used to make a personal attack on the Prime Minister.

The hon. Gentleman made only three points that I believe are relevant to this issue. First, on the number of full-body scanners, we now need to work with the airline industry to decide how many of these scanners we can have and where we can locate them. As I said, we will have the first ready at Heathrow within three weeks. Thereafter, they will be become much more widely available in terms of the capacity to manufacture them and put them in place and the need to get from the various airline companies their authority, agreement and input.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the EU situation. That was clarified just before Christmas when, thankfully, the Commission agreed that there were no Community issues about the transfer of information. That obviously still requires the countries transferring the information to agree their data-processing techniques, but there is no EU issue; that is what the Commission was originally looking at.

The third point was about our use of intelligence and our co-operation with the United States. As I said, the Prime Minister was absolutely right that we did share information with the US. We do not routinely comment on the nature of such information or the information itself. None of that information suggested that Abdulmutallab was planning a terrorist plot. Incidentally, as I mentioned, I met Jane Lute, the Deputy Secretary for Homeland Security, this morning, and she did not mention this matter at all. We spoke about the productive way we can work together to deal with these issues. There is absolutely no relationship in the world stronger than the relationship between the UK and the US, particularly on counter-terrorism, where we work closely together and will continue to do so in the light of this latest threat.

**Chris Huhne** (Eastleigh) (LD): I, too, thank the Home Secretary for early sight of his statement.

The Home Secretary’s announcement that scanners are to be rolled out quickly at British airports is certainly welcome. However, his statement raises several questions. First, can he confirm that such scanners would have been effective in detecting the substances carried by Umah Farouk Abdulmutallab? Secondly, why has it taken him so long to act, given that these scanners have already been trialled and that four are reported to be in storage at Heathrow? Thirdly, will he respect those who may have a deep-felt objection to the scanners by allowing them to opt instead for a body-pat search, for example as part of his code of conduct? What assurance will he give that images of children and others will not be stored?

The Home Secretary opens the door to profiling, but what does this mean? If he means additional searches for those with suspicious travel patterns, then I am sure that I speak for everybody in this House when I ask who could object? But if he means stopping everyone who looks Asian, then I fear that he will alienate exactly those communities whose co-operation we need in the fight against terrorism. Which is it?

Then there is information sharing, which the Home Secretary really cannot dismiss by saying that the Government do not comment on intelligence matters, particularly in the light of recent events in Downing street. Can he confirm the account of a Downing street spokesman that Britain told US intelligence more than a year ago that the Detroit bomber had links to extremists? Can he confirm—this is not an intelligence matter—that the US was informed after that person was placed on a UK watch list? In the light of those contradictions and the open spat with our closest ally, what measures are the Government taking to improve liaison with the United States, or possibly with the Prime Minister’s press operation?

Given that the Detroit bomber transited through Schiphol, were the Dutch authorities notified bilaterally of our concerns at any point? Had we shared our information with our European partners through either Europol or other routes, and what mechanism is there for one EU country to become aware of such intelligence on a suspected radical held or collected by another EU country? Do we routinely share information about our watch lists with our European counterparts even for passengers who are only in transit? In the light of the attempted attack, do those systems need to be improved?

**Alan Johnson:** On whether scanners would have been effective in relation to Abdulmutallab, the indications are that given where the PETN was placed, there would have been a 50 to 60 per cent. chance of its being detected. That is the view of most people who operate the scanners, so the scanners themselves are not the magic bullet. A British company, Smiths Industries, is developing the technology all the time, and we need the next wave of technology with explosive detection as well as body imaging to move ahead very quickly.

I do not accept that we took a long time to act. This happened on Christmas day, and over the Christmas period my colleague the Secretary of State for Transport has been discussing with the airlines the availability of equipment. There was one body scanner at Manchester and a number have been mothballed in Heathrow on a trial basis, but whether they are serviceable or need to be updated has been the subject of the conversation. Today’s announcement is the earliest possible time to get moving.
The issue of privacy will be important, but all the images are destroyed immediately and the person responsible for the scanning is in a completely separate room, as anybody who has seen the system in Manchester or the version in Glasgow operating will know, so there is no immediate contact between the person doing the imaging and the person being imaged. Privacy considerations are important, but I believe that we can ensure that those who have concerns can be satisfied. I do not foresee a situation in which people can simply object to a body scan. We need to use the scanners perhaps not as the first line of our defence but as the second line, on a random basis.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the important issue of profiling. I said in my statement that I recognised the sensitivities of that matter. Anyone can examine the case of Anne Mary Murphy in 1986, who was a pregnant woman inveigled by her Syrian boyfriend to carry a bomb on to a flight to London. She would not have matched any profile, and in the case of someone like Richard Reid the name would not have alarmed anyone. Nevertheless, whether we can deal with sensitivity issues must be part of our consideration of any defence that we can find to address the gap in our defences that Abdulmutallab found, although he was thankfully unsuccessful. We need to consider profiling while recognising the concerns and civil rights issues involved.

We share information all the time on a routine basis, and the US shares information with us. We did not inform the US that Abdulmutallab was on our watch list having been refused a student visa, because the case was not conducted with any concern that he was coming over to commit a terrorism incident. It was an immigration issue, and we would not share such information routinely with the US. We share other information with the US, and we share it routinely with our European partners, although if there were concerns about terrorism we would not wait for a watch list and for the plane to be taking off. It is outside Europe that we have the problem; as the hon. Gentleman well knows, we have a close relationship within the EU, which means that we deal with such security issues straight away. We do not wait for people to come to an airport and try to get on a plane to another country.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. No fewer than 16 hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. As always, I should like to accommodate everybody, and the numbers should be perfectly manageable. I simply remind the House that there are two further statements to follow, and I reiterate my usual appeal for each hon. Member to ask a single, short supplementary question and, of course, for the Home Secretary to provide us with an economical reply.

Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) (Lab): The Home Affairs Committee recently visited both Heathrow and Schiphol, and the Home Secretary is right to consult the airlines and be measured in his response. Of course, in principle, we should have the body scanners, but international co-operation is the most important aspect. I accept what he says about sharing information, but are there any more lessons to be learnt about how we can improve the situation?

Alan Johnson: Doubtless there are. I recognise my right hon. Friend’s expertise in the matter. In some countries, there are separate watch lists for security, for policing and crime, for people who have lost their passports and for immigration issues, but an integrated watch list serves us well. With e-Borders continually coming on stream, we can deal with the matter before the person has taken off. That is important, given that Abdulmutallab was not trying to enter a country, but to blow himself up before he landed. Whether he was in transit or his destination was this country did not therefore matter. We need to ensure the tightest possible control. Although it all worked well, I would be the last person to appear complacent. As the Prime Minister said, the incident is a wake-up call—every failed terrorist attempt must be picked to pieces so that we find anything that we can use to strengthen our defences. We intend to do that.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher and Walton) (Con): Terrorists watch very carefully the technology that we deploy. Does the Home Secretary realise that the term “scanners” covers a wide range of things? Some use millimetre technology; others use terahertz; some require one to go through a box, and others can scan remotely in airport lounges or railway stations. Will the Government please institute a research programme? Several British companies are involved in such research, but the Government never pull through new technologies. We need to stay ahead of the terrorists, not deploy after an incident.

Alan Johnson: The hon. Gentleman makes a valuable point. I do not accept that we have been slow in dealing with this. We are due to meet Smiths Industries shortly, and the document that Lord West, our security Minister, produced in August 2009 was specifically aimed at the scientific community and innovators to get things moving and find new ways to deal with such matters. It is important to stress that there is a great deal of British technology that we can exploit. We need to ensure that we get the right body scanners—that is one reason for talking to the airlines. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is a variety of scanners, and we need to use the most effective.

John Reid (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): I refer the House to my interests in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests. I welcome in particular the way in which the Home Secretary emphasised that there is no magic bullet for solving the problems. I say that in the light of recent media comments, particularly about full body scanners, which still require standardised procedures, are still in trials and so on. A range of search procedures and technologies is required. Above all, as the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor) said, constant innovation in our thinking must be embedded in everything that we do. Will the Home Secretary therefore build on Lord West’s good work and ensure that a partnership of the Government, academia and private industry is given more resources so that we can stay ahead of the curve and the terrorists’ thinking in introducing new ways of terror?

Alan Johnson: My right hon. Friend largely makes the same point as the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor). I agree with it. It is perhaps another reason for redoubling our efforts to stay ahead
of the terrorists. We will not deal with the matter through body scanners alone. Every day, sniffer dogs come into the Chamber, looking for PETN. Behavioural detection is another method, but even with all the techniques we can use, we can never guarantee 100 per cent. safety—there is no magic bullet. However, a lot of people out there are willing to innovate, work and provide equipment and the technological capacity that can move us to the next level. That is the main lesson of Detroit on 25 December.

Robert Key (Salisbury) (Con): The Home Secretary is the lead on homeland security, but will he acknowledge the debt we owe to the Ministry of Defence personnel and the scientific civil servants working at defence science and technology laboratories at Porton Down in my constituency, and particularly at the Counter Terrorism Science and Technology Centre, who are responsible for the day-by-day innovation that goes on in science and technology? Will he talk to the Ministry of Defence, which has tremendous budget problems, to ensure not only that there is no cut in the defence budget as it affects Porton Down, but that quite the reverse happens? Porton Down should have all the resources it needs to counter terrorism.

Alan Johnson: The hon. Gentleman is a great advocate for Porton Down. I am talking to the Defence Secretary. This is a cross-Government initiative. All the relevant Departments are working together on this, using all the agencies at their disposal, Porton Down being one of them.

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Aviation is international. What new steps are being taken to link intelligence information with the best attainable system of security at individual airports?

Alan Johnson: My hon. Friend is the Chairman of the Transport Select Committee, and I know that she has taken a great interest in this issue. I talked to Jane Lute this morning—she is the US Deputy Secretary for Homeland Security—about the best way to have an international gathering to discuss the lessons emerging from this and we are still talking things through. There was a view that we should perhaps get a gathering of Ministers together next week in Brussels. Actually, the opportunity under the Spanish presidency, which is very interested in this matter, comes up in a few weeks’ time. More and more we are centreing on that as the opportunity to get Transport Ministers, homeland security Ministers and perhaps Defence Ministers together to talk about an integrated programme as to how we can act internationally.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right: this will not be solved by us nationally, by its very definition—a Nigerian coming from Nigeria through Holland to bomb Detroit has ramifications for a much wider set of countries. We need to deal with this matter internationally, which is what we intend to do.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (North Essex) (Con): Who authorised the Downing street spokesman to brief so emphatically that information about the Detroit bomber had been passed to the Americans before the bombing?

Alan Johnson: I am not getting into who authorised whom to say what. What the Prime Minister said about us exchanging information with the US was absolutely right. As I said in my statement, none of that information remotely suggested that Abdulmutallab was planning an attack on Detroit.

Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): One resource we could use better is the eyes and ears of the travelling public. Will my right hon. Friend consider creating a central reporting point for members of the public who spot lapses in security in airports from which they are travelling to the UK?

Alan Johnson: I will consider my hon. Friend’s suggestion. Of course, there are plenty of opportunities for people to report such things. There was a programme over Christmas about the 999 emergency service being used spuriously, but certainly for anyone who has the slightest fear that there is a security problem, that is one course of action, and there are others. He makes a good point, and we will look at whether we can make it easier for the travelling public to report any suspicions they have.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): As the Home Secretary is no doubt aware, the only UK airport to be subject to terrorist attack is in Scotland—Glasgow airport. Can Scottish airports therefore expect to be among the first in line for full-body scanners? Will he assure me that he will be working in glove with the Scottish Government to ensure that Scottish airports are as safe as possible?

Alan Johnson: I can assure the hon. Gentleman on both those points. We need to talk to the airlines about which airports are first. I believe that Heathrow will feature, given the huge amount of transit—we are talking about transit passengers as well because, as we should remember, Abdulmutallab was a transit passenger in Holland and was not searched properly—but other airports, including Glasgow, will be very much part of the discussion. Indeed, I believe discussions with the Scottish Government have already started.

Alan Keen (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): We are obviously concerned today with the immediate threats, but may I pass on a warning to the Home Secretary from constituents of mine who have worked their whole lives in Heathrow airport, and the Unite union, that there has been talk of introducing competition between terminals? Will he ensure that security always comes before competition?

Alan Johnson: I can give that assurance, although I am not sure what my hon. Friend means about competition. Security, whether at terminal 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, is the absolute priority, not competition between terminals.

Hugh Robertson (Faversham and Mid-Kent) (Con): In the wake of the failed bombing, many in the intelligence community have expressed concerns about the activities of schools—or karatus—in northern Nigeria and the role that they play in radicalising young men and preparing them for jihad. In the international strand of the Home Secretary’s work, which he mentioned in his statement, can he confirm that those schools will be swept up in
that and that he has had discussions with his counterparts in the Foreign Office to ensure that those schools are properly addressed?

Alan Johnson: Again, the hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Of course, Abdulmutallab himself went to a British school, but it is an important issue that I need to discuss with the Foreign Secretary to ensure that we are doing everything that we can, not just on airport security, but—as I said in my statement—to prevent radicalisation taking place in the first instance, whether in this country or abroad.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab): There have been some interesting proposals about investing in research on the technology required to detect terror. Although the Home Secretary acknowledged in his statement the risks of identity-based profiling, I am concerned that we will not have sufficiently robust research into the effects of such profiling on young Asian or Muslim men who think that they are expected to behave in a certain way and therefore think, “Why don’t I?” Can he assure the House that robust research will be done on the potential consequences of identity-based profiling before any such proposal is introduced?

Alan Johnson: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance, but behavioural detection is different from profiling. Behavioural detection is used by British Transport police, who are trained in it, to observe individuals and how they act around uniformed officers as a preliminary to a possible search or questioning. On profiling, I recognise not only the sensitivities and civil liberties issues that were raised by the Liberal Democrat spokesman, but the possibility that the terrorists—who, as we have said, are one step ahead—will use our main weapon against them to their advantage by using people who do not fit the profile, such as pregnant women or old gentlemen like me. That is the other danger of profiling, and we need to be very careful. I am acutely aware of that, but it would be strange if, in response to Detroit, we did not thoroughly explore all the different elements and options—some of which may be discarded.

Mr. Ben Wallace (Lancaster and Wyre) (Con): This is a bit rich from this Government who year on year have cut the research budget that allowed our law enforcement agencies to stay at least one step ahead of the terrorists. When I developed the millimetre wave with the team at QinetiQ, before I came into this House, we had to go to the Americans to get the funding because the Government cut it. What concrete extra resources will the Home Secretary put into the further development of technologies and manning at airports to ensure that our borders are more secure?

Alan Johnson: I know that the hon. Gentleman has some experience in this field, but I just do not understand the criticism of this Government for what we have invested in science. The hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor) is no longer in his place, but he has continually praised the Government for the 10-year science and innovation project and the fact that, when I was Secretary of State at the old Department of Trade and Industry, more than half of my budget was for science. It was also ring-fenced, which was frustrating at times because I could not touch it for other things. Criticise this Government for many things, but do not criticise us for our investment in science.

Mr. Parmjit Dhanda (Gloucester) (Lab): How will my right hon. Friend consult on and communicate any changes that are made in profiling? It is very difficult, because changes need to be made in a way that does not trigger people’s knowledge that we are doing such things, but it is also important to avoid unnecessary community tensions.

Alan Johnson: I take my hon. Friend’s point. There would be no benefit in even studying the use of profiling if we were not talking to groups representing different ethnic minorities in this country. We have to take them along with us on this. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook and Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) actually supports the use of profiling, and there will be different views in different communities and ethnic minorities. All I am saying is that it would be irresponsible not to look at whether profiling can play a part in strengthening our defences.

Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): If we are to search people more thoroughly and introduce body scanners, we will need far more space and personnel at our airports. Given that most of our airports seem to be crammed full of duty-free boutiques, will the Home Secretary make it clear to airport operators that security matters have to come first?

Alan Johnson: I see an advantage for our alcohol policy coming up here. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is inviting me to change the use of space at airports. This is one of the important discussions that we have to have with airport authorities and airlines: physically how we can do this properly with the minimum of inconvenience to the public and ensure that people can go about their daily business. That is an important part of these discussions.

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): May we have stronger action to deport immediately those people in this country suspected of promoting extremism and of becoming radicalised? May we include in that list those who would hold offensive marches?

Alan Johnson: We always keep such issues under review. As I said in my statement, it is important that we do not take action simply because people have views that we find abhorrent but which are not illegal. We are a democracy, and there needs to be proper debate on our university campuses. It would be totally counter-productive for us to be heavy-handed in that respect. Through the Prevent strategy we are strengthening institutions, helping individuals and providing information, facts and advice to those who want to counter some of these radical views. As part of that, of course, we deport, and seek to deport, lots of people; many are queuing up for deportation at the moment. However, in a democracy, they have their right to judicial review and to go to the European Court. All of that, of course, is important, but at the end of the day they will be deported, providing we have done our job properly.

Mr. Shailesh Vara (North-West Cambridgeshire) (Con): Given the strong links that Umah Farouk Abdulmutallab had with Britain, can the Home Secretary tell us whether, in due course, the British police will have an opportunity...
to question him, particularly with a view to ascertaining any continuing links that he might have with Britons and what those links are all about?

Alan Johnson: All I can say at this stage is that two Metropolitan police officers are working with the FBI in America on the case. As the hon. Gentleman will have seen on his television screen over Christmas, the police took immediate action in this country. We do not comment on current police operations, and we will have to wait for them to come to a conclusion. That might well involve the British police wishing to ask questions, but we will have to see how the operation goes.

Mr. Andrew Pelling (Croydon, Central) (Ind): I have had e-mails from constituents expressing concern about health risks and dignity as a result of the use of the scanners. Can the Home Secretary say anything on the public record to reassure people about such matters?

Alan Johnson: My understanding is that there is less radiation from a body scanner than from the flight itself. On privacy, as I have mentioned, we can probably think and do more, but at the moment all the images are destroyed immediately and the person operating the machine is remote from the person being scanned, which means that there is no face-to-face contact—they are anonymous while being scanned. However, it is difficult to get around the privacy issues, given where Abdulmutallab was trying to hide his explosives. If that is how terrorists seek to get around such issues, obviously we might have to be a little less delicate about privacy if we are to counter the threat effectively.

Copenhagen Climate Change Conference

4.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Edward Miliband): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about December’s Copenhagen climate change conference, at which I represented the United Kingdom alongside my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Today I want to report back to the House and set out where we go next in the global battle against climate change.

Let me say at the outset that the outcome of Copenhagen was disappointing in a number of respects. We are disappointed that Copenhagen did not establish a clear timetable for a legal treaty and that we do not yet have the commitments to cuts in emissions that we were looking for. However, I also want to report to the House the significant progress that the accord agreed at Copenhagen marks and explain how we can build on the progress that was made.

The Copenhagen accord, which is available in the Library, was agreed by a group representing 49 developed and developing countries that together account for more than 80 per cent. of global emissions. The key points of the accord are as follows. It endorses the limit of 2°C in warming as the benchmark for global progress on climate change. Unlike with every previous agreement, not just developed, but all leading developing countries have agreed to make specific commitments to tackling emissions, to be lodged in the agreement by 31 January.

Also for the first time, so that we can be assured that countries are acting as they say they will act, all countries have signed up to the comprehensive measurement, reporting and verification of progress. On finance, significant commitments have been made by the rich world to developing countries. They include fast-start finance worth $10 billion a year by 2012, with a total of up to $2.4 billion from the UK, and specific support to tackle deforestation. In the longer term, the accord supported the goal, first set by the Prime Minister, of $100 billion a year of public and private finance for developing countries by 2020.

By any measure, those are important steps forward, but we know that the world needs to go much further. We need more certainty and a greater scale of ambition. So the urgent task ahead is to broaden, deepen and strengthen the commitments that were made in Copenhagen, drawing on the large coalition of countries that wanted more from the agreement. Broadening the commitments is vital. Forty-nine countries signing up to the agreement is not enough. To tackle the global problem, we need a wider group. The United Nations is seeking to persuade all countries to sign up to the accord, and the UK is determined to play its part in making that happen.

In addition, we must act to deepen the commitments on emissions made by countries across the world. Lord Stern has shown that if nations make the biggest emissions cuts in the range that they have put forward, we can be within striking distance of the two-degree pathway that we need, including with the peaking of global emissions by 2020. We know that that is in our economic as well as our environmental interests. Greater certainty about emissions is necessary to provide the strongest incentive to business, including through the carbon price. So we
will work to persuade other countries that we all need to show the highest levels of ambition on emissions as part of the commitments that we make. For Europe, provided that there is high ambition from others, that means carrying forward our commitment to moving from 20 to 30 per cent. reductions by 2020 compared with 1990. We must also act to strengthen the accord, including by continuing our efforts to secure a legally binding framework. In taking on clear commitments and actions, we should recognise how far major developing countries have come in the past year. However, we must also seek to allay their concern that they will be constrained from growth and development by the demands of a legal treaty.

We must draw on the coalition between some of the world's richest developed countries and some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable developing countries, such as Ethiopia and the Maldives, all of which want a legally binding structure. Strengthening the accord also means that richer countries must make good on the promises made on fast-start finance and show that we can fully fund the long-term goal of $100 billion, one of the tasks for the high-level panel on sources of revenue that was agreed in the accord.

Those efforts to make progress on substance must, in our view, be accompanied by reform of the process of decision making. The conference was held up by disagreements over procedure: which text negotiators should look at and whether, as in Kyoto, a representative group of countries could be formed to avoid having to discuss everything in a plenary of 192 nations. Those disputes about process meant that it was not until 3 am on Friday, the last day of a two-week conference, that substantive negotiations began on what became the Copenhagen accord. By then there was simply too little time to bridge some of the differences that existed. We need to find better ways of running the process of negotiation, so I welcome the UN Secretary-General's decision to look again at those issues.

We also welcome the decision by Chancellor Merkel to host a conference as part of the mid-year negotiations in Bonn, and we will work with the incoming Mexican presidency, which will be hosting the next conference in November. But dialogue and negotiations need to restart before June—something I made clear to Yvo de Boer, the executive secretary of the convention on climate change when I met him in London just before Christmas.

In looking back at Copenhagen, we must bear in mind that reaching agreement would inevitably be tough because we were seeking consensus among 192 countries. Like most ambitious efforts, it was always going to be difficult to succeed the first time round. However, we should not let frustration with the two weeks at Copenhagen—albeit justified—obscure the historic shift that this past year has marked.

I want to pay tribute in particular to the enormous effort of those in the UK, from the scientific community, civil society, British business and the general public, who have mobilised on climate change. Their ideas and energy helped to drive us forward over the past 12 months and during the Copenhagen conference itself. Let me assure him and the House that we are determined to strengthen and sustain the momentum behind the low-carbon transition in the UK. Building on our low-carbon transition plan, our world-leading policy on coal and our plans for nuclear, we will be making further announcements in the coming weeks and months on energy generation, household energy efficiency and transport. Following Copenhagen, as part of the work already ongoing on the road map to 2050, we are looking at whether further action is necessary to meet our low-carbon obligations, and we will report back by the time of the Budget. This will include looking at the advice of the Committee on Climate Change published last autumn.

Internationally, thanks in large part to the deadline of Copenhagen and the mobilisation behind it, every major economy of the world now has domestic policy goals and commitments to limit its greenhouse gas emissions, including the United States, China, Japan, Russia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Mexico, South Africa and, of course, the EU. Throughout the world, policy is now set to improve energy efficiency, to increase investment in low-carbon power, to develop hybrid and electric vehicles and smart grids, and to reduce deforestation.

So although Copenhagen did not meet our expectations, 2009 did see the start of a new chapter in tackling climate change across the world. This global shift might not yet have found international legal form, but scientific evidence, public opinion and business opportunity have made it irreversible. In 2010 and in the years ahead, this Government—and, I am sure, the vast majority in this House—are determined to ensure that we redouble our efforts to complete the unfinished business of Copenhagen.

Climate change remains the biggest global challenge to humankind, and it requires a global solution. We owe it to our children, their children and the generations to come to find it. The work has started, it will continue this year, and I believe that it will succeed. The fight against climate change will be won. I commend this statement to the House.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for giving me advance sight of his statement, and for the briefing that he kindly gave me in advance of the Copenhagen summit. It is disappointing that the Prime Minister is not making this statement, however. He missed questions in the House in order to go to Copenhagen early, and it is surprising that he has chosen not to report to the House on what he accomplished there. The Secretary of State and I share the view that we need to see global action on climate change. If Copenhagen showed one thing, it was that the discussions should not end there, and that they must continue.

Before Copenhagen, we said that a rigorous deal should achieve three things. The first was a commitment to limiting warming to 2°C. The second was a clear focus on adapting to climate change and on finding a dependable mechanism to finance that. The third was urgent action to preserve the rain forests. On the first, the 2°C proposal was noted, as the Secretary of State said, but the accord is completely unclear about when emissions should be cut, and by how much. On the second, it is welcome that adaptation was so prominent in the discussions, but there is no clarity on the sources of finance. On the rain forests, there was once again a discussion of the issue, but nothing that could be meaningfully described as a political deal, let alone a legal framework. By any objective assessment, therefore, Copenhagen was a flop.
The question is: how do we move on from here? I wonder whether the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, in this statement today and their remarks before Christmas, have reflected deeply enough on the implications of the outcome of Copenhagen. The Prime Minister has volunteered to lead a global campaign to make the Copenhagen accord legally binding, but what precisely is it that he would make legally binding? The accord is essentially an agreement to disagree, defined chiefly by what is absent from it. It contains nothing to indicate the scale or the timing of the carbon reductions required of the world, or indeed of any particular country. Is it still the Prime Minister’s intention to lead such a global campaign for ratification?

In the days after the conference, the Prime Minister said that the negotiations had been held to ransom by only a handful of countries, and that that must never be allowed to happen again. The Secretary of State clarified that this included China, but has he not missed a big point here? Does he not see that Copenhagen requires us to face up to what I think is an uncomfortable reality, to blame China, India and other countries for wrecking a deal that is futile because no meaningful global deal can be done without them? Do we not need to understand why these nations considered a real deal to be against the interests of their own people? This view is reflected in their insistence on including in the final text the declaration that “social and economic development and poverty eradication are the first and over-riding priorities of developing countries”.

In other words, the implication is that attacking climate change ranks, for them, below these priorities.

This revealed preference on the part of India, China and other parts of the developing world cannot simply be overlooked or assumed away. The People’s Daily reported that the Chinese Government would treat talks in 2010 on a binding global deal as a struggle over “the right to develop”. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that the central issue is now how cutting current and future emissions can be shown to be compatible with development? Does he agree that for developed and developing countries alike, becoming less dependent on fossil fuels, using energy more productively and damaging the environment less is a pathway that can enhance the prospects for economic development, for prosperity through trade and for the reduction of poverty? If he does, will he accept that we now urgently need a new politics of climate change—one that can convince both around the negotiating table, as it failed to do in Copenhagen, and in the court of public opinion that the action we must take to guarantee the stability of the climate in the long term is also in the interests of both rich and poor in the short term?

Does the Secretary of State agree that three shifts from how Copenhagen was conducted are required—first, the case for action should always be based on practical rather than ideological grounds; secondly, action must not be presented in sacrificial terms, but as a set of economic and wider opportunities; and, thirdly, leaders and Ministers must see it as their mission to persuade and to unify rather than to denounce and divide?

Edward Miliband: I slightly regret the tone of the hon. Gentleman’s remarks. I welcomed the cross-party support for the Government’s work at Copenhagen, from the hon. Gentleman himself and from those on the Liberal Democrat Benches—and, indeed, from the Leader of the Opposition and from the leader of the Liberal Democrat party. All of us who went to Copenhagen sought to get the best agreement we could and I believe that we can build on the accord that was reached. Petty and partisan remarks about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others, however, really do not become the hon. Gentleman.

Let me deal now with the hon. Gentleman’s specific points. On the question of the accord and whether there should be a global campaign for it, I believe it is necessary to seek to encourage more countries to sign up to it. It is not just me that thinks that, as the President of the Maldives, Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia and a coalition of developing and developed countries signed up to the accord. It is not an agreement to disagree. I said clearly in my remarks that it is a matter of regret that the emissions reductions were not lodged at the time of the agreement, but they will be lodged by 31 January, and I hope that those will be targets. I mentioned all the countries that have targets and we can build on that, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not understand that these will be lodged as part of the agreement by the end of January. As I say, it is something on which we can build. That is my first point to the hon. Gentleman.

On the second point, of course developing countries emphasise the overriding importance of development. Indeed, the words that the hon. Gentleman cited were taken either from the Kyoto treaty or the Rio convention, which both emphasised the overriding priority of development for developing countries. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman’s characterisation of how we talked about Copenhagen. When he or I talked about Copenhagen, we did not talk about it simply in sacrificial terms; we talked about it as being good for our economies. We did not talk about it simply in ideological terms either; we talked about what countries could gain from it and we talked about how it could unite rich and poor nations alike.

I am all for slogans about the need for a new politics of climate change and all that, although I will have to talk to the hon. Gentleman at some point about what that means. I think it best to build on the progress made at Copenhagen—although it was disappointing—and, more important, the progress made over the last year, and to use the opportunities that we shall have in the coming year to secure the agreement that we did not secure at Copenhagen.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East) (Lab): I attended the Copenhagen conference in my capacity as the Council of Europe’s rapporteur on climate change. I offer my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Member of Parliament for North West Durham for the work he did to secure the agreement by the end of January. As I say, it is not an agreement that will be legally binding in the United Nations. We did not secure a legal UN binding agreement at Copenhagen. The matter will be decided in the negotiations.

May I ask my right hon. Friend, who will be involved in those negotiations, to take into account, as one of the criteria relating to burden-sharing, the principle of common
but differentiated responsibilities? May I also ask him to recognise pollution as measured per tonne? In America it is 20 tonnes per person; in Europe it is 10; in China it is 5; and in India it is 2. If we take those issues into consideration, we shall be able to combine social justice, the eradication of poverty, and growth and prosperity, along with a greater chance of agreement.

Edward Miliband: I congratulate my right hon. Friend the former Deputy Prime Minister on the role that he played at Copenhagen through the Council of Europe, and, of course, on the role that he played at Kyoto. He speaks with great wisdom on these questions. Just as it would be wrong for Government not to admit the disappointment that was part of Copenhagen, it would be ridiculous for anyone in the House to deny that any achievement has been made in the last year. That, I am afraid, was the problem with what was said by the hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark).

I agree with what my right hon. Friend said about burden-sharing and common but differentiated responsibilities. Many of us believed that we had already incorporated that principle, and indeed it is incorporated in the Copenhagen accord. I remind the House of the commitments that must be registered. In the case of developed countries, the commitment is to cuts in emissions; in the case of developing countries, including China and India—as is clear from the annexes to the agreement—it relates to actions that they are taking. However, my right hon. Friend is correct to say that common but differentiated responsibilities must be at the heart of both this accord and any future agreement.

Simon Hughes (North Southwark and Bermondsey) (LD): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement, and commend his efforts and those of the Prime Minister before and during the Copenhagen conference. However, is not the honest truth that many of the efforts made at Copenhagen were too little too late, and that the Copenhagen agreement will probably go down in history as one of the only occasions on which so many world leaders came together in one place to discuss one of the most important issues and came away with so little to show for it?

Do the Government not accept that there is no excuse for not having sorted out the procedural issues beforehand, and that there clearly was not enough political leadership during the months preceding the fortnight in Copenhagen? To ensure that there will be no more disappointing conferences and no more setbacks like that of last month, will the Secretary of State commit himself to ensuring that political leaders here and in the European Union will be engaged in all the steps of the process—all the interim meetings—rather than just leaving it to a glamorous, or in this case rather unglamorous, summit? If the United Nations Security Council can sit in permanent session, why cannot a United Nations climate council, if the EU is included—to get together in a room? It was because the Danes were systematically prevented from tabling a text, because people kept saying, “We are not ready yet to go into a smaller room.” The same thing happened at Bali and Kyoto. That was one reason why we did not bridge some of the divides—because by 3 am on the Friday there were less than 24 hours of the conference to go.

The hon. Gentleman asks serious questions that deserve serious answers. Let me go through them. On his question about process and why we got to the stage that we did, the mess of process partly represented big disagreements about substance, because there was concern among a number of developing countries about the notion of Denmark tabling its own text. Why did it take until 3 am on the Friday for the leaders’ representatives from a group of 27 countries—representing 49 countries if the EU is included—to get together in a room? It was because the Danes were systematically prevented from tabling a text, because people kept saying, “We are not ready yet to go into a smaller room.” The same thing happened at Bali and Kyoto. That was one reason why we did not bridge some of the divides—because by 3 am on the Friday there were less than 24 hours of the conference to go.

The hon. Gentleman’s other points about procedure are important and correct. The notion that negotiators should be left to negotiate, even though they take instructions from Ministers, is insufficient. His notion that there should be some kind of permanent session is also an option that should be considered. It is very important that we do not leave it until June and the mid-year negotiations in Bonn to restart the whole process. The EU needs to use its commitment to going to 30 per cent. with comparable action from others. We also need to build on the momentum from the EU set a 30 per cent. target for the new decade this month? That proposal could either be contained in the accord annex submissions that must be in by the end of January, or be submitted at the first EU summit this year.

Why did the Commonwealth not play a more significant role? I am a huge supporter of the Commonwealth, whose fantastic diversity—ranging from the Maldives and Tuvalu to Canada, Australia and other countries—surely presents a great opportunity for countries to share their experience and be a real force for influence in the world. I hope that the Secretary of State will undertake to ensure that it plays a much bigger role in future.

What about the US and China? How are we going to get them to sign on a dotted line and be more ambitious? Lastly, rather than what has been suggested in some of the post-Copenhagen comments in the British press—that measures on climate change response and emissions targets will make us uncompetitive in a competitive world—will the Government make it clear, as I know that the Secretary of State is committed to doing, that unless we get an agreement that binds everybody, we will miss the chance to have a sustainable future for all countries, not just ours? We will also miss the chance to have the sustainable jobs and sustainable, safe and secure energy on which the security of the world depends.

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman asks serious questions that deserve serious answers.

There are not now an opportunity for the United Kingdom to propose—and for Baroness Ashton, in her new role, to propose—that the EU set a 30 per cent. target for the new decade this month? That proposal could either be contained in the accord annex submissions that must be in by the end of January, or be submitted at the first EU summit this year.

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Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman asks serious questions that deserve serious answers.
On the US and China, we want the deepest cuts from all countries, including the United States, but that is dependent on its legislation. It was willing to make an initial offer before making legislation, but the legislation that went through the House of Representatives was more ambitious than the offer that was made, so there is some hope there.

On the legal treaty and the attitude of certain developing countries, a process of persuasion is partly needed. They need to be persuaded that they have nothing to fear from the legal assurance that is, in my view, necessary. That argument has not yet been won, but there is a broad coalition of developing and developed countries that want the legal framework. That coalition is important and could help us in the months and year ahead.

Colin Challen (Morley and Rothwell) (Lab): I, too, was in Copenhagen, and it seemed to me that one issue behind the problems that emerged from the conference was the concern about where the relevant finance should come from and go to. The Government have rightly said that not more than 10 per cent. of our official development assistance budgets would be spent on climate change finance, but may I press my right hon. Friend to go further? Will he make a commitment that that 10 per cent. will not make up the whole of our climate change finance? Perhaps it should not, at any point, make up more than 10 per cent. of our total climate change finance. The people of Bangladesh want to know that we are not simply robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority on these issues. He is completely right to say that we have made an important commitment to ensuring that the finance that we give will be no more than 10 per cent. of official development assistance, especially after 2013, and that there will also be additional sources of funds. He is also right to imply that we need to find revenue sources to meet our commitments. We know that promises have been made in the past: although the British Government have a good record of keeping promises, it is also necessary to find the revenue sources that can provide the flow of finance, and this is where the high-level panel that I said was being set up by Ban Ki-moon is important. In particular, we need to ensure that the $100 billion goal is not just set out but is actually met. We want the panel to report back by the winter this year? Which climate model predicted that?

Barry Gardiner (Brent, North) (Lab): I commend my right hon. Friend for the very critical role that he played in the wee small hours, when the world’s media had largely gone to bed, in ensuring that we came away from Copenhagen with something rather than nothing. Does he agree that one of the key areas in which progress can be made over the next 12 months is at national Government level? Should we not aim to align national Government policy and legislation with the GLOBE legislators forum principles set out in Copenhagen in November, before the main conference?

Edward Miliband: I agree with my hon. Friend, and thank him for his remarks about the role that I played in this difficult process. I think that GLOBE has played a very important role over the past 12 months, and that it will do so again in the future. Moreover, he draws attention to the fact that many of the targets that countries will enter into the accord will be domestically binding. Those targets will have gone through national Parliaments, and the new Indian Environment Minister has said that he wants to take legislation on India’s so-called six national missions through his House. That is a big step forward, and it is important to emphasise the crucial role of legislators in this process.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Why are we in the northern hemisphere having such a very cold winter this year? Which climate model predicted that?

Edward Miliband: I can hardly believe that question, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The weather fluctuates, as anyone knows, and the notion that a cold spell in Britain disproves the science of climate change is something that I believe not even the right hon. Gentleman believes.

Lastly, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that winning people’s hearts and minds means that we have to be very clear about the advantages of doing what is being proposed, and that we should not talk in puritanical terms about sackcloth and ashes? Only by showing people that this is a remarkable opportunity for this country, Europe and the world will they come and support us.

Edward Miliband: Let me take this opportunity to say that I know that the right hon. Gentleman has announced that he is leaving this House. We will miss his expertise and passion on these issues of climate change, and we wish him well in what he does next.

The right hon. Gentleman asked several specific questions, and I agree that the argument that we need to make is that there is much to gain from the transition to low carbon. We have made that argument already but we can do so more often, because the benefits include the jobs for people in this country and the new industries that will be created. That is true of what we in this country are doing with carbon capture and storage, and it is true in the renewables sector and across the board.

I also agree that Europe must demonstrate its leadership role by pushing others to do more. Part of the task that we face in the accord’s pledging process is to ratchet up the commitments that people make. That is something that we will be working on intensively, including in Europe this month.
Harry Cohen (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Was the delegate from Sudan right when comparing the failure at Copenhagen to a holocaust? Will not many millions be killed in this century as a result of higher temperatures and increased natural disasters including flooding and, indeed, in wars? Although the United States, China and, in my opinion, the developing world were at fault in not getting an agreement, why did the EU not put its best position on the table? What is that best position? Why is the money commitment to get the developing world on board so soft and unreliable? What are the Government going to do to strengthen that arrangement?

Edward Miliband: The remarks of the Sudanese delegate were reprehensible, as I said at the time. As I said in an earlier answer, there was not yet consensus in Europe that the commitments made by others were sufficient for Europe to move to 30 per cent. We think that Europe does need to move to 30 per cent, in the context of proper commitments from others. The process of people putting their targets on the table by 31 January is part of the process of Europe moving up.

My hon. Friend is right to refer to the commitments on finance. I would not quite describe them as soft because they are clear commitments from leaders in the accord, but we need to have extra confidence in them by establishing the vital revenue sources. That is why the high-level panel set up by the Secretary-General is so important.

Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con): May I ask the Secretary of State a question as a vice-chairman of the all-party group on China? It was disappointing that China sought to strip out any language that would have led to Copenhagen being a treaty and to strip out any figures at all. How do the Secretary of State and colleagues in the Foreign Office see us now engaging China constructively in such a way that next time we come to this issue China engages in it rather more constructively and ambitiously?

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman speaks with authority on these issues. China has moved some distance in the past two years on climate change. The very notion of a target—it set out a target of 40 to 45 per cent. reductions in carbon intensity—is important. We look forward to seeing what it lodges as part of the agreement on 31 January. We face a continuing effort, and we are determined to continue with it, to persuade China that a legal undertaking should give it confidence about others meeting their commitments, and that it will not face the constraints on growth and development that it fears. That is part of the persuasion that we need.

The new coalition that was evident at Copenhagen between the developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change—I mentioned Ethiopia and the Maldives, but there were others including other small island states and African countries—is important. That coalition wants a legal agreement. We need to find ways in which that voice can be heard and to persuade others who are more reluctant that it is the right way to go.

Jeff Ennis (Barnsley, East and Mexborough) (Lab): My right hon. Friend will be aware that we are trying to establish what will probably be the largest carbon capture and storage project in Hatfield colliery in Doncaster in his constituency by 2015. How important is the achievement of that goal to the future economy of Yorkshire and to meeting our obligations under the climate change agenda?

Edward Miliband: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. It is very important that we make progress on carbon capture and storage, including in Yorkshire, where there are exciting plans to move forward on that process. It is also worth saying that internationally many countries are moving towards carbon capture and storage. Again, that is a change we have seen over the past couple of years; countries understand the importance CCS will play and the importance of making coal a clean fuel of the future.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) (PC): I am very pleased that the Secretary-General of the UN recognised that there are procedural problems and I sympathise—even empathise—with the right hon. Gentleman in his task of a few weeks ago. Clearly a standing council would be one idea worthy of note, but in the meantime is the Secretary of State aware of the fact that some officials from developed countries are talking about pressing ahead with a smaller group of 20—a coalition of the willing for the climate? If that is so, should the UK not be taking part as well?

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting question. My immediate response is no, in the following sense: we should stick with the UN framework, because the truth is that although it has its frustrations—not least the need to operate by consensus, and indeed, in some sense, unanimity—unless we get all countries bound in, we will have less chance of tackling the problem in the way we need to do. Our instinct, which I think is right, is to stick with the UN process and find ways of improving it, but not to go off in smaller groups, as that will not give people the assurance they need and it will not give us the environmental integrity we need.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone) (Lab): Like my right hon. Friend, I believe that the challenge that faces mankind is climate change, and I commend him for his work in Copenhagen. There is an enormous distance in moving from an accord to a legally binding agreement. How does my right hon. Friend see the development of steps towards that legally binding agreement? Although the UN is involved in a very positive way, there is still a need to keep that momentum. What steps does he see being taken to keep up the momentum towards a legally binding agreement?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend asks the most difficult question of all about how we proceed. It is important to restart the negotiations, because as I said earlier, if we leave it until June we shall find the same problem of being timed out as we found at the end of the conference. Two tracks are still operating under the UN framework—the Kyoto track negotiated among the Kyoto parties and the other track on long-term co-operative action. Those two tracks could still form the basis of a legally binding agreement. What does he see being taken to keep up the momentum towards a legally binding agreement?
Mr. Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): No one set out for Copenhagen looking for an accord between 40-odd countries, so it is more than disappointment—Copenhagen is a failure, and the Secretary of State should not understate that. Does he agree that the opprobrium visited on China in the negotiations may be unfair and that the United States remains, if anything, the primary barrier to a global deal? What steps does he think can be taken to engage the United States more effectively if we are to see a global agreement?

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman and I have talked about Copenhagen in the past. In a way I think he undersells the efforts, not necessarily of the Government but of himself and legislators all round the world. To say that an agreement that for the first time captures targets not just from developed countries but from developing countries is no step forward and represents no gain is wrong and undersells the efforts of legislators and people who have campaigned for a positive outcome.

On the hon. Gentleman’s question about the United States, all countries face difficulties in getting to the kind of ambition we need. There are two separate questions. One is about the level of ambition in any agreement—we want the maximum ambition, including from the US. The second is about the form of the agreement. My understanding of the United States position is that it is content to see movement to a legal treaty. There are others we need to persuade that a legal treaty is in their interests.

Mr. Andy Reed (Loughborough) (Lab/Co-op): Does my right hon. Friend agree that without a legally binding agreement from Copenhagen, the fact remains that manufacturing industry needs certainty, as my right hon. Friend said in his statement, and international uniformity if we are not to lose manufacturing to non-compliant areas. Will he undertake to have a close dialogue with manufacturing industry in the UK in order to do our best to ensure that our manufacturers do not lose out as a result of the failure to get a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend is right. There is the protection that we need to give to higher carbon manufacturers, which is partly to do with the provisions under the new emissions trading scheme for free allowances, for example. With reference to the comments of the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) and others in the House, there is also the assurance that we need to give to the low carbon manufacturers of the future that a clear signal has been sent by the world on low carbon, and we want to strengthen that signal. Both of those are important, and I absolutely undertake to do what my hon. Friend asks.

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): I congratulate the Government on their efforts so far and, in particular, on their commitment to carbon capture and storage for power stations. However, will they redouble their efforts? The time scale for introducing large-scale carbon capture and storage demonstration plants is not ambitious enough, and we need to do more on that.

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman is right that we need to be as ambitious as we can be. That is why we are bringing forward a carbon capture and storage levy as part of our Energy Bill. We hope that all parts of the House will support it and pass it as soon as possible so that we can start to fund carbon capture and storage projects.

Jim Sheridan (Paisley and Renfrewshire, North) (Lab): As part of a cross-party delegation I recently visited some of those islands in the Pacific and saw at first hand the difficulties faced by many of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the world. Following the Copenhagen discussions, can my right hon. Friend offer any hope or support to those poor communities to stop them from sinking even further into the sea?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend speaks very eloquently about his experiences, and I knew that he had taken that trip. He is absolutely right to say that one of the most
important voices at the Copenhagen summit and, indeed, in the months before was that of the small island states. They are the most vulnerable, and all of us will remember the Maldives cabinet meeting that took place underwater to signal the dangers that they face. The finance part of the accord is important, providing immediate resources—I hope—for adaptation and mitigation, and the longer-term finance is important, too. However, the world must also take action on emissions, because in the end that as well as adaptation is what will save those small islands. That is why we need to redouble our efforts on cutting emissions.

Mr. Andrew Pelling (Croydon, Central) (Ind): The Secretary of State has credited the House with a forensic analysis of the difficulties that led to the disappointment at Copenhagen, but is there perhaps someone to blame? Was it a lack of political will on the part of politicians; was it China; was it the strength of the American Congress; or was it, as he suggests, just a problem of process?

Edward Miliband: No, I do not think that I should give the impression that it was a problem of process. At a meeting early on in the negotiations, I said that every country faced compelling constraints that inhibited action on climate change. If there is a reason why we did not reach the agreement that we wanted, it is that every country faced those compelling constraints and we could not overcome them sufficiently. It was not an accident and there was no question, simply, of a badly organised meeting. There are difficult issues, but I come back to this point: the past year has shown that such compelling constraints can be overcome, and we need to spend the months and years ahead overcoming the other constraints that countries faced at Copenhagen.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee

5.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Ian Lucas): With permission, I shall repeat a brief but important statement that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills made about the Government’s plans to mark Her Majesty the Queen’s diamond jubilee in 2012. It will be a landmark year for Her Majesty, Britain and the Commonwealth. Queen Victoria is the only British monarch previously to have celebrated a diamond jubilee. However modestly our present Queen might approach the celebration, I know that people throughout the country will want the chance to recognise this remarkable achievement by paying tribute to Her Majesty and by celebrating with great pride and affection Her Majesty’s 60 years on the throne.

It will also be an opportunity for us as a country to reflect on the incredible changes that have taken place both here and throughout the world over the past six decades. We want there to be a nationwide celebration, and working with colleagues in Buckingham palace and the devolved Administrations we are planning a series of fitting events to enable communities all over the country to mark the diamond jubilee.

Although we are still in the early stages of organisation, I can confirm to the House that the celebrations will take place around the first week of June 2012. In honour of Her Majesty, we will create a special diamond jubilee weekend, moving the late May bank holiday to Monday 4 June and adding an extra bank holiday on Tuesday 5 June. In Scotland, national holidays are a devolved matter. We will work closely with the Scottish Government to help to ensure that people across the United Kingdom can celebrate the jubilee together.

In keeping with previous jubilees, we plan to issue a diamond jubilee medal. Over the next few months, we will be considering that in more detail, including who should be eligible to receive it. In addition, we will be holding national competitions, to be launched later this year, for city status, a lord mayoralty and a lord provostship. Further details of those and other Government plans for the diamond jubilee are available from the Printed Paper Office—and the Vote Office—and online via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport website.

Finally, I can confirm that Her Majesty has agreed, as a mark of royal favour, to confer royal borough status on the London borough of Greenwich. This rare honour is to be bestowed in recognition of the historically close links forged between Greenwich and our royal family from the middle ages to the present day, and of the borough’s global significance as the home of the prime meridian, Greenwich mean time and a UNESCO world heritage site.

Further announcements will follow as our plans for the diamond jubilee are confirmed, but I know that voluntary and local organisations will benefit from early notice of these dates.

This will be a truly historic occasion—a testament to the hard work and dedication of Her Majesty the Queen to this country and to her people. We are committed to ensuring that celebrations take place of which we can all be proud.
Sir George Young (North-West Hampshire) (Con): I thank the Minister for advance sight of his statement, which was delivered earlier by the Business Secretary in another place.

This afternoon the House has heard two serious and sobering statements on terrorism and climate change, so we warmly welcome the good news in today’s announcement that Her Majesty's diamond jubilee will be recognised by an extra bank holiday. Conservative Members give our full support to this proposal, as indeed we did to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell), who put forward the idea in a ten-minute Bill that had all-party support and was given its First Reading last November.

I join the Minister in paying tribute to the very remarkable achievements of Her Majesty during her extraordinary reign: extraordinary not just because of its length—she will be the second longest reigning monarch in British history—but because of the integrity and commitment she has brought to that role and the popular esteem in which she is held across the UK and beyond. No country could wish for a better Head of State.

The House will remember the mood that was expressed powerfully during the celebrations for the golden jubilee in 2002. Despite being told that it was to be a low-key affair, more than 1 million people flooded to the Mall to celebrate—a clear indication of the strength of the relationship between the monarch and her people. I also remember, as will many colleagues, the celebrations in 1977 for the silver jubilee and the way in which the nation united and rejoiced at that time.

The Minister made passing reference to the Commonwealth. Can he inform the House about exactly what arrangements have been made to ensure that the Commonwealth nations are properly represented during the celebrations? This is particularly relevant given the special importance that Her Majesty has placed on the Commonwealth and the great success that she has had in helping to build strong relations with Commonwealth Heads of State during her reign.

May we ask for more detail on some of the Government’s other plans? In particular, can the Minister confirm that his Department is considering a new youth volunteer scheme, as has been suggested in some press reports? Can he confirm that any organised celebrations will include an important role for young people?

Will the Minister clarify whether arrangements have been made for acknowledging the Olympics during this event? The Government initially indicated that they wanted to link those two events in a single celebration. Can he now confirm, as we hope, that that idea has been permanently shelved?

May I add my congratulations to the London borough of Greenwich on its new auspicious status? It holds a special place in our nation’s history, and it is right for it to be honoured in this way. We also welcome the creation of a new medal of service.

Finally, can we ensure that the House of Commons is part of the celebrations? I am sure that all Members across the House will wish to mark this important occasion, and I think that all colleagues would agree that it is right that the House should show its respect for Her Majesty and, indeed, for Prince Philip, and the tireless public service that they have offered this country for 60 years.

Ian Lucas: I am very grateful for the right hon. Gentleman’s characteristically kind and good-humoured response, and of course for the full support that he has offered for the announcement today. I am sure that we will carry forward that support in preparing for the celebrations ahead.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Commonwealth, as I did in my statement. Of course, Her Majesty has been very successful in developing the strong bonds between the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth throughout her reign. It is important that we take into account the full views of the Commonwealth, and as we prepare we will have the opportunity to involve the Commonwealth in the year as a whole and in the celebrations on the bank holiday.

Another important group that should definitely be involved is young people, as the right hon. Gentleman said. I cannot confirm the press reports relating to the new youth volunteer scheme. We are in the process of discussions at the present time, and of course we will keep the House fully informed.

It is very important that the diamond jubilee celebration is seen as a distinct, almost unique celebration in British history and the history of the Commonwealth, because there has been only one diamond jubilee celebration before. I therefore agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it should be seen as distinct from the Olympics, which of course happen to be in the same year but are not linked to it. The diamond jubilee is to celebrate the commitment and work that Her Majesty has given the nation over 60 years.

It is of course important that the House of Commons be involved, and I am sure that all Members will ensure that that happens when the time comes.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for his statement and wholeheartedly endorse his remarks and those of the right hon. Member for North-West Hampshire (Sir George Young) about the appropriateness of celebrations to commemorate Her Majesty’s remarkable 60 years’ service to this country, of which we are all deeply proud.

I particularly welcome my hon. Friend’s announcement about the significant honour bestowed on the borough of Greenwich, which will be very warmly welcomed throughout my constituency. In his statement, he acknowledged the significant achievements in the area. In view of his business promotion responsibilities, does he agree that 2012, which will be not just the jubilee but the year of the Olympics, in which Greenwich will host many of the most significant events, provides a golden opportunity to promote the area’s already successful and further developing industries in the field of leisure, cultural activities, tourism and hospitality?

Ian Lucas: I had a feeling that my right hon. Friend would be here today. He is in the fortunate position of representing the royal borough of Greenwich, as we have said it will be in future. It is an extraordinary constituency and an extraordinary place, and it has strong historic links with the royal family, which is one reason for the announcement today. The year 2012 will be very special, and I urge anyone from across the UK who has not visited Greenwich so to do. It is one of my favourite parts of the UK, and the announcement is richly deserved.
**Lorely Burt** (Solihull) (LD): I thank the Minister for previous sight of the statement.

In 2012, our Queen will have served her people for a whole 60 years, which is a long working life in anybody’s book and deserves to be commemorated. That will be done in a lot of imaginative ways, and we look forward to hearing more suggestions for celebrations. We hope that they will be truly inclusive, and I am sure that they will.

It is welcome that all the Queen’s subjects can join in the celebrations on her official birthday, but a bank holiday attracts a cost to industry. The CBI estimates that every bank holiday costs £6 billion, and the Federation of Small Businesses applauds the sentiment but notes the cost, especially to small businesses. However, we welcome this day of celebration for the only monarch who has reigned for so long, with the exception of Queen Victoria, and for someone who has served her subjects so well. We welcome the bank holiday and the celebration, because you’re worth it, Ma’am.

**Ian Lucas:** I am very pleased that the hon. Lady welcomes the celebration.

**Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): I commend the Minister and the Government for the splendid announcement—it will be welcomed by people the length and breadth of the United Kingdom. We look forward to a magnificent celebration of the Queen’s diamond jubilee in 2012.

Will the Minister please bear in mind the importance of involving Her Majesty’s subjects in the other 15 realms, particularly Australia, New Zealand and Canada and, of course, in the 21 Crown dependencies and overseas territories? They are all Her Majesty’s subjects and it is important that they, too, are included in the celebrations. I remember the silver jubilee of 1977, when the Royal Canadian mounted police were here for the parade in London. Will he consider issuing invitations throughout the Commonwealth to make it a truly magnificent celebration for Her Majesty?

**Ian Lucas:** I will of course consider all the hon. Gentleman’s suggestions. I was present to listen to his introducing his ten-minute Bill, and we have responded to that as part of the consultation and discussions that have already taken place. As I have said, it is important that the Commonwealth, the Crown dependencies and all subjects are involved in the celebrations. We want to try to ensure that.

**Dr. Andrew Murrison** (Westbury) (Con): In 2002, a golden jubilee medal was struck for the armed forces and other uniformed services. The qualification period for it was five years before 2002. If similar criteria were used for the diamond jubilee medal, those serving between 2002 and 2007 would be disfranchised. Paradoxically, that is a period in which our armed forces have been engaged in two major theatres of war. In setting his criteria—a difficult task—will the Minister bear those people in mind to ensure that their contribution and service to Her Majesty the Queen are properly recognised?

**Ian Lucas:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. The criteria for the diamond jubilee medal have not yet been established. We are still in the process of taking into account issues such as those that he raises. We will of course consider them closely.

**Gregory Barker** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I was in the Mall with my son for the golden jubilee celebrations, which were terrific. For the diamond jubilee, will the Minister consider an even more enhanced role for our armed services? There is a particular bond between the Queen and the armed services, and we are now dependent on them and in their debt more than at any other point during her reign. If all the regiments could be recognised—and perhaps an invitation issued to all those who marched in her coronation parade or their successor organisations—it would be great. A particular focus on the armed forces for the diamond jubilee would be very welcome.

**Ian Lucas:** We are, of course, all very much aware of our debt to the armed services, particularly at this time. The hon. Gentleman’s positive suggestions will be taken into account.

**Bob Russell** (Colchester) (LD): The announcement will be welcomed by the Scout and Guide movements in particular, as well as by calendar manufacturers—such as Rose printers of Colchester—which have to work two years in advance, so I appreciate notice of the bank holiday.

Will the Minister elaborate on his reference to national competitions for city status? I recall that, for the golden jubilee, England was disproportionately discriminated against. I therefore urge the Government to ensure that towns in England are treated more favourably than they were for the golden jubilee.

**Ian Lucas:** There will be a further announcement on the city status competition, which will set out the criteria in detail. I am aware of the strength of feeling in English towns. There is also strong feeling in my town of Wrexham—we believe that our town should have city status, too. Like the hon. Gentleman, I may be able to issue a press release after the statement.

**Tony Baldry** (Banbury) (Con): The present Banbury cross was built following public subscription to celebrate the wedding of Princess Victoria, Queen Victoria’s eldest daughter. I am sure that the people of a borough such as Banbury will want to mark the Queen’s diamond jubilee by some similar but modern, 21st-century memorial and tribute. Will the Minister discuss with his colleague the Lord President of the Council whether he could approach the appropriate officials at the palace to ensure that we have a suitable fundraising logo that could be used locally by the authorities in the respective counties and by the respective lord lieutenants? In that way, there will be some focus in each county that the lord lieutenant could oversee, and it would ensure that fundraising can be organised in a structured way for local tributes for the Queen’s diamond jubilee.

**Ian Lucas:** It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman wrote to me with the details of his suggestion, and I will undertake to try to take it forward on his behalf.

**Mr. Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Up and down the country, there are jubilee halls, bridges, parks, gardens and other local memorials. What steps will the Department for Culture, Media and Sport take to encourage such local celebration of the diamond jubilee in 2012?
Ian Lucas: It is for the DCMS to set out the steps that it will take, but I will be happy to liaise with it on any proposals that need to be taken forward regarding the issues the hon. Gentleman raises.

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire) (LD): As a citizen who has always preferred the idea of a monarchy to a republic, I welcome the opportunity to celebrate this wonderful forthcoming jubilee. Will the Government consider a fund from the public purse to ensure that local authorities and local communities can truly celebrate the monarchy that we love, and to which all of us are loyal—I hope—on that very important day?

Ian Lucas: With the Chancellor of the Exchequer sitting to my left, I am very reluctant to make any financial commitments at this juncture, but I am sure that there will be engagement right across the United Kingdom on the jubilee, that people will be determined to carry forward celebrations, and that they will be committed to fundraising in order so to do.

Mr. Andrew Pelling (Croydon, Central) (Ind): Queen Victoria’s glorious diamond jubilee was also held in June. It is a historic part of her reign that is very much remembered. The Minister talked about the importance of this jubilee being an historic occasion, but how can the Government assist in ensuring that it is?

Ian Lucas: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct—this has happened only once before in British history, so it is a genuinely historic and virtually unique occasion. We need to think carefully about it, and to hear from hon. Members and the general public, because we want to make the jubilee something that is remembered for generations to come.

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): Does the Minister agree that the Queen should try to visit each of the Olympic sites? May I invite her to Hadleigh which, with Hadleigh castle, has very strong historical royal connections? She would receive an extremely warm welcome there.

Ian Lucas: I am sure that Her Majesty has heard that kind invitation and that the palace will consider it carefully.

Point of Order

5.53 pm

Mr. John Gummer (Suffolk, Coastal) (Con): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We had a statement today on climate change. It was circulated in the House of Commons in very large type, suitable for reading by the Government spokesman, and the backs of the pieces of paper were uncovered. If we are going to do something about climate change, could we start in this House of Commons, and ensure that statements are first of all written in print that is not so big, so that we use less paper, and secondly that they are printed on both sides of the paper? After all, equipment for doing that has been available for a very long time and we might do our little bit towards climate change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord): I am quite sure the right hon. Gentleman is well aware that those are not matters over which I have a great deal of jurisdiction, but I am sure that the whole House has noted his points, and perhaps they will be taken into consideration when statements are produced in future.
The deficit reduction plan to halve the deficit over a four-year period is a very important part of that strategy. The Bill will set out obligations to cut the deficit at an appropriate and sensible pace, and it will allow us to protect the economy and maintain public services, upon which growth and members of the public depend. That is an important part of what we are trying to do.

Whatever the economic circumstances under whatever Government, we need rules and objectives to govern fiscal policy. Between 1979 and 1997 during the previous Conservative Government, there were many different targets. Between 1980 and 1997, monetary policy targets changed 14 times and there were at least five different fiscal policy objectives. In fact, I believe that there was no clear and consistent objective of fiscal policy. The result was the lack of a clear objective and overall coherence, which meant, among other things, that we had interest rates peaking at 15 per cent. in 1990, instead of half of that, recorded over the 12 years since 1997.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): In 2015 and 2016 under the Bill, if national income rises, the Government can put borrowing up and still meet the requirements. However, if national income fell, they would have to cut. Is not that the very opposite of the natural stabilisers the Chancellor normally recommends?

Mr. Darling: No. It is important that the right hon. Gentleman recognises that the Bill requires the Government, in line with the proposals I set out in the Budget and the pre-Budget report, to halve our borrowing over a four-year period, which I believe is absolutely essential. The measures I have set out will enable us to do that, but it is important that we do it in a way that supports and does not damage the economy. Indeed, this is one of the differences between the Government and the Opposition. One reason why we should not go further at the moment is that going further and faster, and bringing forward that deficit reduction, would be damaging to the economy. We are supporting the economy now because we are not yet out of recession. We need to ensure that we have the support of public fiscal policy, which is keeping the economy going, and supporting the public, businesses and families.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr. Darling: I will give way, but I shall first finish dealing with the point made by the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). It is important that we have that discipline. As I was saying, every Government must have a discipline in relation to their fiscal policy and the discipline I set out is important.

Mr. George Osborne (Tatton) (Con): Will the Chancellor confirm what he just said—that we are not yet out of recession at the beginning of January 2010?

Mr. Darling: I have said so—we have not yet had the figures for the fourth quarter of last year. I have said before on many occasions that I believe we will come out of recession at the turn of the year, but we will not have those figures until later this month. Had I said otherwise, the hon. Gentleman would be the first to jump up and say that we do not have the figures, which we do not.

Mr. William Cash (Stone) (Con): As the Chancellor knows, I have raised the question of the true state of the debt on many occasions. I have never had a straight answer, so I would be grateful if I could have one now. When one aggregates the amount, including public pensions, private finance initiatives, Network Rail and bank bail-outs, one reaches the figure of £2.220 billion, which is 158.8 per cent. of gross domestic product. Is that the case? The figures are from the Office for National Statistics. Will the Chancellor also tell my why, in relation to Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds, the £62 billion that he announced before the rise of the House for Christmas, was not disclosed to either the Public Accounts Committee or the ONS? Is it the case that Sir Martin Scholar is taking that matter up with him right now?

Mr. Darling: I think that the hon. Gentleman means Sir Michael Scholar, who is the chairman of the ONS. I have explained that point before to the House. This was money that was made available by the Bank of England as emergency support to ensure that RBS and the then HBOS could get through the crisis that we faced in October 2008. I have been asked about that and explained the position before. As I have told the Chairmen of the two relevant Select Committees, I am reflecting on how we deal with such matters in the future.

With regard to the other question, the hon. Gentleman is adding together all sorts of things, including future pension liabilities. The correct thing to do is to look at our position in relation to our debt and compare that with other countries. Even though our debt is going up, by 2014 it will be still be below the G7 average.

Lembit Öpik (Montgomeryshire) (LD): While the Chancellor's intention to reduce the public debt significantly through specific targets is unquestionably laudable, my concern is that if he—or someone else, if a different party has taken the reins of Government—misses the target, what is to prevent him from introducing an amendment to the Bill to alter the target? This is a policy statement rather than a binding objective, because it could be changed by statute in the future.
Mr. Darling: I shall come on to that point, but as I was saying before I gave way all Governments have rules and objectives. Up until 1997, those were simply statutorily made by the Chancellor in a Budget or at some other fiscal event. Since 1998, we have had the code for fiscal stability and two rules that have guided fiscal policy for the past 10 years. The hon. Gentleman is right: it is open to any Government and Chancellor to say that circumstances have changed and so we need to change policy. I have been a Minister for the past 12 years and I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the discipline created by rules, so the Chancellor can tell Departments that they can not have any more funds because it would breach a particular rule, is important. I daresay that that was also important for previous Governments. Today we are legislating to put on the statute book a requirement to reduce the deficit by half. Of course, it will not be a question of going to jail if we do not do it, but having to come back to the House to seek further legislation will be a discipline for future Governments. It is not uncommon for Governments in other parts of the world to have similar strictures on them.

The two rules that the Government operated between 1997 and 2007, before the current financial crisis hit us and hit other countries, were to balance the budget, excluding public investment, over the economic cycle and to keep Government debt at a prudent level. Those two rules were appropriate to the challenges of the time. We wanted to increase public investment, and at the time there was a consensus in this House—certainly in the latter part of the 1990s and the early part of the last decade—that our public services did need more money spent on them, including the health service and schools. Those rules were designed to enable us to do that. Over that 10-year economic cycle, which ended in 2007, we were able to balance the budget and borrow to invest, which is something that previous Governments of both political colours had not been able to do previously. We were able to increase significantly investment in public services, tripling it from 0.6 per cent. of GDP in 1996-97 to 2 per cent. in 2006-07, its highest level since 1979. We also sustained continuous expansion in the economy, while also reducing Government debt as a share of GDP, from 42.5 per cent. in 1996-97 to 36 per cent. in 2006-07.

Those rules stood our economy and the country in good stead during that period, but events towards the end of 2007 and in 2008 fundamentally changed the economic situation for the entire global economy, because we experienced the worst economic conditions seen in more than 60 years. We were operating in a completely different environment, and policy, here and in other countries, needed to adapt to reflect that. No one could have foreseen the sheer scale and spread of the global financial recession that hit economies all over the world in 2007 and at the beginning of 2008. The result is that borrowing and debt have risen in most countries, ours included.

Mr. Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): In his opening remarks, the Chancellor made much of the need not to reduce the deficit too fast. However, his written statement to the House on 2 December reported on ECOFIN—I presume that either he or the Chief Secretary attended and agreed with the recommendations—which called on the UK to reduce its budget deficit below 3 per cent. of GDP, or half the level in this Bill, by the 2014-15 financial year. He suggests that the approach in the Bill is prudent, but in another context he suggests that we go twice as fast. Can he account for that disparity?

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman refers to the Finance Ministers’ meeting in Brussels at the beginning of December, which I most certainly attended, and the rules that pertain to countries in general. The Commission can make recommendations, but as we are not in the euro, we are not obliged to follow them. We have no plans to change our current policy on that issue. The measures that I have announced in the pre-Budget report and before are sensible and, at this stage and when there is still so much uncertainty as countries emerge from the global recession, it is sensible to reduce the deficit in a way that does not damage our economy.

The recession has had a substantial impact on the public finances, here and in every country. With economies weakening, tax revenues have fallen. In this country, we have seen falls in corporation tax, especially from the financial services industry, but also in income tax. Higher unemployment inevitably and rightly means that more has to be spent supporting people and families. There has also been a cost to continuing to maintain and support the economy and stabilising the banking system. However, both sides of the House agree that stabilising the banking system was necessary. It was not an optional extra, because it would have been calamitous not to have done so. But there is a difference in our policies on support for the economy. Had we not maintained spending to support the economy, the pain and cost of the recession would have been far greater. I do not accept the argument of those who claim that we should have started to cut back on expenditure two years ago. That would have been extremely damaging to the economy and would have made it even more difficult for people.

As we emerge from this global downturn, we need to cut our borrowing, as other countries are doing. To try to meet the fiscal rules put in place for the previous economic cycle would be perverse. Not to allow borrowing and the deficit to rise to help people and businesses would have meant greater pain and more job losses, as we saw in the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s, and would have meant increased costs in both human and economic terms.

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): Before the Chancellor moves too far from the banking system, would he agree that in order to build public confidence it might be worth considering linking Ministers’ pay to performance? If the Government failed to meet the target, Ministers’ pay could be cut.

Mr. Andrew Pelling (Croydon, Central) (Ind): Or increased.

Mr. Darling: I think that the latter proposition is probably a remote possibility in the current climate, but the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) makes an interesting proposition.

The vital point—one to which I shall return later—is that it is important that Ministers and Governments are accountable to the House, which they are of course. Each and every one of us who are privileged enough to be Ministers of the Crown are answerable to the House,
and if we do not come up to the mark, one way or another it is open to the House to do something about it. That remains the case, and it is perhaps a more draconian system than simply modifying that week’s pay packet.

Mr. Darling: I agree with my hon. Friend. I, too, want to reduce borrowing. We have to do more than moderate it—it has to come down. He is right also that part of what we must first do is close the tax gap and ensure that HMRC does everything possible to ensure that it collects every penny due to it. That is not always possible—people go bankrupt and so on—but we must do it. It is also necessary for us to be vigilant about closing tax loopholes when they emerge. One of the successes of the G20 meeting last year was at long last to get international agreement to begin to open the doors on some of the tax havens, such as Lichtenstein for example, so that we can get access to the records of people who live and do business in this country but avoid paying tax here. That is grossly unfair and inefficient. I agree with him on that.

We have a duty to support the economy during the downturn, and that has resulted in higher borrowing, and indeed such measures are still supporting the economy. Not to have put in place the discretionary measures that we have introduced since the end of 2007 would have had disastrous consequences for the economy—I accept that is a minority view, although held by those on one side of the House—because failure to support the economy would have meant higher, not lower, debt and higher, not lower, long-term borrowing.

I have always made it clear that support for the economy during the downturn goes hand in hand with steps to rebuild our fiscal strength once recovery is established. That is necessary to get the growth that we need. However, it is also imperative that we get our borrowing down in a way that supports growth, because growth itself will help us to reduce our borrowing and debt. The alternative is to consign ourselves to a decade of austerity, low growth and low employment, which I do not think would be the right thing for this country.

As I said, in the past, there have been many and varied fiscal objectives under successive Governments. Since 1997, however, our fiscal objectives have remained in the medium term, to ensure sound public finances so that spending and taxation impacts fairly between generations, and in the short term, to support monetary policy and to help to smooth the path of the economy. Despite the disruptions of the past couple of years, those objectives remain important, and to get back on that course we need to get borrowing down on a reasonable time scale.

The Bill requires the Government to set out a fiscal plan for delivering sound public finances, which must be approved by Parliament, and places a duty on the Government to meet that plan. As I said earlier, it gives Parliament a clear role in setting and monitoring the Government’s medium-term fiscal plans. Parliament must approve those plans before they become law, so this Bill gives the House a new opportunity to scrutinise the Government’s plans. Over the past few months, there has been an understandable desire to reassert the authority, in particular, of the House, and I believe that the Bill is one way in which we can do that. It represents a substantial strengthening of the fiscal policy framework in response to the challenges we face while enabling the House to exercise greater scrutiny, not just through Select Committees, but through the House sitting in this Chamber.

Mr. Darling: No, I do not accept that. As I said earlier—the hon. Gentleman might not have been here—prior to 2007, when this crisis began, our debt levels came down to the second lowest in the G7. We have been reducing debt while spending more on infrastructure. The hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) mentioned the railways. I know, having been Transport Secretary for four years, what happens when a Government inherit a transport system starved of investment, as it had been in the 1990s—literally, things come off the rails. That is why I make no apology for the fact that the Government spend more on the railways and infrastructure. Our transport system needed the investment.

We have spent more on schools and hospitals too. We owe a great deal to the Victorians, but I do not think that they expected us to be relying on their hospitals at the back end of the 20th century. We spent that money while reducing borrowing. Now let us consider what happened to us in 2007-08—this has a bearing on the point made by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Gregory Barker) about the recession. We have a very large financial services sector—I think that we are, in most people’s view, the main financial services sector in the world—so the recession has had a far greater effect on us than on others.

I would like to ensure that we have a major financial centre here in the future. That is why we have to toughen up regulation and work with the industry to ensure that we achieve that. However, the idea that when we entered the downturn, we had not been running the economy efficiently and effectively is nonsense. Yes, we were spending more money on public services, but not a day or week went by when people on the Conservative Benches did not ask for even more money—not less—for schools and hospitals. On some days, they even outdid the Liberal Democrats in calling for more expenditure on services, so for them to say now that they did not want that spending is nonsense.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): The Chancellor appears to be rewriting history as he goes along. He is trying to give the impression to the House that the Government were repaying debt until the economic crisis hit, but that is clearly not true. The Government were borrowing money each year in many years before the crisis hit. Is it not a fact that, unlike the impression that he is trying to
give, my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) is right that the Chancellor was not fixing roof when the sun was shining?

Mr. Darling: When the hon. Gentleman has a chance to think about these things, he might realise that Governments borrow money. There was a time, early in the last decade, when Government borrowing was going down, but then we started to hear concerns from the pensions industry that the Government were not borrowing enough—the pensions industry actually requires borrowing.

Mr. David Gauke (South-West Hertfordshire) (Con): So it’s their fault now?

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely flippant remark.

From time to time, Governments need to borrow money to ensure, for example, that we have infrastructure, schools and hospitals. At times like these, were a Government to shut down spending and so put even more people out of work, or were they to get into the absurd situation, like the Government in the early 1930s, of trying to cut benefits and spending, they would make a difficult situation even worse. So I do not accept the point made by the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies).

Dr. John Pugh (Southport) (LD): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Darling: No, I want to make some progress. Perhaps I will give way later.

Clause 1 of the Bill imposes three duties on the Treasury: first, to ensure that Government borrowing as a share of GDP falls in every year to 2015-16; secondly, to ensure that Government borrowing is at least halved as a share of GDP over a four-year period to 2013-14; and thirdly to ensure that Government debt as a share of GDP is falling by 2015-16. The latest forecasts for the public finances, which I set out at the pre-Budget report last month, are consistent with these duties: in the next financial year, 2010-11, Government borrowing will start to fall and continue to do so each and every year after that; borrowing will reach 5.5 per cent of GDP by 2013-14, so that we will more than halve the 12.6 per cent of GDP reached this year; and with further consolidation thereafter, debt as a share of GDP is projected to fall in 2015-16. I have announced measures that will allow us to more than halve the deficit as a share of GDP over four years—from 12.6 to 5.5 per cent. That is the sharpest reduction in the budget deficit for any G7 country.

In relation to the points raised by some hon. Members earlier, there are no powers to amend those duties. They can be changed only through new primary legislation. In other words, the Government would have to return to the House were they not meeting the obligations.

Mr. Pelling: Can the Chancellor give a judgment on just how deflationary those changes in public spending could be? Is there not a danger from the straitjacket that is being introduced through this legislation?

Mr. Darling: I believe that the changes are manageable, and they are the right thing to do. The hon. Gentleman might want to make his point to those on the Conservative Front Bench, who as I understand it want to go further and faster. There is a risk of damaging the economy if that happens. Inevitably, these are matters of judgment, but I am very happy to justify why we have had to borrow so much at the present time. However, if we are going to get sustainable growth in future, it is important that we get that borrowing down. To halve it over a four-year period is a reasonable thing to do and a reasonable rate at which to do it. To go further than that—and to make that judgment at the present time, when there is so much uncertainty—would be hugely damaging to the economy and would present a terrible risk, especially when the Opposition are contemplating spending even more money on top of that.

Dr. Pugh: Following on from a previous question about what would happen if the legislation had been in place earlier, if it had been in place, would the Chancellor have been free, as he was free, to bail out the banks as promptly as he did? Is he not hampering the range of movement of a subsequent Chancellor?

Mr. Darling: No, because the Chancellor would quite obviously have to come back to the House if circumstances were as severe as those that pertained a couple of years ago. I do not think that anybody would argue for getting ourselves into a position through legislation where the Government were completely hamstrung and could not effectively govern the country. That would be nonsense. However, it is important that there should be a discipline and a clear sense of direction on reducing the deficit.

Clause 2 sets out a duty that the Government must continue to have a fiscal plan after 2016. That will be done by order, so the Government can decide what is appropriate. Again, the matter has to come back to the House. There is also a provision in clause 2 to give the Treasury the power to add further duties to the Government’s fiscal plan. We have illustrated how we do that. For example, a draft order was published on the day of the pre-Budget report requiring the Government to ensure that borrowing as a share of GDP came down to 5.5 per cent., which is more than halving the deficit. As we look to the future, if we can get growth that is more robust than in my forecast, borrowing will naturally fall faster. It would then be possible to reduce that borrowing further in the medium term. However, at this stage, I believe that the course that I have set out is the right one.

Clause 3 sets out various reporting requirements, so that the House has an opportunity to see what progress is being made. The Treasury must report on whether it has succeeded in fulfilling the duty that is imposed upon it—that is, on whether borrowing as a share of GDP is lower—and also ensure that debt is falling. If the targets are not met, the Treasury has to explain to Parliament why that is not the case. Again, that is subject to scrutiny by Parliament. There will be a revised code for fiscal stability, which I shall make available before Committee, so that there can proper scrutiny of it.

Clause 4 makes it clear that it is to Parliament that the Government are accountable for approval of, progress towards and compliance with their fiscal plans. I see that the reasoned amendment calls for the creation of a new independent body to monitor and demand fiscal action, but I believe that Parliament should hold the
Government to account for their fiscal policy, not a quango, an external body or, indeed, the courts. The Government are accountable to Parliament and, through Parliament, to the people.

Mr. George Osborne rose—

Mr. Darling: I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman and I both agree that the Government are accountable to Parliament and, through Parliament, to the people.

Mr. Osborne: When the Prime Minister was shadow Chancellor and originally set out his plans for fiscal rules, he said that they should be monitored independently by an independent office. Does the Chancellor know when the Prime Minister changed his mind?

Mr. Darling: My recollection was that when the then shadow Chancellor set out his plans, he set out proposals that we subsequently enacted. The hon. Gentleman asked about independent verification. Again, my recollection is that we said that there should be a role for the National Audit Office, and there was indeed a role for the NAO, which is independent of the Government.

Stewart Hosie (Dundee, East) (SNP): I agree entirely with the Chancellor that Parliament should hold the Government to account, on this and many other matters. So why have we not had a comprehensive spending review, so that we can understand precisely what the impact of the cuts will be and hold the Government to account on the plans that they are already putting forward?

Mr. Darling: For the reason stated in the pre-Budget report. I said that there was still a lot of uncertainty about. We still do not know what unemployment will be this coming year. We had some good news just after the PBR, in that employment rose and unemployment fell, but we still think that unemployment will rise during the course of this year, so there is a lot of uncertainty about, and we still have the current spending plans, which run through until April 2011. That is why we have not done a spending review just now, and that remains the case.

There is no doubt that we face a huge challenge as a country. There will be difficult judgments over the next few years. I have said before that some tough decisions will have to be taken, but the real judgment is this: we should recognise that what the Government do and what they spend can make a difference to the future rate of growth, and they can certainly make a difference to the quality and availability of public services, upon which many people who send us here rely. However, what the Government do and what they spend will also set the direction of this country for the next 10 or 20 years. That is why it is important that we get it right. I believe that my judgment of bringing borrowing down in a way that is manageable and deliverable and, at the same time, does not damage the social and economic fabric of this country is the right one. This Bill will help us to achieve that. I commend it to the House.

6.26 pm

Mr. George Osborne (Tatton) (Con): I beg to move an amendment, to leave out from “That” to the end of the Question and add:

“this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Fiscal Responsibility Bill because it does not establish an independent mechanism for ensuring the publication of credible fiscal forecasts and assessing the effectiveness of Government fiscal policies in achieving stated fiscal objectives; because the duties imposed by the Bill are not accompanied by any corresponding sanctions; because in the absence of spending plans which set out a credible means by which public sector net borrowing is to be reduced, legislating to secure sound public finances is irrelevant and a distraction; and, consequently, considers that the Bill is inadequate in achieving the objective of securing sound public finances.”

Although this piece of legislation consists of only six short clauses, it must be the biggest load of nonsense that this Government have had the audacity to present to Parliament in this Session. Quite frankly, I do not think the Bill is the idea of the Chancellor of the Exchequer or any of his Treasury Ministers, or indeed of any official in the Treasury. It was dreamt up by the Schools Secretary and the Prime Minister when they were trying to think of something to say on the “Andrew Marr Show” on the eve of the Labour conference, so now we all have to go through the rigmarole of debating it in Parliament. The Bill was a completely feeble stunt, a fact that is revealed when we look at the clauses.

Let us remember what one of the economists whom the Prime Minister himself appointed to the Monetary Policy Committee has said about the Bill. Willem Buiter has said:

“Fiscal responsibility acts are instruments of the fiscally irresponsible to con the public.”

That was the man whose economic judgment the Prime Minister trusted so much that he put him on the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England, but no one is conned. If the Bill was supposed to reassure the markets, it has failed. This is what one of the City’s leading economists, Michael Saunders of Citibank, says:

“the government’s plans for legislation to cut the deficit are not convincing and are probably just camouflage—a sort of ‘fiscal figleaf’—for the lack of genuine action”.

If the Bill was supposed to con the business community, it has completely failed in that task too. Richard Lambert, the head of the CBI, was on the radio just two or three days ago saying:

“I’m certainly not satisfied with the government’s plans. It’s going to be publishing in the next few days legislation which says it is going to halve the deficit within the next four years, but it’s a bit like me saying I’m going to join the gym and that means I’m fit already.”

The Bill was also supposed to convince the independent economic commentators, but this is what the Institute for Fiscal Studies says about the legislation that the Chancellor has brought to the House today:

“it is far from clear why investors and voters should be any more impressed by this”—

the Bill—

“than they were by the Code for Fiscal Stability, which was enshrined in statute with much fanfare in 1998.”

The Bill has failed to con even the Labour party. This is what the right hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Clarke) says—

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury laughs, but I seem to remember that the right hon. Gentleman is the former Home Secretary—not
the former Home Secretary who says that the Labour party has a big charisma problem; I am talking about the other former Home Secretary, who says that this piece of legislation is “vacuous and irrelevant”. As with so much that the right hon. Gentleman says about the leadership of the Labour party at the moment, he is absolutely right, because when we go through the Bill clause by clause, we see what complete nonsense it is.

Let us start with clause 1, which deals with the duties on the Treasury. Here we read:

“The Treasury must ensure that...public sector net borrowing expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product is less than it was for the preceding...year.”

We are also told that the law will require net debt to be falling by the end of five years. Saying these things, and putting them into statute, will not actually make them happen, however. Every Budget and pre-Budget report produced by this Chancellor and his predecessor since 2003 has promised falling net debt at the end of a five-year horizon, and every one of those borrowing forecasts has been wrong, in times of boom and of bust.

The present Chancellor has got his total borrowing forecasts wrong to the tune of £560 billion since he entered No. 11. It is now four times higher than when he announced his forecasts for the PBR in 2007, after the credit crunch had begun. So why would anyone believe his latest forecast, just because he writes it into the clause of a Bill instead of publishing it in the Budget Red Book? Does the fact that it is printed on green paper, given a solemn title and passed through Parliament after being looked at by a Committee of the House make it any more likely to happen, or any more real, than when he stood at the Dispatch Box on Budget day and told us that these things were going to happen?

Clause 2 relates to “Further duties for securing sound public finances”. In it, we find a stunning extension of state power. We discover that

“The Treasury may make an order imposing...a duty or duties”

and that these duties are

“imposed for the purpose of securing sound public finances.”

We also find that these duties

“must be consistent with the key principles as applied by the code for fiscal stability.”

This is the same code for fiscal stability, by the way, that allowed the Prime Minister to run massive deficits in the middle of a boom, but never mind that. We shall have an order that will impose a duty to secure sound public finances, and it will have to be laid before Parliament and approved by resolution of the House of Commons.

Who is to be on the receiving end of this great order that will descend from on high, from Her Majesty’s Treasury, to use the full authority of Parliament to impose a duty to secure sound public finances? Which public body will be quivering in fear, wondering whether it is to be the Treasury’s chosen victim? Well, it turns out that that public body is the Treasury itself. Under clause 2, the Treasury will have the power to make an order that imposes a duty on the Treasury. That will make it sit up and take notice, will it not?

Mr. Cash: On the question of duties, does my hon. Friend agree that the point he is making could equally be applied to the Government Departments on which Parliament has imposed a series of duties that drive levels of public expenditure ever upwards? Does he not agree that, to get the whole question of public expenditure right, we would have to amend or repeal many of the duties imposed on public bodies in order to reduce the overall level of public expenditure?

Mr. Osborne: I take the point that my hon. Friend is making.

The Chancellor said in his speech that the great sanction would be that, if the existing code or Act were broken, the Chancellor would face the humiliation and embarrassment of coming to Parliament to introduce a new piece of legislation. I guess that he is in a position to know what that feels like. From what I can see of his behaviour today, however, that is not a huge sanction.

Lorely Burt (Solihull) (LD): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that legislation without sanctions is not worth the paper it is written on?

Mr. Osborne: I agree with my— I was about to say “my hon. Friend”, but that would be to get ahead of ourselves, would it not? We are all being very nice to the Liberal Democrats these days. I agree with the hon. Lady. I take it from what she said that she will be joining us in the Division Lobby tonight; I certainly hope she will.

Hon. Members might be hoping to find something a bit more impressive in clause 3 Bill, but in it we discover that the Treasury will be required to tell us whether it has met its borrowing forecasts. The last time I checked, I found that that happens in every single Budget statement and pre-Budget report. However, we now need legislation to turn what has been the standard practice of Chancellors, at least since the second world war, into the law of the land. And when will the Treasury be required by law to tell us whether it has succeeded in performing its duty to secure sound public finances? According to clause 3(5), this will have to happen “during the financial year ending with 31 March 2016.”

We shall not have long to wait, then, for the Government’s assessment of how well they are doing. They cannot get their borrowing forecasts right from one month to another, yet they now expect us to believe a commitment written in statute relating to 2016. They are living in a completely parallel universe.

Let us look at clause 4, which relates to accountability. Let us see what terrible fate will await the Treasury if it fails to comply with the order imposed on it by the Treasury. Will the Chancellor be hauled off to the Tower? Will he be forced to hand in the great seals of his office? Will his pay be docked for poor performance? Will he at least have to apologise? No. Clause 4 states that the fact that any duty imposed as a result of the Bill “has not been, or will or may not be, complied with does not affect the lawfulness of anything done, or omitted to be done, by any person.”

This is an absolutely ridiculous clause. There are no penalties. This must be the first law introduced in Parliament that contains absolutely no legal sanction whatever for those who break it.

We have only two more clauses to consider. Clause 5 is about interpretation, and states that the Treasury will be required to “explain the meaning” of such terms as “public sector net borrowing” and “public sector net debt”. It is a shame that the meaning of those terms was not explained to the previous Chancellor when he was in office. As far as I can see, the clause does not require a proper explanation of the state of the national accounts
that takes into account the private finance initiative liabilities that are kept off-balance sheet, and public sector pension liabilities.

Finally, clause 6 deals with the short title of the Bill, and tells us that the legislation will be known as the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2010. We will have to see whether it ever becomes an Act. This clause confirms a time-honoured principle in this place: the greater the claims that are made by a Bill’s title, the less substance it usually contains.

Of course we have to debate this vacuous and irrelevant legislation, but why did the Chancellor feel the compelling need to introduce it? Why is he the first Chancellor in history to feel that he needs an Act of Parliament on top of a Budget statement? There can be only two explanations: either he does not trust himself to secure sound public finances, or he knows that the public do not trust him to secure them. Neither is exactly a ringing endorsement; both are a reflection of the catastrophic, disastrous state to which this Government have reduced the finances of this country.

I have searched far and wide to find another country that has introduced a fiscal responsibility Act, and I have found one. It is that shining example of fiscal rectitude, Nigeria. That is where the Chancellor appears to have got his inspiration from. It was no doubt sent to him in one of those e-mails that we all get from Nigeria. Perhaps it said, “Dear honoured sir, I am a former finance Minister of this country, and I have a plan to reduce your debts. Please send me your bank account details and I will forward the money by return.” [Laughter.] Of course this would be funny, if this were not such a fundamentally dishonest piece of legislation, and if this were not such a fundamentally serious time, in which the credibility of our nation and its ability to pay its way in the world are being questioned by markets, investors and credit rating agencies around the world.

A poll in yesterday’s Financial Times found that a fiscal crisis was the biggest single risk facing the British economy at the moment. The managing director of Moody’s Global Sovereign Risk group is now warning of the danger of “an abrupt increase in long term interest rates” in the UK. The former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Howard Davies, whom the Prime Minister appointed to be the first head of the FSA, said this week that “the major risk” to the British economy “is the loss of confidence in the government’s ability to get the public finances back under control.”

And today we hear that the world’s biggest bond investor, Pimco, has announced that it will be selling off UK Government bonds this year. It says that this is a “significant policy statement” prompted by concerns about rising borrowing levels in this country. It has just issued a statement saying that the question is when, not if, Britain’s credit rating will be downgraded.

Mr. Redwood: Has my hon. Friend noticed that during the period in which the Bank of England has been buying a quarter of the total Government debt in issue to try to keep the price up, the price has been falling so the long-term rate of interest has been rising? That has happened even though the Bank is buying a quarter of the issue, so what is going to happen when it stops buying?

Mr. Osborne: My right hon. Friend makes an extremely telling point, and I am going to come on exactly to the threat to interest rates posed by the Government’s policy. Before I move on from Pimco, I cannot help noticing that the head of the European arm of Pimco, one Mr. Andrew Balls, is the brother of the Schools Secretary. Clearly, the Balls family’s confidence in the Chancellor’s ability to do his job runs across the brothers.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) makes a very important point about gilts and the fact that we are now in a period when the Bank of England is pursuing a policy of quantitative easing, but with £200 billion of gilts to get away next year, we need buyers, not sellers of those gilts. Here, however, we have the world’s largest bond investor saying that it is going to be selling gilts next year. Of course gilt yields are rising—up 1 per cent. last year and up 0.5 per cent. in the last month, which is twice the rate of increase in countries like Germany.

Rising gilt yields, of course, mean in the end rising interest rates, so a central objective of policy for recovery must be to allow the Bank of England to keep interest rates as low as possible for as long as possible, which requires a credible fiscal plan. The absence of such a plan from the Labour Government is pushing up the yields that will push up the interest rates and the mortgage rates, causing businesses to fail and jobs to be lost. The Chancellor, however, remains paralysed by inaction. He seems to see the storm clouds gathering, but he is doing nothing. We know the reason why. The Prime Minister and Schools Secretary—the man whom the Prime Minister wanted to be the Chancellor—will not let him. The disagreements between them are now an open secret. They are on the front page of The Financial Times and are being read across Europe. The Chancellor is at least vaguely aware, I think, of the seriousness of the debt crisis this country faces, but the Prime Minister is in complete denial. The Chancellor at least uses the word “cuts”, but the Prime Minister could not bring himself to use that word in the first big interview he gave in the new year.

I believe that the Chancellor wanted to accelerate the reduction in the deficit and he wanted to do so in the pre-Budget report, but he was overruled by the Prime Minister who accelerated the spending instead. That is the problem—the Chancellor keeps losing this argument in Downing street and the result is that Britain’s credibility in the world markets is further undermined. Britain’s credit rating is for the first time in our history at serious risk and British interest rates are set to rise in a recovery.

The answer surely is to deal more decisively with the deficit. As the Chancellor well knows, that is the view of British business and the CBI. The Labour party used to parade the CBI as one of its great supporters, and I believe that in 1997 the CBI was invited into Downing street before the trade unions were. Now the Labour party dismisses the views of the organisation that speaks for many British businesses, but this is what Richard Lambert, the man who was also appointed to the Monetary Policy Committee by the Prime Minister, says:

“History tell us that these are really difficult nettles to grasp but if you grasp them in a clear and bold way, then the pain lasts for a shorter period than if you just limply grab and hold of
them... Our strong instincts are that the risks of going too soon are less than the risks of waiting too long... Two full parliaments of chancellors being responsible just seems too much to expect.”

Here is the view of the OECD expressed in the last few days:

“Major fiscal consolidation is needed” in the UK

“and more concrete plans should be developed and communicated as early as possible.”

That is the OECD’s view expressed after the pre-Budget report.

Here, now, is the view of the international markets.

BNP Paribas says:

“The UK’s public finances are in such a poor state that delay could lead to a loss of confidence, a downgrade of the UK credit rating and a crisis in the public finances.”

Sir John Gieve, another former deputy governor of the Bank of England appointed by the Prime Minister, stated that the Government’s plan

“will be hard to sustain politically and eliminating the structural deficit more quickly in 2011 and 2012 looks a better course.”

Mr. Darling: I have said that we should halve the deficit over a four-year period, but the hon. Gentleman clearly thinks that we should go further and faster. How much faster and how much further?

Mr. Osborne: I am just coming on to my view, which is exactly the same as that of the Governor of the Bank of England, the person who is in charge of monetary policy. The Chancellor is in charge of fiscal policy in this country; the Governor of the Bank of England is in charge of monetary policy. It is the view of the Governor that we should eliminate a large part of the structural deficit in the next Parliament and that is precisely my view as well.

Mr. Darling: That is what we are proposing to do, but in addition, the Governor of the Bank of England said in the same interview in response to a series of questions that he recognised the difficulties that could arise from going too fast and too much further. Let me ask the shadow Chancellor again: if he thinks we should go further and faster, will he tell the House how much further and how much faster? Especially in the light of what has happened in the last 24 hours, some further detail would be very welcome.

Mr. Osborne: The Chancellor says that he has the same view as the Governor of the Bank of England—he has just said that—but when asked by the Treasury Select Committee what he thought about the risk of a credit downgrade to the UK, the Governor said that we needed “a credible plan”, which by implication does not currently exist, and that such a plan should consist of the elimination of a large part of the structural deficit in the next Parliament. That is a view I share with the Governor of the Bank of England and it is clearly not the view that the same Governor believes is being pursued currently—or else he would not have referred to the need for a credible plan.

Mr. Darling: Let me ask the hon. Gentleman a last time, as it does not seem that I am going to get an answer. If he read the whole of the Governor’s reply, the hon. Gentleman would know that he was talking about countries across the world, not just this country. But why will the hon. Gentleman not answer the question? He quite clearly hints that he would like to go further and faster, so why will he not tell us exactly how much? Does he want to reduce the deficit a year earlier than we do? If so, how does he intend to do it? If he does do that, it might mean taking another £26 billion or so out of the economy. Is that his intention?

Mr. Osborne: This is what the Governor of the Bank of England said when asked—[Interruption.] I know that it comes as a complete surprise to Labour Members that the Conservative party agrees with the Governor of the Bank of England and the Chancellor of the day does not seem to agree with him. When asked to comment on the plan that the Chancellor had set out, the Governor said this, and I have it before me:

“I think” the plan

“has to be something where a really significant reduction in the deficit, the elimination of a large part of the structural deficit, takes place over the lifetime of a parliament, which is the period for which a government is elected. Beyond that”—commenting on the Chancellor’s plan—

is a statement of intent and hope rather than a plan for which someone can be held accountable.”

That is what he said in evidence to the Treasury Select Committee on 24 November 2009. I agree with the Governor of the Bank of England and that is our policy.

It is increasingly clear, by the way, that virtually every independent and respected opinion in this country agrees with us rather than with the Government of the day. Such opinion is also in agreement with our approach towards creating a fiscal framework in which we can be held accountable. What we are going to do if we are elected to power in the next few months is create a proper and independent office for budget responsibility. Indeed, we publish today draft legislation—[Interruption.]—Well, I am not sure what Liberal Democrat policy is on independent fiscal accountability—although, of course, I must be careful.

Let me explain the very significant difference between what we are proposing and will implement and what the Government are presenting to Parliament today. The first striking difference is that while this Bill leaves the Treasury in charge of forecasts and gives the Chancellor the room to fix the forecasts in order to fit the Budget policy—as we know, a practice that has developed in recent years—our Bill would for the first time ever put the forecasts of the nation’s finances in independent hands. In other words, it would not be the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day who published the borrowing and debt forecasts; it would be an independent office for budget responsibility, properly resourced and accountable to Parliament.

Secondly, while this Bill leaves the Chancellor as judge and jury on whether he is sticking to his fiscal strategy, our Bill would subject the Chancellor to the independent verdict of an independent panel of experts in the office for budget responsibility. While this Bill tells us nothing about the true state of the nation’s finances, our Bill would give the country a statutory independent audit of the true cost of public sector
pension liabilities and the dodgy off-sheet accounting of PFI contracts, and give us a proper national audit of the nation’s finances.

Mr. Pelling: Might not the arrangement be strengthened further if the body sat in Parliament, mimicking the Congressional Budget Office in some respects? I know the Opposition feel strongly that it is important to enhance the effectiveness of Parliament, and I may have misunderstood what the hon. Gentleman is proposing. Perhaps he intends the body to sit in Parliament.

Mr. Osborne: It would be rather like the Monetary Policy Committee. It would be independent, but accountable to Parliament. Its members would, I assume, appear before the Treasury Committee, and it would be asked to make a technical judgment in publishing the nation’s borrowing and debt forecasts.

Instead of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on Budget day or pre-Budget report day, standing up and saying “We predict that the country will borrow X, Y and Z over the coming years”, this independent body, accountable to Parliament, would make the judgment. It is a technical judgment, and we do not need an elected politician to make it. We need elected politicians to be informed by a proper, independent judgment of the nation’s finances; then we shall all be able to make the decisions on tax and spending for which we are held democratically accountable. It is clear from what has happened over the last few years how misled Parliament has been by the borrowing forecasts announced by the present Chancellor and his predecessor, which have turned out to be completely wrong and have led to decisions that were not in the interests of the country.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West) (Lab): The shadow Chancellor is rightly puzzled about the issue of sanctions that the Treasury might be able to impose on itself, but can he explain what sanctions the new independent body would be empowered to impose on the Treasury if the targets set by the body were not met?

Mr. Osborne: At or around the time of the Budget, and the pre-Budget report, the body will publish not just the forecasts but its view on whether the Government are on course to fulfil the mandate set by the Chancellor—in other words, the elimination of a large part of the structural deficit over the Parliament—and an independent report. Obviously, if the Government were shown to be off course, that would be hugely embarrassing for the Chancellor of the day.

I do not think that a Chancellor who regularly disagreed with the independent body could survive for long, so it would pose a challenge to him. This would constitute a proper, serious sanction. In extremis, the Chancellor of the day can overrule the Monetary Policy Committee or the independence of the Bank of England, although of course the question never arises. In this case, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would face a very difficult time if, after he or she had said “We will achieve this fiscal result over the coming years”, the independent body, at the time of the Budget, said “Actually, they will not.”

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab): Is not the truth that the sanction contained in both the Bill and the hon. Gentleman’s proposal is the bond market? If a Chancellor of the Exchequer came to the House and said that he wanted to change, in primary legislation, the arrangement that we are discussing today, or if a future Conservative Chancellor said that he was ignoring what the new body was saying about the danger to the economy, we would very soon find our credit ratings lost or further downgraded, and long-term interest rates would rise. That suggests that the real discipline now is not in the House or even in the banking community. We are now subject to the requirements of credit agencies and the bond market for us to start behaving properly.

Mr. Osborne: The right hon. Gentleman has made a very good observation, which is, in fact, true of government through the ages. Even in mediaeval times, kings and Parliament in its then form were subject to the ability to raise money on what were then the international money markets.

Something interesting has happened in this country’s politics. We used to regard Budget day, and pre-Budget report day, as the moment when the Chancellor, whoever it was, would come from on high and hand out the goodies. We were all supposed to be incredibly grateful, and then the Chancellor would disappear for another six months. Of course, things are very different now. The House of Commons is subject to the economic pressures imposed on it by, in part, the bond market.

I recently read an interview with the Swedish Prime Minister of the 1990s, Göran Persson, who said that no Prime Minister wanted to find himself in the situation in which he had found himself. He was spending more time in the City of London giving presentations to young bond market traders than talking to the Swedish people about the fiscal problems the country faced. The House should take very seriously the fact that the world’s largest bond investor said today that next year it would sell gilts rather than buy them, the fact that all the credit ratings agencies have put the United Kingdom on a warning and will decide later in the year whether it should face a credit downgrade, and the fact that our gilt yields are rising at twice the rate of Germany’s.

Even if the Prime Minister is in complete denial about the economic situation and the fiscal problems that the country faces, I do not think that that is an excuse for the rest of us to ignore those problems.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) about the discipline of the bond market, but I believe that an independent office for budget responsibility would help Members of Parliament to hold Chancellors and Prime Ministers to account for their promises, and would give Members proper information on Budget day so that they could challenge what the Chancellor and the Prime Minister of the day were saying. It would also discipline the Government internally, and would help Chancellors to achieve their and the Government’s stated goals.

Our proposal has been welcomed by many different people, including independent economists. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that a new independent body of the kind that the Conservatives propose “could help keep the interest rates at which the government is able to borrow low”.

[Fiscal Responsibility Bill]
because it would enhance the confidence of the bond markets in the Government's ability to deliver on their objectives. It has been supported by the CBI and many other organisations. That is why we have published our legislation in draft today. It means proper accountability, a real set of national accounts, lower interest rates, economic stability, and the restoration of Britain's credibility in the world markets. That is what a Conservative Government will bring to this country as we consign this Government and this nonsense of a Bill to the dustbin of history.

6.56 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab): I want to explain briefly why I will not be supporting the Government tonight.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle) (Lab): There is nothing new about that.

Mr. Field: That is true, and it is a sadness for me, but clearly not a big enough sadness to the hon. Gentleman, who is now leaving the Chamber.

Given the Chancellor's ability to present such thin gruel to the House, I am surprised that his party did not claim to see the signs of joined-up government. Yesterday they announced that in future all five-year-olds in our schools would be taught the dangers of debt, how not to fall into debt, what to do if they fell into debt, and how to get out of debt as quickly as possible. Bright, or perhaps not so bright, five-year-olds might suggest that the lessons could start here rather than in the classrooms.

I want, however, to inject a note of seriousness, if not horror, into the debate. I want to compare our present position with the phoney war that led up to world war two. Although those on all three Front Benches now talk of the need to lower the deficit, they are all also talking about spending more. I do not believe that our voters—the voters of this country—have any idea how not to fall into debt, what to do if they fell into debt, and how to get out of debt as quickly as possible. Bright, or perhaps not so bright, five-year-olds might suggest that the lessons could start here rather than in the classrooms.

I return to the central issue of whether we are going to spend more, so that nobody would think that we are merely pawns on the chessboard of the credit agencies and the bond market. It is to their tune, sadly, that we now have to dance. My worry is that even in the next few months we are going to have difficulty in floating the amount of debt required to see us up to and through the election, let alone the next umpteen years.

Kelvin Hopkins: I usually agree with much of what my right hon. Friend says, but I am alarmed by what he says about the level of cuts that he believes we face. He is talking only about the expenditure side, and not the income side, of the problem, but we should be looking at income and not expenditure. If we cut spending now, we will just make the problem worse.

Mr. Field: In my view, if we do not cut enough and soon enough, we will not have a currency. The debate about whether we should have taxation or cuts is to some extent academic. The plea about tax evasion and avoidance is not my concern. Friend has made very clear that we have been in the House—ever since I have enjoyed listening to him—is one that I was pleased to hear the Chancellor pick up in such a positive way, but that alone is not enough.

I return to the central issue of whether we are going to see ourselves through to the general election. We have been living in a cloud cuckoo land partly because all the political parties have been saying that they are going to spend more, so that nobody would think that things will be all that tough. The economic crisis was said to be the most serious since the 1930s, but when improvements in programmes are announced, people think, “Well, it can’t be all that bad, can it?” What has added to that illusion is the fact that the Government have been printing money, between 98 and 99 per cent.
of which has been buying the Government debt. What we do not know is what the markets will do when there is no more funny money to use to buy that debt. We know that there is £25 billion more; presumably, that money is being spent now and will, one hopes, take us up to February—but then things will hit the fan. Of course, the Government are taking proper actions such as saying to the banks, which behaved so irresponsibly in that earlier period, that they need to restructure their liabilities and assets so that they have a more stable basis from which to carry out their trade. Surprise, surprise, one of the assets that the Government say that the banks should have more of are Government gilts. The danger is that if the international markets do not believe us, those gilts might not be much better than the American mortgage bonds that were floated a few years ago and that got us directly into this mess.

I want to make a plea to the Government. The point of maximum danger will certainly come when we cannot, or are not going to, print any more money to buy our own debt. Earlier, I made a comparison between the current situation and the phoney war—the lead-up to the First World War. The comparisons are chilling. In 1938, people came to the House and to the Dispatch Box and told us that there was no real threat from the international situation and certainly not from Germany. Recently, there has been an unwillingness across the whole House to get to grips with the size and extent of the debt. That unwillingness has been equivalent to the denials about the dangers of Nazi Germany. Back then, when the Government started to lose support, they were forced to give a pledge to Poland. An equivalent pledge today is the Bill before us, which the Government would not have introduced willingly, but they know that they need to introduce it if they are to increase the confidence of the markets. In 1939, the then Prime Minister said to Montgomery when visiting the British Expeditionary Force, “I don’t think the Germans have any intention of attacking us. Do you?” Montgomery soon put him straight on that. The bizarre denial of that time culminated in the Norway situation, when we all learned just how grave and perilous the position of this country was.

I want to end by making a plea to the Government. The Conservative party did not have a terribly good record on Munich, so I am not trying to make party political points here; it is far more serious than that. It is a big regret of mine that in the lead-up to the Iraq war—and I am probably the only person in Christendom who still believes that the Iraqis did have weapons of mass destruction—I did not ask the then Prime Minister an obvious question about the plan for day two. I did not ask about the plan for ensuring that the country did not descend into chaos after the Government had been toppled. I therefore make a plea to the Chancellor, knowing that no one will be able to stand up and say that they have taken the relevant precautions. What defences have the Government thought through for if long-term interest rates do not rise in the way that the shadow Chancellor has described, but start to gather pace? What will our response be? What will be our defence to prevent further deterioration if we lose our credit rating? What do the Government have in the cupboard to ensure that we do not face a gilt strike when the Debt Management Office at the Treasury reports to the Prime Minister that it has not been able to garner enough funds that week to buy up the Government debt? Margery Allingham wrote a brilliant diary on the horrendous drift into war from 1938 to 1939. When the Norway disaster engulfed the country, she wrote of the then Prime Minister, Chamberlain, that he was a “vain old man with nothing up his sleeve.” Please, God, I hope that this Government have a lot up their sleeve.

7.9 pm

Mr. Jeremy Browne (Taunton) (LD): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to contribute to this pressing and important debate. As we have just been hearing from the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), we gather at a time of great economic risk for our country. The first signs of tentative economic growth may be appearing, but we are far from out of the woods.

The economic backdrop to the Bill is dire, as the right hon. Gentleman has just said. In 2009, the British economy contracted by almost 5 per cent. That is worse than in either of the Conservative recessions of the early 1980s and 1990s, and worse even than 1978 and the winter of discontent. Remarkably, it is even worse than the year of the Wall street crash or any of the subsequent years during the great depression.

Our economy contracted by more in 2009 than in any peacetime year since 1921, and the impact on our public finances has been truly devastating. One quarter of British public spending is now unfunded. We have a low-tax economy, not because ordinary people and households around the country pay less tax but because of a collapse in corporation tax. At the same time, however, we have a high-spending Government. The money coming into the Treasury’s coffers is comparable to that in an American-style society, but the money going out of those coffers is more comparable to that in a Scandinavian-style society. The long-standing ready reckoner suggesting that any country borrowing more than 10 per cent. of gross domestic product in a given year has entered basket-case territory has been breached. In this financial year, we in Britain will borrow more than 12 per cent. of our GDP, and the proportion will be well over 10 per cent. again next year.

What will be the effect on public services—the local schools, the police, the hospitals—in our individual consistencies? One quarter of those services are unfunded, and we are plugging that gap this year with public borrowing. As a country, we are borrowing an extra £500 million every single day, which equates to more than £20 million extra every hour or £1 million extra every three minutes. We have borrowed about £25 million extra since this debate started. Our currency has been massively devalued, and we are now printing extra money.

It is often said by the Government that other countries have experienced recession too, and that is of course true. When those countries were growing, however, we never heard from the Prime Minister that Britain’s rising prosperity was due to international factors that had nothing to do with the policies of his Government. Instead, all his plans were predicated on the best-case scenarios, and that left Britain dangerously over-exposed. When this Prime Minister boasted that we had abolished boom and bust on his watch, he was half right—he just got the wrong half.
I want, however, to turn to where the Prime Minister has a valid story to tell. It has been said—and the Chancellor said it again today—that our borrowing is at a level similar to that of other comparable countries, and that is broadly true. We were told by our iron Chancellor that we would not let our debt rise above 40 per cent. of GDP, but it is now doubling to 80 per cent. Even so, it remains lower than the debt level in Italy—although by some measurements Italy’s economy is now bigger than ours, and our total debt is still rising faster than Italy’s.

It is also true—and in this the Chancellor, the Prime Minister and others have a point—that by historical standards Britain’s debt looks manageable. It may be rising to 80 per cent. now, but we have just been hearing from the right hon. Member for Birkenhead about the consequences of 1945, when our total debt as a percentage of GDP stood at a terrifying 250 per cent.

The second world war is always rightly portrayed in terms of the human casualties that were suffered, but until I saw that figure I had not fully appreciated the terrifying scale of indebtedness that we as a country faced at that time. We may be broke now, but we have been three times more broke in the past.

Mr. Cash: Given my earlier remarks about the true level of debt, would the hon. Gentleman be surprised to hear that aggregating the bank bail-outs—never mind the cost of the RBS-Lloyds deal that was never even disclosed—would put the actual liabilities in the region of £3.84 trillion? He has just given the figures for 1945, but that sum is equivalent to 274 per cent. of GDP.

Mr. Browne: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. I shall not comment on his specific statistics, but merely observe that I am painting the rosiest picture that I can of the current state of the public finances.

Mr. Redwood: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is another very big difference between 1945 and now? In 1945, it was decided by common acclaim to get the deficit down by sacking, through demobilisation, almost 1 million public officials who were in the Army or serving the Army. The Government are not about to do the equivalent now.

Mr. Browne: There is another, slightly more obvious difference between now and 1945. Then, we had run up a spectacular debt that changed Britain’s place in the world, in many ways for the worse. It left us vulnerable and led to years of rationing and hardship for households right across the country, but we had something pretty spectacular to show for that greater debt—we had defended ourselves against an unprecedented threat to our freedom and independence. Sixty-five years later, it is somewhat harder to work out what the current Prime Minister’s monumental achievement from our rising debt is.

Instead, our Prime Minister today stands metaphorically on the observation deck of the new Burj Khalifa skyscraper. Lifted high on a mountain of debt and hubris, he surveys a scene of economic depression and endless desert.

Mr. Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is right to follow the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in emphasising the severity and seriousness of the current situation, but the big difference between 1945 and today is that then the war was over and the expenditure on it had finished. In contrast, the unsustainable level of expenditure that we have today has not finished, and there does not appear to be any credible offering from the Government as to how they are going to bring that expenditure under control. We just have this Bill, which halves not the overall debt but just the rate at which we will increase it. That is no real solution at all.

Mr. Browne: The hon. Gentleman is right that our debt-to-GDP ratio fell, in a good way, quite markedly after the second world war. Nevertheless, it is still true that we have previously been in territory where that ratio has been well over 100 per cent. We are not in that position at the moment.

Kelvin Hopkins: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has referred to 1945, because we had a wonderful Labour Government who brought us out of that terrible time. Does he agree that, instead of deflating our way out of the massive problems that we faced at that time, we grew our way out of them? We did not spend our time talking about what we had to cut: in fact, we created a national health service, for example, in which we spent more.

Mr. Browne: Perhaps I should avoid a protracted historical discussion, although I always thought that the hon. Gentleman’s favourite Labour Government were in office during the period of achievement from 1976 to 1979. However, we have managed to identify another one whom he holds dear to his heart.

I was talking about the Prime Minister standing on deck looking at the consequences of his policies. In that economic desert, we find before us this Fiscal Responsibility Bill—a pathetic and dangerous piece of legislation.

It is pathetic, because we should not need a new law to make the Government do their job. We just need the Government to do their job. The Chancellor is like a man with a new year’s resolution to lose weight. He knows that he desires the outcome, but he doubts his ability to make the disciplined decisions that are necessary. He therefore passes a law requiring himself to lose weight, confident in the delusion that he can now tuck into a diet of endless doughnuts and pork pies. As people across the country are daily discovering to their dismay as they examine their discarded gym memberships and low-fat cookery books, there is a world of difference between resolving to do something and having the fortitude to see it through.

The Chancellor has flunked the difficult decisions at every turn. The media were briefed that December’s much delayed pre-Budget report would be bristling with tough choices. It did contain an announcement from the Chancellor on pay restraint, as well as the bizarrely counter-intuitive set of higher taxes on employing people, but it then emerged that the extra spending in the PBR added up to more than the extra revenue that would accrue. As in the Prime Minister’s Labour conference speech, the goodies kept on coming, but these really were empty promises.

What was the result of the PBR? Having previously said that the deficit this year would be £175 billion, and after announcing a slew of supposedly tough choices in
The shadow Chancellor went on to say that he had identified £7 billion-worth of savings. Let us leave aside for a moment the fact that some of those were costed in 2020 prices and failed to match any sustained scrutiny. This is the crucial bit. The Conservative shadow Chancellor went on to say:

“Anyone who tells you these choices can be avoided is not telling you the truth.”

But that was not really the truth. We have a structural deficit of about £85 billion, so what the Conservative shadow Chancellor told us was perhaps at best one 12th of the truth. It might have been up to a point the truth, but it certainly was not the whole truth and it certainly was not nothing but the truth. Instead, just yesterday we had the Conservatives splashing £400,000 on posters claiming that they would aggressively cut the deficit, but they gave no specific proposals except a single pledge to spend more.

**Mr. Gauke:** Those of us who were listening carefully to my hon. Friend’s speech at that party conference will know that he stated that he did not claim that we had set out a full policy. What he announced was not going to address the full structural deficit, but we had provided an indication. Given the criticisms made by the hon. Gentleman, does he have a full plan to address an £85 billion structural deficit?

**Mr. Browne:** Let me come to our proposals in just a moment. People will be keen to hear them.

**Lorely Burt:** Given that 70 per cent. of the deficit is structural, and therefore pre-dates the current financial turmoil, does my hon. Friend think that a Bill that provides no detail about how the Government intend seriously to tackle the problems with the public finances demonstrates any fiscal responsibility at all?

**Mr. Browne:** I accept my hon. Friend’s point. The Bill is near to worthless, but it is a valid point that the Conservatives have just spent a lot of money on a poster campaign across the country that does two things: says that they will try to tackle the deficit and identifies one measure that does nothing to tackle the deficit. That is the point that the right hon. Member for Birkenhead was making. If anything, the deficit would be even greater were the Conservatives’ proposal to be implemented. This is the new, cool Steve Hilton-aura Conservatism, pointing in different directions at the same time. It is what Tony Blair called triangulation and the third way, pointing in different directions at the same time. It is what fashionable Camerons call red Toryism and the rest of us call an abdication of leadership. I do not doubt that the Conservative leader’s greatest priority is the NHS, but he does not mean the national health service; he means the Notting Hill set.

**Philip Davies:** The only interpretation that anyone can put on the hon. Gentleman’s remarks is that the Liberal Democrats propose a huge cut in spending on the NHS. By how much does the hon. Gentleman’s party think that the NHS budget should be cut? Everyone would be interested in that.

**Mr. Browne:** We are getting to the interesting nub of the argument. We are saying that there is not a good reason to ring-fence Departments. That does not necessarily mean that the Department of Health would be cut, but...
the implication of the Conservatives’ policy—[Interruption]

Hon. Members should hear me out; I am doing the hon. Gentleman the credit of taking him seriously. The implication of his party’s policy is that the cuts in schools, police and our soldiers in Afghanistan would be greater, deeper and more fundamental than they would be if all the Departments took the burden of the deficit reduction. That has got to be the case. If the Conservatives would make the cuts across a smaller number of Departments, the cuts would have to be deeper to make up for the fact that some had been ring-fenced. That is a serious question that the Conservative party will have to explain to teachers, police officers and many other public servants and people who use our public services.

Stewart Hosie: I know that the hon. Gentleman is getting dreadfully angry. There is a big fight between the Liberals and the Tories in his seat in the south-west, and it is all dreadfully vexed. The hon. Member for Solihull (Lorely Burt) said that 70 per cent. of the deficit was structural. That comes in at about £125 billion. Scotland’s share of that would be about £11 billion—the total cost of the NHS in Scotland. How many nurses and teachers does the hon. Gentleman plan that the Scottish Government should sack in order to meet the Liberals’ version of cutting the debt?

Mr. Browne: My understanding is that the SNP aspires to be in coalition with the Conservatives after the general election, so they may be able to come up with a joint plan at that stage. Let me get to our deficit reduction proposals. The straightforward answer is that we are not saying that Departments should be ring-fenced. In the mind of some Members, the right hon. Member for Birkenhead may have exaggerated in his speech the scale of the threat we face, but he rightly warned of the scale of the problem, as I tried to do in the introduction to my speech. Our economy is 5 per cent. smaller than it was a year ago. We cannot carry on with all this “share the proceeds of growth”—with a robe of feel-good Conservatism, without wearing a tie—saying that there are no hard choices to be made. It is not a realistic way forward.

Mr. Gauke: I just want to be clear. The hon. Gentleman is unable to answer.

Mr. Browne: No, I have not said that.

Philip Davies: What have you said then?

Mr. Browne: I will tell you if you listen. I said that no Department is ring-fenced. I have said not that there would automatically be cuts in every Department, but that we should not have a policy of ring-fenced Departments. I will give way to any Conservative Member who will say that all the extra money that Labour has spent on the NHS has been spent 100 per cent. efficiently and that there is no scope for finding efficiencies in the national health service. If there is scope for finding efficiencies in the NHS, the question Conservative MPs have to ask themselves is why they would cut efficient parts of the national health service. That is a valid question, which the Conservative party, due to marketing reasons, is unable to answer.

Mr. Pelling: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Browne: No, I want to make some progress.

I want the deficit cut, which is why my party has consistently made bold and eye-catching contributions to our national debate on that subject. That is why in the past months we have called for pay restraint, which protects those on low incomes but would make significant savings of billions of pounds over two years. As I have just said, Britain is almost 5 per cent. poorer than it was a year ago and we cannot afford a national wage bill that pretends nothing has happened.

We have led the way in saying that some major capital spending proposals are unaffordable. We have said that households with incomes that would be the envy of the majority of people should not also be topped up with unaffordable extra tax credits. We have identified specific projects that we believe can no longer be financially justified. That is why in a Statutory Instrument Committee in February—less than a year ago—I argued against both Labour and Conservative Front Benchers that the so-called baby bonds were no longer affordable.

There was great unity among the Front Benchers of the two old parties; they were committed to the old policies, as though the deficit had never happened, but later in 2009 the Conservative shadow Chancellor, to his credit, belatedly caught up, telling his conference that baby bonds are “a luxury we can no longer afford.” Where the Liberal Democrats lead, others in the House follow. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] It is true.

I am constantly looking for new savings. I realise the enormous challenge that a deficit of £500 million extra every day poses. I was looking through Hansard a couple of weeks ago and I found a question from the Member who is known to the Conservative shadow Business Secretary as Philip Holland, but is better known to the rest of us as the hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr. Hammond). Anyone anxious about the Conservatives’ plans for deficit reduction needs to understand how seriously they are taking the task. I shall read out that brief question to give the House a flavour of the magnitude of the Conservative approach to the task. The question is headed “Christmas”:

“Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department has spent on Christmas (a) cards, (b) parties and (c) decorations in the last 12 months.

Mr. Hain: In the last 12 months, my Department spent £385 on Christmas cards and £1,054 on receptions. We did not purchase any Christmas decorations.”—[Official Report, 10 November 2009; Vol. 499, c. 178W.]

The shadow Chief Secretary’s job is not just to clear up the mess left by his leader; he is also asking the brave deficit reduction questions that can transform our country’s prospects. I have done the calculations, and the savings identified by the hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge equate to 0.26 seconds of national debt—the gap between Usain Bolt and the man who finished second, with the Conservatives left on the starting blocks.

Kelvin Hopkins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as I indicated a little while ago that I wanted to intervene.
The core of the hon. Gentleman’s rather rambling round-about speech is squeezing public expenditure—wages, capital investment and other spending programmes. Surely that will deflate the economy and raise the level of unemployment, which will make the problem worse by reducing tax revenues and increasing benefit payments.

Mr. Browne: I have acknowledged in the past, and will acknowledge again, that the Chancellor is right to be concerned about debt. He is also right to warn that it is possible to cut too deep and too quickly. Navigating a course from our current dire position to calmer waters is a real challenge for the Chancellor and for whoever is in government over the next decade or more, but it is a great political and economic challenge that requires great political and economic skill from the Chancellor, the Prime Minister and the rest of the Government. It does not require legislation of the sort that is before us this evening.

John Hemming (Birmingham, Yardley) (LD): Does my hon. Friend share my concern that although the Government have a model of the economy written in Fortran, which they will provide, they will not provide the data that go into the model? Proper scrutiny of what the Government are doing is, therefore, difficult, as is making the right judgments, such as whether we are going too deflationary. Would it not be better if the Government were to release the data that go into the Treasury economic model, to enable people to make such judgments more effectively?

Mr. Browne: It would inform the debate, although one is sceptical about the accuracy of some of the data. Recently I told the Chancellor that he had revised upwards his borrowing figures for this year. He appeared to imply that that had not happened, but I have gone back through the figures. In his 2008 Budget—less than two years ago—the Chancellor announced that borrowing for the year 2009-10 would be £38 billion. At the time, some commentators were shocked at the scale of our predicament. Later in 2008—the pre-Budget report just over a year ago—the figure for this year was revised up to £118 billion. In the 2009 Budget, we were told that instead it would be £175 billion, and now the latest estimate for the year that is about to finish is £178 billion. That gap—between the £38 billion forecast less than two years ago and the £178 billion forecast today—represents the Chancellor’s credibility in forecasting and deficit reduction. We are borrowing £140 billion more this year than the worst-case scenario forecast less than two years ago.

Anyone wanting to know the worth of the legislation need only look at the helpful explanatory notes provided to us all. One line, on page 5, sums it up perfectly: “These are not the significant financial effects of the Bill.”

Never has anything been said with such brevity and accuracy in an explanatory note, or with such devastating political insight in a document that does not normally verge into that territory.

The cupboard is bare, and too much of the political debate is empty. No wonder that Labour and the Conservatives, in the initial skirmishes of the general election campaign, now both look to the Liberal Democrats for leadership and inspiration.

7.38 pm

Mr. Andrew Tyrie (Chichester) (Con): I did not think it would be possible for anyone’s credibility to emerge from this debate weaker than the Government’s, but after that speech I am beginning to wonder whether it is not the Liberal Democrats who have damaged themselves more in our discussion tonight. That really was a speech that missed the target entirely, if I may say so, yet it is a target that is pretty easy to hit.

The language that others have used about the Bill is overwhelmingly condemnatory—a con trick, vacuous, irrelevant; I will not go through all the quotations that my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) read out. The one bit I agreed with the Liberal Democrat spokesman about was when he described the Bill as a dangerous and pathetic piece of legislation.

The Bill will make bad law. It is declaratory. No explanation has been given about how it will be enforced. It will carry no credibility in the markets. Indeed, it could further erode credibility in the markets, as it may appear no more than a rhetorical substitute for the action we need. In other words, it will appear to be what it really is—mere words.

But it is not just the confidence in the markets that I am worried about and that could be eroded. Legislation such as the Bill erodes confidence in Governments and gives politicians and Parliament a bad reputation. It is corrosive of respect for the rule of law and our institutions. The Bill is, of course, a political document designed to substitute for the markets’ lack of credibility for the numbers in the pre-Budget report and the Red Book about how the deficit will be filled.

That credibility deficit has three main causes. The first and immediate cause is that three quarters of the gap between spending and tax is now acknowledged, even by the Government, to be structural—that is to say, it will remain even after the effects of the recession on the deficit have been unwound. It has been created largely by explicit mistakes of Government policy in recent years, not by the crisis. The policy in question is the Brown spending binge that fuelled the boom and aggravated the bust. The Government increased public spending by much more than the economy was growing, and for many years.

Spending has increased from 37 per cent. of GDP to 48 per cent. of GDP. In some ways, that is the most dramatic change in the structure of the UK economy since the wartime measures were unwound. Many of us on the Conservative Benches warned that such rapid spending increases posed a danger for fiscal policy. When I was shadow Paymaster General, I gave several warnings myself. I pointed out that “we could be heading for a serious financial threat to our fiscal position”.

It is, I said, “extremely worrying that we should be facing that threat at this point in the cycle.” —[Official Report, 17 March 2005; Vol. 432, c. 487.]

The second cause of the credibility deficit—I said that there were three—is the sustained lack of transparency in the Government’s accounts. If the markets cannot be sure of the Government’s figures, they will fear the worst. Examples of the impenetrability of the accounts are legion. What really is the scale of the Government’s liabilities? We cannot be sure. We have had some discussion
of that this afternoon. It will fall to an incoming Conservative Government, aided by the office of budget responsibility, to find out.

The third main cause of the collapse of credibility has been the emphasis in presentation on language rather than substance, and spin before action in the conduct of fiscal policy over a substantial period. The Bill will make an illustration of that phenomenon—a phenomenon that we have had to endure for years. For example, we now know that the so-called fiscal rules were mere words. Their credibility was shot when the Prime Minister, who was then the Chancellor, fiddled his start date for the business cycle in July 2005, immediately after the election, in order to avoid admitting that he was breaking his own fiscal rule. Empty economic rhetoric has been the Prime Minister's stock in trade for a long time. It was, after all, the Prime Minister who, as Chancellor, as late as 2007 said in the House that “fiscal discipline is the foundation of the strength of Britain’s finances.”—[Official Report, 21 March 2007; Vol. 458, c. 816.]

Handing the assumptions in the Red Book to the Comptroller and Auditor General of the National Audit Office for supposed vetting was another gesture that eroded credibility. It sounded good but it was an insubstantial thing to do, as the markets soon discerned and as the Comptroller and Auditor General more or less admitted in evidence in public session in a Committee. In the end, it has only made Labour’s credibility problems even worse.

I said at the beginning that the three main causes of the credibility deficit—the structural origins, the lack of transparency, and the empty rhetoric—cannot be addressed by Labour’s current measures, but they can be assuaged by other practical steps. First, on the structural gap between spending and tax, the obvious answer is to set out how the gap will be plugged. That is what we have just been discussing with the Liberal Democrats.

In practice, that means explaining how public spending will be cut. It means reversing a proportion of Labour’s spending binge. But Labour have done the opposite. They have announced increases in spending of £3.5 billion and they have even cancelled the spending review. That leaves a gaping hole in the credibility of Labour’s overall financial policy.

Members of the Conservative Front-Bench team have been courageous in coming forward with a number of tough measures in recent announcements and have talked of an age of austerity. It is fair to say that the Conservative party has gone further than either of the other two in making a clear case for the reality of the situation—the reality that we will have years of very difficult fiscal policy before we can get overall financial policy back on an even keel.

More will need to be done by us from within Government, where I hope we soon will be, to find out the true scale of the deficit and to make it fully transparent. Then an analysis of the relevant merits of various additional measures can be done with full civil service support. I cannot stress too strongly that it is only by working with civil servants, drawing on their expertise and reviving a Whitehall culture of thrift, which has sadly been lost, that we can hope to restore Britain’s public finances. The main reason for the binge was political, but a major subsidiary reason has been Labour’s failure to mobilise Whitehall to the cause of the efficient use of public money.

The second point that I want to make in this respect is on the credibility of the numbers on the basis of which decisions will be taken. Have Labour really been cooking the books? Perhaps scarcely at all. Perhaps a lot. We do not know. Twenty years ago I left the Treasury and went to spend a very enjoyable year at Nuffield college, Oxford. There, among other things, I wrote a short book on public expenditure and fiscal policy. Two of the suggestions in that book, eventually published in 1996, were to create an independent national statistical office and to create a fiscal policy committee charged with the task of producing the forecast and thereby bolstering the credibility of the Government’s accounts.

From the Front Bench a little over five years ago, I worked up those proposals at the request of the then shadow Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin). They were subsequently published as “The Independent Fiscal Projection Committee” and “A Framework for Statistical Independence”. The Government responded to the first after the election by giving independence to the Office for National Statistics, but the second pillar of the plan was wholly ignored by the Government.

I was delighted when my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) took up the latter idea. His proposed new body, which he has called the office for budget responsibility, goes further than I proposed in 1996—a good way further—and further than my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset suggested in that document. I believe that what my hon. Friend has proposed will contribute to the economic credibility needed to reduce the deficit in one crucial respect, which he mentioned in his speech. It will put the Government at one remove from the forecasting business, with all the temptations to fiddle the forecasts that can come with that.

Those two measures that I spoke about earlier, a credible plan to reduce public spending and a credible, independent, depoliticised and verified forecast, will act on the credibility deficit. That is important because, as the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who is no longer in his seat, pointed out, the credibility issue is not about mere words. It comes with a price tag, potentially huge in terms of loss of market confidence in plans to fund the deficit and service the debt stock. It is the Governor of the Bank who told us that the deficit, at nearly 13 per cent. of GDP is “truly horrendous”. The debt stock will have doubled as a percentage of GDP to nearly 80 per cent. shortly, as the spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Browne) pointed out.

Even if credibility is eroded only to the extent that it represents, say, 50 basis points on debt servicing costs, we are talking about billions and billions of pounds in higher taxes or lower public spending for a generation. Even more perilously, the loss of credibility could manifest itself in a collapse in people’s confidence in the currency.

Mr. Cash: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his prescience and look forward to reading the pamphlet that he produced at Nuffield college, Oxford, because it sounds very interesting. He mentioned thrift, but the issue is not just about efficiency. Does he agree that however much we develop models and look at the bond market, at credit risk and at the rest of it, until real change is made, the scale of the problem will require an adjustment on the statute book to the duties that are
imposed on all public authorities? That is a serious and difficult problem, but it is one that we will have to address. We cannot go on imposing legal duties, with which local, national and public auditors are required to comply, and at the same time step up the amount of legal liability that we impose on all of those public authorities.

Mr. Tyrie: My hon. Friend returns to a point that he made in an earlier intervention. I listened to it carefully, and I probably agree. The Americans deal with the same issue using their distinction between discretionary and non-discretionary funding in the federal budget.

This debate takes place against the backdrop of an election. The respective claims of the major parties on the public finances will come to the fore, and the danger is that there will be a bidding war. Each party will claim that it can do more than its opponent to tackle the deficit, with less pain than its opponent. That will not make for an enlightening election. It could lead to a further erosion in the credibility of politics and politicians, to which I alluded at the beginning of my remarks.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning my book. In it I suggested a way out of the problem—a way that might bolster rather than erode the credibility of respective claims of the parties, particularly at election times. My proposal was quite straightforward: in addition to creating a fiscal policy committee, which is similar to the proposed office of budget responsibility, I suggested that to bolster the credibility of the Government and Opposition parties’ policies on tax and spending in the months prior to an election, that body should examine all their pledges and come to a view about the bottom-line effect on the deficit.

It would be quite reasonable to ask that institution to undertake that work for any party registered under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and to publish the assumptions on which it came to its conclusions about the scale of the parties’ pledges and their implications for public borrowing. If it did that, it would concentrate the minds of politicians when they make exaggerated claims on economic and financial policy, especially at election time. Such a measure would raise the quality of debate in elections and of public discourse about economic matters between elections, giving the public greater confidence in the statements of politicians.

A major Opposition party might be reluctant to subject itself to such scrutiny, but what credibility would such a party have? It might supply inadequate information about its policies, thereby preventing meaningful costings to be made by the office of budget responsibility. If it did, the OBR should say so and let the electorate draw its own conclusions. At election times, such a measure is still achievable, even if things have to be done in more of a rush. The Government’s costings would be largely straightforward: after all, one function of the OBR would be to have a firm grip on Government pledges. In any case, before the Government went to such a committee, they would have available to them the full resources of Whitehall in order to cost any additional pledges that they wished to unveil in their manifesto.

As for the Opposition parties, any party worth its salt and challenging seriously for power would want the credibility of its economic plans endorsed by the OBR. The party would be likely to engage with the office well before it published its manifesto, and it should be permitted to do so confidentially. In Committee I intend to table an amendment to give effect to this proposal, and I very much hope that it secures cross-party support.

The agenda of British politics has been set by Labour: it is to repay Labour’s debts. That will be a huge and painful undertaking, affecting the entire British population. Labour’s only hope of restoring confidence in itself would have been to set out the spending measures required to plug the deficit. That is Labour’s duty, after all: it is still in government. But even if it had done so, I am not sure how much weight it would have carried with the markets or with the public at this stage, because the canker at the heart of Labour economic policy derives not just from its credibility on fiscal policy, but from a deeper collapse in confidence: confidence in the Government’s ability to take any correct decisions for the country—the confidence that can, in turn, be built only on the sound foundations of economic competence.

When the economic history books are written, the writers’ pens will above all linger not on the Government’s intentions but on their incompetence. How was it that a Government inheriting such a strong economic legacy could have so easily squandered it? How was it that so little could have been bought with so much extra public spending? Even two years into this crisis, Labour still tries to return to the tactics of the past decade—the tried and failed tactics of rhetorical devices, which we have in this Bill, as a substitute for something solid. The Bill’s title could usefully serve in one of those history books as the heading for a final chapter. It could read: “All credibility gone: the Fiscal Responsibility Bill is brought to the House.” It would describe willing the end without the means and yet another addition to the catalogue of gesture politics.

The decision to postpone the spending review has been crucial. Those who argue that the Bill is merely a cheap political trick to avoid disclosing the pain that Labour would have to inflict on the electorate get at only half the truth. The Government appear to have no notion of how to implement the measures required to give effect to the good intentions of the Bill, and that is symptomatic of so much policy making over the past decade. Their response to any problem has all too often been to seek to legislate it out of existence, and, when disappointment has inevitably followed, the tendency has been to blame others, especially Whitehall officials, and the wider public service, for a so-called “failure to deliver”. We have therefore had a succession of initiatives, most of them equally misguided, seeking to deal with the problem through efficiency units, a succession of studies, the tsars and so on.

Ministers hoped that those measures would compensate for Whitehall’s alleged shortcomings, when the shortcomings that mattered were really much closer to home. It is the bankruptcy of ideas and, above all, of understanding how to translate intentions into action, more than the financial bankruptcy, which this Bill illustrates.

7.58 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I remind the House that I have business interests with a multinational industrial company and an investment management company.
I rise to remind the House that the big financial crisis through which we have been living was in origin a crisis of borrowing too much. The Government now admit that their regulators were asleep on the watch, and that banks borrowed too much. It is clear that individuals and families borrowed too much. They felt that they had to because the erratic and expansionary monetary policy followed on both sides of the Atlantic fuelled a house-price boom and took houses and flats ever more beyond people's reasonable expectations of being able to service a mortgage. They were dragged into borrowing too much to meet those giddy house prices based on the monetary excess that the Government and their agents had unleashed.

Industry and commerce also borrowed too much, and in some cases, particularly under the private equity model, the levels of leverage for companies were very high and made it difficult for them to trade profitably and successfully. Yet the Government, who tell us that the private sector sinned and borrowed too much, now seem to believe that the way to correct the problem is for the state to borrow too much in its turn.

My first message for the Government is that we cannot solve a crisis of over-borrowing by borrowing too much itself. We cannot resolve British state finances by underwriting every bad debt and every bad loan throughout the banking system—we have to get the banks to sort it out and to take more of the hit. This Government have dragged the taxpayer and the state into accepting far too much risk and far too much debt obligation. That is why we are now on the verge of another nasty phase to this long and tragic financial crash: the phase when the state is made to realise that it is borrowing too much, and the markets and others force the state and its agents—the Government of the day—into getting their own house in order because otherwise they will find that they cannot borrow at anything like a sensible rate, if at all, or on the scale that they wish.

I think it is agreed ground between the three largest parties in this House that the deficit is too large, that it is growing too quickly, and that it needs to be controlled within the next four to five years. It seems that the principal disagreement remains between the Government and the rest of us about the timing of when to start to control borrowing. It is less painful to start to control borrowing now than to leave it for another year. It will do less damage not to have borrowed another £200 billion before deciding to give up the bad habit. If someone is an alcoholic, the time to stop drinking is today—it is not a good idea to have another year of drinking very heavily and damaging their liver. They know they have to tackle the issue, so why not start now? They may then discover that they have a longer and happier life, because there is life after alcoholism, as all those of us who are not alcoholics are pleased to report to anyone who might be in doubt.

We have to say exactly the same thing to this Government about borrowing. There is life for a Government after borrowing too much. It can be a very good life where the economy will function better, not worse—a situation where the public services are better run, not worse run, and where if they put quality, efficiency, productivity and performance into their vocabulary when managing the public services, they may well discover that they can run them better and provide more for considerably less input than the current costs. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Tyrie) remarked, one of the extraordinary things about this Government is how they managed to spend so much money to so little effect; that is the tragedy that we have to tackle. Unfortunately, the Bill is not the means to do that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Osborne) pointed out with great humour and aplomb in noting that it sets out to have the Treasury controlling the Treasury. Why should the Treasury need to control itself? Why can it not run self-disciplined budgets in the normal way? Why can it not use the existing mechanisms of pre-Budget reports, Budgets, forecasts and economic reports to this House to provide the discipline that is required?

I should like to pause for a little on the details of the Bill, which I hope will be substantially amended if we have to go through the rigmarole of legislating it at all. It is bizarre in its own terms and seems to be against the run of the advice that the Chancellor has regularly given us on how to run an economy in trouble. Clause 1 tells us that in each of the years 2011 to 2016, public sector net borrowing expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product has to fall compared with the preceding year. To ensure that it falls by a reasonable amount, there is the added rider in subsection (2) that it needs to halve by 2014. That means, as I reminded the Chancellor when he was here earlier, that in any given year borrowing could go up. That is even true in the period when one is trying to halve borrowing, because one could leave it all to the end and suddenly have very big cuts in the last year or do it all earlier and then have greater freedom. Because it is expressed as a proportion of income, there could be individual years when borrowing was going up, assuming that the economy was growing. Perversely, however, if in that period we had another unfortunate year when the economy was not growing, it would be necessary to reverse and to cut borrowing in cash terms. That is the exact opposite of the natural stabilisers that the Chancellor has always told us are very important, as Conservative Members have accepted. We agree that the natural stabilisers are important if one gets into a position where there is such a big fall in output as this Government have presided over. The Government could change this and come up with a formula that recognises that it is necessary to take into account the state of the economic cycle.

The second part of clause 1 contains the most important part of the whole proposition—that borrowing should be halved as a proportion of gross domestic product. Given that under current economic policy we are not going to get much growth, that means that it is necessary, roughly speaking, almost to halve the current cash deficit, so we are talking about somewhere between £80 billion and £100 billion of spending cuts, tax increases or some combination of the two. There is always a temptation among those on the Labour Benches to believe that tax increases are the better option, but if they choose the wrong tax increases they could make the position worse. If enterprise is taxed too much, there will be less of it and they may end up with less revenue. They also like to tell themselves that if only they could at last get to grips with tax evasion and avoidance all our problems would be solved, whereas after 12 years of their trying to do that, all the evidence shows that it does not solve the problem as it is a very small part of a much bigger problem.
We cannot get away from the fact that in order to cut the deficit by this magnitude, even under a Labour Government with some strange tax plans, most of the burden would have to fall on public spending, and trying to cut public spending by £80 billion to £100 billion has proved to be difficult in the past. The Government clearly find it impossible because they have produced a Bill for the House of Commons demanding that we do this, yet there is not a single item in the supporting papers or speeches to tell us how they would achieve it. Worse than that, they have cancelled the normal public expenditure review setting out detailed plans for the future because they clearly find it too difficult, too embarrassing, or both, to have to admit that the large chunks of money that they have committed in the past are no longer affordable and perhaps discover that some of those chunks of money are indeed very wasteful.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Does he agree that there is another factor apart from having to review legislation, which imposes the duties to which I have referred—that is, the need to emphasise the necessity for enterprise and small businesses from which one can generate the growth that is required in order to fill the gap? After all, not one penny of public expenditure comes from anything other than the tax revenues from private enterprise, and if we do not put our emphasis on the growth of small businesses and enterprise companies, we will not be able to close the gap, which makes complete nonsense of this ridiculous Bill.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We clearly need a lot more growth; I think that that is also common ground between the main parties in this House.

The evidence of our past successes and failures as a country is very clear. When a Government have had the courage to cut the marginal rates of income tax on people of enterprise and investors and to cut the rates of profits tax and other taxes on employment in small businesses, there has been a proportionate improvement in the growth rate and an increase in the tax take from those sectors. Governments who have gone for extremely high penal rates of tax on the rich, the successful and the potential investors who might do something to improve our economy have had the reverse experience. They have discovered that growth has slowed or gone into reverse, and that lots of bright and talented people have gone abroad because they do not wish to pay such tax at all. That would be even more true today in this extremely footloose globalised world. Surely we should learn the lessons of the ’70s, when Governments had high taxes and it did not work, and the ’80s, when they summoned up the courage to cut the taxes and it started to work rather well with the enterprise policies that were introduced. The same has been true all around the world. Wherever a country has had the courage to set very competitive tax rates on enterprise, business, success and investment, it has found that it gets a lot more revenue in.

As I always try to tell the Labour party, the best way to tax the rich—I would like to tax the rich more as well—is to cut the tax rates, because we then have more rich people in this country who pay more tax, because it is less worthwhile to pay for all the accountant advice to get around it, and venture more of their money. This morning I spoke to a successful entrepreneur who told me: “I’m on strike. I was a successful entrepreneur. I sold my company because the climate was becoming so hostile in this country. I managed to sell up before the crash. I have no intention of going back in because they’re making the climate even more hostile—I’ll sit on my backside and do nothing for a bit.”

Mr. Pelling: I know that it is politically difficult to say that one is in favour of bringing the 50 per cent. tax rate back down, but would that not be the best approach for an incoming Conservative Government so as to encourage enterprise?

Mr. Redwood: I have made a clear statement about what I believe is the way that works best, and I trust that a future Government will be wise and will want to set competitive rates of tax on enterprise, success and rich people so that we tax them more in the way that I have described. That is clear advice that I am sure will not fall entirely on deaf ears, because it works and has worked in the past and elsewhere in the world.

In clause 1, after the extraordinary claims and strange wording that I have mentioned, we go on to be told that in due course net debt has to start to fall as a proportion of gross domestic product, but only in the final year of the period. The Chancellor effectively confirmed that the Bill is drafted in that way because the Government do not believe they have any chance of getting net debt down as a proportion of our national income until 2015-16. That could well be after the next election but one, in two Governments’ time rather than one. It is remarkable that they can be that precise in thinking that that will be possible by that stage. For once, I agree with their realism that, with their policies, they will not get net debt down any time soon, and not before 2015.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) rightly pointed out that the debt is grossly understated in the figures that the Government use. The Office for National Statistics has got nearer to the truth. I have always cited a figure of £3 trillion plus for the true level of debt and obligations of the British state. Now that the Government have gone to the aid of banks in difficult situations and allowed the pension deficits to build up so colossally, that is the kind of figure that we would come up with if the British state account were put on the basis on which the British state puts any reputable company account. I see no reason why it should be treated differently. Clause 1(3) is pretty meaningless, because the Government will clearly carry on using definitions of net debt that no one else believes. Everybody else knows that they greatly underestimate the position.

That brings me to another problem with the Bill. The part about interpretation, definitions and so forth is one of the slenderest that I have ever seen in a piece of legislation. I presume that that is intentional and designed so that were there to be a future Labour Government in the time period in question, they could play all sorts of games with the definitions of net borrowing and net debt if things went wrong, just as Labour played all sorts of games with the cycle and the definitions of the golden rule in its earlier years in Government. The Bill is shoddy and unacceptable because there is no professionally and internationally agreed definition of
the debt and borrowing that they are trying to measure. Doubtless they would want to leave quite a lot out by anybody else’s standards of financial reporting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton made mincemeat of the Treasury imposing a duty on itself and of the fact that there are absolutely no sanctions on anyone involved in this sorry charade. It is not so much a case of Ministers giving themselves a “get out of jail free” card in case something goes wrong as giving themselves a card that says that no Minister ever goes to jail or suffers any other penalty of any kind, however bad, grotesque and wrong their implementation of the policy.

The Bill is a worthless piece of paper and an unnecessary intrusion into what should be a serious debate. It will not take a trick with the bond markets in the City or with anybody in this place other than a few Labour loyalists. It is a political prank, an expensive press release. It is wasting the time of the House and it is completely unsubstantiated by any plans.

Mr. Osborne: Say what you think!

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend tries to tempt me to be a bit more outspoken, but the House knows me all too well—I am not characteristically outspoken.

I return to the divide on the timing of the reductions that the Bill requires. The Government’s case is that they should delay the reductions for about another year. That is felicitous, because it will get them through the general election period and put all the burden of the cuts on to a future Government, but perhaps they actually believe what they are saying. Maybe they believe this neo-Keynesian nonsense that they have come up with that the only thing that is sustaining the economy is the excess public spending and borrowing, and if they started to reduce it now, it would plunge the economy back into a nasty recession. I have some simple questions for them about that. If all this public spending and borrowing is so good, why is our economy still in recession? The Government are in a hole with their argument that all this public spending and borrowing is sustaining the economy, and that it would relapse without it. They have against them the problem of international comparisons, but also that of historical comparisons. If we look at recoveries from previous, rather shallower recessions in this country, we notice a certain common characteristic. Usually, the recovery got under way when the Government of the day admitted that they had a budget problem and took action to control the budget deficit through a combination of tax increases and spending cuts. In 1981, famously, quite big reductions were made in spending to curb the budget deficit, and from the day of the announcement of those cuts the economy accelerated away into one of its long and successful periods of growth. Something similar happened after the exchange rate mechanism disaster of the early 1990s. Again, it was when the Government got a grip on the deficit that we ushered in a very long period of expansion under two different parties.

Mr. Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in addition to the Government’s historical problems, they have a current difficulty in that they seem incapable of securing the support of a single Back Bencher for the vital debate on the most pressing problem that faces this country? Only those Back Benchers who support the Opposition, not the Government, have spoken.

Mr. Redwood: That is a wise observation. Only one Labour Back Bencher is even present to hear of the Government’s travails.

Stewart Hosie: The right hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point about recovery from the 1980-81 recession. He will of course recall that, even after its technical end in 1981, unemployment continued to rise for three full years.
Mr. Redwood: That is a sad truth. All of us who lived through that were miserable about it, but it was good that we started to recover. The evidence shows that cutting public spending did not impede, but enabled the recovery. I remind Labour Members of Conservative Front Benchers’ main claim on that point: we do not recommend spending cuts because we want to cut spending; we have come into politics because we want good public services—obviously, all politicians like to be involved with success in public services—but we believe that cuts are now essential because of the interest rate threat, which my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton correctly identified.

The reason that Governments had to make cuts—and, in some cases, provide for tax increases—to get out of previous recessions was that, if they had not controlled the deficit, the deficit would have controlled them. If we do not control the deficit, it will exact an extremely high price on the rest of the British economy in the form of much higher interest rates and rationed credit, when we need low interest rates for longer and a more plentiful supply of credit from the private sector to get the productive economy moving again.

Our problem is that we have a banking crisis and a crisis of over-borrowing. If we persist in over-borrowing in the public sector, we will not strengthen, but undermine or weaken the recovery. We will make progress more difficult, delay the necessary action and when the cuts—forced by market crisis, collapse of sterling or a bond crisis—eventually come, they will be more rapidly administered, more brutal and less well thought through. It is far better to plan and start to take action now so that the markets begin to say, “Ah, they are serious; they understand it. We can give them a bit of time because we now know that they want to get on with it.”

If we constantly repeat, “Tomorrow, tomorrow—mañana, mañana”, the markets will not believe a word we say, our interest rates will continue to rise, as they have done in the past year; and our currency will continue to fall, as it has done in the past year. The Economic Secretary appears to think that that is funny. He should wake up to the reality over which the Government are presiding. Interest rates should remain low—we do not want them driven higher by market movements. Our currency is being driven lower, and we need a floor in sterling before the situation gets out of control. I hope that the Treasury sees the need for that. It would be good if it could persuade the Prime Minister—the First Lord of the Treasury—that he also has some duties, and that he does not fulfil them by tarting up a few words as a Fiscal Responsibility Bill. He has the power to instruct the Government to start to tackle the problem.

Apart from the absence of Labour speakers, the interesting point about the Government is the absence of any commentary on how they might start to control the deficit by controlling public spending. Let me begin with an observation and then make an unpopular comment. A substantial reduction can be made in the number of people employed in the public services while delivering a good level and quality of public service in crucial areas. We currently do too many things badly. The Government have recruited another million public sector employees in the past 12 years and they have not always chosen well the roles into which to put those people. Often, they have complicated and made the process of public service delivery less efficient by over-recruiting in the wrong areas.

The first thing I would do to try to tackle the deficit is put a control on all new recruitment. Every year, 5 to 10 per cent. of public employees leave, find better offers, retire, go off to have children and do not want to return to work. That means that the work force can be reduced quite rapidly over four or five years without compulsory redundancies and the costs and disruption they bring. If one has a strongly enforced natural wastage policy, one can give one’s existing public employees much better chances of promotion and career development because some posts will need filling. They tend to be more interesting and better posts, so people can be accelerated into them and that can create a better life for them. We need to control our costs and do more with less. The biggest cost throughout the public services is that of labour.

Of course, we need all the teachers, nurses, doctors and uniformed personnel that we have—I am not talking about those front-line jobs. However, most public employees are not in those jobs. We can introduce better processes, ensure that we do more with less and simplify the tasks. If we simplify the regulatory system, we need fewer regulators; if we simplify the tax and benefit system, we need fewer people clerking and administering those systems. That is what we need to do. Any company would do it when faced with the need for cuts on a proportionate scale that the Government face.

Companies do not immediately ask, “How can I cut my most important service to the public?” or, “Can I close down all my shops to show that I’m in a financial mess?” or, “Can I get rid of all the key personnel so that I can do a really bad job?” Companies ask, “Which people can I do away with so that it’s least damaging to the business? To whom can I give more authority and promote, who can then do more for less? How can I win more business with fewer people?” A company has to work like that, particularly in a global marketplace. For example, every year, manufacturing companies are normally asked by their leading customers to cut their prices because of the power of global competition. They therefore have to get on with delivering more for less. They cannot do that by skimping on quality; they must also improve their quality every year, otherwise competitors will do better for less.

My unpopular point is that Members of Parliament must show that we ourselves can do what I have outlined. As I understand it, the current expenses system budgets for every Member of Parliament to have three full-time staff. I think we can do our work with two. I do not want to be unkind to current colleagues, so I believe that we should say to all new Members of Parliament that they will get an allowance for only two full-time staff. Those who are already here can carry on with three—I do not know whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, employ three staff, but I do not, so I know that the work can be done with fewer—but when one leaves, the Members should move on to the system of two full-time staff. That is a minimal sacrifice that we should make to show the public sector that more can be delivered for less. A Member of Parliament can do a perfectly good job with two rather than three staff, and that makes a contribution. Across Westminster, we can then approach the big parts of the civil service and say, “Look, this is what we’re doing; this is our contribution, and now we’d like you to do something similar. We
don’t want you to take out one in three—perhaps one in 10—but we need to act to make an impact on this huge deficit.”

Let us consider pensions. Members of Parliament, unknown to the public and unbeloved by them, have already worsened the terms of our pension scheme for everybody who is here. We have to make bigger contributions and there has been some dilution of the benefits—rightly so because the costs were large and the deficit was getting out of control. We are therefore contributing to tackling the deficit. I think we need to go further, and to say to new MPs that like all private sector schemes, the MP scheme is closed to new Members. We have to work our way through our pension problem in exactly the same way that people are working their way through many private sector problems—they have realised that they are not affordable any more, and that they have to make cheaper arrangements for new staff. We are going to have to do the same in many public sector pension schemes that are far bigger and more important than the MP scheme, but it is important to do it first for that scheme, so that we lead by example and have some moral authority when we come to tackle the problem.

There are many other ways in which we could start to curb the deficit. I have no intention of repeating speeches that I have made in the House before and of naming individual programmes and areas of work that I would like to see discontinued, such as the identity card and regional government agenda and so forth, which we could simply abolish and scrap. I am pleased to say that there are many such schemes that could be scrapped, which would start to fight the deficit.

The issue of process is terribly important. The public sector in Britain must learn to do more for less. It must learn to raise quality every year and to cut the price every year, which is what organisations in the private sector must do year after year if they wish to be successful. It is not impossible. Indeed, one of the joys for any new Government is that they will inherit such an inefficient mess that the early improvements in efficiency will be relatively easy. It is far more difficult to take over a company that has been through 10 or 20 years of such processes because the obvious, low-hanging fruit will have been taken—as private sector people would say, the obvious inefficiencies will have been squeezed out. A new Government will have many inefficiencies to squeeze out. They will have to be bold and strong and do such things in a sensible time scale and in a way that does not disrupt the rights and loyalties of existing staff. I think that can be done, and it will begin to curb the deficit.

This afternoon and this evening is, I am afraid, a waste of time and money. Parliament stands ready to provide a better service.

8.31 pm

Ms Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab): It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I suspect that many of the speeches that we have heard so far will be the kind of thing that we will be hearing in debates over the coming months as we go towards the general election.

I will not be able to support the Government in a Division on Second Reading this evening, but for very different reasons than those others have outlined. I agreed with much of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said. He made a powerful speech and articulated very clearly the scale of cuts that we are facing, which I do not think the British people really appreciate at the moment.

In his helpful contribution, my right hon. Friend highlighted one powerful issue that we need to be aware of: the influence of market. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) and a number of others on the official Opposition Benches spoke about the influence of the market on decisions that Governments will make over the coming period, but the irony, which seems to have been lost, is that the markets put us in this position—there was a failure to regulate, but a completely irresponsible approach by the free market put us in this situation. In my view, the Government had no alternative but to take the type of action that they have taken in the past two to three years. The Chancellor was correct that there was no alternative to taking banks into public ownership and bailing them out, and to the fiscal stimulus.

One problem is that there is an over-skewing of our economy in favour of the financial sector. In Britain, much of the financial stimulus has gone towards the financial sector. Our manufacturing base has not had the type of financial injection it has had in some other countries. Perhaps they did not go through some of the experiences that we had in the 1980s and 1990s, when we saw the demise of so many traditional industries and the flourishing of the City and the financial sector. Obviously, at times, that has had benefits for us. I am not in any way trying to minimise the huge financial input that the City and the financial sector have had into this country, but they have put us in difficult situations in the recent period.

I cannot support the Bill because of the scale of public sector cuts that will be required if it is implemented. I am simply not willing to vote to cut essential services for some of the poorest people in this country. We need to have a massive debate not only on why we got into this situation and how we ensure that it does not happen again, but on how we deal with the deficit that we face. In peacetime, Britain has never before faced such a deficit. We have only had to deal with such situations during times of war.

I do not defend every penny that the public sector spends. Anyone with an ounce of sense realises that the public sector does not do everything in the most efficient way, and some things could be done more cheaply, although in some cases more money needs to be spent to provide a better service.
Mr. Redwood: The hon. Lady says that she supported bank nationalisation. Does she think that it was right to put huge sums of money into very expensive subsidies to banks but not into failing industrial or retail businesses?

Ms Clark: Each situation needs to be looked at on its merits. With the banking sector, there was no alternative, because if the banks had collapsed, the economic situation would have been much worse, given that the economy depends on them. I would have welcomed greater support from the Government for the manufacturing sector, and I will support any such provision in the times to come. The retail sector is in a slightly different situation. There is a long-term argument for retaining a steel industry and other parts of the manufacturing sector, because we will rely on them in years to come. Once we lose those sectors, they will be very difficult to recreate. Those of us from the north and Scotland—the more industrialised areas—know of the proud industrial traditions of this country. We were at the forefront of manufacturing and development, but that is no longer the case in many sectors of the economy.

The right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) talked about substantial reductions in public sector jobs. If we are to follow the advice of all the Front-Bench teams, especially of the official Opposition, we will see substantial cuts in public sector employment, which will have massive economic implications, especially in those parts of the country that are more heavily reliant on public sector jobs. As has been pointed out, if jobs are lost in the private sector, tax revenue is lost and we no longer have the benefit of the production by that individual. But the same is true in the public sector. There is a huge cost to the state in the loss of employment in the public sector and, at a time when we have to be alert to the risk of growing unemployment, any solution that involves cuts in public sector jobs is a very short-term approach.

In recent months we have had much debate about the possibility of a double dip recession, and that is a genuine risk. It is difficult to predict when we can start to consider how to reduce the deficit, and that is one reason why I feel it would not be helpful for any Government to have the restraints in the Bill placed on them. No Government, of any political persuasion, would have been able to predict some of the economic experiences that we have had in the past three years. As a Labour MP, I do not want to see my Government constrained in that way. I want Ministers to be able to respond to events, use their judgment and do everything that they can to protect the British economy and the British people. Therefore, as a matter of principle, I am not convinced that a Bill is the most helpful approach.

However, the real reason why I feel unable to support public spending cuts of this nature is the types of cuts that they will likely mean to some essential services. I have voted against various Government proposals that have amounted to substantial public expenditure, including Trident replacement and the identity cards scheme, and I believe that there will be a range of other Government initiatives, such as the NHS computerisation programmes, that perhaps we should look at as well.

I am not saying that there are not areas of public spending that very legitimately we need to look at. Of course, we are currently embroiled in overseas armed conflict. I have never voted in the House on those issues because there have not been any votes since I was elected in 2005, but before I became an elected representative in this place I marched against those conflicts. We need to have a serious discussion about our society’s priorities and values. My concern about the Bill is that yet again the poor will pay the price when those who have the power and run the show make mistakes. Bizarrely, over the past one and a half to two years, the debate has gone from being about the mistakes made by those running the banks to how we can most effectively and severely cut public spending, and of course it will be my constituents and those of every Member in this House who will pay the price.

I understand the reasons for the Government’s stance. However, over the coming months we must be extremely careful in our approach towards the public sector, particularly education, health and the other essential public services on which the most vulnerable in society rely. Many of those services have been fought for by individuals and communities generation after generation, and if we start down the path of closing community halls, libraries and other services, they will not come back easily. I would like injected into this debate a discussion about not just cuts, but our society’s values, and we need to say very clearly that it is not those at the top who have got us into this mess. As we move forward, we must also say that it is our role as elected representatives to ensure that they are not the people who pay the price.

8.42 pm

Stewart Hosie (Dundee, East) (SNP): I do not want to repeat what anyone else has said, but this is a profoundly pointless piece of legislation, because one would have imagined that the job of any Government at any time would have been to ensure fiscal responsibility and sound public finances all the time. One would not imagine that the Government would need a law to tell them to do that, and certainly not a law that will enshrine on the statute book, if it gets that far, deep and savage cuts—cuts that this Labour Government have already planned. An £800 million budget cut has already been announced for Scotland.

Only this Government, I suspect, could be so foolish as to lay out very broad and deep public spending cuts before we have a sustained and sustainable economic recovery from the recession. Only this Government, I suspect, would carve them into stone on the statute book, if it gets that far, deep and savage cuts—cuts that this Labour Government have already planned. An £800 million budget cut has already been announced for Scotland.

At its heart, the Bill is also dishonest. Although it is fundamentally about deep cuts—as I said, an £800 million cut to the Scottish budget has already been announced—the Government have refused to publish or carry out a comprehensive spending review. That means that we do not yet know the implications for every single one of the UK’s spending Departments. We are therefore having this debate in a vacuum, without knowing the implications for ordinary people and ordinary services or for the economy more widely—the very point that the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Ms Clark) made. It may be those at the bottom of the pile who will pay the price for this Government’s economic failure.

The absence of both a comprehensive spending review and an understanding of what the cuts really mean make a mockery of the explanatory notes. The hon.
Member for Taunton (Mr. Browne), who speaks for the Liberals, mentioned this earlier, but paragraph 31 says:

“There are no significant financial effects of the Bill.”

He seemed to agree with that, but I disagree entirely. There are massive financial implications for every UK spending Department and, potentially, for almost every piece of public investment. There are also implications for, in the first instance, the incomes of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of public sector employees who will lose their jobs and, in the second instance, private sector employees, as expenditure in local communities is reduced, as the cuts begin to bite on public sector income and the spending power in local communities. There are also massive financial implications arising from the increased social protection costs as people are paid off as a direct consequence of the cuts.

Do the Government not understand that it was only increased Government consumption—up 2.2 per cent. last year, at a time when household expenditure fell by 3.6 per cent., when total business investment was down by 22 per cent. and when gross fixed capital formation was down by 17 per cent.—that kept the economy afloat at all? Do they not understand that to begin the process of deep and savage cuts now, before the private sector has the confidence to spend and invest, and when credit for businesses and individuals remains incredibly difficult or expensive, is economically stupid? That is the economics of the madhouse. The measures—the Labour cuts—therefore not only put faltering economic recovery at risk but, as the hon. Lady said in her speech, run the risk of pushing the economy into a double-dip recession, which is something that I know the Treasury is concerned about. I am therefore at a loss to explain why they are introducing the measures today.

As an aside, I am also at a loss to say where the Chancellor is. There were only two, very modest financial measures in the Queen’s Speech: the Financial Services Bill and the Fiscal Responsibility Bill. Both are small and modest—indeed, this one really does not matter—yet the Chancellor is not even here to listen to this short debate, on one of only two financial measures in the Queen’s Speech.

Before embarking on this political dividing line of a Bill—that is all it is—this Labour Government should have learned the lessons of fairly recent history: the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s. The recessions of 1980-81 and 1990-91 lasted for five quarters. This recession has already lasted for six. The declines in GDP then were 4.7 and 2.5 per cent. respectively. This recession has already taken our GDP down by 5.9 per cent. The economy took two full years after the technical end of those earlier recessions to reach the point at which the GDP recovered to pre-recession levels. As I said earlier to the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), it took three years before unemployment stopped rising after the technical end of the recession in 1981 and two full years before it stopped rising after the technical end of the recession in 1991. In the absence of the clarity that a comprehensive spending review would give, the scale of the cuts envisaged by the Bill and the PBR run the risk of replicating, or worse, the human cost, as well as the economic danger, of the 1980s and 1990s recessions.

I have been a critic of the deficit and the debt levels since before the recession and before the banking crisis. Going into the recession, I said that there was nothing in the tank, because our debt at that point was around £500 billion and due to rise. I want the deficit and the debt to be reduced, but there are alternatives to what the Government propose in the Bill. When the New Zealand Government introduced their Fiscal Responsibility Act 1994, they did so on the basis of five important principles. I shall go through them briefly. The first was that Government debt would be reduced to a “prudent” level. That principle acknowledged that the existing level of Government debt was too high—as it is here—and that the Government needed to run operating budget surpluses for a period of time to reduce the outstanding debt and the annual deficits. They talked about a “prudent” level, not about an arbitrary 50 per cent. cut in order to be able to afford an artificial political dividing line.

The second principle was that, once debt was reduced to a prudent level, the New Zealand Government would seek to maintain a balanced budget on average over the medium to long term. They did not seek to do so over one economic cycle, in which the Government would change the start and end dates to make the cycle fit the numbers, or over a single Parliament. They sought to achieve their aim using an average over the medium to long term. That was very sensible. If the Government here were to adopt that principle, they would still be able to invoke counter-cyclic measures in the midst of an ongoing debt and deficit reduction programme, if we were to hit a further significant downturn. The automatic stabilisers would kick in safely, and we would have the ability to use fiscal stimulus measures, if they were required, while we stuck to a medium to long-term objective of bringing the debt and deficit down to a prudent level.

The third principle was that the New Zealand Government would achieve and maintain a level of net worth that provided a buffer against unforeseen future factors. That principle recognised that factors other than explicit Government debt—such as public service pension liabilities or bank deposit insurance such as the asset protection scheme—have an impact on the fiscal position.

The fourth principle was that the Government would manage fiscal risks prudently. That called for attention to be paid to all fiscal risks, such as shifts in the demographic structure of the population and off-balance sheet state guarantees. This Bill, however, is a blunt measure to camouflage risky and damaging cuts, and it says nothing about prudent financial management.

The fifth principle was that the Government would pursue policies that were consistent with a reasonable degree of predictability in regard to the level and stability of tax rates for future years. That principle recognised the importance of tax stability for private sector planning and growth. Although this Bill is called the Fiscal Responsibility Bill, it says nothing about the important matter of tax stability.

Whether the Bill is passed or not, we might have a Budget in the spring. On the “Andrew Marr Show”, the Prime Minister said that that could happen “if it’s the right time”, which was meaningless nonsense to avoid saying yes or no. There might be a Budget in the spring, but there will be no time for a Finance Bill to consider its tax implications. There will almost certainly be an emergency Budget closer to the summer, but that will cause further uncertainty and delay. We are already seeing further tax rises, more
tax changes and more tax uncertainty, all of which risk discouraging the investment that we need in order to grow the economy. Growing the economy is the real key to tackling the deficit and ending the debt, but the Bill says precisely nothing about that.

I heard the Chancellor’s rhetoric earlier, but when I looked at the Bill, I wondered whether he was talking about the same piece of legislation. I also wondered, when I heard him justifying some of the measures, whether he was on speaking terms with the Prime Minister, who said on 10 June last year that “you cannot cut your way out of the recession”.

On 21 October, the Prime Minister said:

“The only way forward for this economy at the moment is to maintain the fiscal stimulus”.—[Official Report, 21 October 2009; Vol. 497, c. 906.]

In The Daily Telegraph on 25 October, he said that “it would be suicidal to put recovery at risk by suddenly cutting”. Then, on 28 October, he said:

“What sense does it make to withdraw the fiscal stimulus now...?”—[Official Report, 28 October 2009; Vol. 498, c. 279.]

He is, of course, the Prime Minister of the only serious economy in the world that does not have a fiscal stimulus package any more. As recently as 2 December, he railed against those who wanted “immediate and savage” cuts that would prevent Britain from recovering from the recession, yet that is precisely what the Bill and the pre-Budget report will achieve. It is precisely what the noble Lord Mandelson was referring to at the Press Gallery lunch in July, when he warned of austerity “for the next decade”. When I hear the Chancellor and other Labour figures railing against so-called Tory austerity for a decade, I am reminded of the noble Lord Mandelson warning against Labour austerity for the next decade. The Herald reported accurately—I was there at the lunch—that “Lord Mandelson has raised the prospect of an age of austerity in Britain under Labour, with spending cuts... running right the way through to 2020.”

What we are seeing today is the enabling legislation to do that.

The Government appear to be determined to risk economic recovery by withdrawing the lifeblood from the economy before we have a sustained and sustainable recovery. I believe that they will pay the price for that at the ballot box, but that will be of little comfort to the hundreds of thousands of ordinary people who will pay the real price for Labour’s economic failure and this inflexible Bill.

I want to see the deficit and the debt cut, but I want to see that done from a position of a sustained and a sustainable economic recovery. I conclude my remarks by saying that if anyone thinks that tackling the deficit and then the debt will be difficult from a position of sustained and sustainable recovery—and it will be; there will be tough choices to make—it will be absolutely impossible from a position of faltering recovery or a double-dip recession or one that will require the kind of swinging cuts that other Members have spoken about, made in a knee-jerk and panicked way. That is something that none of us wants to see.

I tell the Government that we will oppose the Bill today and bring forward amendments in future stages. The attempt to tackle the deficit and the debt must be done in a flexible way that protects genuine front-line services and allows the deficit and the debt actually to be reduced from a position of real growth, rather than having the whole economy be reduced simply to create an idiotic dividing line between two parties in the run-up to an election that the Prime Minister does not even have the guts to call.

8.57 pm

Mr. Andrew Pelling (Croydon, Central) (Ind): I congratulate the hon. Members for North Ayrshire and Arran (Ms Clark) and for Dundee, East (Stewart Hosie) on breaking the ice on the consensus in the debate on this cold winter evening. It is important to talk about the economic implications of the Bill.

In reality, what we have seen over the last 18 months or so has been a socialisation of the bad debts that were created on the banking books as a result of huge leverage and excess capacity within the debt markets, making it inevitable that the Government would transfer those debts into the public sector. It would have been completely irresponsible for any Government not to have acted in that way. In respect of the current Bill, however, running down that socialisation of bad debt in a compulsory fashion could lead to very significant economic damage for our country.

The dangers of having a double-dip recession are real. My own professional experience involved spending a great deal of time working for Japanese financial companies, but the last thing I would like to see is our country suffering the 20 years of economic turpitude that that country has faced. If we take away the ability to use proper fiscal stimulation, there may well be real problems.

There are many clouds over the economy. VAT is going to increase, for example, and internationally, US housing is still in great difficulties. Only last week, the US Government found it necessary to give another bail-out to GMAC. There are weaknesses in other economies. French consumer confidence was unexpectedly down today, while there are tremendous weaknesses among our European partners, particularly in Ireland and Spain. We must also remember that for our own economy, manufacturing production is down almost 11 per cent.—10.8 per cent.—over last year and the service economy has contracted by 4 per cent.

In considering the Bill, we should bear in mind the tremendous fragility in our economy. Many pressures—well-meaning pressures—were exerted for banks to be required to put a significant amount of extra capital on to their books, but in the coming years that would inevitably result in continuing severe restrictions on the ability of private sector banks to give stimulative support to our economy, and in such circumstances it is important to maintain full fiscal discretion.

There are real questions to be asked about whether quantitative easing is an appropriate tool, but there is no doubt that if we withdrew it, the need for fiscal stimulation would become ever more important. We must bear in mind just how significant the removal of credit from the economy has been as a result of the financial crisis. A substantial amount of that credit came from financial organisations that were not banks. There was a heavy reliance on short-term borrowing from the financial markets—perhaps, in the UK economy,
the equivalent of £240 billion of credit stimulation. The £200 billion of heavy gilt issuance represents only one part of meeting the amount of credit creation that has been withdrawn from our economy, and a severe reduction in fiscal stimulation could lead to significant troubles for it.

Much reference has been made to history in today's debate. Members have mentioned, for instance, the crisis that followed the post-war period. It should be remembered that the success of the recovery in Europe was the result of a considerable fiscal stimulus on the part of our United States partners in terms of the recapitalisation of Europe. Members were making false assumptions when they cited that period to justify significant reductions in fiscal spending now.

I think that the danger of a crisis in the bond markets has been greatly exaggerated, in terms of their ability to absorb significant issuance of United Kingdom Government debt. The right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) recalled that in the 1980s the Swedish Finance Minister greatly resented having to come to speak to young people in the City, and to justify why people should buy Swedish debt. I was one of those young people in the 1980s, although I am less young now.

There is no doubt that the power of the bond markets is very important. I remember a senior financial official in the Reagan Administration saying that if he were to be reincarnated he would want to be reincarnated as the bond markets, such was their influence and strength at the time. I believe that, particularly if there is a significant reduction in Government spending, banks will be keen to buy issuance from Government—they are being pushed in that direction by regulatory change—but if we move too quickly to remove fiscal stimulation, the only productive area in which banks will invest will be gilts, because the return from them will be significantly higher than that provided by other potential investments or lending in the United Kingdom economy.

If I wanted to be particularly controversial, I would say that the UK Government's triple A rating does not really exist any longer within the capital markets, as the credit level is treated as being below that. There is a danger in us, as politicians, regarding that as absolutely totemic. This is obviously a matter of great historical departure—other than, potentially, on some war bonds, our country has never defaulted—but being rated double A-plus would not be such a severe challenge. Many other G7 countries have gone through such change.

The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Tyrie) made the most pertinent point when he said that the debate is also about our credibility as politicians. Legislating to deliver a promise weakens the position of politicians because it implies, or even states, that any other promise that politicians give which is not backed by legislation is inevitably of a lower calibre. This highlights the way in which politics has become so debased that legislation comes to the House purely on the merits or demerits of making a particular point with the media.

Unfortunately, as the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran has pointed out, the type of restriction involved could be very severe in terms of public services dislocation and the lack of discretion that politicians would have in future. I cannot see the sense in both of the main political parties, which have for so long emphasised that they like the flexibility that this country enjoys because it is not part of the euro, wanting to move on and suggest that our country can do well and prosper if our politicians are straitjacketed by a restriction on their future discretion to make judgments about appropriate economic policy. In reality, if we needed, through economic policy, to have a higher rate of fiscal stimulus than that required by the tapered approach to reduction in the annual public deficit, we would probably—as has happened in the past to meet the European 3 per cent. of gross domestic product borrowing requirements—have a system of obfuscation and using different means of private finance initiative to hide real Government borrowing. As a result, we would end up further undermining our credibility as politicians. We should have the confidence to be straightforward with the electorate about the requirements of Government and about our finances.

I agree strongly with the comments that my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) made in an intervention on the Chancellor. It seems reasonable that the approach to politicians' pay should be the same as that in the private sector. If the Government are determined to put the Bill through Parliament, and if they think it is important, perhaps there should be performance-related payments for the Chancellor if he hits targets. Let the Bill have real bite if they think it is important. There is no point in passing legislation with no sanction or incentive of any kind for the Chancellor regarding the proposals.

Let me address the Opposition's amendment. Initially, I decided not to support it because I think it is important that politicians should feel that they can deliver results by their actions rather than through legislation or the setting up of alternative quangos. However, I think that the amendment is written in such a way that there is sufficient flexibility to allow those of us who are not members of the Conservative parliamentary party to support it. In particular, this House would be strengthened if the opportunity were taken to set up an independent Budget office, similar to the one in Congress, to look at how the Government are performing their fiscal and debt management.

Such a body would revitalise this place's ability to hold the Government to account about their finances. This House's inability to do that on taxation issues has been a long and unfortunate tradition in this House, although the Public Accounts Committee has done extremely well in its endeavours to look at whether Government money is well spent.

In conclusion, this Bill will place our country and politicians in such a fiscal straitjacket that our very prosperity will be put at risk, and it is being done on a mere whim. The Government are playing to the media, and trying to create false division lines between the two main parties represented in this Chamber.

9.11 pm

Mr. Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to this debate. on what is the first parliamentary day of the new decade. It is also the first parliamentary day of the final year of this Parliament and, I hope, of this Government. Change will undoubtedly come this year, in that it has to be an election year.

As previous speakers have noted, the election is at the heart of this Bill. That observation has not been confined to politicians in this Chamber, as it has been made by
outside commentators as well. In its commentary on the pre-Budget report, Goldman Sachs wrote:

“The UK press has concluded that the relatively slow pace of tightening, which doesn’t begin in earnest until 2011, reflects politics more than economics—there’s a general election next spring.”

We will have to wait and see whether Goldman Sachs is right about the spring, but the sentiment reflects what the Bill is all about.

I want to add my voice to those who have spoken in the debate and declared this to be an utterly feeble Bill. The only support for it has come from those on the Government Front Bench. It is one of the thinnest pieces of legislation that I have seen since I arrived in the House nearly five years ago, and it has quite properly been ridiculed—by the shadow Chancellor in particular, but also by every speaker other than the Chancellor himself.

No other issue is more significant, or a greater plank in the Government’s own election planning, than sorting out the public finance deficit that this country faces after 13 years of Labour mismanagement. There is no bigger issue facing the country, or for voters to consider at the coming election. No difference between the Government and the Opposition is more striking than their respective approaches to dealing with this matter: the Government are clearly divided, and the Opposition are clearly united.

We could not have illustrated that better had we, as the potential Government in waiting, planned today’s debate and set out the approach to be taken by Labour Members to supporting their own Government’s legislation. They have not followed that approach. I said earlier that, apart from the Chancellor’s, only one speech had been made from the Labour Benches, but now there have been two. Both speakers have said, in terms and at the outset of their remarks, that for very different reasons they would not be supporting the Bill.

There has not been a single speech in support of the Bill. That shows more clearly than we could ourselves the truth of the shadow Chancellor’s allegation in his remarks that there is division at the heart of Government over how to tackle the deficit. As we have all acknowledged, I think, that is the critical issue that the country faces at present.

So given that lack of interest, I have to ask why the Government business managers have decided to rush the Bill through the Committee stages on the Floor of the House. The obvious answer may be that they need to get the Bill through quickly to have it on the statute book ahead of a general election, which may be called in early or late spring. But that is too simplistic an answer to my question. I think the simple fact is that the Bill will not be handled in Committee, where evidence sessions would merely be a waste of time. The Government are trying to deal with solutions to a credibility crunch.

The Government have form on the issue of fiscal stability. In his famous, or should I say infamous, Mansion House speech in 1997 the present Prime Minister, then Chancellor, set out his fiscal rules—his first attempt to provide an aura of credibility for his approach to the public finances. He said:

“We will introduce tough rules for government borrowing.”

A year later, he told us:

“I will never let the deficit get out of control. We will not spend money we have not earned.”

Well, we all know what happened to those fiscal rules. The goalposts were moved as soon as it looked like they might be missed.

The commentators at the Institute for Fiscal Studies spelt out in their 2007 budget briefing:

“The perception that the Chancellor has moved the goal posts has delayed the tax raising measures and cuts in spending plans that we and other independent commentators had been saying would be necessary until after the 2005 election undermines the credibility of the fiscal framework.”

The measures were obviously dropped.

What is the impact of that lack of credibility when it comes to dealing with the current state of the public finances? We have heard from other speakers this evening about the impact within the market. The right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) drew analogies with the run-up to the second world war, clearly with an eye to securing an impact in the media. The impact of the lack of credibility is extremely significant. It is not just the credit rating agencies, which have put the UK sovereign debt on informal credit watch. It is not just the market commentators, who are saying that the Bill will do nothing seriously to address the debt-to-GDP ratios, which must fall faster. The Governor of the Bank of England himself has said that the deficit needs to be reduced much faster than is proposed in the Bill.

Apart from the commentators, the markets themselves are telling us that we are getting perilously close to an apocalyptic scenario. Let us look at the three market measures that are most regularly used to compare this country’s public debt with that of our international comparators. We can see that the UK is in a perilous position. In the gilt market—which includes the impact of currency, so the measure is not the most directly relevant—the yield on medium-term gilt is up 43 basis points since 1 December 2009. There has been a similar increase in the US, yet in Germany the figure has risen by less than half over that period.

We can look at inflation-linked bonds, which remove the differences in inflation between countries. Since 1 December 2009, UK medium-term inflation-linked bonds have risen by 23 basis points to almost 3 per cent.—2.96 per cent.—which indicates an inflation risk over the risk-free rate.

Mr. Pelling: Is some of that movement in basis points

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Mr. Pelling: Is some of that movement in basis points to do with the market discounting the heavy prospective issuance of debt that is coming, particularly in the US and the UK? Reference was made earlier to PIMCO, which has invested heavily in Government bonds and has taken the view that the UK and the US are particularly difficult investments at this time.

Mr. Dunne: That helps to explain the differential rates in different countries. I am trying to draw out the significant increase since this Bill was first referred to in...
the pre-Budget report, to show that the markets have no faith in it as a means of trying to reduce the public finance black hole the country finds itself in.

The third measure is credit default swaps, which take out the currency risk because they indicate the premium this country would have to pay should it raise debt in other currencies. Here again, the issue is stark. The UK credit default swap rate today is 83 basis points, up 12 since 1 December 2009, whereas in Germany the rate is only 26 basis points and has risen by three since 1 December. We have had an increase of four times more than that in Germany, and we have a credit default rating twice that of the United States.

Where does that place the UK when competing for finance internationally to fund our deficit? A table helpfully produced by the House of Commons Library showing 2009 Government borrowing as a proportion of gross domestic product for OECD countries rates the UK as third worst. Only the economies of Iceland and Greece are in a more precarious position, and the country that is closest to the UK is Ireland. We have all seen what has happened to their borrowing costs and the stark action that has had to be taken by all three of those countries to bring their public finances under control. The UK sits right in the middle of that bunch.

Quite apart from the challenges of funding the Government’s spending over the coming years, given the public finance position we are in, the other significant worry is the impact the increase in rates will have on the rest of the economy—the whole private sector, whose borrowing costs are also priced off the so-called risk-free sovereign rating. There is no question but that the volume of Government debt is not allowing private sector credit spreads to contract. The simplest indicator is the continued wide spread of new mortgages. It is not the supply of credit to the household sector that is so much of a problem, but the price. The Government need to recognise that their action in failing to get to grips with the state of the public finances is spilling over and restraining growth in the private sector of the economy that they are so keen to support.

The Government’s credibility is the key to understanding whether the Bill has any prospect of achieving success. We have heard from many other speakers this evening that the Government have no credibility when it comes to forecasting either their debt levels or GDP growth. The track record for their debt forecasting was well demolished by my hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor. As he said so clearly, in every Budget or pre-Budget report from the Chancellor and his predecessor, there has been a claim for debt reduction over a four-year period—as envisaged in the Bill—yet not once has it been achieved.

On the forecasting track record for GDP growth, the pre-Budget report assumes, first, that the economy will recover in a more dramatic fashion than we have experienced in any previous recession. Secondly, it assumes a consistency in growth rates that is unprecedented on two counts. It assumes a 3.25 per cent. increase in GDP for the four years starting next year. This is not only above the trend rate that the Government have presided over throughout the past 13 years, but it is a greater and more sustained increase than in any comparable four-year period of the Blair/Brown chancellorship. One can only assume that those forecasts were optimistic.

My final point on the credibility of the Government in their approach to the Bill relates to their actions. The Bill does nothing to restore faith in the Government’s competence in administering the economy or to restore faith in the Treasury’s competence. Let us take a recent example of Treasury competence to see whether the current Treasury team are the right people to monitor the reductions in the deficit envisaged in the Bill. Let us take the issue of the bank bonuses.

At the time of the pre-Budget report, the Government announced that they wished to get a grip on bank bonuses. Their objective, which was widely shared across the House, was to extend the period of deferral of bonuses to bank executives in particular, to ensure that they were not motivated to bet the bank’s balance sheet, to put it crudely. Let us take as an example the largest financial institution over which the Government have some direct influence—the Royal Bank of Scotland, where the taxpayer is the largest shareholder.

The Government have proposed a bonus scheme for executives at the Royal Bank of Scotland that envisages payments over a three-year period—50 per cent. in year one, 25 per cent. one year later, and 25 per cent. a year after that. That is, broadly speaking, more generous than the current market norm, where deferred bonuses are typically paid equally in three instalments, rather than loaded to year one. Leaving that criticism aside, the other issue that the Government have completely failed to take into account when considering introducing a deferral scheme to Royal Bank of Scotland is that a large proportion of the senior executives at RBS who are transacting in the markets and who are therefore eligible for bonuses are former ABN bankers—the very bank that got RBS into the perilous state that it is in.

If we look at the bonus scheme that applied to those bankers—the current RBS executives who were formerly ABN AMRO executives—the Government’s proposed bank bonus deferral scheme, far from extending the period over which they get paid their bonuses, will actually reduce it. Their scheme had a four-year deferral provision, whereas the proposed scheme has a three-year deferral. Not only have the Government introduced a more generous scheme in the one company over which they have some direct control, but they have exposed an issue in relation to the Bill—that is, what happens to a Government Minister who makes such a mess of an area for which they are responsible, such as the bank bonus deferral that I have just described?

What sanctions apply? Will such a Minister be fired or moved on? Who knows? That is highly unlikely. In this Bill no sanctions at all are proposed in the event that one of the targets is missed. As Martin Wolf suggested in the Financial Times to add to the ridicule of the Bill, a future Chancellor who failed to meet the targets might be sent to the tower of London. What chance of this Chancellor or the Minister accepting that as a suitable sanction in the event of failure of the Bill? Perhaps she might be able to tell us.

9.29 pm

Mr. David Gauke (South-West Hertfordshire) (Con): This has been a somewhat curious debate. I do not know whether there has been a precedent for such a Bill. The Bill was at the heart of the Prime Minister’s party conference speech in 2009; it was the flagship economic Bill in the Queen’s Speech; and it is the
centrepiece of the Government’s economic strategy to reduce the deficit. However, I wonder whether we have ever had such a Bill, because it has attracted not a single voice of support from Back Benchers on Second Reading.

I suppose that the Government might have hoped that in a time of crisis the country would unite around them as they set out to address the problem, but as it happens the Bill has managed to unite the House in opposition. The fact is that we have had only two contributions from Labour Back Benchers in the debate. I do not know where the rest of the parliamentary Labour party are tonight—they may be plotting, once again, if the rumours that have been reported this evening are true—but not one Labour Back Bench could be prevailed upon to speak in support of the Bill.

Instead, we have had from Back Benchers a series of critical contributions. The right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and his hon. Friend the Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Ms Clark) took somewhat different perspectives on the Bill, but they both opposed it. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Stewart Hosie) from the Scottish nationalists, the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Pelling) from the independents, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Tyrie) and for Ludlow (Mr. Dunne) were all critical, too. Almost any speaker this evening could have uttered the words that we have heard used to describe the Bill, including “profoundly pointless”, “frivolous”, “a political prank”, “an expensive press release” or “mere words”, but we have not heard any words of support for the Bill.

Let us imagine the scene in the Treasury last year as preparations were made for the pre-Budget report. The public finances are in ruins and we are borrowing more than at any time in our peacetime history. For every £4 spent by the Government, £1 is borrowed. We are borrowing more than any other G20 country. The CBI, the International Monetary Fund, the OECD and the Governor of the Bank of England are all calling for a credible plan to reduce the deficit. The credit rating agencies have started to express their concerns about the existence of a target somehow provides credibility in itself is ridiculous, even if it is a target devised by the people who brought us, and broke, the golden rule. I suppose that we should be grateful that there is some acknowledgement of the credibility problem, given that the Prime Minister is currently going through one of his bouts of total denial as to the need to address public spending in this area, but that is very little comfort.

Let us not ignore the intellectual confusion at the heart of the Bill, which has been brought out by several speakers, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham and the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran—we hope that she is safe. It is not often, I suspect, that those two Members agree on much. Nevertheless, the point has to be made.

In the past couple of years, the Government have argued that nothing could be done to reduce the deficit until the recovery was well under way; that notwithstanding the record levels of borrowing, fiscal policy could continue to be used to counteract the recession; and that it was appropriate to have a discretionary fiscal stimulus through a temporary cut in VAT. Now, however, we have a Bill that means that from 2011 to 2016 borrowing must fall year in, year out, regardless of the economic circumstances and where we are in the economic cycle. Never mind the discretionary fiscal stimulus—this could preclude even the use of the automatic stabilisers, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham pointed out. Does that mean that the Government now believe that we have borrowed so much, and will continue to do so; that we do not have room for manoeuvre; and that once we are through a general election the fiscal levers will not be available for at least six years?

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend recognise the problem that I have presented to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) and my hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newmark)? All three of us have argued for a long time that the Government’s figures on net debt are simply not true. They are not giving the real picture to the British people, and they are not even giving the picture that the Office for National Statistics has given.

Mr. Gauke: My hon. Friend raises an important point. One of the benefits of an office for budget responsibility would be that we could provide some credibility in exactly that area.

If, as the Bill implies, it will not be possible to use the fiscal levers from 2011 to 2016, that would appear to signal the complete collapse of the Government’s position, which is that fiscal levers are a very important element of what a Government can do. One might ask why the born-again Keynesians on the Labour Benches will be walking through the Lobby in support of the Bill given that that is what it says, as they would know if they

Mr. Redwood: Has my hon. Friend noticed that neither Labour Back Bench who spoke in the debate has returned to the Chamber for the winding-up speeches as is traditional? Does he share my concern that the Labour Whips may be dealing with them at the moment—trying to re-educate them?

Mr. Gauke: I am grateful for that intervention. I look forward to reading on tomorrow’s blogs reports of the mobile phone conversation in which the Government’s Chief Whip explains exactly what he is going to do. I believe that he has a habit of making such phone calls on trains.

This Bill is a distraction policy. The idea that the existence of a target somehow provides credibility in itself is ridiculous, even if it is a target devised by the people who brought us, and broke, the golden rule. I suppose that we should be grateful that there is some acknowledgement of the credibility problem, given that the Prime Minister is currently going through one of his bouts of total denial as to the need to address public spending in this area, but that is very little comfort.

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actually read it. To be fair to the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran, she has read the Bill and she will not be walking through that Lobby; I wonder whether many of her colleagues will be joining her.

Alternatively, perhaps, as ever with Labour Governments, fiscal discipline will be there for as long as it is absolutely expedient, as in the case of the abandoning of the fiscal rules at the point at which they prove to be a constraint. The Chancellor gave us the answer earlier today when he stated that if there were a recession and difficulties in the economy, the Chancellor would simply have to come back and explain to us that the target was not going to be met. If that is really the case, then we have to ask what on earth is the point of the Bill.

If the Government genuinely wanted to increase the institutional pressures to reduce the deficit, they could have followed our policy and established an office for budget responsibility that could publish its own fiscal forecasts. We have heard several times today about the Treasury’s failures in its own fiscal forecasts. It could make recommendations as to whether the Government would meet their stated objectives in reducing the deficit or whether further action was necessary, and of course it could be a much more sophisticated instrument than the targets set out in the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) pointed out, the difficulties that exist and the use of the private finance initiative and other off-balance-sheet mechanisms have done little for the Government’s credibility in this area.

Truth be told, whatever the Government propose at this stage, there is nothing that they can do to restore their credibility. This Government are to fiscal responsibility what Tiger Woods is to marital fidelity. The Chancellor had his chance to set out a credible path to fiscal responsibility—indeed, we read the leaks suggesting that he fought to put forward proposals that would have delivered something close to credibility—but the man whom we thought was unsackable was still too weak to stand up to the Prime Minister and the Schools Secretary, and yet again we had a pre-Budget report that did nothing to address the Government’s lack of credibility.

The Chancellor could have set out spending plans that would have reassured the markets, and in doing so perhaps protected his own legacy, but he failed to do so. Instead we have this pathetic excuse for a Bill. As the right hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Clarke) pointed out, it is vacuous and irrelevant. At a time when the Chancellor has pointed out, it is vacuous and irrelevant. At a time when the Chancellor could have set out plans that could have been part of a credible path to fiscal consolidation.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry): In 1997 the Government established two clear fiscal objectives, which have been maintained since and will remain in place. The first is, over the medium term, to ensure sound public finances and ensure that spending and taxation have a fair impact within and between generations. The second is, over the short term, to support monetary policy to help smooth the path of the economy.

The financial crisis and the global recession have had a profound impact on the public finances, resulting in a significant increase in Government borrowing and, as a result, increasing public sector net debt. Those major economic shocks have hit every country in the world, and we have had to be flexible in our response to changing circumstances. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out, our first priority was to provide support to the economy, which is why the Government undertook a fiscal stimulus to provide support when the economy was weakened. That stimulus and the effect of the automatic stabilisers are providing fiscal support totalling about 5 per cent. of GDP this financial year, which has helped limit the severity of the downturn and its impact on businesses and individuals.

The Government estimate that as a direct result of the fiscal stimulus announced in the 2008 pre-Budget report, GDP growth in 2009 will be about half a percentage point higher than it would otherwise have been. There were costs to stepping in, but not to have intervened would have been even more costly and burdened the economy over a much longer horizon. We have always been clear that the initial support must be followed by steps to secure sound public finances. Our fiscal stimulus was deliberately time-limited to increase its impact during the downturn and ensure sound public finances over the medium term.

Timing is all, and much of today’s debate has centred around the timing of the consolidation. There have been contributions from my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Tyrie), my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), my hon. Friend the Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Ms Clark) and the hon. Members for Dundee, East (Stewart Hosie), for Croydon, Central (Mr. Pelling) and for Ludlow (Mr. Dunne). Some hon. Members complained that we were not going fast enough, and others that we were going too fast.

Mr. Gauke: As the Exchequer Secretary runs through the various contributions to the debate, can she recall any other occasion on which the flagship measure in the Queen’s Speech has not attracted a single voice of support from the Government Back Benches?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I cannot speak for Back Benchers who may not have been able to get here in time to speak in the debate. [Interruption.] The proof of the parliamentary Labour party’s support will be in the votes for the measure.

The Government will not withdraw support too quickly. Tightening fiscal policy too quickly risks jeopardising the recovery, which would result in the deterioration of the fiscal position. The Government will therefore ensure that fiscal policy continues to provide support to businesses and individuals in the early stages of recovery.

Mr. Redwood: Why have countries, which borrowed much less and ran a much tighter ship, recovered much sooner?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We must look at things in a wider context. We should remember that unemployment in this country is not as high as in other countries. We must examine all the factors.

When the economy is better placed to support a more rapid tightening, fiscal policy will shift towards consolidation. Well timed and planned fiscal consolidation...
will support economic growth during the recovery. In line with fiscal objectives, the Government’s fiscal strategy is threefold.

First, we will base policy decisions on a realistic fiscal forecast, based on a range of assumptions, some of which are designed to provide caution for uncertainty. Secondly, we will ensure that the fiscal policy framework is set to deliver the Government’s fiscal policy objectives. To that end, the Government have introduced the Bill. Thirdly, we will set out a credible plan to deliver sustained consolidation in the medium term to ensure sound public finances in a time frame that is consistent with economic recovery and growth. In line with that, the pre-Budget report outlines plans to more than halve the deficit in four years, and the fiscal consolidation plan included in the Bill embeds the deficit reduction. That is the sharpest reduction in the budget deficit of any G7 country.

Mr. Graham Stuart: I sympathise with the Exchequer Secretary’s plight this evening. She says that the Government aim to have a credible policy. How credible can it be when a heavily whipped parliamentary Labour party cannot produce one Back Bencher to speak in favour of it? No wonder the Chancellor is desperately whispering in her ear. It is a night of humiliation for him and for the Government.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I have no need of sympathy from the hon. Gentleman.

As the economy emerges from recession, and exceptional uncertainty recedes, the Government believe that it is appropriate to strengthen the fiscal framework. That will support the recovery and is in line with international action. As Governments around the world work together in response to the downturn, many other countries are now choosing to strengthen their fiscal frameworks. Indeed, the International Monetary Fund has highlighted fiscal responsibility laws as a way in which to buttress fiscal adjustment following the financial crisis by strengthening institutional arrangements. The Government have chosen to enhance the fiscal framework through the Bill. The measure will help businesses and investors make long-term plans with confidence about the future fiscal position and the financing environment.

Stewart Hosie: The position has been buttressed globally, but which other G7 country has withdrawn its fiscal stimulus package?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We are not immediately withdrawing our fiscal stimulus package—I am sure that that will be debated further in the pre-Budget report debate on Thursday.

Mr. Dunne: Will the Exchequer Secretary give way?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I want to make some progress, then perhaps I shall give way if there is time.

The Government have set out measures to reduce borrowing by £57 billion by 2013-14 and to contribute to more than halving the deficit over four years. The Bill embeds the deficit reduction in legislation and also sets further targets to reduce the deficit in each year to 2015-16 and to have the national debt falling in that year.

Mr. Gauke: Will the Minister explain what would happen if she were in Government in 2012 or 2013 and there were a recession? Would the target of reducing borrowing year in year out, as set out in the Bill, still apply? Is that the Government’s position?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I cannot remember whether the hon. Gentleman was here for the Chancellor’s opening speech, but he dealt with that point quite closely—[Interruption.] I will repeat it if the hon. Gentleman wants me to. If there were an unprecedented situation, the matter could be looked at again, but we are setting out a plan for a reduction in the deficit and further targets to reduce the deficit in each year.

The plans contribute to ensuring sustainable public finances in the medium term, and I do not think that placing them on the statute book is a distraction. Legislation provides certainty and stability, and we are giving Parliament a new role in both setting and monitoring the Government’s fiscal plans. In particular, Parliament must approve fiscal plans before they become law, which is a significant evolution of the extent to which the Government are held to account for their medium-term fiscal policy.

Mr. Cash: In view of the tremendous certainty that the Minister is describing, will she tell us now what net debt means under the Bill?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I was going to come to that later in my speech, but given the number of interventions, I might not get there. The legislation requires explanation of key terms to be set out in the code for fiscal stability. The Chancellor has stated that that will be published in draft in advance of Committee to allow for scrutiny. All definitions and fiscal aggregates used in the Bill will be national statistics, produced by the independent ONS, using European and internationally accepted methodologies.

Several hon. Members rose—

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I am not going to give way because if I do, I will not get to the end of my speech.

The International Monetary Fund has set out that the strengthening of medium-term frameworks, including through fiscal responsibility laws, should help to support the fiscal adjustment that will be necessary in most economies following the financial crisis. The Bill is therefore a crucial part of our fiscal strategy, binding the Government to deliver on the tough decisions we are taking to more than halve the deficit over four years and to get debt falling.

The Bill builds on, and significantly enhances, the existing legislative underpinnings of the fiscal framework. It requires the Government to set out at all times a legislative fiscal plan for delivering sound public finances. That must be approved by Parliament before it becomes law, and the Bill places a binding duty on the Government to meet the plan.

Mr. Jeremy Browne: Given that less than two years ago the Chancellor forecast that the deficit this financial year would be £38 billion, and that instead it has turned
out to be £178 billion, why is the Minister so confident that her right hon. Friend is able to predict what the economic circumstances will be in 2016?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Maybe the hon. Gentleman missed it, but there has been a global economic crisis since then.

Fiscal plans cannot be changed except with the approval of Parliament through new legislation. That demonstrates the Government’s commitment to delivering consolidation—

Mr. Browne: The Chancellor might be the leader of the Lib Dems by then.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I think that that is the most unlikely thing in the world.

The fact that the fiscal plans cannot be changed except with the approval of Parliament through new legislation also demonstrates the importance the Government place on action to ensure sound public finances in the medium term. The Bill makes the Government accountable to Parliament for meeting their fiscal plans and creates a new scrutinising role for Parliament in relation to both progress towards and compliance with them. That is a significant evolution of the extent to which the Government are held to account for their medium-term fiscal policy. Parliament is the right body to hold the Government to account for their plans for tax, spending and borrowing.

The Government are required to account to Parliament through regular progress and compliance reports, which will be produced alongside Budgets and pre-Budget reports. Progress reports must set out the progress that has been made towards compliance with the plans. If targets are not met, the Treasury must set out for Parliament why not. The revised code for fiscal stability will set out that the Treasury must also report on what it will do to remedy the situation if targets are not met. These measures represent a significant evolution of the extent to which the Government are held to account for their medium-term fiscal policy.

As the Chancellor noted, the Government do not consider that an office for budget responsibility—as proposed by the Opposition—is the right solution to the challenge we face. Establishing a new quango would undermine the role of Parliament in scrutinising the Government’s fiscal plans. Introducing blurred lines of responsibility for forecast and policy-making functions risks damaging accountability: policy-makers would be acting on forecasts for which they were not fully responsible. It is Parliament and Parliament alone that is best placed to hold the Government to account for their plans. They should have ultimate say in matters of tax, spending and borrowing.

Further, evidence does not suggest that outsourcing the forecast would improve its accuracy. The Treasury’s fiscal forecasts since 1997 have been marginally more accurate than the forecasts for the UK made by many independent international organisations, such as the OECD, the IMF and the European Commission, and no more or less cautious than the range.

Instead, the Government’s approach is to strengthen the existing fiscal framework and enhance accountability to Parliament rather than outsource it to an external body. Parliamentary scrutiny has been bolstered by the steps the Government have taken since 1997 to improve fiscal transparency. In addition, the independent National Audit Office will retain its existing role in auditing key forecasting assumptions.

Parliament should have the ultimate say in matters of tax, spending and borrowing. The Bill will give Parliament a new role in holding the Government to account for their medium-term fiscal policy and meeting the targets of the fiscal consolidation plan. The legislation includes clear targets, and will create a transparent reporting process for assessing progress and compliance against fiscal plans. If the Government are not on track it will be obvious, and if plans are not achieved the Government will have to set out why not.

The Government have made it clear that reducing spending accounts for two thirds of the action the Government are taking to reduce the deficit following the crisis—measures that will reduce the deficit by £57 billion in 2013-14. This is shared between current and capital spending. Specific savings that we have already set out include £12 billion of savings from the smarter government reforms to the public sector; £4.5 billion from slowing increases in public sector pay and pensions; and £5 billion from cuts to lower priority programmes, as well other efficiencies across all Departments, where £10 billion value-for-money savings have been found already.

The Government have already set out clear plans for fiscal consolidation. In April in the Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out plans for consolidation and the recent pre-Budget report confirms these. These plans include more than halving the deficit in four years. The Bill enshrines these plans in law, through the Government’s first fiscal plan, the fiscal consolidation plan.

The Government are committed to sound public finances and have set out clear plans for consolidation. We will not withdraw support too quickly and jeopardise recovery. The annual pace of consolidation set out in the 2009 pre-Budget report is faster than the pace of deficit reduction forecast by the IMF for all other G7 economies in the period up to 2014. Further, the Government will return with legislative targets beyond 2015-16 at an appropriate time. The pre-Budget report projects that the deficit on the cyclically adjusted current budget will be eliminated by 2017-18.

We are now at the turning point in the global recession and at a time when we need to start building and planning for the future. As growth picks up, we must ensure that we have sustainable public finances. Through enhancing the fiscal framework, the Fiscal Responsibility Bill will support that task. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put. That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 280.

Division No. 26] [21.59

AYES

Afriyie, Adam
Amess, Mr. David
Ancram, rh Mr. Michael
Arbuthnot, rh Mr. James
Atkinson, Mr. Peter
Bacon, Mr. Richard
Baldry, Tony
Baron, Mr. John
Bellingham, Mr. Henry
Benyon, Mr. Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Binley, Mr. Brian
Blunt, Mr. Crispin
Bone, Mr. Peter
Howarth, Mr. Gerald
Howell, John
Huhne, Chris
Hunter, Mark
Hurd, Mr. Nick
Jack, rh Mr. Michael
Jackson, Mr. Stewart
Jenkin, Mr. Bernard
Jones, Mr. David
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kennedy, rh Mr. Charles
Key, Robert
Knight, rh Mr. Greg
Laing, Mrs. Eleanor
Lamb, Norman
Lancaster, Mr. Mark
Lansley, Mr. Andrew
Leigh, Mr. Edward
Lettvin, rh Mr. Oliver
Lewis, Dr. Julian
Lidington, Mr. David
Lilley, rh Mr. Peter
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
Malins, Mr. Humphrey
Maples, Mr. John
Mates, rh Mr. Michael
Maude, rh Mr. Francis
McCrea, Dr. William
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McLoughlin, rh Mr. Patrick
Miller, Mrs. Maria
Milton, Anne
Moore, Michael
Moss, Mr. Malcolm
Murrison, Dr. Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newmark, Mr. Brooks
O’Brien, Mr. Stephen
Ők, Lembit
Osborne, Mr. George
Ottaway, Richard
Paterson, Mr. Owen
Pelling, Mr. Andrew
Penning, Mike
Penrose, John
Pickles, Mr. Eric
Prisk, Mr. Mark
Pugh, Dr. John
Randall, Mr. John
Redwood, rh Mr. John
Rennie, Willie
Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
Robathan, Mr. Andrew
Robertson, Hugh
Robertson, Mr. Laurence
Roscinburgh, Andrew
Russell, Bob
Sanders, Mr. Adrian
Scott, Mr. Lee
Selous, Andrew
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, David
Simpson, Mr. Keith
Smith, Chloe
Soames, Mr. Nicholas
Spring, Mr. Richard
Stanley, rh Sir John
Steen, Mr. Anthony
Stuart, Mr. Graham
Stunell, Andrew
Swayne, Mr. Desmond
Syms, Mr. Robert
Taylor, Mr. Ian
Taylor, Matthew
Timpson, Mr. Edward
Tredinnick, David
Turner, Mr. Andrew
Tyrie, Mr. Andrew
Vaizey, Mr. Edward
Vara, Mr. Shaihesh
Viggers, Sir Peter
Villiers, Mrs. Theresa
Wallace, Mr. Ben
Waterson, Mr. Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Webb, Steve

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, rh Mr. Bob
Alexander, rh Mr. Bob
Allen, Mr. Graham
Anderson, Mr. David
Anderson, Janet
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, Mr. Ian
Austin, John
Bailey, Mr. Adrian
Bain, Mr. William
Baird, Vera
Balls, rh Ed
Battle, rh John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Sir Stuart
Benn, rh Hilary
Benton, Mr. Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Mr. Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blackman-Woods, Dr. Roberta
Blears, rh Hazel
Blanket, rh Mr. David
Borrow, Mr. David S.
Bradshaw, rh Mr. Ben
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr. Nicholas
Brown, Mr. Russell
Browne, rh Des
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, rh Andy
Butler, Ms Dawn
Byrne, rh Mr. Liam
Cabor, rh Mr. Richard
Cairns, David
Campbell, Mr. Alan
Campbell, Mr. Ronnie
Caton, Mr. Martin
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben
Clapham, Mr. Michael
Clark, Ms Katy
Clark, Paul
Clarke, rh Mr. Charles
Clywd, rh Ann
Coaker, Mr. Vernon
Coffey, Ann

Whittingdale, Mr. John
Wiggin, Bill
Willetts, Mr. David
Williams, Mr. Roger
Willis, Mr. Phil
Willott, Jenny
Wilson, Mr. Rob
Winterton, Ann
Winterton, Sir Nicholas
Yeo, Mr. Tim
Young, rh Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
James Duddridge and
Jeremy Wright

NOES

Cohen, Harry
Conran, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crausby, Mr. David
Creagh, Mary
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs. Ann
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Mr. Jim
Cunningham, Tony
Darling, rh Mr. Alistair
David, Mr. Wayne
Davies, Mr. Dai
Davies, Mr. Quentin
Dean, Mrs. Janet
Dhanda, Mr. Parmjit
Dismore, Mr. Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Donohoe, Mr. Brian H.
Doran, Mr. Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs. Louise
Engel, Natascha
Ennis, Jeff
Etherington, Bill
Fisher, Mark
Fiellio, Mr. Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Mr. Michael
(Worcester)
Foster, Michael Jabez
(Hastings and Rye)
Francis, Dr. Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, rh Mr. Bruce
Gerrard, Mr. Neil
Gilroy, Linda
Goodman, Helen
Griffith, Nia
Griffiths, Nigel
Grogan, Mr. John
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr. Peter
Hall, Mr. Mike
Hall, Patrick
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Mr. Tom
Havard, Mr. Dai
Division No. 27

[10.15 pm]

Question accordingly negatived.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 62(2)), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 265, Noes 196.
George, rh Mr. Bruce
Gerrard, Mr. Neil
Gilroy, Linda
Goodman, Helen
Griffith, Nia
Griffiths, Nigel
Grogan, Mr. John
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr. Peter
Hall, Mr. Mike
Hall, Patrick
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Mr. Tom
Havard, Mr. Dai
Healey, rh John
Hepburn, Mr. Stephen
Hesford, Stephen
Hewitt, rh Ms Patricia
Heyes, David
Hill, rh Keith
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs. Sharon
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Mr. Jim
Hoon, rh Mr. Geoffrey
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, rh Mr. George
Howells, rh Dr. Kim
Hoyle, Mr. Lindsay
Humble, Mrs. Joan
Hutton, rh Mr. John
Iddon, Dr. Brian
Irranca-Davies, Huw
James, Mrs. Silan C.
Jenkins, Mr. Brian
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Ms Diana R.
Jones, Helen
Jones, Mr. Kevan
Jones, Lynne
Jones, Mr. Martyn
Jowell, rh Tessa
Joyce, Mr. Eric
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keeley, Barbara
Keen, Alan
Keen, Ann
Kelly, rh Ruth
Kemp, Mr. Fraser
Khan, rh Mr. Sadiq
Kidney, Mr. David
Kilfoyle, Mr. Peter
Knight, rh Jim
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Ladyman, Dr. Stephen
Lammy, rh Mr. David
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Mr. Ivan
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, rh Mr. Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Mackinlay, Andrew
Mackeag, Fiona
Malik, Mr. Shahid
Mallaber, Andy
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr. Gordon
Marshall-Andrews, Mr. Robert
Marlew, Mr. Eric
McAvoy, rh Mr. Thomas
McCabe, Steve
McCafferty, Chris
McCarthy, Kerry
McCarthy-Fry, Sarah
McDonagh, Siobhain
McFadden, rh Mr. Pat
McGovern, Mr. Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs. Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechnie, Ann
McNulty, rh Mr. Tony
Meacher, rh Mr. Michael
Meale, Mr. Alan
Merron, Gillian
Michael, rh Alun
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Mole, Chris
Moon, Mrs. Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Julie
Mudie, Mr. George
Mullin, Mr. Chris
Murphy, rh Mr. Denis
Murphy, rh Mr. Paul
Naysmith, Dr. Doug
O'Brien, rh Mr. Mike
O'Hara, Mr. Edward
Osborne, Sandra
Owen, Robert
Pearson, Ian
Plaskitt, Mr. James
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Bridget
Prescott, rh Mr. John
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Mr. Ken
Raynsford, rh Mr. Nick
Reed, Mr. Andy
Reed, Mr. Jamie
Reid, rh John
Robertson, John
Robinson, Mr. Geoffrey
Roy, Mr. Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Christine
Salters, Martin
Seabrook, Alison
Sharma, Mr. Virendra
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheerman, Mr. Barry
Sheridan, Jim
Simon, Mr. Sidon
Skinner, Mr. Dennis
Slaughter, Mr. Andy
Smith, rh Mr. Andrew
Smith, rh Angela E. (Basildon)
Smith, Geraldine
Snegroff, Anne
Soulsby, Sir Peter
Spellar, rh Mr. John
Spinak, Bob
Starkey, Dr. Phyllis
Stewart, Mr. David
Stoate, Dr. Howard
Strang, rh Dr. Gavin
Straw, rh Mr. Jack
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr. Gerry
Taylor, Ms Dari
Thomas, Mr. Gareth
Thornberry, Emily
Timms, rh Mr. Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mr. Mark
Touhig, rh Mr. Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, Mr. Paul
Turner, Dr. Desmond
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Keith
Walley, Joan
Waltho, Lynda
Abbott, Ms Diane
Afriyie, Adam
Amess, Mr. David
Anclam, rh Mr. Michael
Antheunis, rh Mr. James
Atkinson, Mr. Peter
Bacon, Mr. Richard
Baldry, Tony
Baron, Mr. John
Bellingham, Mr. Henry
Benyon, rh Mr. Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Binley, Mr. Brian
Blunt, Mr. Crispin
Bone, Mr. Peter
Bowes, Mr. Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Brady, Mr. Graham
Brazier, Mr. Julian
Breed, Mr. Colin
Brokenshire, James
Brooke, Annette
Browne, Mr. Jeremy
Burns, Mr. Simon
Burrowes, Mr. David
Burt, Alistair
Burt, Lorely
Butterfill, Sir John
Campbell, Mr. Gregory
Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
Carmichael, Mr. Alistair
Carswell, Mr. Douglas
Cash, Mr. William
Clappison, Mr. James
Clark, Ms Katy
Clarke, rh Mr. Kenneth
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Mr. Geoffrey
Crabb, Mr. Stephen
Davey, Mr. Edward
Davies, Mr. Dai
Davies, David T.C. (Monmouth)
Davies, Philip
Djanogly, Mr. Jonathan
Dorrell, rh Mr. Stephen
Duncan, Alan
Dunne, Mr. Philip
Ellwood, Mr. Tobias
Evans, Mr. Nigel
Evennett, Mr. David
Ward, Claire
Watson, Mr. Tom
Whitehead, Dr. Alan
Williams, rh Mr. Alan
Williams, Mrs. Betty
Wills, rh Mr. Michael
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr. David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Woolas, Mr. Phil
Wright, Mr. Anthony
Wright, Dr. Tony
Wyatt, Derek

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mark Tami and
Mr. Bob Blizzard

NOES

Fabricant, Michael
Foster, Mr. Don
Fox, Dr. Liam
Francois, Mr. Mark
Gale, Mr. Roger
Garnier, Mr. Edward
Gauke, Mr. David
George, Andrew
Gibb, Mr. Nick
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs. Cheryl
Goldsborough, Julia
Goodman, Mr. Paul
Goodwill, Mr. Robert
Gove, Michael
Gray, Mr. James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian
Greening, Justine
Greenway, Mr. John
Grieve, Mr. Dominic
Gummer, rh Mr. John
Hague, rh Mr. William
Hammond, Mr. Philip
Hancock, Mr. Mike
Hands, Mr. Greg
Harper, Mr. Mark
Harris, Dr. Evan
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, Mr. John
Heald, Mr. Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, rh
Mr. David
Hemming, John
Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mr. Mark
Hollis, Mr. Philip
Holloway, Mr. Adam
Hornor, Mr. John
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, David
Howarth, Mr. Gerald
Howell, John
Hughes, Simon
Huhne, Chris
Hunter, Mark
Hurd, Mr. Nick
Jack, rh Mr. Michael
Jackson, Mr. Stewart
Jenkins, Mr. Bernard
Jones, Mr. David
1. The Bill shall be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

2. Proceedings in Committee, any proceedings on consideration and proceedings on Third Reading shall be completed at one day’s sitting.

3. Proceedings in Committee and any proceedings on consideration shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which those proceedings are commenced.

4. Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment of interruption on that day.

5. Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to the proceedings on the Bill in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading.—(Steve McCabe.)

The House divided: Ayes 254, Noes 187.

Division No. 28] [10.30 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, rh Mr. Bob
Alexander, rh Mr. Douglas
Allen, Mr. Graham
Anderson, Mr. David
Anderson, Janet
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, Mr. Ian
Austin, John
Bailey, Mr. Adrian
Bain, Mr. William
Baird, Vera
Balle, rh Ed
Battle, rh John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Sir Stuart
Benn, rh Hilary
Bent, Mr. Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Mr. Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blackman-Woods, Dr. Roberta
Bleas, rh Hazel
Blankett, rh Mr. David
Borrow, Mr. David S.
Bradshaw, rh Mr. Ben
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr. Nicholas
Brown, Mr. Russell
Browne, rh Des
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Colín
Burnham, rh Andy
Butler, Ms Dawn
Byrne, rh Mr. Liam
Cabin, rh Mr. Richard
Cairns, David
Campbell, Mr. Alan
Campbell, Mr. Ronnie
Caton, Mr. Martin
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben
Clapham, Mr. Michael
Clark, Ms Katy
Clark, Paul
Clarke, rh Mr. Charles
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Mr. Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connor, Michael
Crausby, Mr. David

Ayes 254, Noes 187.

Tellers for the Noes: Jeremy Wright and James Duddridge

Creagh, Mary
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs. Ann
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Mr. Jim
Cunningham, Tony
Darling, rh Mr. Alistair
David, Mr. Wayne
Davies, Mr. Quentin
Dean, Mrs. Janet
Dhanda, Mr. Parmjit
Dismore, Mr. Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Donohoe, Mr. Brian H.
Doran, Mr. Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs. Louise
Engel, Natascha
Ennis, Jeff
Fiello, Mr. Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Mr. Michael
(Foster, Michael Jabez
(Worcester)
(Hastings and Rye)
Francis, Dr. Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, rh Mr. Bruce
Gerrard, Mr. Neil
Gilroy, Linda
Griffith, Nia
Griffiths, Nigel
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr. Peter
Hall, Mr. Mike
Hall, Patrick
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Mr. Tom
Havard, Mr. Dai
Healey, rh John
Heppburn, Mr. Stephen
Hesford, Stephen
Hewitt, rh Ms Patricia
Hill, rh Keith
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs. Sharon
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Mr. Jim
Hoon, rh Mr. Geoffrey
Hope, Phil
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, rh Mr. George
Hoyle, Mr. Lindsay
Humble, Mrs. Joanne
Hutton, rh Mr. John
Iddon, Dr. Brian
Irranca-Davies, Huw
James, Mrs. Siân C.
Jenkins, Mr. Brian
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Ms Dana R.
Jones, Helen
Jones, Mr. Kevan
Jones, Lynne
Jones, Mr. Martyn
Jowell, rh Tessa
Joyce, Mr. Eric
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keeley, Barbara
Keen, Alan
Keen, Ann
Kelly, rh Ruth
Kemp, Mr. Fraser
Khan, rh Mr. Sadiq
Kidney, Mr. David
Kilfoyle, Mr. Peter
Knight, rh Jim
Ladyman, Dr. Stephen
Lammy, rh Mr. David
Lepper, David
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Mr. Ivan
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, Mr. Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Mackinlay, Andrew
Mactaggart, Fiona
Mallab, Judy
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr. Gordon
Martlew, Mr. Eric
McCovoy, rh Mr. Thomas
McCabe, Steve
McCafferty, Chris
McCarthy, Gerry
McCarthy-Fry, Sarah
McDonagh, Siobhan
McFadden, rh Mr. Pat
McGovern, Mr. Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs. Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McNulty, rh Mr. Tony
Meacher, rh Mr. Michael
Merron, Gillian
Michael, rh Alun
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Mole, Chris
Moon, Mrs. Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Julie
Mudie, Mr. George
Mullin, Mr. Chris
Murphy, Mr. Denis
Murphy, rh Mr. Paul
Naysmith, Dr. Doug
O’Brien, rh Mr. Mike
O’Hara, Mr. Edward

Osborne, Sandra
Owen, Albert
Pearson, Ian
Plaskitt, Mr. James
Prentice, Bridget
Prescott, rh Mr. John
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Mr. Ken
Raysford, rh Mr. Nick
Reed, Mr. Andy
Reed, Mr. Jamie
Reid, rh John
Riordan, Mrs. Linda
Robinson, John
Robinson, Mr. Geoffrey
Roy, Mr. Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Christine
Salter, Martin
Seabeck, Alison
Sharma, Mr. Virendra
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheerman, Mr. Barry
Sheridan, Ann
Simon, Mr. Siôn
Skinner, Mr. Dennis
Slaughter, Mr. Andy
Smith, rh Mr. Andrew
Smith, rh Angela E.
(Saidlons)
Smith, Geraldine
Snellgrove, Anne
Soulsby, Sir Peter
Spellar, rh Mr. John
Starkey, Dr. Phyllis
Stewart, Ian
Stoate, Dr. Howard
Strange, rh Dr. Gavin
Straw, rh Mr. Jack
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr. Gerry
Taylor, Ms Dari
Thomas, Mr. Gareth
Thornberry, Emily
Timms, rh Mr. Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mr. Mark
Touhig, rh Mr. Don
Trickett, Jon
Truswell, rh Paul
Turner, Dr. Desmond
Twiig, Derek
Wallace, Joan
Waltos, Lynda
Ward, Claire
Watson, Mr. Tom
Whitehead, Dr. Alan
Williams, rh Mr. Alan
Williams, Mrs. Betty
Wills, rh Mr. Michael
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr. David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Woolas, Mr. Phil
Wright, Mr. Anthony
Wright, David
Wright, Mr. Ian
Wright, Dr. Tony
Wyatt, Derek

Afyrie, Adam
Amess, Mr. David
Ancram, rh Mr. Michael
Arbuthnot, rh Mr. James
Atkinson, Mr. Peter
Bacon, Mr. Richard
Baldry, Tony
Baron, Mr. John
Bellingham, Mr. Henry
Benyon, Mr. Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Binley, Mr. Brian
Blunt, Mr. Crispin
Bone, rh Mr. Peter
Boswell, Mr. Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bradby, Mr. Graham
Brazier, Mr. Julian
Breed, Mr. Colin
Brokenshire, James
Brooke, Annette
Browne, Mr. Jeremy
Burns, Mr. Simon
Burrowes, Mr. David
Burt, Alistair
Burt, Lorraine
Butterfill, Sir John
Campbell, Mr. Gregory
Campbell, rh Mr. Menzies
Carmichael, rh Alistair
Carswell, Mr. Douglas
Cash, rh Mr. William
Clappison, Mr. James
Clarke, rh Mr. Kenneth
Cox, Mr. Geoffrey
Crabb, Mr. Stephen
Davey, Mr. Edward
Davies, rh Mr. David
Davies, Mr. Dai
Davies, David T.C.
(Monmouth)
Davies, Philip
Djanogly, Mr. Jonathan
Donnell, rh Mr. Stephen
Duncan, Alan
Dunne, Mr. Philip
Ellwood, Mr. Tobias
Evans, rh Mr. Nigel
Ewennett, Mr. David
Fabricant, Michael
Farrelly, Paul
Foster, Mr. Don
Fox, Dr. Liam
Francois, Mr. Mark
Gamier, Edwina
Gauke, Mr. David
George, Andrew
Gibb, rh Mr. Nick
Gidley, Sandra
Gillan, Mrs. Cheryl
Goldsworthy, Julia
Goodman, rh Mr. Paul
Goodwill, rh Mr. Robert
Gove, Michael
Gray, Mr. James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damien
Greening, Justine

Mr. Bob Blizzard

Greenway, Mr. John
Grieve, Mr. Dominic
Gummer, rh Mr. John
Hague, rh Mr. William
Hammond, Mr. Philip
Hancock, Mr. Mike
Hands, Mr. Greg
Harper, Mr. Mark
Harris, Dr. Evan
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, Mr. John
Heald, Mr. Oliver
Hemming, John
Hendry, Charles
Hoban, Mr. Mark
Hollobone, Mr. Philip
Holloway, Mr. Adam
Horam, Mr. John
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, David
Howarth, Mr. Gerald
Howell, John
Hughes, Simon
Huhne, Chris
Hunter, Mark
Hurd, Mr. Nick
Jack, rh Mr. Michael
Jackson, Mr. Stewart
Jenkin, Mr. Bernard
Jones, Mr. David
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kennedy, rh Mr. Charles
Key, Robert
Knight, rh Mr. Greg
Laing, Mrs. Eleanor
Lamb, Norman
Lancaster, Mr. Mark
Lansley, Andrew
Letwin, rh Mr. Oliver
Lewis, Dr. Julian
Lidington, Mr. David
Lilley, rh Mr. Peter
Llywd, Mr. Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Malins, Mr. Humphrey
Maples, Mr. John
Mason, John
Mates, rh Mr. Michael
Maude, rh Mr. Francis
McCrea, Dr. William
Mcintosh, Miss Anne
McLaughlin, rh Mr. Patrick
Miller, Mrs. Maria
Milton, Anne
Moore, Mr. Michael
Murrison, Dr. Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newmark, Mr. Brooks
O’Brien, Mr. Stephen
Öpik, Lembit
Ottaway, Richard
Paterson, Mr. Owen
Penning, Mr. Andrew
Pennrose, John
Pickles, Mr. Eric
Price, Adam
Question accordingly agreed to.

Business without Debate

DEFERRED DIVISIONS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 41A (3)), That, at this day’s sitting, Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply to the motion in the name of Secretary Alan Johnson relating to Immigration.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

CORPORATION TAX BILL

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 90 (5)), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to the Joint Committee on Tax Law Rewrite Bills (Order, 26 November 2009, and Standing Order No. 60(6)).

CORPORATION TAX BILL

(WAYS AND MEANS)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52 (1) (a)), That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Corporation Tax Bill, it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to tax which may arise from any of the provisions of the Act.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

TAXATION (INTERNATIONAL AND OTHER PROVISIONS) BILL

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 90 (5)), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to the Joint Committee on Tax Law Rewrite Bills (Order, 26 November 2009, and Standing Order No. 60(6)).

TAXATION (INTERNATIONAL AND OTHER PROVISIONS) BILL (WAYS AND MEANS)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52 (1) (a)), That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Taxation (International and Other Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to tax which may arise from any of the provisions of the Act.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I suggest that we take motions 7 to 12 together.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken. We will put them individually.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118 (6)),

CRIMINAL LAW

That the draft Crime (International Co-operation) Act 2003 (Designation of Participating Countries) (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) (No. 3) Order 2009, which was laid before this House on 4 November, in the previous Session of Parliament, be approved.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

Tribunals and Inquiries

That the draft Amendment to Schedule 6 to the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 Order 2009, which was laid before this House on 20 October, in the previous Session of Parliament, be approved.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118 (6)).

Tribunals and Inquiries

That the draft Transfer of Functions of the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal Order 2009, which was laid before this House on 20 October, in the previous Session of Parliament, be approved.—(Steve McCabe.)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118 (6)).

Tribunals and Inquiries

That the draft Transfer of Tribunal Functions Order 2009, which was laid before this House on 20 October, in the previous Session of Parliament, be approved.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118 (6)).
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (1996 Hague Convention on Protection of Children etc.) Order 2009, which was laid before this House on 11 November, in the previous Session of Parliament, be approved.—[Steve McCabe.]

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118 (6)),

BANKS AND BANKING

That the draft Banking Act 2009 (Exclusion of Insurers) Order 2009, which was laid before this House on 10 November, in the previous Session of Parliament, be approved.—[Steve McCabe.]

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118 (6)),

IMMIGRATION

That the draft Immigration (Biometric Registration) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2009, which were laid before this House on 25 November, be approved.—[Steve McCabe.]

The House divided: Ayes 243, Noes 42.

Division No. 29

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, rh Mr. Bob
Alexander, rh Mr. Douglas
Allen, Mr. Graham
Anderson, Mr. David
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, Mr. Ian
Baird, Vera
Balls, rh Ed
Battle, rh John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Bell, Sir Stuart
Benn, rh Hilary
Benton, Mr. Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Mr. Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blackman-Woods, Dr. Roberta
Blears, rh Hazel
Borrow, Mr. David S.
Bottonley, Peter
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr. Nicholas
Brown, Mr. Russell
Brownie, rh Des
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, rh Andy
Butler, Ms Dawn
Byrne, rh Mr. Liam
Cabol, rh Mr. Richard
Cains, David
Campbell, Mr. Alan
Campbell, rh Mr. Gregory
Campbell, Mr. Ronnie
Caton, Mr. Martin
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben
Clapham, Mr. Michael
Clark, Ms Katy
Clark, Paul
Clarke, rh Mr. Charles
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Mr. Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Croustby, Mr. David
Creagh, Mary
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs. Ann
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Mr. Jim
Cunningham, Tony
David, Mr. Wayne
Davies, Mr. Quentin
Dhanda, Mr. Parmjit
Dismore, Mr. Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Donohoe, Mr. Brian H.
Doran, Mr. Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs. Louise
Engel, Natasha
Ennis, Jeff
Fiell, Mr. Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Mr. Michael (Worcester)
Foster, Michael Jabez (Hastings and Rye)
Francis, Dr. Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, rh Mr. Bruce
Gilroy, Linda
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr. Peter
Hall, Mr. Mike
Hall, Patrick
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Mr. Tom
Havard, Mr. Dai
Healey, rh John
Hesford, Stephen
Hewitt, rh Ms Patricia
Hill, rh Keith
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs. Sharon
Hood, Mr. Jim
Hoon, rh Mr. Geoffrey
Hope, Phil
Howarth, rh Mr. George
Hoyle, Mr. Lindsay
Humble, Mrs. Joan
Iddon, Dr. Brian
Irwan-Davies, Huw
James, Mrs. Siân C.
Jenkins, Mr. Brian
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Ms Diana R.
Jones, Helen
Jones, Mr. Kevan
Jones, Mr. Martyn
Jowell, rh Tessa
Joyce, Mr. Eric
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeble, Ms Sally
Keeley, Barbara
Keen, Alan
Keen, Ann
Kelly, rh Ruth
Kemp, Mr. Fraser
Khan, rh Mr. Sadiq
Kidney, Mr. David
Kilfoyle, Mr. Peter
Knight, rh Jim
Kumar, Dr. Ashok
Ladyman, Sir Stephen
Lammy, rh Mr. David
Lepper, David
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Mr. Ivan
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Love, rh Mr. Andrew
Lucas, lan
Mackinlay, Andrew
Makki, Mr. Shahid
Mallaber, Judy
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Mr. Gordon
Marten, Mr. Eric
McAvoyp, rh Mr. Thomas
McCabe, Steve
McCafferty, Chris
McCarthy, Kerry
McCarthy-Fry, Sarah
McCrea, Dr. William
McDonagh, Siobhain
McFadden, rh Mr. Pat
McGovern, Mr. Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs. Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McNulty, rh Mr. Tony
Meacher, rh Mr. Michael
Merron, Gillian
Michael, rh Alun
Miliband, rh Edward
Mills, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Mole, Chris
Moon, Mrs. Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Julie
Mudie, Mr. George
Mullin, Mr. Chris
Murphy, Mr. Denis
Murphy, rh Mr. Paul
Naysmith, Dr. Doug
O’Brien, rh Mr. Mike
O’Hara, Mr. Edward
Osborne, Sandra
Owen, Albert
Pearson, Ian
Pasklitt, Mrs. James
Pound, Stephen
Prentice, Bridget
Prescott, rh Mr. John
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Mr. Ken
Raynsford, rh Mr. Nick
Reed, Mr. Andy
Reid, rh John
Richardson, Mrs. Linda
Robertson, John
Robinson, Mr. Geoffrey
Roy, Mr. Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Salter, Martin
Seaback, Alison
Sharma, Mr. Virendra
Shaw, Jonathan
Sheerman, Mr. Barry
Sheridan, Jim
Simpson, David
Skinner, Mr. Dennis
Slaughtor, Mr. Andy
Smith, rh Mr. Andrew
Smith, rh Angela E. (Basildon)
Smith, Geraldine
Snelgrove, Anne
Soulsby, Sir Peter
Spellar, rh Mr. John
Spin, Bob
Starkey, Dr. Phyllis
Stewart, Ian
Stoate, Dr. Howard
Straw, rh Mr. Jack
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr. Gerry
Taylor, Ms Dari

[10.45 pm]
(Steve McCabe.)

Commons; and
Act 1939 from the salaries of Members of the House of
under section 1(3) of the House of Commons Members’ Fund
Act 1948:

1 October 2009 there be appropriated for the purposes of
Commons Members’ Fund Act 1957, in the year commencing
Members’ Fund Act 1948 and section 1(4) of the House of
approved.

29 October, in the previous Session of Parliament, be
Provisions) Order 2009, which was laid before this House on
Order No. 118(1),

Question agreed to.

(2) The whole of the Treasury contribution to the Fund.

(1) The whole of the sums deducted or set aside in that year
That, pursuant to section 4(4) of the House of Commons
Members’ Fund Act 1948 and section 4(4) of the House of
Menzies
Alistair
Edward
David
Simon
David
Tony
Mark
Sandra
Andrew
Evan
Jenny
Roger
Mike
Steve
Matthew
Andrew
John
Lembit
Dr. Alan
Tom
Claire
Lynda
Joan
Derek
Jo
Tom
Dr. Alan

EUROPEAN UNION DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing
Order No. 119 (1).

GAS SECURITY

That this House takes note of European Union Document No.
11892/09, draft Regulation concerning measures to safeguard
security of gas supply; notes the Government’s position on this
proposal and agrees the broad aim of the Regulation that seeks
enhanced EU resilience to supply shocks through robust preventative
and emergency planning and strong emphasis on the role of a
well-functioning internal gas market as the best insurance for
security of gas supply; and further notes the need to ensure that
tor the powers of the Commission in this Regulation satisfy the
principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and supports the
Government’s aim of securing this.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made,

That—

(1) Standing Order No. 14 (Arrangement of public business)
shall have effect for this Session with the following modifications,
namely:

In paragraph (4) the word ‘eighth’ shall be substituted for the word
‘thirteen’ in line 42 and in paragraph (5) the word ‘fifth’ shall be
substituted for the word ‘eighth’ in line 44;

(2) Standing Order No. 90 (Second reading committees) shall
have effect for this Session with the following modification,
namely:

In paragraph (2) the word ‘fifteenth’ shall be substituted for the word
‘eighth’ in line 21;

and

(3) Private Members’ Bills shall have precedence over
Government business on 29 January; 5 and 26 February; 5 and
12 March; 23 and 30 April; and 7 May.—(Steve McCabe.)

Hon. Members: Object.

PETITION

Car Scheme (Castle Point)

10.56 pm

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): Rene Begley, the
co-chairman of New Thundersley Townswomen’s
Guild, has kindly organised this petition.

Our communities are enriched and strengthened by
volunteers who work in excellent schemes such as the
Castle Point social car scheme. I warmly congratulate
all the caring people involved in that scheme, which
helps vulnerable people. Each councillor is individually
responsible for ensuring that frail people are able to
remain in their homes and to have help with their
mobility. The public will hold councillors personally to
account for trying to cut the car scheme’s funding
without proper consultation with its organisers and
with no consultation at all with the public or users of
the scheme.

The petition states:

The Petition of the New Thundersley Afternoon Townswomen’s
Guild, the residents of Castle Point and others,

Declares that they object to the proposed reduction in funding
for the Castle Point Car Scheme in these buses, to take effect from
January 2010, that this reduction in funding will impact upon

NOES

Judge, Mr. Collins
Brooke, Annette
Brown, Mr. Jeremy
Burt, Lorely
Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
Carmichael, Mr. Alistair
Davey, Mr. Edward
Davies, Mr. Dai
Foster, Mr. Don
George, Andrew
Gidley, Sandra
Goldsworthy, Julia
Hancock, Mr. Mike
Harvey, Nick
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, David
Hughes, Simon
Huhne, Chris
Hunter, Mark
Jones, Lynne
Kennedy, rh Mr. Charles
Kemp, Norman
Llwyd, Mr. Elfyn
Williams, rh Mr. Alan
Williams, Mrs. Betty
Wills, rh Mr. Michael
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr. David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Woodas, Mr. Phil
Wright, Mr. Anthony
Wright, David
Wright, Mr. Iain
Wright, Dr. Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mark Tami and
Mr. Bob Blizzard

Tellers for the Noes:
John Hemming and
Dr. Evan Harris

Question accordingly agreed to.

REGULATORY REFORM

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing
Order No. 18(1)).

That the draft Legislative Reform (Insolvency) (Miscellaneous
Provisions) Order 2009, which was laid before this House on
29 October, in the previous Session of Parliament, be
approved.—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS’ FUND

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing
Order No. 118 (6) and Order, 23 November).

That, pursuant to section 4(4) of the House of Commons
Members’ Fund Act 1948 and section 1(4) of the House of
Commons Members’ Fund Act 1957, in the year commencing
1 October 2009 there be appropriated for the purposes of
section 4 of the House of Commons Members’ Fund Act 1948:

(1) The whole of the sums deducted or set aside in that year
under section 1(3) of the House of Commons Members’ Fund
Act 1939 from the salaries of Members of the House of
Commons; and

(2) The whole of the Treasury contribution to the Fund.

—(Steve McCabe.)

Question agreed to.

THAMES VALLEY AND SOUTH EAST

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing
Order No. 119 (2)).

That this House notes the report of the Select Committee on
Regulatory Reform on the draft bill submitted by Mr.
Bridgeman, entitled The Thames Valley and South East
Regional Assembly Act 2009; and, in particular, takes note
of the Committee’s recommendation that the draft bill
be amended in accordance with its report.

Question accordingly agreed to.

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frail, elderly and infirm residents who rely on the buses as a means of independent living, and that public transport such as the Car Scheme offers a cheaper and greener alternative to private transport.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to press Castle Point Borough Council, and all Councillors, to reverse the decision to reduce funding for the Castle Point Car Scheme, and to increase support for local, greener transport schemes.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

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10.58 pm

Mr. David Amess (Southend, West) (Con): My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend, East (James Duddridge) has the honour to represent the town of Southend-on-Sea, which I can say without fear of contradiction is the finest seaside resort along the Thames estuary. In its heyday, going back to Victorian times, it was enjoyed by east-enders, not only for day trips but to spend long weekends there. Sadly, in 2010, British holidays are not quite as popular as they used to be, primarily because the cost of air travel is greatly reduced and we often cannot entirely rely on our climate.

Southend is probably no different from any other coastal resort in having fewer people in jobs, higher levels of benefit claimants, and more people in poor health and with worse transport links than their inland counterparts. That is very common among coastal resorts. However, Southend is trying to re-establish itself as an attractive and vibrant seaside town for visitors and residents alike, and it is blessed with superb leadership from Councillor Nigel Holdcroft, who is the council leader, ably supported by his deputy John Lamb. We also have an excellent council chief executive, Rob Tinlin, who is supported by a superb team of officers.

We are perhaps not quite in the strong funding position that we would have hoped for, because the last census was somewhat lacking in rigour. The Minister will understand that we intend to ensure that the next census is absolutely accurate, because the last one basically left off 20,000 people, which was very damaging in funding terms. However, I am delighted to say that a £25 million investment package will mean four new regeneration schemes. One is City beach on Marine parade, in my hon. Friend’s constituency, which will be launched on 7 January.

Congestion and weak transport infrastructure are challenges for the town, and the other three key development projects will significantly reduce congestion and journey times. Work on the Victoria gateway, again in my hon. Friend’s constituency, will start in March. The other two projects are in my constituency. One of the worst bottlenecks in the town is at Cuckoo corner, where £5 million improvement works will begin in April. It is hoped that when the improvements are completed, there will be a reduction from the 400 minutes a day of congestion that is experienced at peak times. The final piece of work, which will be started shortly, is at Progress road, a key section of the main arterial route into Southend. Those are positive schemes that my hon. Friend and I welcome, but there are further bottlenecks at the Bell and Kent Elms junctions with the A127, and I hope that in due course there will be some improvements.

The Minister will be only too well aware of the expansion of Southend airport. Most residents welcome the fact that there is an airport in Southend, but since its current owner, Stobart, put in plans to expand it, there has been some debate in the town about the benefits of the suggestion. I believe that the council will examine the proposals on 20 January. For my own part, I feel that to satisfy all residents’ concerns there should

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Southend-on-Sea

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Steve McCabe.)
be a public inquiry, but I know that the Minister cannot say anything about that and that it is a matter for the Secretary of State at the end of the day.

The council has invested £5 million in the third phase of improvements to the A13, which is one of the town’s main arteries and is also subject to bad congestion. Although Government funding was received for the first and second phases, for which we were very grateful, nothing was provided for the third phase, which covers the area from the entrance boundary with Essex to a third of the way into the town centre.

I should tell the Minister that the decision not to extend the c2c and National Express contracts on our two rail links is creating uncertainty, particularly as there are negotiations under way with c2c and Network Rail regarding parking and redevelopment. I would be grateful if he had a word with his colleagues about the delay in that.

I am delighted to tell the House that throughout the summer, Southend enjoyed a relatively high level of tourism, and the local authority produced an attractive programme of events for tourists to enjoy.

I had the privilege of chairing proceedings on the London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Bill, and I am a keen supporter of the games. Southend is bidding to become the United Kingdom’s capital of culture for 2013, and several projects are under way that can only help the overall regeneration of the town. The international arts organisation, Metal, has come to Southend having renovated the grade II listed building, Chalkwell hall. I attended its launch at the end of September. It was a great occasion and a celebration of the town. Many events were held there, and that has done a great deal to boost morale.

We hope that, in the longer term, Metal will encourage creative businesses to set up in the town, helping us to become a regional centre for the creative industries. I was delighted that, before Christmas, the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded Prittlewell priory museum a grant of £1,300,000. The grant will fund repairs and refurbishment, as well as creating new displays and a new external building, thus creating even more space for new displays. The project will also add new signage, trails and publications to connect Prittlewell priory with the surrounding area and landscape. The refurbished museum will tell the story of the priory from its monastic days to its life as a Victorian house, as well as that of the wildlife of the park. In addition to Southend council, the Friends of Southend Museums and the Cory Environmental Trust have pledged sums to match fund the lottery grant. That is all good news.

We are delighted that Hadleigh, which is close to my constituency, will be a venue for the 2012 Olympic mountain bike events. In addition, many venues locally would make an ideal base for hosting teams from smaller visiting nations. For example, I recently had the privilege of opening Eastwood school’s new, wonderful, first-class sports complex. That would be an ideal site for one of the smaller nations to use as a base camp.

There will be a state-of-the-art swimming facility and a world-class Olympic-sized diving facility at Garon park. The council has invested £14 million to ensure that Southend residents, as well as visiting teams in training for the 2012 Olympics, can enjoy the facilities. In addition, other key swimming facilities in the town at Belfairs and Shoebury in my hon. Friend’s constituency will be refurbished. I know that I speak for all local residents when I say that we are looking forward to the Olympic games. We certainly intend to ensure that Southend is at the heart of the celebrations.

Given Southend’s waning popularity as a destination for weekend visitors, we have tried to direct its energy towards the twin activities of becoming the centre of culture for the east and becoming a centre of learning. We have a wonderful college, which has joined forces with the university of Essex under the excellent leadership of the principal, Jan Hodges. It was opened in 2007, and we have a marvellous campus, with performing arts, a business school and health and human sciences. Recently, we joined forces with Basildon and Thurrock. We welcome the fact that Southend is the lead in the partnership, but are somewhat disappointed that there does not seem to be funding for a single campus for South Essex college. Until there is additional funding, we will have a split-site campus, which is not ideal.

The Minister knows only too well that Southend has suffered a blow through job losses. HSBC has closed its card-processing facility, and 750 local jobs have been lost. I know that I speak for my hon. Friend when I say that we are concerned about the rumours of further job losses at Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs site in the town—the numbers working there have already been reduced. Further losses would certainly be unwelcome.

Finally, the pier regeneration is very important. As the Minister knows, Southend pier is the longest in the world and the town is famous for it. We were very disappointed recently about it. We had been given the impression that we were to be given funds to develop and restore the pier given that it has had three fires, and we invested £36,000 on a design competition because we were encouraged to do so by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, but unfortunately our bid was unsuccessful. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced only £5 million of major projects when it was expected that there would be £15 million. Was that why the decision was delayed by four months?

About two years ago, a DCMS Minister was good enough to give us money to help deal with the cliff slippage that we suffered in Southend. The Department for Transport provided £1 million in the last financial year for emergency stabilisation in the west of Southend in Belton Hills and by Leigh railway station. Any further support the Government could give would be very welcome.

In conclusion, we are very grateful indeed for the help that has been given thus far for the regeneration of Southend, but any further help would be very much welcome.

11.11 pm

James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend, East) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) on securing this debate and look forward to the Minister’s reply, given that he recently enjoyed a visit to Southend and the surrounding area. I ask three things of him: to count correctly, to fund directly, and to get the infrastructure right.

Counting correctly relates to the census. The failure to count 20,000 people in the 2001 census costs Southend £7 million each year, so counting correctly is the most
fundamental single thing the Minister could review when considering the future prosperity and regeneration of Southend.

Secondly, on funding directly, I say candidly that there are far too many organisations with their fingers in the pot. We have extremely good directly elected councillors, and they should be allowed to get on with the job of spending the money as local residents desire, rather than the money going through an alphabetetti spaghetti of acronyms and quangos. Frankly, those not only add little value, but are sometimes destructive of the value the council could add. I ask the Minister to get rid of some of those organisations and to fund everything directly.

Finally, on infrastructure, living in Southend sometimes feels like living on an island in the corner of Essex. We need to speed up traffic along the A127 and A13. The sea-to-sea rail line has been award winning, and despite the problems that National Express has had elsewhere in the eastern counties, I urge the Minister to consider awarding the contract and franchise to the existing management of the line, who have been absolutely fabulous. Given our road infrastructure problems, I would be very disappointed if the existing management of the sea-to-sea railway were not involved in the longer term franchise for the line.

11.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr. Shahid Malik): It is a pleasure to engage in this debate under your stewardship, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I congratulate the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) on securing the debate, which is on a subject that is important to him, his constituents and others living in Southend. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (James Duddridge) on his contribution. As I was sitting on the Bench earlier, a number of Ministers who have had the same responsibilities asked what debate I was here for. When I told them that it was on the regeneration of Southend, three of them said, “I’ve done that in the past.” That is testament to the hon. Gentleman’s commitment to his constituents and their well-being—and that goes for the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East as well.

It has been just over a year since we last had a debate about regeneration in Southend, and there has been much progress since then, as I saw when I visited in September. Since my visit I have been a big fan, as I was incredibly impressed. The hon. Member for Southend, West mentioned leadership, and I was impressed by the leadership and the partnership at work in Southend. I am very aware that partners in Southend have been working hard to ensure that the town becomes a thriving regional centre, with culture and commerce at its heart, and that it is seen as an exciting place to live, work and visit.

One of the most impressive things I saw was the education hub of South East Essex college and the University of Essex in the town centre. Those developments have attracted multi-million pound investment and brought many benefits, including employment opportunities, supporting learning and raising skills levels, and transforming the street scene with more young people living in and around the town centre. I also note the comment made by the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East about counting. I am not fully aware of the issue, but I will get back to him with more information about the census. The issue was also raised by the hon. Member for Southend, West.

It is not surprising to find that regeneration features strongly in the recent comprehensive area assessment for Southend, published last month. The assessment recognises the important role that regeneration has played in transforming the town and highlights not only the education hub but other developments such as Pan Hill, Hamlet Court road and the network of 11 children’s centres, many of which are located in the central areas of the town that I saw on my visit.

Importantl, Southend’s regeneration has not simply been about bricks and mortar; it has also been about people, businesses and communities. It is about instilling confidence and encouraging people to join in and helping them feel in control of what goes on in their town. It is therefore important that we build on this success and exploit the potential within Southend. The local strategic partnership, Southend Together, has a shared vision to “ensure Southend is a proud and dynamic city”.

Partners have been working together very productively to deliver that vision, and I was pleased to meet many of them during my visit last year. I mean that very sincerely.

There are also significant opportunities to promote the advantages of Southend’s location close to London and the 2012 Olympics; to become both a nationally and internationally recognised centre of educational and cultural achievement; to make maximum use of its physical assets including the seaside and the magnificent world record-breaking pier; and to promote Southend as a place to live and work, as well as to visit. It is very good news that Hadleigh Farm has been selected as the venue for the mountain bike events in the 2012 Olympics. I know just what an inspiring venue it will be, with an amazing view across the Thames estuary—Constable country at its best.

I am sure that hon. Members will agree with me, however, that along with such opportunities, Southend, like many other seaside towns, still faces a number of real challenges, and the hon. Member for Southend, West alluded to many of them. It has significant pockets of social and economic deprivation, mainly centred in the Milton, Victoria and Kursaal wards, all of which rank in the top 3 per cent. of most disadvantaged wards in the country according to the indices of multiple deprivation.

Southend has of course not been immune from the effects of the global economic downturn, as the hon. Gentleman highlighted. It has some of the highest unemployment rates in the east of England. The claimant count in November 2009 was 5 per cent. compared with 3.4 per cent. for the region. It was 50 per cent. higher than the same time a year earlier, although unemployment has stabilised in recent months.

The hon. Gentleman was right to mention the airport. Certainly when I was there, there seemed to be a consensus among the regeneration leadership that it could be a good thing. However, he was right in pointing out that it was inappropriate at this stage for me to comment, given that it is likely to come before my Department and the Secretary of State in due course.
The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the urban regeneration company for Southend, Renaissance Southend Ltd, which brings together all the public and private partners in the area master plan, looking at the potential for redeveloping the town centre and improving the commercial seafront as a visitor attraction and destination.

The East of England Development Agency is supporting Renaissance Southend Ltd through core funding, as well as working with it and the council. It has invested more than £30 million in Southend over the past five years, most recently—I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has already touched on some of these—on projects such as the £5 million redevelopment of the former Clifftown United Reform church into a state-of-the-art facility for the teaching, training, rehearsal and performances of the East 15 Acting School students, and the new student accommodation and car park on London road, which promises to be a striking landmark for the town. It is obviously a bold design and certainly will be a talking point.

Both hon. Gentlemen have talked about the need to ensure that there is one Southend—in the sense that at the moment the various funding agencies perhaps cause confusion. I hope that they will be reassured that the new “single conversation”, which has already begun between the Homes and Communities Agency and Southend partners on all aspects of housing, infrastructure and regeneration, will reduce some of the complexity.

The HCA carried out a reprioritisation exercise in September 2009 for projects provisionally identified for funding in the Thames Gateway delivery plan. I am pleased to say that Southend did well out of that reprioritisation, with seven out of 10 potential projects placed on the high priority list for funding, which is testament to the hard work of stakeholders and the project teams. Six of those now have funding agreements in place or near to completion, providing more than £9 million of funding, in this and the next financial year, for a mixture of public realm projects and studies of development potential.

Southend’s role as a cultural and educational centre is being supported by partners in a number of ways. I am pleased to say that we have recently agreed to the merger of South East Essex college and Thurrock and Basildon college, which will help provide a wider range of curriculum and progression opportunities, further strengthening the education offer—something that is obviously critical given where we are in the economic downturn.

Hon. Members will recognise Southend’s aim to become not only the cultural capital of the east of England, but the UK capital of culture in 2013, with its recent bid “Southend’s Got Front”. As the hon. Member for Southend, West mentioned, the recent opening of Chalkwell Hall, the new home for Metal, will provide a low-carbon space that can be used as a power house for creativity in the community and far beyond, allowing artists to develop their talent and ideas.

The City Beach project, of which the hon. Gentleman is aware, with public sector funding of £7 million, will bring urban design improvements to the central seafront and public realm, based on enhancing the promenade, improvements to the sea wall and the installation of architectural lighting.

Improvements to transportation routes are important to the continued development of Southend. That point was well made by the hon. Gentleman. As was pointed out, a significant part of the borough council’s plans is the work on Priory crescent and its junction with the A127 at Cuckoo corner—a pinch-point on the route to and from the eastern part of Southend. The Department for Transport has provided just under £5 million through the community infrastructure fund, or CIF2, taking the scheme through to completion by March 2011. Work on the Victoria gateway, which will provide improved pedestrian links between Victoria station and the town centre, will also start shortly. Both schemes should help to improve public transport prioritisation and through-route development of the south Essex rapid transit scheme. I also note the hon. Gentleman’s point about c2c, which I will push in the direction of the relevant Minister.

However, as we know, regeneration is as much about communities as it is about physical infrastructure. I would like to note some of the work seeking to improve the lives of those in the more deprived areas. We have allocated £1.6 million from the neighbourhood element of the safer and stronger communities fund to Southend-on-Sea. The programme has delivered genuine results, such as the small grant programme for local people developing schemes to support their residents, as well as neighbourhood wardens, who patrol the local area during daytime hours.

Some £243,500 has been awarded from the social enterprise investment fund to set up the St. Luke’s healthy living centre, a social enterprise aiming to improve the health and well-being of local people and create training, employment and social enterprise opportunities for residents. The local strategic partnership has also set up community voices, a series of free community engagement-focused events designed to give residents and businesses direct access to key agencies. The most recent event was themed “Beat the Recession”, and provided advice and guidance on a range of topics, from personal finance to dealing with stress.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke about the pier and the redevelopment there. Wave 3 of the sea change programme was heavily oversubscribed. The sea change partnership, which is led by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, which manages the programme on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and its partner non-departmental bodies, had to make difficult choices among good projects. Written feedback on why the bid was unsuccessful has been given to Southend borough council. Wave 3 of the sea change programme takes us to the end of 2010-11, and it is too soon to make announcements on public expenditure beyond then.

There is no doubt that Southend is a place with a very bright future indeed. However, we must ensure that the momentum is consolidated and built upon. We recognise that, with other places, Southend faces challenges, some of which have been made more difficult in the current economic climate. The Government and local partners have been actively working together to try to reduce the impact of the downturn on local communities and businesses.

11.28 pm

House adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 9(7)).
Mr. Kelvin Hopkins

Westminster Hall
Tuesday 5 January 2010

Independent Safeguarding Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned. —(Mr. Frank Roy.)

9.30 am

Mr. Bill Olner (in the Chair): Members will be aware that our colleague, David Taylor, died suddenly over the Christmas period. David was not only a great member of our party, but a great socialist and a personal friend, whom I shall miss greatly.

Leaving that sadness to one side, may I say how much I enjoy serving under your chairmanship again, Mr. Olner, and wish you and everyone else a happy new year? It will obviously be an interesting year politically, and it is a novel experience to make the first speech of the new year in this Chamber.

I welcome the opportunity to initiate the debate and would like to add my own comments on the tragic death of David Taylor. He was not only a great member of our party, but a great socialist and a personal friend, whom I shall miss greatly.

I must place on record that the trade unions and other professional bodies involved in protecting vulnerable adults and children strongly endorse the principle of public protection. The terrible events at Soham and other cases in recent years have demonstrated that case to be unquestionable. However, several issues raised by the creation of the Independent Safeguarding Authority and its impact on working people need careful consideration.

The Minister will be fully aware, as we all are, that the public debate has understandably been dominated by high-profile media coverage — perhaps rather populist in tone — of the impact of the ISA scheme on voluntary groups such as scouts and local football clubs. Although those groups play a valuable — or even essential role — and are vital to society and local communities, much less coverage has been given to the impact of the scheme on the caring professions and public services, and the many thousands who entered their vocations in those professions and services to protect and assist the vulnerable and children, especially. It is that specific dimension of the debate that I wish to address today.

I am sure that hon. Members will agree that the public will be best protected by a system that is risk-based and proportionate, and that addressing such issues intelligently will have a positive impact. I wish to highlight substantive concerns relating to ISA that trade unions and other professional bodies have raised.

Several concerns have been brought to my attention by the TUC coalition, which has been working to develop a constructive response to the ISA scheme. I understand that a productive meeting took place with my hon. Friend the Minister early in November, which was attended by, among others, Dave Prentis, the general secretary of Unison. Three key issues were raised at the meeting, the first of which was the cost of registration and the impact that it might have on low-paid or part-time staff, particularly women.

The second concern was about the duplication of registration for a number of individuals who are already on a professional register, such as nurses, midwives, doctors, social workers and teachers, all of whom are required to maintain a professional registration as a condition of their employment. The final issue raised was the lack of an appeals process under the current legislation. Although individuals can appeal to the Care Standards Tribunal, as things stand that can be done only on a point of law or fact. The tribunal is not allowed to hear evidence on appropriateness, which can be challenged only by judicial review.

I shall address each of those points in turn. In order to appoint someone to a post that allows them to work with or have access to vulnerable adults or children, an employer, organisation or individual must first ensure that they meet the knowledge requirements and possess the skills for the post. People are also subject to a criminal record check for all relevant employment posts. Unison and the TUC are calling for the costs of registration to be borne by the employer as part of its recruitment costs. The Home Office has indicated that that is, in any case, a one-off cost, as monitoring will then be ongoing for all employees. That being the case, it is reasonable and appropriate that employers fund the associated registration costs. If an employer is securing the services of an individual, surely ensuring their safety and suitability to be in that working environment should be included within its recruitment costs.

All the trade union organisations have expressed concern about registration fees’ impact on individuals. In particular, Unison has questioned why a school meals cook or catering assistant working a few shifts a week should pay the same registration fee as a head teacher. That is surely unfair and inequitable by any standards. It is too early to assess the future impact on services, but we could, for example, face the spectacle of an individual having to pay to register so that they may serve school children their meals, but not facing such requirements in a local supermarket canteen. In those circumstances, an individual might choose to work in a supermarket and not apply to work in schools, to the detriment of the school meals service and contrary to the individual’s initial preferences.
Robust arguments have been put to me by the TUC coalition and Unison about the impact on those who are already on a professional register yet will have to register with both ISA and their professional regulator. With the current proposals, under the definition of “harm”, the professional regulators could spend more time referring cases to ISA than investigating them and taking professional decisions on whether or not a person should remain on the register. I understand that several regulators have expressed similar concerns about the impact that the ISA process will have on their fitness-to-practise processes.

To illustrate that point, I shall refer to a relevant case, which has been provided to me by Unison, of a nurse working in a mental health trust who, in restraining a service user, used a control and restraint technique that caused bruising. The service user complained and stated that the use of the technique breached their human rights and caused them harm. They also made a written complaint to the regulator, the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Having investigated and referred the case to a fitness-to-practise hearing, the panel concluded that although the use of control was appropriate, the nurse did not use the correct technique as their training was not current. The panel therefore decided to issue the nurse with a one-year caution and recommended updating their control and restraint training.

As the examples and definition of harm issued by ISA are so broad, however, that case would now also have to be referred to the authority. ISA would then consider all the information and might write to the person indicating its intention to place them on the banned list. The nurse would then have eight weeks to submit a statement to put forward their case. Their only opportunity to challenge appropriateness at that stage would be via judicial review. However, if the allegation was more serious, a judicial review at that stage would prevent ISA from concluding its decision, thus placing the individual concerned on the banned list.

In seeking to find a viable solution to the potential dilemma, Unison and the TUC have suggested a slight change to the appeal process that would enable the Care Standards Tribunal to hear all the evidence, including that relating to appropriateness. That would not cause delay to the ISA decision-making process, but ensure that any person whose livelihood would be taken away from them would have the opportunity to seek redress and challenge and examine all the evidence. Indeed, Unison and the TUC have also suggested that any person who was on a professional register should have their case heard and concluded by the relevant professional regulator first. Each of the regulators would jointly agree with ISA a protocol for referring relevant cases. That would avoid the current duplication, enable the case to be heard and all the material facts to be considered and taken into account, and allow decisions to be made and conclusions to be reached more quickly and efficiently.

The Royal College of Nursing, in particular, has added its own emphasis to the need for a right to a fair hearing for individuals. Currently, appeals and hearings can be based and made not only on a point of fact or law. The RCN believes that that breaches the European convention on human rights. It also emphasises the unnecessary duplication of registration that I referred to earlier, and is concerned that there is a lack of clarity surrounding how ISA will work alongside professional regulators such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The RCN believes that that could lead to conflicting decisions by the two bodies.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the TUC coalition and all its constituent organisations support the principle of public protection. However, several requirements proposed by the legislation might have a negative impact if regulators become weighed down with a 20-page referral form and are unable to meet their statutory obligation of public protection. The public can best be protected by a risk-based and proportionate system, and addressing these issues will have a positive impact and measurably improve statutory requirements and the safeguarding system which, in other respects, are both necessary and appropriate. I look forward to hearing the comments of other hon. Members and what I hope will be a positive response from my hon. Friend the Minister.
burdensome, bureaucratic or invasive. Many of those parents, who are doing a fantastic job educating their children at home, feel that the hand of the law on their shoulder suggesting that perhaps their own children are at risk is not acceptable, and I agree with them. We have to get the balance right.

Volunteers and the voluntary sector play an important and increasing role in our communities, so I am delighted that volunteers will not have to pay the ISA registration fee. I am a volunteer myself, with a fantastic charity called Rudyard Sailability. We work with disabled children and adults, and I am delighted that that charity will not have the extra burden of having to pay the fee. However, I remember that the process of having my Criminal Records Bureau check done was very bureaucratic. It put a great burden on the gentleman who dealt with that on behalf of the charity, and I would be worried if this check created such burdens for voluntary sector organisations, whether they be disabled sailing charities such as mine, sports clubs or churches.

I hope that the ISA process will not overburden such organisations. They would much rather spend their energies dealing with their client groups and giving them the good time that they want to give them, rather than filling in forms. It is important that we get this right and do not alienate volunteers. They will not have to pay the charge, but obviously they give their time freely, and if that time is taken up with form-filling, it will not be as attractive an option as working with vulnerable client groups.

I, too, am a member of the public sector union Unison. I should like to discuss some of the issues that my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North addressed. I believe that many MPs have come across cases of people who could not fully take up employment because their CRB check had not been done. That is worrying, particularly for someone in their first job. They want to start off well, but they are prevented from taking up their post because the CRB check has not come through, perhaps for a purely bureaucratic reason—the papers might have been lost. It has nothing to do with the individual applicant, but if the CRB check takes a long time to come through, it begins to reflect on the applicant. I do not want the same thing to happen with the ISA checks.

Kelvin Hopkins: My hon. Friend talks about delays in CRB checks, and I am sure that other hon. Members have come across that problem in other circumstances. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will find ways of ensuring that CRB checks are undertaken quickly, and that explanations are given if there are delays.

Charlotte Atkins: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Although the CRB check is a totally independent process, people get worried if there is a delay, and it appears to reflect on the individual. Clearly, it does not, but people who are starting a new job want to make a good impression, so it is important that the process is properly carried out. I do not expect the Minister to tell me at this point how long she expects the ISA checks to take, but it is vital that they are done quickly; otherwise, we will create a huge bureaucratic merry-go-round, which we do not want.

Many individuals are already subject to professional registration, and it seems over the top for people who have had to go through that process also to have to go through the ISA scheme. I understand that the new ISA scheme will duplicate the existing regulation of public protection for almost 4 million workers—a huge proportion of the estimated 11 million who will be covered under that scheme. Surely, this does not make any sense.

I turn now to the cost of registration to the individual. Individuals in paid employment will effectively be subsidising the voluntary sector. I am in favour of that, but I am worried because the fee in England and Wales will be £64, which in anyone’s book is a substantial sum—it will be £58 in Northern Ireland—that is hugely higher than the original estimate of just £20. That is a huge burden for a low-paid part-time cook, for instance. The school cooks in my local schools do a fantastic job. I do not want to see their skills diluted in any way.

Kelvin Hopkins: I thank my hon. Friend for emphasising this important point about costs, which will have a differential effect on people from different social classes. As my hon. Friend said, it might be loose change for someone in an affluent town where £64 is pocket money and pocket change. My hon. Friend has emphasised this point correctly.

Charlotte Atkins: There are school cooks in my area, in Leek and Biddulph, who have worked for the service for decades, have served youngsters and their parents too and are a valued institution. Those school cooks have really taken through the healthy foods initiative in schools and encouraged youngsters to try different foods, and they have had to struggle with menus that have been difficult to sell to young people. They are the people who encourage children to eat healthily. They do not just cook and serve the food; they engage with the children. I do not want any of those excellent ladies—and some gentlemen—who are doing a marvellous job, to find that the £64 is too much for them to bear. Why should they have to bear that cost? It makes no sense. They are public servants who are doing a fantastic job. As my hon. Friend said, it might be loose change for a chief executive or a senior head teacher—

Kelvin Hopkins: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way yet again and I apologise for intervening so frequently. A long report on the radio yesterday mentioned the impact of healthy meals on children’s performance at schools and the massive contribution made by school cooks and catering workers to that. The more we can encourage children to eat healthy school meals, the better they will perform and the better they will be as citizens in the future.

Charlotte Atkins: I, too, heard that report, which denied the myth that the healthy school food initiative had been a failure and demonstrated that school catering teams had done a fantastic job throughout the country introducing healthy food. We do not want to see that work put at risk.

The registration cost makes no sense. Trading standards’ fees for a small local delicatessen are different from those for a major company such as Tesco. We obviously should have a graduated fee system that would ensure that there is a proportionate response, because we want it to be proportionate and we do not want to lose public sector workers into the private sector and thereby lose their expertise and skills. It is vital that we ensure that we maintain those people within the schools.
All these risks could be avoided if the employer was required to pay the registration fee. That would be the best way forward, because the one-off fee could be incorporated in the recruitment costs of these excellent staff, rather than introducing any of the negative implications or unforeseen effects of the fee on low-paid staff. That is important.

Given that we have time to look at some of the details of the ISA, I hope that these issues are taken seriously by the Minister and thoroughly considered, because although the scheme is important it is also important that we get it absolutely right and that it works effectively. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to some of these points.

9.55 am

Laura Moffatt (Crawley) (Lab): I support my parliamentary colleagues in their attempt to get clarity about the implementation of the Independent Safeguarding Authority. None of us is here to do it down or to create difficulties where we do not think that there are any, and most of us are supportive. A group of organisations has come together on this matter, and I am glad to say that Unison is taking a lead in that. I say that as a lifetime working member of Unison who was part of the creation of the Confederation of Health Service Employees and moved into Unison in the nursing profession. These proposals and changes are sensible and proportionate. As a listening Minister, my hon. Friend will be keen to hear those concerns, although I know that she has had a series of meetings with those with particular issues to talk about.

The last thing that we need is for people to be deterred from going into the caring professions, which are not well paid for millions of people, particularly women. It is important that we ensure that these professions are welcoming, and we are keen to ensure that new people come into the caring professions to revive them and do extremely difficult jobs. People do not do it for the money: it is difficult. I have worked alongside all sorts of carers for 25 years and it is obvious that people are coming into the profession because they want to and because they know that they can make a difference.

It would be easy to say, “Well, people are getting upset about the new overarching authority, because if you’ve something in your background, you’d be afraid to disclose that.” That is untrue. The reality is that, overwhelmingly, the people working in the caring professions with vulnerable young people, children and babies are straight as a die and honest. The last thing that we want to do is to put them off and turn them out into another profession. It is important that, whatever we do with the implementation of the authority, it is proportionate and understandable.

Mrs. Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): I want to ask the hon. Lady about the important point that she has raised. She says that those who go into the caring professions have nothing to worry about if they have a clean bill of health in respect of their backgrounds. However, there is a worrying increase in the number of people who are given cautions for sexual offences—it has been increasing year on year—and many may not understand that, by accepting a caution, they could be ruling themselves out of all those jobs in future. Has she talked to her contacts about that?

Laura Moffatt: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising that. All of us as Members of Parliament have had issues brought to us by our constituents. However, one major issue is not the offence but disclosure and ensuring that people understand at the time that, if they accept a caution, it may affect their future. Education and information for people at that stage is crucial to the whole process. I agree that the new way of dealing with offences and the changes have implications for people, but although it is proportionate—a major offence should not be dealt with in that way—they need information, so that they know about the effect that that will have on them.

There are many people whom we believe will be ideal for the profession, and the last thing that we should do is set up a host of hurdles for those who are willing, particularly younger people who are looking at the caring professions. The economic climate has changed, and a lot of younger people are now looking to the public sector for their future vocation. For many people, it is a vocation to be a midwife or a nurse or to work in a school. Therefore, there will be increased demand, but let me reiterate that many of those people will be relatively low paid. There appears to be no mechanism to take account of that—it might be a head teacher who applies, as was mentioned earlier, or a dinner lady—and we need to give that issue some attention.

My hon. Friends have said, quite rightly, that ensuring that the employer pays the initial fee for joining the register would take away many of those obstacles. It would make people feel that, if they enter a profession, the commitment from the employer is there. Having checked with local trusts in my constituency, I accept that many employers will be prepared to do that, but there is no mandatory fixture for them to say that they will pay. I believe that good employers will pay that fee, but that might not happen in some organisations. We need everybody to be certain that the issue will be dealt with in that way.

My hon. Friends raised the issue of volunteering. We are greatly relieved that volunteers will not only be dealt with proportionately through the changes already made, but that they will not have to foot the bill for any of the work that they do. Many of us know of local organisations where people dedicate their time and energy to making lives better for our constituents. Nevertheless, we should consider one issue: it is good that volunteers will not be asked to pay, but that is based on the principle that 11 million people in work will contribute in some way, either through the employer or personally, to allow the system to function properly. Once again, is it fair to allow the dinner lady to subsidise volunteering? Pleased as we are that volunteers will not pay, is it right and proportionate that those on lower incomes will contribute?

Those are just some of the issues. I completely support the principle and the notion behind the authority, as does the impressive coalition of good, sound organisations that have come together to consider the matters in detail and provide a sense of proportionality about what is needed to protect our professions. None of us wants the authority to fail or to be ineffective—it flows from the Bichard inquiry, which was set up after the Soham murders. If we could have prevented those murders by having a more effective register, we would have wanted to do so. Therefore, it is in a spirit of support and of
starting to be tight, there were concerns that the other vetting procedures. At a time when budgets were the police were being required to register their own staff in the education world, we got to a situation in which even adults, particularly in a voluntary capacity. might drive many law-abiding citizens away from being involved in the support of children and vulnerable adults is an issue. Those concerns were not consolidated but in all those areas where the protection of children and vulnerable adults is an issue. Those concerns were not consolidated beforehand. We have seen from the Singleton review the justification for those concerns and the need for us to look again at the regulation to see whether they could be implemented more sensibly. We are not convinced that all the proposals are sufficiently robust, and how rapidly they will take effect. Importantly—I think that this was also raised by the hon. Members for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Charlotte Atkins) and for Crawley—the third issue is whether the principles in the Singleton report relating to police exemptions should be extended to other professional groups. I hope that the Government will consider that seriously, because if credible vetting procedures are in place for professional groups, we should not try to replicate them. We were particularly concerned about the situation relating to the police. Some of the other professional groups were not raised with us, so today’s debate is an interesting opportunity to discuss some of those issues.

Kelvin Hopkins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his very helpful comments. We are concerned about the wider question of duplication with other professional bodies; not just in relation to the police, but in all cases in which professional bodies and regulators do checks beforehand.

Mr. Laws: I am grateful for that clarification. I hope that the Minister will respond to the hon. Gentleman’s important point.

Let me go through some of these areas and several of the other issues that are still outstanding in relation to the legislation and regulations under discussion. When the matter was first debated in the House, both Opposition parties expressed a great deal of concern about many of the loose ends, the limited time to deal with a very detailed subject and the potential unintended consequences. We have seen from the Singleton review the justification for those concerns and the need for us to look again at the regulations to see whether they could be implemented more sensibly. We are not convinced that all the proposals that will be in place by next year are quite right yet. Although we accept that the Singleton report and the Government’s acceptance of it represent a significant move forward.
Let me first raise one important concern about the Singleton recommendations. I think that the hon. Member for Luton, North, quite deliberately, did not seek to touch on it, but it is, for us, an important residual point that comes out of the recommendations, which were published in December. It relates to recommendation 3, on “Frequent and intensive contact”, and the associated recommendation 4 on “Visits to different settings”. In some ways, both recommendations seek to take into account the concerns expressed about whether the regulations would be excessively burdensome. In recommendation 3, Sir Roger seeks to redefine the frequent and intensive contact tests so that they would essentially come into place if people were going into schools and coming into contact with vulnerable individuals once a week or more regularly. The intensive contact test is defined in terms of four contacts a month.

Our concern is not that that is not a small move in the right direction, but that it does not really deal with the question of what individuals are doing when they are in the particular settings and whether they are really likely to pose a risk. In other words, we think that it is framed too much in terms of frequency of contact and does not consider in sufficient detail what the contact constitutes. Many people would regard it as obvious that when an individual comes into contact with children or vulnerable adults in an environment in which they are the only adult present, or when they are in a particularly vulnerable setting—perhaps involving an overnight stay, or sports or some such activity—there are reasons for ensuring that the safeguards in place are very secure. However, many other people who go into educational establishments or who come into contact with vulnerable children and adults might be doing so with a much lower risk characteristic, particularly when those individuals are coming into schools or other settings where there is another adult who might already be the approved and vetted adult present.

Many of us can think of occasions on which individuals come from outside school settings to talk to children, sometimes quite regularly, but those contacts take place wholly with one of the existing members of the teaching staff in place. That seems not to be properly taken into account in the recommendations and in the Government’s plans, so we have a situation that is framed too much around frequency and not enough around the actual risk inherent in any particular situation.

That concern was raised by the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller) when this matter was first debated. She said:

“As a school governor myself, I have seen instances in which outside organisations have come into the school without ever being left in sole charge of the children with whom they come into contact.”—[Official Report, Standing Committee B, 11 July 2006; c. 77.] She said that there would be activities that did not need to be monitored, but that equally there would be circumstances, such as those outlined on that day, in which there would be concerns. I should like to know whether the Governor have given, or will give, more consideration to whether the nature of the contact and the risks inherent in that should be considered more seriously and whether, therefore, more flexibility could be built into the procedures, but obviously not in relation to contacts that would be particularly high risk.

I should also like clarification of the linked proposal—recommendation 4, which relates to visits to different settings. My understanding of that is that Sir Roger has concluded that if an individual comes into contact with a vulnerable adult or a child on a regular basis, there is cause for concern that some sort of abusive relationship might develop in unusual circumstances and that therefore protection is needed. However, Sir Roger seems to have decided that if an individual comes into contact with a range of young people or vulnerable adults, but not the same young people or vulnerable adults, the potential for an abusive relationship to develop would be much lower and therefore the toleration of contact with those different individuals should be much higher.

I can understand the argument that if an individual comes into contact frequently with vulnerable adults or with the same children, there is the potential for a relationship to develop that could be abused, but I can also see an apparent irrationality. My understanding is that if, for example, an individual was coming into a secondary school from the outside but was having contact with children in different classes, they would essentially have an exemption from some of the other proposals in relation to frequency and intensity of contact. It seems bizarre that those individuals might be able to come into contact with individuals in a potentially exposed setting quite frequently, but provided that it was with different individuals, they would be exempt from the frequent and intensive contact proposals. I wonder whether that is sensible, particularly given that those individuals, even if they are coming into contact with different classes or individuals formally in the classroom, might still be able to meet up with children or vulnerable adults whom they had met in another formal setting as they worked their way around the institution.

I therefore have yet to be persuaded that recommendations 3 and 4 deal sensibly and pragmatically with this particularly crucial issue. I think that, in some senses, recommendation 4 leaves some scope for abuse and child protection concerns, but recommendation 3 does not go nearly far enough in allowing exemptions for the large number of adults who come into contact with young people and vulnerable adults but do so in a setting where the risks are extraordinarily low and, in particular, where another adult who has been vetted is already in the setting. I invite the Minister to comment on that and let us know whether the Government will look at the matter again.

I should like to pick up the point that the hon. Member for Luton, North made about other professional groups and whether the exemptions that have now been extended to the police, following the Singleton report and the Home Secretary’s response to it, could be extended to other groups on the basis of the checks that already have to take place. Even after Sir Roger’s proposals, the new regulations will still relate to between 9 million and 9.5 million people, and possibly many more over time. If it is possible to work within the framework of the current checks, rather than introducing new bureaucracy, I hope that we can pursue that.

Will the Minister comment on a number of other issues that have been left hanging in the air as a consequence of the Secretary of State’s response to Sir Roger at the end of last year? First, Sir Roger recommended further work on three of the proposals at the end of his report. Under what time scale can we expect the Government to
complete that work and bring recommendations to the House? Is it likely to be before the spring or will it be well into the future? Secondly, when will there be a new impact assessment of the proposals as amended by Singleton? Will it include an assessment of their benefits in terms of reducing the potential for abuse?

I want to pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Luton, North. I have concerns about whether the appeals process can be strengthened and about the length of time taken to process checks. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned, there is a lot of evidence to show that the processing is taking far too long. If people believe that processing will take a long time, organisations, employees and volunteers may be deterred from entering into arrangements, which could have a damaging impact.

Finally, we heard about the cost of processing. In some cases, particularly those of a more voluntary nature, the expectation will be that the individual, sadly, will have to bear the cost. However, a legitimate point can be made, particularly in the case of low-paid individuals, about whether the employer should pick up the cost. Although £64 might seem a relatively small amount for somebody on a high income, it is a lot for somebody on a low income, particularly if they have been out of employment for a long time. People who go back into employment often face transport and other costs, which can be quite large and which can act as a genuine disincentive to taking up work. I therefore have some sympathy with the points made by the hon. Member for Luton, North and his hon. Friends, and I hope that the Government will respond positively.

10.22 am

Mrs. Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship in the first debate of the new year, Mr. Olner. I echo the sentiments that you expressed about the sad loss of David Taylor. I am sure that all our thoughts are with his wife and family at this sad time.

On a lighter note, I congratulate the hon. Member for Luton, North (Kelvin Hopkins) on securing the debate and on setting out so clearly some of the real concerns that remain about the Independent Safeguarding Authority. It is important that we do that, because the organisation was conceived to help some of the most vulnerable people in our communities—those with whom we perhaps deal most as constituency Members of Parliament—and to ensure that they are appropriately protected. As we have heard from several hon. Members, various organisations, including trade unions, have concerns about the impact of the legislation on their workers and particularly on the lowest-paid.

The Government’s approach to the new vetting system, which has evolved over more than four years, and the creation of the ISA reflect some of the more troubling issues—[Interruption.]

Mr. Bill Olner (in the Chair): Order. I must remind officials that they cannot pass notes to members of the public at the back of the room. I would appreciate it if they would refrain from doing that.

Mrs. Miller: Among the most troubling issues that our communities face is the implication that we can eliminate risk from the lives of children or vulnerable adults, with the result that we break down the trust that exists in our communities. Although those are much broader issues, and there probably is not enough time to debate them today, we should ensure in all our deliberations that we do not try to create a false impression that society is devoid of risk. We should ensure that employers and voluntary organisations take responsibility for such issues in the way in which they operate.

It is unsurprising that there has been widespread concern about the role and remit of the ISA, given that the organisation’s scope has evolved so much under secondary legislation over the past four years. That is perhaps another reason why the Government should have included in the original legislation more of the detail of how the new vetting procedure would work. Many feel that we have moved away from the original intentions outlined in Sir Michael Richard’s report; indeed, there are indications that he himself feels that.

The Secretary of State’s most recent guidance on the Singleton review simply serves to underline the fact that the new ISA legislation lacks a clear statement of the principles guiding the vetting process, so perhaps the Minister can take the opportunity afforded by the debate to clarify the issue. As we have heard from today’s contributions, there is a real lack of clarity even about who has to be vetted. There is no coherent rationale, and the catch-all approach that formed our starting point seems to have evolved into a catch-all with significant caveats, which have been inserted by the Secretary of State in an attempt to prevent the whole organisation from being derailed. We need a much clearer articulation of the principles guiding the ISA, as well as a recognition that no system can guarantee the safety of children and vulnerable adults and that police checks are simply a record of the past, not a substitute for every organisation taking ultimate responsibility for those who work in them.

The most important part of the debate is the Minister’s response, so I will outline only briefly some of the other issues that she may want to talk about. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) rightly said that the Singleton report covered a number of concerns, but there is still a lack of clarity about exactly who must be monitored and vetted. Given that the principles must be implemented by employers, employees and voluntary organisations, the most important point is surely that we have a simple set of rules that everybody can understand, rather than the complexity that we have now.

Although we originally expected a Minister from the Department for children, Schools and Families to respond, the Minister is from the Home Office, so she might like to give us a quick update on how the police are getting on with their new database. Is it as up-to-date as it needs to be? Is it working in the way that she hoped it would? Are there any concerns or reviews that we should be aware of? Those issues are outside my departmental responsibilities, so I would appreciate an update.

Another issue that the Minister could usefully mention is the clear ineptitude that has been demonstrated in communications on the new way of vetting. There have been several misconceptions about who should be vetted, some of which hon. Members have echoed today. The original legislation was never intended to touch on private understandings, but they are widely thought to be covered. Indeed, in his letter to Roger Singleton on 14 December, the Secretary of State says:
"I strongly agree with you that we need to intensify our communications efforts in order to dispel myths and ensure that there is a wide understanding of how the scheme will apply."

Is that an admission that the Government have failed properly to communicate the details of the scheme? What has been learned from those mistakes? How exactly will the Minister communicate with employers and employees about how the ISA will work? We discussed those issues extensively in Committee, and I feel rather disappointed that the Government took no heed of what the Opposition said.

Another issue was raised directly with me in a round-table seminar with a wide range of experts that I hosted just before the Christmas break—the uncertainty about whether children's attendance with organisations as, say, part of their year 10 work experience would trigger a monitoring requirement for the organisation's employees, since a week's placement could satisfy the intensity test. If so, has the Minister taken into account the numbers who would be vetted? That is a matter that particularly concerns schools and organisations that are trying to set up such placements. A parallel issue is internships. We welcome the clarification to the effect that vetting would not be required of 16, 17 or 18-year-olds working with children or vulnerable adults as part of their school or college training. However, many university students may have short or long-term work experience placements. Why would they not be exempt too? Surely that would be an important part of their academic studies.

It is unclear why overseas visitors looking after their own children have a three-month exemption from registering. They will come into contact with children from this country on a frequent or intense basis—say at a scouts' jamboree camp. Perhaps the Minister will explain the choice of the three-month period, which seems somewhat arbitrary, and why there is a shorter period before having to register—I think it is about 28 days—for parents in the UK who come into contact with children from overseas through exchange visits.

The portability of the new system is to be welcomed and I think that many of my constituents see it as an asset of the scheme, but will the Minister clarify whether employers will still be required to seek an enhanced disclosure for people in certain jobs once they are ISA-registered? The ministerial response to the Singleton review seems to be to advise employers that all the information needed to check the suitability of a candidate will be held by the ISA and that thus an enhanced disclosure will not be needed. There is a lack of understanding and clarity about that among voluntary organisations, and it would be a good thing if the Minister were to clarify it today.

Concerns were expressed in the round-table seminar that I mentioned about the decision-making powers of ISA caseworkers. They have the opportunity to change someone's life: it is fundamental. Will the Minister explain the training that they will receive, the prerequisite qualifications and experience for the job, the management structure of the ISA and to whom caseworkers will be accountable? Perhaps she will also clarify the type of information that caseworkers will observe, and the information that they will be able to pass on to employers. Concerns have been raised with me that information about third parties living in the house of a potential employee or volunteer might be passed to voluntary organisations, which might put the individual receiving it in an extremely difficult position. What safeguards are there to ensure that caseworkers do not misuse the information given to them?

An important group of people affected by the measures is ex-offenders. The St. Giles Trust has raised concerns about how the scheme could prevent them from re-entering the labour market. Sir Roger Singleton noted:

"The process of ISA registration is viewed by many as a potential and significant disincentive to ex-offenders who may wish to engage in this work."

The ISA is apparently engaged in discussions with rehabilitative organisations, and perhaps the Minister will explain what action the Department is taking to encourage ex-offenders, and to educate employers, to ensure that the ISA will not have the negative impact that so many fear it will.

The hon. Members for Luton, North and for Crawley (Laura Moffatt) have already discussed the costs of registration, so I shall not do so further, other than to say that I share the hon. Lady's concern that they may disproportionately affect female workers and those who choose to enter the caring professions, perhaps after having a family.

The issue of overseas workers, although tangential to the points raised by the hon. Member for Luton, North, is probably of concern to trade union members. I have raised it with the Government in the past four years, and it has still not been fully addressed. In June 2006 the then Minister of State said that the Government were developing protocols with 21 different countries about how to deal with information about overseas workers who put themselves forward to be registered under the new system. Three years later, the Government have made initial agreements with Australia, France and Ireland—three countries. That is well short of the original objective. That was confirmed recently in a debate in the other place, when the Government spokesman Baroness Morgan said:

"Concern was expressed about engaging with international protocols. I can confirm that we have an initial agreement with Australia and that we are in ongoing discussions with France and Ireland."—[Official Report, House of Lords, 8 July 2009; Vol. 712, c. GC240.]

Considering the substantial number of individuals from overseas who now work in many areas that will be covered by the new registration process and about whose background and records there will be no information on the database, there seems to be a continuing glaring hole in the process. The Government have resisted any system of flagging the fact that someone has been working overseas, to give employers a heads-up on the fact that their ISA check is incomplete. Perhaps union members will be interested in that, because it means that there are two sets of rules for people applying for jobs. It is important that, if records are incomplete, that should be flagged up to employers and voluntary organisations.

It is clear from the debate today, and the debate that has been going on outside Parliament, that there are big questions about how workable the new system will be. We are trying to create a system that will be implemented by employers, employees and voluntary organisations. If those of us who have been involved in the debate for four years find it difficult to unpick the Government's
intentions, the Minister would do best to tell the House that some fundamental reviews are being undertaken, beyond what has been done by Singleton; otherwise, she is stoking up significant problems for the future.

10.37 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Meg Hillier): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr. Olner. I share the sadness that has been expressed about the death of my friend and colleague David Taylor, who was a fellow Co-operative MP and, as you said, a very active Member in Westminster Hall. It is fitting that we should remember him today.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Kelvin Hopkins) for obtaining the debate. The issue is of great importance, and I am glad of the opportunity to clarify some of the matters that he raised and those raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Charlotte Atkins) and for Crawley (Laura Moffatt) and the hon. Members for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) and for Basingstoke (Mrs. Miller).

It is worth my giving an overview of the scheme, but I want to move quickly on to deal with the many points that have been raised. It is worth reiterating a fact on which I am glad that we have the support of hon. Members from all parties: we want a scheme that will be clear, straightforward and current employees. As I explained earlier, it is not over-bureaucratic; it should be a swift and straightforward process.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Meg Hillier):

The scheme provides a simple, one-off registration that is—to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North—free for volunteers and allows an organisation placing volunteers to verify the information quickly and free of charge, without requiring the disclosure of sensitive criminal records data. As hon. Members know, the scheme comes out of the terrible events in Soham. We have made quite a lot of progress. The hon. Member for Basingstoke about where risk lies. Whatever the Government do, they can never eliminate all risk, and it is important that the system that we are debating should be seen as part of the armoury of information that an employer can have in making a decision about whether it is safe for someone to work in a particular environment.

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The scheme was launched on 12 October last year. It was the first stage of the process, under which the three existing barring lists—the POVA and POCA lists and list 99—were replaced by the two ISA barred lists, the lists of those barred from working with children or vulnerable adults. Some people would appear on both lists, and some on one or the other.

A crucial point is worth stressing, as we have not talked enough about vulnerable adults in our four years of debate. Employers have had a legal duty imposed on them to refer to the ISA information about an individual who may pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults. That is critical. As a carer of a particularly vulnerable adult, I have seen over the years what can happen in some care settings—both professionally and personally.

For example, an agency worker or a member of staff who is under investigation may choose to leave that employment. The employer does not need to take further action, because he no longer employs that person. Indeed, his investigation may not have progressed that far. On the same day, the individual can register with another employer or agency, sometimes working in the same care setting. From now on, if there is even a question mark or if an investigation has been started, that individual has to leave that employer and has a legal duty to provide that information. We will see some significant step changes in tackling the few—I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley—bad apples who may pose a risk to vulnerable adults. That will be an important step.

There are also new criminal penalties for barred individuals who work or apply to work with vulnerable groups. Applying to work will itself be a criminal offence if one has been barred. Criminal penalties were introduced to deal with employers who knowingly take on people with a poor record.

About 15,000 people are on the ISA list of barred adults and 19,200 people are on the children’s list, but as I said, some appear on both lists. The reasons for inclusion in the lists include physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, drug offences, neglect and emotional abuse. Paedophilia is only one reason why the scheme is essential. It is important to see things in the round. It is important to note that the majority of those on the current lists were moved from the previous barred lists, which is why so many have been added in such a short time.

From July 2010, all new employees and volunteers who regularly come into contact with children or vulnerable people can be ISA-registered before starting work. Individuals will be able to apply for ISA registration and an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check on one application form. I shall talk about fees in a moment, but the bureaucratic procedure is similar to going through a CRB check. For the individual, it will involve much the same process.

The crucial aspect of the new scheme compared with existing and previous regimes is that people will be continuously monitored and their status reassessed whenever new information is received. There will be automatic triggers to ensure that such information is provided to the ISA. The employer will be able to register an interest in an individual with that person’s consent. For example, were I to apply to for a job in a care home, I would be able to give my registration details to the employer, who would then be able to check that I was free and able to work.

From November 2010, all new employees and volunteers who regularly come into contact with children or vulnerable people must be ISA-registered before starting work. It will become a legal requirement for employers and voluntary organisations to check the ISA status of new and current employees. As I explained earlier, it is not over-bureaucratic; it should be a swift and straightforward process.
By July 2015, all employees and volunteers who work regularly with vulnerable people, including current employees, must be ISA-registered. It may seem a long time, but it is important that we get it right and that we do things proportionately. I recognise, however, that the checks and normal precautions that employers and voluntary groups should be taking have indeed been taking place.

Many points have been raised this morning, so I may skip through certain matters that I think less important; I shall make a judgment on that. The hon. Member for Yeovil asked about Sir Roger Singleton's check. The scheme has received much publicity over the summer. I remember being on maternity leave and sometimes wanting to throw things at the radio when hearing the myths that abounded about who might be included. I was therefore delighted that my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families agreed to ask Sir Roger to check whether what was being done was proportionate. I am glad that we are having this debate today, as it will lay to rest some of those myths.

As a result of public concern, Sir Roger was asked to check whether the scheme had drawn the line in the right place for definitions of frequency and intensity of contact with children and vulnerable adults. His recommendations have been accepted; I believe that they improve the overall balance. They remove some 2 million people from the need for registration and ensure that the definitions of frequent and intensive activities are clear and understood.

It is essential to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are properly safeguarded and that we do all that we reasonably can to protect them from those who seek to do them harm. However, to be effective, the system must be balanced and proportionate. It is no good making it so tight and difficult that it is hard for people to understand. I am grateful to Sir Roger for the clear way in which he communicated his thoughts on how things should be done, and as I said, the Government have accepted them in full.

Mr. Laws: Will someone who goes into a school on a voluntary basis to talk to the same class each week for between six and eight weeks, but always in the presence of the teacher, have to go through the procedure?

Meg Hillier: I shall touch on a number of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. It will depend on frequency, but I shall not pick up on one point. It would depend on frequency, and the scheme is proportionate. The cost of police going through their own check, which is essentially the same, seemed over-bureaucratic. It has therefore been decided that police officers, for whom rigorous vetting arrangements are already in place, and who are uniquely placed to access all the relevant criminality and intelligence information on the police national computer, do not need to be ISA-registered. Some officers have regular contact with children, but that is a slightly different issue.

Mrs. Maria Miller: I return to the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws). If the Minister finds it difficult to give an answer to his question, surely school governors in our constituencies will find it difficult to assess whether or not an individual needs to be police checked and will therefore err on the side of caution. The lack of clarity—and perhaps the Minister's inability to answer that question—shows the scale of the problem.

Meg Hillier: I shall take the rare step of being candid. I have been up three times in the night with a young baby and I have had a cold. I was worried that I might have misheard what the hon. Gentleman said and did not want to commit myself, in Hansard, to something that I may have had to correct. However, I shall address the point that he raised in more general terms. Forgive me, Mr. Olner, for being personal, but that is the reality.

We believe that removing the police is a proportionate decision that will reduce bureaucracy. Voluntary sector support is high. Bodies such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Volunteering England support the inclusion of volunteers in the scheme. It is right. I have volunteered for groups in which my children have been involved. I am a mother of three. For example, I would sometimes turn up at a Cub Scouts camp. In those days, I needed a CRB check as there were other children. I recently turned up to make paper flowers with the Brownies, but I did not need a CRB check because, at all times, Brown Owl was present. We have to recognise that the balance is right for volunteers.

As a number of hon. Members stressed, we also need to communicate clearly to those who are asked to undergo CRB checks or ISA registration which people need to be checked. It is important to get right the frequent contact test that was raised by Sir Roger Singleton. The hon. Member for Yeovil asked whether the test takes into account the nature of the contact. I hope that my story about the Brownies and the paper flowers has reassured him on that. Of more concern is the overnight stay on residential trips with children. I welcome the opportunity to make clear that difference.

The CRB check gives information about a person, but it is left to the employer's discretion to decide whether or not it is relevant to the person having contact with a child. For example, someone who is not barred may have additional information on their CRB...
check, and it would be up to the employer to judge whether it was relevant to the job. If someone was to apply to be a minibus driver for a youth club, the fact that they had a criminal record may not be an issue, but if they had a record around children it may be. If they were to apply for a job in which they were handling money, a criminal record on a financial matter might be an issue. If they were providing children with counselling and the financial issue was a concern, the employer might use that as a reason not to employ them. That is the normal process for a CRB check. I am slightly digressing here. As I am anxious about time, I will have to rattle on a bit.

As for children’s authors, the Government accepts Sir Roger’s analysis that in cases in which someone is working frequently with children but only in different schools and returns to the same school only infrequently, if at all, there is no opportunity to develop and abuse trust. If I understand the hon. Member for Yeovil correctly, he was talking about someone having fairly regular contact with the same group of children, in which case there would be a requirement for registration. The key issue is about the ability to develop a relationship. Schools can still choose to ask anyone for an up-to-date CRB check even if they are not barred from working with children. There may be information in the CRB check which is not relevant to the ISA. The impact assessment that was mentioned is being produced, but I cannot give a definite time scale on its production at the moment.

Let me pick up on some of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North, because he initiated the debate. He and other hon. Members touched on the issue of cost. The cost of the first registration is £64. It is worth stressing that the cost was never £20. I am not clear where that figure comes from. In the consultation carried out by Government, only 5 per cent. of respondents considered that £20 was an appropriate cost. The cost for the ISA part of the check is £28. At the same time, the scheme requires an enhanced CRB disclosure, which costs £36. Therefore, in total, the cost is £64, but the ISA registration is only £28, which is a reasonable amount. Good and responsible employers may well choose to take on such a scheme, and it would be right for them to consider it and, arguably, it would make them competitive in attracting employees.

We must recognise from where the funding comes. If we provide the checks for free, the money will come from tax funds. If we charge a fee, the scheme will be paid for from that. Therefore, we have two payment options because the money has to come from somewhere. It is not for the Home Office to direct employers what to do, but other Departments—the Departments of Health and for Children, Schools and Families—may choose to have discussions with some of those who require people to have checks.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** I am listening to my hon. Friend with interest, but I am sure that it only requires a simple adjustment to the legislation to make it statutory for employers to pay the costs.

**Meg Hillier:** There is no time for legislation on such a basis even if it were in the Government’s mind. However, I hope that most employers will take up the scheme. Once employees register, the scheme is portable. There is a one-off registration. The scheme is similar to the security checks at airports in which employees can be required to contribute.

I do not have the time to go into the issues around CRB performance, but let me reassure hon. Members that it is not as bad as it has been painted. We are regularly on target to achieve a turnaround within 28 days. For the ISA registration, there will be a seven-working-day turnaround to get the information back, and only if there is the trigger of information being sent to the ISA will the ISA have to go through its process, so that is much faster. I have already mentioned that volunteers do not have to pay anything at all, which addresses some points of concern.

The concern about duplication of regulatory provisions is important, and I have had constructive discussions with Unison and other TUC members, and their arguments convinced me to consider the matter again. The work is ongoing, so I cannot reveal anything to hon. Members now, but I am grateful to the trade unions and professional bodies for their constructive and detailed input into the discussions. Intense work is still going on behind the scenes.

I want to stress that the roles for regulators are different from those of the ISA, which must ensure that unsuitable persons are barred from work with children or vulnerable adults. It considers risk and professional competence, which is the role of the regulators. It is important that we recognise the difference. Nevertheless, the ISA works with Unison and keepers of registers to develop clear and consistent guidelines on what information should be referred to the ISA and when. The ISA chief executive has held discussions with some bodies, including the General Social Care Council, the General Medical Council and Unison and will be meeting Unison again later this month to take matters further forward. An operational workshop involving a number of stakeholders will take place later this month to work through the practical issues involved in the referral process. That came about as a result of a meeting that I had with trade unionists and keepers of registers last autumn.

The point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North in respect of harm is a sound one and goes to the heart of what we are discussing with stakeholders. The ISA has no interest in creating an unnecessary and unwieldy bureaucracy that might hinder rather than improve safeguarding. The suggestion that any person who is on a professional register would have their case heard and concluded by the professional regulator prior to referral to the ISA is, in all likelihood, how the process will work. We must ensure that we are aware of any potential loophole or flaw in the process, that we have a proper notification and that we know exactly where responsibility lies at each stage of the process. As the Minister responsible, I am anxious that we do not have a system that sets up a chain of events and that, when different bits of the chain slip, we do not end up with a tragedy for which no one takes responsibility. We must have clear lines of responsibility at every point.

As for conflicting decisions between regulators and the ISA, it might indeed be the case that different conclusions are reached, but that may be for reasons that I outlined at the beginning. The ISA might not bar someone who has been dismissed for professional misconduct because they might not be a risk to children...
or vulnerable adults, but it might bar someone not because they have been dismissed from the professional body but because it holds other relevant information, and it must take all that information in the round. Therefore, we will sometimes see different decisions, but we must be clear about why. I am very positive about our work with the trade unions and the registers of information on the matter.

On appeals, individuals can appeal to a tribunal only on points of law or fact. It was recognised that the expertise of the ISA board and its professional judgment should not be overturned by a court that does not have the same expert knowledge. The option of continuing to a judicial review of decisions remains and discussions are ongoing with those involved in representing employees about how the scheme will work, and I am still open to discussion. We have to start with as we mean to go on, and we start with what we have already outlined and laid out in law. If the scheme does not work, I pledge to review it after the fact and to continue to have discussions about how we ensure that it works properly. Let me reassure all concerned that the factual information provided will be properly considered.

I have very little time left, but I want to stress that I went to Darlington and met the case workers, and I will write to the hon. Member for Basingstoke about the training aspects. I had a very positive experience meeting them and I was impressed with how seriously they took their jobs and their decisions, knowing the impact that they have on people’s lives.

Let me clarify that the ISA scheme does not apply to private and family arrangements or infrequent arrangements. However, when carers—those of us who are parents or caring for anyone who is an adult—hand someone over to others who are not in their direct control, they need the reassurance that they are safe. That is what this scheme is intended to do and what I believe, with the adjustments that we are making, it will do.

Let me reassure the hon. Lady that we are making good progress on the police national database. Moreover, I have to say that we have not been inept on the communications front. We have done a lot to communicate with different bodies, but sometimes, alas—as a journalist myself I find this distressing—newspapers do not always check their facts properly and headlines can alarm people. We will continue to provide information. The helpline has dealt with many queries and e-mailed responses. A lot of work has been done by the ISA to help guide people through the process. Youngsters of 16, 17 and 18 do not need to be vetted. As for the issues around overseas visitors, I will write to the hon. Lady about them and send a copy to other hon. Members.

In summary, the scheme is important and I welcome the debate on it. It is a shame that we have not had more time to discuss it.

11 am

Andrew George (St. Ives) (LD): This is a very important debate for my constituents, who are extremely concerned about the links between mainland Penzance in west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in my constituency.

I am delighted to have secured this debate. Although I understand, of course, that there are very few constituencies south of the Scottish border that have islands with substantial populations who have questions about island transport services, such services are none the less important to my constituents.

I am grateful to the Minister and his Department, particularly for their work during the passage of the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007. At that time, I raised concerns about what would happen to ensure that residents on the Isles of Scilly would achieve parity with those people who were fortunate to have roads and bus services between the communities that they needed to communicate and travel between. I raised those concerns because the water buses—the launches that operate between the Isles of Scilly—are the equivalent of bus services elsewhere. Therefore, I am grateful that his Department was prepared to consider that issue in 2007 during the passage of the Act and that it found a settlement that I know both the council and the residents of the Isles of Scilly were satisfied with.

This debate, which is a 90-minute debate rather than a 30-minute debate, is very specifically geographically focused on my constituency, particularly the west of my constituency, and it is related to the future plans for investment in and improvement of the Isles of Scilly ferry link. For reasons that I need to explain and that I must at least put on record today, this project has been seriously knocked off course by a recent decision, which had been predicted for some time beforehand. The reason that I have secured this debate in Westminster Hall is that I now need the support of the Minister; ideally, I need his intervention, but certainly I need his advice, to help to ensure that this project can be put back on course and that we can find a way forward for it. We need to find a way to ensure that this project can proceed.

By way of assisting the Minister, I will just run through in advance a number of questions that will arise from what I am going to say, to give him the opportunity to reflect on those questions while I paint, if you like, the picture that lies behind them. I will perhaps come back to those questions at the end of my contribution, but I thought it would be helpful if I gave him early notice of them.

The Minister’s colleague, the Minister of State, Department for Transport, the right hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Khan), recently wrote a letter to me, dated 22 December 2009; as the Minister knows, I have corresponded with both him and the Minister of State. In that letter, the Minister of State reasonably stated—I entirely understand his statement—that

“as the decision Minister on any final funding approval for this scheme”—

that is the Isles of Scilly ferry scheme—

“I must decline requests for a meeting. It would be inappropriate for me to involve myself in the local debate on specific proposals for a scheme and even more so as the scheme is also the subject of due planning process.”
I entirely accept and appreciate that comment. He goes on to say:

“However, this should not be interpreted as a “snub” by anyone—I remain fully supportive of your efforts to bring this scheme to a speedy conclusion.”

I appreciate those remarks, because I must say that it has been a difficult negotiation locally on this scheme and it remains difficult now.

However, there has been a recent development, which is the rejection by Cornwall council of its own transportation department’s application for listed building consent for one aspect of Penzance harbour. Of course, gaining that consent is critical to the progress of the ferry scheme and so there is now probably a need for aspects of the scheme to be reviewed. In the light of that development, are there circumstances in which the Minister would be prepared to join me in a meeting with others to help to find a productive and constructive way forward for this project?

In my opinion, the best way forward would be to have input by the Regional Minister, the Minister for the South West, the right hon. Member for South Dorset (Jim Knight); the Government office for the south-west, which I have been speaking to on this issue and which has been very helpful, I must say; senior officials from English Heritage, who I have also spoken to and who are very keen to make a constructive contribution to finding a way forward, and of course officers from Cornwall council. Crucially, however, we also need senior officials, or at least those who can be given an “executive brief”, from the Department for Transport to help us find a way forward. I have already offered to convene such a meeting or series of meetings, in the event of receiving the appropriate agreements from all concerned. My second question therefore is, will the Minister be prepared to commit some of his senior officials to assist with that meeting or series of meetings?

In the letter dated 22 December 2009 from the Minister of State, Department for Transport, which I referred to a moment ago, he told me:

“You may be aware that the South West Region recently carried out a further review of its current programme. I am pleased to report that the Region continues to support this scheme and have, on an exceptional basis, accepted to increase the allocation for the Isles of Scilly scheme to £36m. I hope this provides some reassurance that this scheme is still a priority for the Region and Department.”

Although I query how decisions can be made in a region where there is no line of democratic accountability, I will not probe that issue at the moment. None the less, I am pleased that that decision has been made and that the scheme remains a priority.

That letter from the Minister of State was clearly written after the planning decision that I referred to, which was made on 14 December 2009. Therefore, bearing in mind the rather catastrophic situation that we found ourselves in just before Christmas, I am reading into the Minister of State’s letter that there is some support from the Department for Transport to find a way forward for the scheme.

The current funding package for the project, which should secure the improved ferry scheme for the next 25 years, therefore comprises £36 million of the Department for Transport’s regional transport fund; £11 million from the European regional development fund, because Cornwall, being the poorest region in the UK, is a convergence region, and £10 million of loan capital from Cornwall council. So my final question to the Minister today is, because this project will now inevitably spill over beyond the current financial year and, I am sure, beyond the general election, before a full approval case can be presented to him and his Department, what advice or assistance can he offer to help us ensure that both the hard-won funds and the work that has been going on during the last six years to bring this project forward will not be lost and that the project will proceed? I also ask the Conservative Front-Bench spokesman and my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mark Hunter) what happens to projects that do not reach full business case approval before a general election. I will be interested to hear in their winding-up speeches what reassurance they can offer.

I do not expect from any of the three hon. Members copper-bottomed guarantees to my constituents on the Isles of Scilly or in Penzance that the funds will be in place, but it is important to give some indication on that. I am interested in their comments, bearing in mind that the project has now gone through so many stages of preparation. It is the eleventh hour for a final decision; I will return to the reasons why we are in such a parlous situation, I would find it helpful if all three hon. Members, especially the Minister, could address the matter. The Minister may also wish to offer other advice or recommendations that might help ensure that the project is brought to fruition in the current difficult circumstances.

It might be worth while to outline a few points by way of background. The project originated in some campaigning in which I was involved when I was first elected and a debate that I secured, oddly enough, eight years ago in this very Chamber and more or less at this time, on 8 January 2002. It was a 90-minute debate entitled “Rural and Island Transport” in which I compared the level of subsidy provided to the Isles of Scilly—zero—to that offered pre and post-devolution to the islands of Scotland. Parity with the Scottish islands was the primary basis on which I argued that the Government should consider seriously the need for improvements and investment in the future of the Isles of Scilly ferry link.

The plans for the ferry link emanate from that, as well as from concerns expressed by the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company that its turnover provided insufficient capacity for investment in the kind of vessel and the harbour infrastructure needed to bring the service up to both the safety standards expected by the Government and the standard of comfort relative to services elsewhere in Europe expected by the travelling public.

The Isles of Scilly Steamship Company vessel Scillonian III was purpose-built in 1997—I hope that the Minister is listening—with the support of the Labour Government in the form of a £1 million loan to assist with purchase and construction. Perhaps former Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s connection with the Isles of Scilly had something to do with it. I am sure that he would not have been pulling strings at the time, but it would have assisted negotiations. Because of the extremely rough and inclement sea conditions at this time of year, the service runs seven months a year, from March to November, crossing the 42 nautical miles between Penzance and St. Mary’s in the Isles of Scilly. A freight vessel, the Gry Maritha, also runs three times a week throughout the year and is an essential lifeline to the Isles of Scilly.
The progress of the project has been good since 2003. I took a delegation to see the then Minister and Member for Plymouth, Devonport, David Jamieson. One thing led to another, and we negotiated and secured a project, which put the funding in place and encouraged local authorities to establish what they described as a route partnership between local councils and the Duchy of Cornwall, which owns substantial amounts of land and property in Cornwall and especially on the Isles of Scilly. In the early days, a proposal was made to include within the route partnership a bid to purchase a new helicopter for British International Helicopters, which provides a lifeline air service to the Isles of Scilly in addition to the fixed-wing aircraft that runs mainly from Land’s End to St. Mary’s. However, that element of the project evaporated over time and the partnership returned to the issue of the vessel.

A great deal of progress has been made, particularly in recent years. The proposed design of the vessel has been agreed and competitive tenders have been made. Some are very good, particularly in the current market, and would provide the island service with a lot of boat for little money, so I am sure that the partnership will be keen to proceed with them and not lose them. However, the competitive tenders expire at the end of the month, when the partnership must either seek an extension or run the whole process again. Equally, regarding the two remaining companies operating the service through the process, the tender exercise has been completed and the tenders will expire mid-February.

Permissions have been granted at both the harbour revision and planning stages for St. Mary’s harbour on the Isles of Scilly, and the harbour revision order for Penzance has proceeded, although a judicial review challenge is pending, so I do not imagine that the Minister will want to comment on that. The crucial issue is that the listed building consent planning application for Penzance has not proceeded, having failed on 14 December.

A great deal of progress has been made over time, but the question is how the project has foundered on what are known in Penzance as the Battery rocks, which stand to the south of Penzance harbour. Difficult decisions have been made, and after much scoping and a working consultants’ report, the narrowing of options regarding the vessel types and port infrastructure have proceeded with little contention, although a lot of the process was bound to be contentious. It was important that the route partnership and its membership listened and were prepared to compromise when they found themselves in difficulty.

The proposed scheme for Penzance was exhibited on 30 September 2008. Until then, because the decisions to be taken were all local, I, like any other Member of Parliament, kept out of them. The more contentious they were, the more likely I was to keep out of them, also like any other Member of Parliament, but what concerned me after the exhibition was the nature of some of the objections to the proposals and the vociferousness and widespread concern about how the project was proceeding. Although I did not wish to offer a view on any of the planning merits of the proposal, I was concerned about the process, particularly the consultation with the local community and English Heritage’s recommendation that in order for the project to proceed, the route partnership should seriously investigate alternatives. I was worried that that simply was not happening.

I called for constructive dialogue and for calm and rational consideration of the route partnership’s favoured proposal and the alternatives. As a result, rather than proceeding with the planning application in October 2008, the route partnership delayed and reconsidered. It held a further public engagement exhibition in Penzance in January 2009 and proceeded with the planning application in February. It was clear to me that there would be serious difficulties, given the extent and nature of the objections. Fearing that the project was about to be scuppered, I called on the partners to come together to take a genuine look at the alternatives. I am pleased to say that the officers agreed to such constructive discussions and that they began in April last year.

At the same time, English Heritage wrote to Cornwall county council—that was before it was changed to a single unitary authority, which I voted against. English Heritage’s letter of 21 April followed other letters expressing its deep concern about the proposal and outlining the significance of the location for the proposed freight terminal. It was to be built in the part of the harbour with the most historical significance. In particular, a south-facing wall where five centuries of harbour development were visible was to be covered in concrete, and that was the fundamental reason why English Heritage urged the council to consider alternatives. The letter asked that “consideration be given to locating the passenger and freight terminus in an alternative location, less harmful to the historic environment.”

The lengthy correspondence from Mr. Simon Ramsden on behalf of the regional office of English Heritage contained clear warnings.

On 12 June, during negotiations in which I was encouraging the council to look at the alternatives, the planning application was eventually withdrawn and an options study agreed to. I convened meetings to ensure that that was pursued. Halcrow, the consultancy that had been engaged previously, was appointed to undertake the work. The Penzance Harbour Revision Order 2009 was finally passed on 27 August. Halcrow’s options appraisal report, which came out at the end of August, confirmed that although the preferred option of building on Battery rocks would be the most expensive in capital costs, it had the lowest forecast operational costs.

That was a crucial turning point in the process because the route partnership had the opportunity to review its approach. Leaving aside the merits of the options and the report, my assessment was that the route partnership’s favoured option was the least politically deliverable. I use that expression deliberately because my assessment was concerned not with economics, but with policy. I was concerned that the proposal simply would not get through because of the strong opposition to which I have referred. English Heritage, a statutory consultee, was saying that there should be more commitment to considering the alternatives. There was a threat and a likelihood of judicial review or legal challenge if the favoured option was decided on because a number of process issues were not satisfactory.

As all Members of Parliament know, when providing political leadership, one has to take the rough with the smooth. There was a lot of rough coming my way at
that time, but I do not mind that. We needed a considered, calm and rational debate on the proposals, but sadly we had a response that fanned—or poured paraffin on—the flames of the concerns and opposition in Penzance. Cornwall council's portfolio holder made injudicious comments and the Council of the Isles of Scilly felt it could tell Penzance what it should do with its harbour—not a clever move. That tipped the project into almost certain political undeliverability in September.

I called seven public meetings: six on the Isles of Scilly and one in Penzance. They were well attended and the people were extremely passionate. The majority of those who spoke on the Isles of Scilly were passionately opposed to the line I was taking, to my warnings and to my preferred option, even though that is not a material consideration because I have no say in the matter, as the Minister knows. However, I answered the question of which option I preferred, rather than avoiding it.

The Council of the Isles of Scilly proposed a motion that tried to draw the Minister into the merits of the planning decisions that were to be taken by Cornwall council, rather than communicating its concerns to the council. It also made some inaccurate and disparaging remarks about me, but I will leave that aside. I was provoked to write to the Minister to apologise that he had been troubled by questions that should not have been directed at him. I expressed concern that the actions of the Council of the Isles of Scilly risked derailing the project and about whether the council was representing the views of the islanders.

As a result of the motion, I received my largest postbag ever of personal support from the islanders. Sadly, I cannot give names to the comments because of the fear of reprisals and intimidation on the islands, but I will give a flavour of what was written. On 16 October, the day after the council's decision, one person wrote:

“I personally do not think the residents of the Isles of Scilly should ‘tell Penzanze residents what they should do in their area/community’."

It goes on to say:

“the word so many people are forgetting is PARTNERSHIP. Not a dictatorship, which as an observer, appears to be the stance from the Council of Isles of Scilly. As MP for the Isles of Scilly, please could you ask for an enquiry as to why the Route Partnership failed to engage with the Penzanze residents and how this this 11th hour mess could have been avoided?”

Another letter stated:

“Unfortunately there is a climate of intimidation and few wish to speak out… I wish you strength and patience. Do not allow our council to bully or intimidate you. We rely on you to remain our voice of reason.”

Another person points out

“how appalled I am by the recent actions from the Council of the Isles of Scilly, and I express all my sympathy to you when you face such unjustified, unfair, and misinformed fire”

A further letter dated 19 October states:

“Many people, with a great deal of ability, within these Islands feel they are excluded from entering into debate on major issues that affect their community due to conflicting interests and the fear of persecution by what has become over the last few years an all-powerful local authority, led under the mantra of ‘divide and rule’.”

Another person has written:

“I was extremely sorry to learn about the way you have been treated by the Isles of Scilly Council”— and so on. There were many more such letters.

I mentioned those letters simply because they show the concern that decisions were not necessarily being taken on behalf of the community as a whole. As I mentioned, on 14 December, of course, Cornwall council’s strategic planning committee recommended the rejection—it cannot ultimately make a decision—of the planning application for the critical element of Penzanze harbour.

There is no satisfaction in going through an “I told you so” routine when such an important project has been seriously jeopardised, by what can be described only as wanton obstinacy. There is tremendous concern about the future of this important link, and although I do not think the link itself is in jeopardy, the project certainly is. Clearly, in such circumstances, there is no shortage of accusations flying around.

Where do we go from here? In his message to council members before Christmas, the chief executive of Cornwall council stated:

“We are continuing to work with English Heritage to remove its objections to certain aspects of the scheme.”

I have spoken to English Heritage and it is not aware that any representations are currently being made. He went on to say:

“we are seriously looking at Falmouth as an alternative.”

Such a proposal would extend the ferry time by at least another hour and a half, would probably jeopardise the link completely and is therefore not a serious option—in fact, I do not expect the Minister to comment on that.

Many people are concerned about what has happened in the past, and a number of criticisms have been made about the political nature of the decisions taken. There has been particular confusion about the kind of planning application that should have been made at Cornwall council's level, and concern about the lack of proper consultation, the misjudgement that I have mentioned, and the perceived bias of some of the planning documents.

I mentioned a number of public meetings. More than 500 people turned up to the one in Penzanze on a rainy Friday night—indeed, I believe that we had to turn people away because the hall did not have the capacity to take them. Some 500 people voted against the council’s proposal and three voted in favour. I tried to urge the route partnership to play a part in that meeting, but it refused to engage with the public at that level. That is obviously an issue of deep concern.

The two ships themselves—the Scillonian and the Gry Maritha—obviously provide a vital link to the Isles of Scilly. The Minister’s Department—through the Maritime and Coastguard Agency—is clearly responsible for giving the ships their certificates of seaworthiness. I believe that once the freight ship itself completes this year’s five-year survey, it will be seaworthy until 2015. Scillonian has a five-year cycle of surveys, which should at least mean that it is available until 2014. The sustainability of the link for the next few years is, I think, assured, although the Minister has anything further to say about that.

Although I passionately favour devolution and would like Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to be given a great deal more power, as the Minister might know, I would like central Government to come in and offer support at this stage. I am keen to work with the Minister to achieve that. We need a quick review of the project and
not only for the people who live on the Isles of Scilly, of
details of the subject in his usual calm and rational way,
the debate. He has covered almost all the relevant
great detail, I frankly do not have much more to add to
in Parliament.

issue for the people he has the privilege of representing
on securing a debate on what is clearly a significant
under your chairmanship, Mr. Olner. I congratulate my
11.38 am

Graeme Hicks—I do not think that I have mentioned
his name already—said in the
Western Morning News
on 17 November that the prime concern of the route
partnership has not been to reduce capital costs, which
will largely be covered by grant funding, which is vital
to the islands’ communities, but to decrease running
costs, which will not be covered by such funding. The
Minister might wish to reflect on the use of capital
funding to reduce the revenue consequences of such a
project. Whatever package is ultimately put in place to
secure this vital link, my constituents on the Isles of
Scilly are keen to ensure that the islands are not saddled
with unacceptably high freight costs. The funding package
needs to be managed in a way that ensures the economic
viability and affordability of the scheme, whatever
infrastructure configuration is put in place. That should
remain uppermost in the minds of those who seek a
settlement of the issue.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise such a
parochial issue. Obviously, I understand the limitations
in place, but I look forward to hearing whether the
Front-Bench spokespeople can express some kind of
recognition of the difficulties or a commitment to dealing
with them. I know that other projects around the UK
will experience such difficulties, because there is a risk of
slippage beyond the financial year and the general
election.

11.38 am

Mark Hunter (Cheadle) (LD): It is a pleasure to have
the opportunity to contribute to this important debate
under your chairmanship, Mr. Olner. I congratulate my
hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Andrew George)
on securing a debate on what is clearly a significant
issue for the people he has the privilege of representing
in Parliament.

Having listened to my hon. Friend’s contribution in
great detail. I frankly do not have much more to add to
the debate. He has covered almost all the relevant
details of the subject in his usual calm and rational way,
and he has spoken passionately and knowledgeably on
the issue—indeed, he has a track record of doing so
since he was first elected to the House in 1997.

My hon. Friend has discussed a link that is important
not only for the people who live on the Isles of Scilly, of
whom there are approximately 2,000, but for the wider
community that he represents. That link is, of course,
also important to the many thousands of people who
visit the area because it is a tourist hot spot. Indeed, the
people of the Isles of Scilly would be the first to
acknowledge, as would my hon. Friend, how important
the tourism industry is to them.

My hon. Friend set out the case for a new Isles of
Scilly ferry service comprehensively and in his usual
quiet and rational manner. In doing so, he made a
simple and heartfelt plea on behalf of the people he
represents, and I think we would all agree that that
deserves a positive response from the Minister. It is a
measure of the man that, despite all the difficulties and
challenges of the issue, which he has chronicled in
detail, and the controversy and the various threats of
intimidation, which most of us will have heard with
great concern, he has stood steadfast and continued his
campaign for the much-needed ferry link between St. Mary’s
and Penzance.

The ferry link, as I have said, is an issue of extreme
concern not only to the 2,000-odd people who live
there, but to the wider community. It is about links
between the isles and the mainland. Public transport—
indeed, transport links generally—is just as important,
some would say more so, in the remote parts of the UK
as in any other part. We must try to find a way to ensure
that the project proceeds, despite the setback of Cornwall
council’s planning committee’s failure to back the plans.
My hon. Friend warned that that might happen, and
today he simply seeks ministerial support to extend the
funding deadline so that all workable options can be
explored.

The message is straightforward. Will the Minister
throw the scheme a lifeline, so that those across the
spectrum who want the project to succeed—my hon.
Friend made great play of the fact that it is not a
partisan or party political issue—can work together to
seek a viable solution? Surely, the Government that are
elected after the general election, of whatever political
hue, will not abandon their commitment to those who
live on the Scillies. I am prepared to say on behalf of my
party that, despite the setbacks that were well chronicled
in my hon. Friend’s contribution, we believe a new Isles
of Scilly ferry link is not only desirable but essential,
and public funding is a key component of that.

I think we would all agree that my hon. Friend made
the case today comprehensively, in great detail and in a
calm, rational and bipartisan manner, and it deserves
that kind of response. I, too, look forward to what the
Minister might be able to say by way of extending a
lifeline and some hope to the people who live on the
Isles of Scilly and the wider community that the ferry
link will go ahead and will not fall merely as the result
of a funding deadline that, despite the best efforts of so
many, will not be met. That is the key question that
should occupy Members in the debate today.

11.43 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): It is a pleasure
to serve under your chairmanship, Mr. Olner. I, too,
congratulate the hon. Member for St. Ives (Andrew
George) on securing the debate. It is clear how committed
he is to his constituents and how much work he has put
into the issue, although I am a little puzzled by his
stance, to which I shall return in a moment.
I do not know the beautiful Isles of Scilly at all, but I get second-hand reports of them that are full of praise from a family member who holidays there regularly. The ferries to the islands from Penzance are pivotal to tourism not only for the Scillies, but for Penzance, where they play a significant role in the local economy, as the hon. Gentleman acknowledged. I am impressed by the project to regenerate Penzance harbour and the impact it could have on improving transport links for the town as well as for the isles. Derek Thomas, the Conservative parliamentary candidate for St. Ives, has told me that it is essential that the sea link from Penzance to the Isles of Scilly is improved, both for handling freight and for improving the passenger experience, through a new ferry service.

I understand that three options were examined, of which two are still on the table. Option A, the main option that the hon. Member for St. Ives discussed, falls within the £44 million budget originally allocated, including the substantial grants from central Government. It would comprise freight and terminal facilities on reclaimed land at Penzance harbour and a pier extension with rock armour protection for the pier. Cornwall county council was minded to accept that option. It had already, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, for a harbour revision order, which involved significant changes to the grade II-listed harbour sea wall, and crucially, English Heritage accepted that. Sadly, English Heritage seems to have changed its tune and objected to option A because of concerns about the preservation of aspects of Penzance harbour, whose antiquity I fully recognise.

Cornwall county council’s strategic planning committee was forced to reject that proposal because it was told that it would not get past English Heritage. Nevertheless, Councillor Alec Robertson, the leader of the council, has told me that he continues to believe that that is a viable option and is working with English Heritage to resolve its concerns—I think that the Minister is nodding.

Option B was dropped because it would have involved hugely increased operating costs and destroyed several local jobs. The only remaining option is option C, which proposes that the freight depot should be relocated to the village of Longrock and that the old Trinity House museum at Penzance should be converted into a passenger terminal. It does not include plans to extend the pier or provide it with rock armour protection. Both options include a new combined passenger freight vessel, which would operate at similar speeds to the existing Scillonian—I will not repeat the points that the hon. Member for St. Ives made about that.

If a consensus is not reached on one of the options, and option A is clearly the favoured one, the historical links could be under threat as there is a danger that Falmouth could re-emerge as an option. For all the reasons the hon. Gentleman set out, that would be extremely unsatisfactory.

According to the Office for National Statistics, about 100 jobs in Penzance and on the Isles of Scilly are within water-based transport. I understand that the recent Mott MacDonald analysis conducted on behalf of Cornwall country council showed that 31 of those jobs relate to the passenger and freight ferries currently operating from the harbour.

Visitors generate revenue for local shops, restaurants, bars and taxi firms, and the council estimates that approximately 190 jobs in Penzance are dependent, directly or indirectly, on business links with Scilly. Although average earnings in the south-west hotel and restaurant sector are extremely low—£11,500 a year—those jobs inject a combined £2.2 million into the local economy, so Penzance’s economy would be affected as well as that of the Isles of Scilly.

It is also important to stress the impact that suspending freight services would have on Penzance. Some 12,000 tonnes of freight are delivered to the Isles of Scilly each year, 95 per cent. of which go through Penzance, so the loss of freight services to the Isles of Scilly could kill off Penzance’s harbour.

Option C, which I have mentioned, would have several practical difficulties. It would delay the project further, which in turn would lead to the need to repeat vessel tenders that will have gone out of date, and another delay in the harbour works to suit the seasonal need of marine works. In a letter to the hon. Member for St. Ives, the Minister who was then responsible for shipping made it clear that the Government would withdraw funding if the agreed time scales were not met—I hope that the Minister will come back to that point in his speech. The delay involved in option C would further increase the costs by £5 million anyway, so that option looks less attractive.

Unsurprisingly, both Derek Thomas and Cornwall county council have told me that they have concluded that option A offers the best solution. Operationally, it is simpler and easier to manage with activity on only one site. Option A would maximise harbour regeneration opportunities, and allow enhancement of the south pier, reclamation and rock armour protection along the full length of the listed harbour, thereby reducing storm damage to it. Investment in the Penzance south pier would reduce future maintenance costs on the grade II-listed pier via the rock armour protection to the seaward face, but all that depends on persuading English Heritage to change its mind.

Andrew George: I entirely accept the hon. Gentleman’s points about the significant importance of the link between Penzance and the Isles of Scilly for jobs and economic benefits to Penzance, but I am not sure that he has been well briefed on the impact of pursuing option A versus that of pursuing option C. The £5 million figure that he cited would be for anticipated additional costs should the project be delayed, whether it be option A that causes the delay or a failure to pursue option C at an earlier stage, which would also result in delay.

Mr. Brazier: I accept the hon. Gentleman’s point, but option C includes inherent further delays. I mentioned a couple of them, including the requirement to retender for the vessels. There is a further point: Cornwall council has estimated that option C would involve an additional cost of up to £150,000 a year for the freight facility, so there is a substantial extra operating cost.

I should say something further about the hon. Gentleman’s handling of the matter. I make it clear that I fully understand his commitment, but when any constituency MP is faced with competing desires among elements of their constituency, with some people in favour of one thing and some people in favour of another, they of course hold consultation meetings, and the outcomes of those meetings tend to depend, to some extent, on the part of the constituency in which
they are held. However, at the end of the day, attacks on
the process, even if there have been flaws in the it—I am
not in a position to comment on that—are no substitute
for coming to the view that a particular outcome is
needed.

As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman believes that
the project is needed, and needed soon, which really
means that option A is needed. He accuses the Council
of the Isles of Scilly of intimidation, but I must say that
I do not recognise that. One does not normally identify
the Isles of Scilly as an area of huge intimidation—that
is not the picture painted by my family member who
frequently holidays there.

The Western Morning News reported a view that the
hon. Gentleman's meetings were
“not a constructive way forward for the project at this late stage in
proceedings”.

I know that the county council also raised several
points about that. He must accept the logic of his own
conclusion. There will be some elements in Penzance
that will be sorry to see the changes involved in the
process, but, if something is to happen in a reasonably
timely fashion and without a lot of extra costs, option
A is the realistic option on the table. To will the end but
not the means is not consistent.

The hon. Gentleman rightly asked—if I were a
constituency MP in his position, I would have done the
same—for a view from each of the Front-Bench spokesmen
as to whether the project will be funded. He did not get
an answer from his party's Front-Bench spokesman—

Andrew George: I did.

Mr. Brazier: Well, not a full answer, and the hon.
Gentleman will not get a full answer from me.

Mark Hunter: I am not quite sure—

Andrew George: The hon. Member for Canterbury
(Mr. Brazier) was not in the Chamber.

Mark Hunter: Yes. With great respect to the hon.
Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), he was, in fact,
out of the room, or had at least popped to the back—I
was facing Mr. Olner in the Chair. I clearly gave my
party’s view on the matter, so I hope that he will
withdraw his comment. The record will show what I
said, and there is no doubt about it.

Mr. Brazier: I apologise. I was out for a moment to
answer a message on my mobile phone, so I withdraw
the point. I listened to the hon. Gentleman's peroration,
and I had assumed that he would have included his
answer in his summary, in which he made several fair
points but did not give a firm commitment to providing
the money. If he did so earlier while I was out of the
room—for a moment, I apologise and withdraw my
comment.

Given the current state of the public finances, it is
impossible for a spokesman for a party that might well
be in office in a few months' time—I do not anticipate
anything from the election, but there is a reasonable
prospect that my party may be in office—to make an
absolute commitment on public spending. However,
there are two points that I can make.

First, it seems wholly unreasonable to say that a
deadline a few weeks away must be a hard and fast
condition for receiving the money. Clearly, that is ridiculous.
Secondly, I hope that, when considering this matter,
English Heritage will not allow itself to become simply
a spanner in the works. I have the greatest admiration
for the work that it does to protect important heritage,
including a great deal in my constituency. However,
given that it has already conceded much important
ground in respect of the harbour revision order, I very
much hope that it will not simply become a spanner in
the works should it prove possible, as I very much hope
that it will, for this extremely worthy project to go
ahead.

Andrew George: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brazier: I am about to finish, but I shall give way
one last time.

Andrew George: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.
Of course, I entirely understand that there is a general
election coming and that therefore he probably could
not resist commenting on my handling of the situation—I
leave that to others to judge. However, on English
Heritage and its role, as I have said, it has already made
it clear that it wants to offer a constructive role in
seeking a workable alternative, and it has professional,
capable officers who are prepared to come and work
with others to find a way through. That is willing the
means, as well as trying to achieve the ends.

[Mr. Peter Atkinson in the Chair]

Mr. Brazier: I understand what the hon. Gentleman
is saying, but the options are narrowing. We are now
down to two options. The second one would be more
expensive in capital terms partly, as he said, because of
delays, some of which are inevitable. It would certainly
also be more expensive in current terms, and this at a
time when money is critically tight.

I very much hope that attention can be focused on
option A, which the county council believes is the best
option. I hope that any Government, whatever their
political complexion, will look at it with some enthusiasm,
because it is important for the local area, and I very
much hope that it will be possible to fund it so that it
can go forward in a timely fashion.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport
(Paul Clark): I offer best wishes for 2010, Mr. Atkinson.
Let us hope that we have a constructive year. If Mr. Olner
had still been here, I might have said “successful”, but I
will not say that. Seasons greetings to you and to hon.
Members in this Chamber.

At the outset, I congratulate the hon. Member for
St. Ives (Andrew George) on securing this debate on a
fundamentally important issue. It is important not only
to those on the Isles of Scilly for reasons of social
inclusion, education, economic prosperity and tourism.
As the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mark Hunter) said, it
is also fundamentally important to Penzance and the
wider region for attracting people, jobs, business and
trade to the region. It is important to all the good
people who work and operate in the area.
The Isles of Scilly came to my attention as a young lad in short trousers when that great leader Huyton holidayed there. What a marvellous leader he was. I have to be put right. I should say that I recognise the importance of that area.

If hon. Members could see my in-tray and that of the officials in the Department of Transport, they would see that the hon. Member for St. Ives has certainly been working hard, seeking a way forward on this important issue. I recognise that he has held seven public meetings and so on, and all that has happened. However, I am interested in the fact that he now wishes the Government in Whitehall, many hundreds of miles away from his constituency, to start imposing processes on democratically elected bodies. I say that genuinely, because I am not going to comment on quotes such as the one about whether the decisions were being taken on behalf of residents overall. All local authorities, whether the council of the Isles of Scilly or Cornwall council, need to take part in these processes, as part of the day-to-day process that goes on.

I give this commitment at the outset: we support the need for there to be a viable passenger and freight service, which is important for all the reasons that I have just outlined, but I cannot dictate—I would be highly surprised if any Liberal Democrat Member suggested that I should dictate—what should be the final outcome. The hon. Member for St. Ives quoted someone saying something about this needing to be a partnership not a dictatorship, and that is exactly where the solution must be found. I will answer the hon. Gentleman's questions, which he set out clearly at the beginning, as I go through.

Andrew George: I look forward to hearing the Minister’s response to the other issues. I want to reassure him, in case he misunderstood, about the nature of the question that I was fundamentally asking. I am not asking him or his Department, or anyone in the Government, to come in and impose a solution in circumstances where a solution needs to be the product of decisions taken by the democratically accountable bodies representing the communities that are served by the service. However, I seek reassurance that his Department will assist—and that requires some executive decisions. Certainly, a decision on the extension of the funding can only be taken by his Department, not by local authorities.

Paul Clark: I hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying and I recognise that. Let me reassure hon. Members again that we are doing all that we can. My ministerial colleague, the Minister of State for Transport, said in a letter written in December:

“officials are working very closely and positively with Cornwall Council on this scheme with the most recent meeting held”

in the middle of November. We continue to do that because we want to find a solution. This is an emotive issue that goes beyond the normal sort of transport debate to the heart of creating and nurturing flourishing communities.

Regrettably, I have been unable to meet the hon. Member for St. Ives, despite his asking me on a number of occasions. That is not, to quote the minister a snub: it is because ongoing legal matters are involved, and that is the only reason why. I am sure that hon. Members are aware that I cannot discuss in detail the harbour revision order, the listed buildings consent order or the proposed planning application from Cornwall council. It would not be advisable for me, a decision-making Minister, to do that because I could be involved in processes later on. However, it might be useful if I answered the questions posed by the hon. Gentleman and gave an indication of the implications of any revised time scales. I hope that this scene-setting will help to take that forward.

It is crucial to maintain the existing links between the mainland and the islands. I put that on the record because it is clearly our position. They are an essential lifeline to more than 2,000 islanders and they allow trade and tourism to flourish. Some 140,000 visitors a year are attracted to make the journey down to the beautiful south-west. To give an indication of how vital retaining the Isles of Scilly link is, the tourist board for the south-west estimated that 77 per cent. of employment on the islands relies on tourism. It cannot be much clearer that there is an overriding need, just in economic terms, to ensure that there is a safe, affordable link to the islands.

For many people the stopover in the scenic and historic town of Penzance and surrounding areas before moving on to the islands is an essential part of the experience. That is why I picked up on the comment made by the hon. Member for Cheadle about the economic prosperity not just of the isle, but of Penzance and the surrounding area. That is all part and parcel of the work that goes on. An assessment in 2009 said that 190 jobs in Penzance alone are directly or indirectly related to tourism and trade with the Isles of Scilly. Those issues should feature prominently and those two employment facts should be at the forefront of our thinking about the future and the timing of the delivery of a solution to the issues that we face.

As hon. Members have already highlighted, current links include a plane from Lands End and a helicopter from Penzance, which continue to offer excellent, speedy transport links to the islands. Equally, the existing passenger vessel, Scillonian III, and the freight vessel, Gry Maritha, provide the unique travel experience enjoyed by many—although I understand it is not so good when the swell is up. I had that experience when I was in the North sea. I have been advised by members of my own office that the journey across on Scillonian III is beautiful. However, we have to recognise that although various works, including maintenance works, have been undertaken and that it probably has a certificate until 2012 on the passenger side, which might be able to be extended, there is clearly an issue vis-à-vis health and safety and long-term sustainability that must be taken into account.

Andrew George: The Minister is aware that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency regularly inspects the Scillonian III. I understand that, as a passenger ferry, it is subject to a five-year round of annual inspections. Obviously, the thing that is under inspection most in relation to the Scillonian III is its life-saving apparatus, which may have an impact on the passenger numbers that it can take. However, I hope that we can work together and ensure that we do the right thing from the outset. We are committed to ensuring that the vessel requires some extension of life with regard to the certificate, which will be necessary should this project be delayed, and that there is some co-operation
from the Minister’s Department in ensuring that the concerns about the longevity of the vessel are communicated and actioned properly.

Paul Clark: I take that point on board. The Scillonian III was built in 1977 and I want to ensure—as does the hon. Gentleman, I am sure—that we continue to have a regime that is fit for purpose and ensures the safety of passengers, staff and operatives who use such vessels. That must be the overriding concern. If I am right, two overriding considerations were taken into account in 2002-03, one of which was the upgrading of the quays, which was needed to allow safer and more efficient passenger and freight movement. Most importantly, there was the need to acquire a new vessel or vessels, since the current vessels are likely to be past their service fitness by 2012.

As already indicated, the Scillonian III has a licence to operate until February 2012. It is part of the MCA process to continue reviewing that, but we are talking about long-term viability and it is clearly not going to go much further than that date. The freight vessel has been subject to major repairs and is licensed until 2014. Further extensions to the licence may be possible, but that must be underpinned by a firm commitment to replace those vessels at the earliest opportunity.

Cornwall council’s proposal to replace both vessels with a single vessel for handling passengers and freight in a safer and more comfortable fashion has been clearly outlined, recognising the two overriding criteria that were identified in 2002. Improvements to the harbours at St. Mary’s and Penzance would be needed to accommodate the larger single vessel. Obviously, there are always bones of contention with any such proposal. As the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) said, that will always be the case due to the nature of planning and major changes, but we need to find the right way to proceed on that basis. It is partly the role of Cornwall council, along with the council of the Isles of Scilly, to find ways through. I understand that concerns continue regarding the sight lines along Jubilee Pool, the future of Battery Rock beach and the proposed new terminal. I will not go through the rights and wrongs of what we now know as option A and option C; but I will state again that securing a long-term solution must allow the sea link to operate economically. It must be done on an economic basis or it will not work. I recognise some of the arguments about that being more expensive and issues about freight operations, but this must be done on an economic basis or it will have no sustainability. Any solution must secure vital jobs in Penzance and the island, and it must allow the Scillonians to contribute to the wider UK economy and community and allow passengers and freight to move safely. Those are our key concerns, which I am sure are shared across the Chamber.

Andrew George: In terms of assessing the merits of the scheme before the full approval submission is made, the Minister will be aware that as a fall-back, both councils suggest that this might go to Falmouth as an alternative—a lot of people raise their eyebrows when they hear that. Given the test that he has just set for such an approval, I am sure he would acknowledge that such an alternative would require an entirely new business case, and the whole project would have to be started again. A business case of that nature would take at least 10 months to complete, and would probably require about half a million pounds of investment to undertake all the scoping and investigation work. I would be interested to hear the Minister’s comments on that.

Paul Clark: I was coming on to the implications of that. The hon. Gentleman is right: if there is to be any major revision to the proposals, we will need a new appraisal process that would, quite rightly, have to be followed to ensure that a business case could be made and to protect the public funds and so on.

There have been some issues about whether an options analysis was undertaken. My understanding is that in 2004, the route partnership started looking at the details and the range of options for delivery of the scheme, on the basis that I outlined a moment or two ago. It was agreed that the basis behind the options and analysis would be that the vessel and harbour-side operations would be self-financing, and would not continue to have revenue implications for the public sector through subsidised fares or freight costs. The scheme would need to provide for a payback to Cornwall council of any moneys that were provided, and create a sinking fund for the replacement of a new vessel in 20 to 25 years’ time. Clearly, a prudent, sensible process was put in place. There were a number of scenarios to look at—doing nothing; doing a minimum option such as replacing the vessel; or doing something on a range of different harbour options, including alternative mainland port options, and alternative layouts for Penzance and St. Mary’s harbours.

The conclusion at local level was that option A was the best route forward as it had the smallest impact in terms of the development of the harbours, and was the most sustainable solution for the environment and as a business model. I understand that the route partnership undertook a comprehensive range of consultations on the necessary consents for the harbour revision order, the listed building consents at Penzance, and the planning and listed building consents at St. Mary’s. As part and parcel of that process, an additional £400,000 was found to review the potential of option C. That detailed financial analysis showed that such a solution would not solve the health and safety issues that I raised about port security. It also showed that the out-of-town depot would have increased operating costs of around £300,000 a year, with no greater revenue. That was confirmed by a body that operates another out-of-town freight facility on the Isle of Wight. A number of assessments were made in getting to where the local stakeholders and bodies currently are. It would be a sad day if a workable solution could not come forward and a lifetime for economic prosperity was placed at risk.

On the funding arrangements, I commend the south-west region for identifying the Isles of Scilly link as a priority scheme for the region. The region has had a number of pressures on it in respect of the region of transport demands, as many regions do. Not long before taking this portfolio, I made a three-day visit to the south-west and saw some of the work being undertaken at Truro and St. Austell. I opened the new Dobwalls bypass. There is a range of pressures, but I recognise that the south-west region has put the scheme very high on its agenda, and rightly so.

The scheme was supported in the first round of regional funding allocations, and in last year’s update to the region’s transport programme continued to be so.
The region has proposed an increase to the scheme, with a revised regional allocation of £36 million. That is a resounding reflection of the importance that the regional partners attach to the scheme, for all the reasons that we have identified.

The South West of England Regional Development Agency has also given its full support to the scheme, and long may the RDAs continue to play an important role in helping with economic development for regions such as the south-west. I am sure that the hon. Member for Canterbury would like to agree. The South West of England RDA has identified £11 million—that has been made available—from the convergence fund to support the upgrade of the harbours. There is also, of course, funding from Cornwall council. The scheme currently has in place for the first time all the funding sources that it requires.

Mr. Brazier: As the Minister invited me to intervene, I shall do so. There are, of course, some things being done by development agencies of which we approve and which we would like to see continue.

Paul Clark: That sounds like resounding support for the continuation of regional development agencies. I am delighted that the enlightened hon. Member for Canterbury supports the bringing together of investment in jobs, homes and the prosperity of regions such as the south-west.

Andrew George: Rather ironically, the decision taken by the regional development agency is to spend money that has been allocated to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly through the European convergence programme, and of course many people in Cornwall and on the Isles of Scilly believe that such decisions would be better taken in Cornwall than by an unaccountable and unelected body covering the Government zone of the south-west.

Paul Clark: However, this is about bringing together minds and having representatives from local authorities—from Cornwall council in this case—and so on involved. It is about partnership, going back to the very first comment of the hon. Member for St. Ives. It is about partnership, not dictatorship, and drawing together many strands of importance to ensure that we have economically viable regions. That is exactly what has been happening.

That said, it is evident that an appropriate scheme needs to be found, and quickly. The convergence funding must be programmed by the end of 2013 and spent by mid-2015. With pressures elsewhere and such a sizeable commitment involved, any submissions for funds made towards the end of the programme may be too late to secure the £11 million required. Those are some of the issues that must exercise the minds of local and regional stakeholders in finding a way through.

The south-west region will need to consider whether retaining the island link as a top priority represents good use of its capital allocations. Clearly, it believes that at the moment, because it has reaffirmed that and the allocation has been increased to £36 million. Spend on the Isles of Scilly vessel and the harbour is due to start this year. With potential delay, regional partners may consider reprioritising this scheme and bringing forward another scheme from the region. Given the steps that the region has taken to improve scheme delivery and given other calls on funds, the Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly link could possibly find itself reprioritised to later in the current 10-year transport programme, which runs to 2018-19. I think that all those involved in the debate today and the people of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly would wish to avoid that scenario.

As I said at the beginning, the officials at the Department for Transport have been working closely with all funding partners associated with the scheme and have taken a broader view of the economic and social issues attached to the scheme to ensure that it is ready for delivery. Working up alternative schemes to the one currently presented to the Department is possible but will be time-consuming and costly for the council to pursue, and there is no guarantee that the complex and hard-won funding arrangement in place today will be available when a new proposal is tabled. I believe that it is reasonable that hon. Members and others involved are aware of the risks to funding and relative priorities and how that impacts on the timing of replacement of the ageing vessels. Let me—

Andrew George: Will the Minister give way?

Paul Clark: I will give way, but I may well be going to answer the question that the hon. Gentleman raises.

Andrew George: The Minister refers to “the region” as if that body is somehow accountable to those in Cornwall and on the Isles of Scilly. I have to say that the decision-making process that it is engaged in is pretty opaque to those who consume the outcome of that decision making. Is it entirely a decision that is delegated to that body that makes decisions on behalf of the Government zone of the south-west as a whole, or do the Minister and his Department have any influence at all in the decisions that it takes? It clearly is not directly democratically accountable to the people whom it serves.

Paul Clark: This is an interesting debate. Clearly, the south-west regional body has said that it believes that one of the top priorities or the top priority is to go forward with the link service—with all the associated works—which needs to be in place for a host of reasons, and to take it through all the modelling and so on that is required to ensure that it is viable and has a sustainable future.

The hon. Member for St. Ives will be well aware that record levels of investment have gone into transport at regional and local level. We have said that it is for regional bodies to consider the schemes that are there and what is required to meet needs, whether that involves objectives to create homes and communities or jobs and prosperity. It is a question of bringing together all those areas to decide which are the best schemes that will help them to deliver their key targets for their regions. Clearly, a set of criteria is laid down to help that process, but it has been a great development that areas are brought together in that way. Rather than just whacking in schemes from Whitehall, with someone sitting in a room saying, “Yes, this is very important. We’ll have this scheme but we won’t have that one” or “We’ll have that one; Penzance doesn’t matter”, it is far better that that regional prioritisation, which is best understood at local level, is delivered at local level.
Andrew George: Will the Minister give way?

Paul Clark: I want to respond to one or two other points that have been raised and talk about a way forward. There is no deadline on the full approval submission. A business case could be submitted only when all the statutory processes—the legal and the planning—have been completed. The harbour revision order is currently subject to judicial review. As the hon. Gentleman will know, I have no powers over that to take it forward, but that is the backdrop to the process that is going on.

I am delighted to hear the hon. Member for Canterbury say that the leader of Cornwall council continues to have dialogue with English Heritage. Indeed, I am delighted that the hon. Member for St. Ives says that he knows that there are people at English Heritage who are working hard to find a way forward. That is exactly what has to happen at that level, and I urge people to continue that. The planning application can then be considered as well. It is in that way that we will get a solution to the problem.

Finally on funding, I have never said that we would withdraw the funding, but let me say, in terms of this being an election year, that certainly we have made it very clear that transport issues are important. I have said how important this matter is to the islanders as well as to Penzance and the wider community. I recognise its importance for prosperity, social inclusion and wider issues. Clearly, we will continue to ensure that transport is at the forefront of our spending as we have done over the past 10 years, but I certainly urge all local stakeholders to work hard to find the solution.

Treasury Accounting (Natural Capital)

Barry Gardiner (Brent, North) (Lab): I wish you the compliments of the season and a happy new year, Mr. Atkinson. The accuracy and transparency of Government accounts have long been accepted as among the fundamental pillars of good governance and democratic accountability, and it was for that reason that William Gladstone established the Public Accounts Committee almost 150 years ago. It is for that reason, too, that we have an Office for National Statistics. It is also why the Government publish a pre-Budget report and why every Budget day comes with not just a red box but, more importantly, a Red Book.

In their policy decisions, the Government must be clear that they are using the country’s resources wisely and efficiently. If they are to be sure that economic growth will be sustainable into the future, it is crucial to account for the impact of economic activity on the natural environment. It is also important to be able accurately to assess the value of the natural capital on which so much economic activity is based.

Nature provides human society with an enormous range of benefits, which go well beyond the obvious commodities of food and fuel, for which we are accustomed to paying a market price. The benefits include ecosystem services, such as the soil stabilisation provided by forests and the pollination carried out by insects, coastal protection, climate regulation, nutrient cycling and water purification. They even include amenity services with aesthetic and recreational value.

Recognising that many of those services are predominantly public goods, however, presents a considerable problem for Government accounting and effective policy making. Classical economics treats such benefits and ecosystem services as externalities—free goods with no market price. Given that they have no market price, their destruction does not show up as a cost in the balance of costs and benefits. As a result, natural ecosystems become depleted and the services that they provide become degraded, and human society suffers the consequences of that loss of natural capital. We lose clean air and suffer asthma. The fish in our seas disappear and we lose a vital source of food. We destroy our forests and suffer climate change; we build a cement factory and lose a beautiful view.

Such changes are the inevitable consequence of human beings living beyond their environmental means and consuming every 12 months the resources that the planet takes 16 months to renew or replace. That is a credit bubble of far more terrifying proportions than the one that the world has just experienced. It saddles our children with debts that they might never be able to repay, because we have consumed not just money but whole ecosystems, and nature does not do bail-outs.

That credit bubble has come about because Government accounting systems have not adequately been able to incorporate the true value of nature. If we wish to understand the true value of nature, we must do better at understanding the true nature of value. The Treasury Green Book sets out guidance to the public service on appraisal and evaluation in central Government—indeed, that is reflected in its subtitle. The Green Book constitutes binding guidance to Departments and Executive agencies,
and its latest edition has many virtues. It has replaced the old discount rate of 6 per cent. with one of 3.5 per cent. in real terms. It has introduced adjustment procedures to address the systemic optimism that has afflicted the proper appraisal of policies in the past. However, on the key issue of valuing environmental, non-market impacts, it is hopelessly inadequate.

Here are some examples of the advice given on various ecosystem services. On biodiversity, the Green Book says:

“The benefits of biodiversity can be difficult to measure, define and value.”

Of water, it says:

“It is not easy to derive economic values for damage costs of water pollutants.”

On air quality, it remarks:

“Assessing the impact of particular policies on air quality is a complex science...In cases where detailed modelling is not possible, a reasoned statement of whether or not a particular policy is likely to result in greater or lesser emissions of particular pollutants should be included in the appraisal.”

Finally, on greenhouse gas emissions, it records:

“Current methodologies for assessment of the effects of policies and measures on greenhouse gas emissions are policy specific with no standard guidance available...In cases where quantification of the climate change effect is impractical, an assessment of whether the policy is likely to increase or decrease emissions, combined with a qualitative assessment of the significance of this change, should be included in the appraisal.”

If those pieces of advice were translated to meet the criteria for the crystal mark for clear English, they would say, “This is all very difficult to measure. Where possible, please provide an indication of whether pollution will increase or decrease and by how much. Where you don’t know, please make an educated guess.”

I agree that the process of evaluating natural capital is tremendously difficult, but what is startling in the exhortations that I have read out is that, aside from recognising the difficulty of the exercise, they provide virtually no guidance to civil servants or Executive agencies about what they should proactively do to arrive at a valuation that can be fed into a cost-benefit analysis.

These issues are relevant to not just domestic policy and decision making. My hon. Friend the Minister has supported the millennium development goals, so I am confident that she understands only too well the fact that the problem of valuing natural capital has a profound effect on the lives of the world’s poorest people and goes to the heart of questions of international justice and poverty alleviation. If we are to meet the millennium development goal of taking half the world’s poor out of poverty by 2015, we must enable them to preserve the value of their natural capital, which represents more than 50 per cent. of the gross domestic product of the world’s poor. The Minister will acknowledge that developing countries that have taken proper account of their natural capital, such as Botswana, have been markedly more successful economically than countries that have not done so, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

One way to refine our methods of evaluation is to work on specific examples where natural capital is under threat. One such example is tropical coral reefs. Six months ago, the Royal Society set out the following scientific analysis:

“Coral reefs are the most biologically diverse habitats of the oceans and provide essential ecosystem goods and services to hundreds of millions of people.

Temperature-induced mass coral bleaching causing widespread mortality on the Great Barrier Reef and many other reefs of the world started when atmospheric CO2 exceeded 320ppm—parts per million. It continues:

“At today’s level of approximately 387ppm CO2, reefs are seriously declining and time-lagged effects will result in their continued demise with parallel impacts on other marine and coastal ecosystems.

Proposals to limit CO2 levels to 450ppm will not prevent the catastrophic loss of coral reefs from the combined effects of global warming and ocean acidification.

To ensure the long-term viability of coral reefs the atmospheric CO2 level must be reduced significantly below 350ppm.

In addition to major reductions in CO2 emissions, achieving this safe level will require the active removal of CO2 from the atmosphere.

Given the above, ecosystem-based management of other direct human induced stresses on coral reefs, such as overfishing, destructive fishing, coastal pollution and sedimentation, will be essential for the survival of coral reefs on which so many people depend.”

That is a quotation from the Royal Society meeting of 6 July 2009.

Only last month, in Copenhagen, the world spectacularly failed to agree a pathway to reduce emission levels to 450 ppm by 2050. The current saturation level stands at 370 ppm. Coral is doubly vulnerable to climate change because it cannot survive where CO2 concentrations make the pH balance of the sea water too acidic and it dies if the water becomes too warm.

Tropical coral reefs are often referred to as the rain forests of the seas, because although they cover less than 2 per cent. of the planet’s surface, they form the most biodiversity-rich ecosystem in the world, providing a home for more than one quarter of all the planet’s fish species. They are therefore of tremendous economic importance, and more than 500 million people depend on them for their livelihoods. Estimates of the overall human welfare benefits from those ecosystems are significant. One estimate puts them at $172 billion annually. Those benefits arise not just from commercial and artisan fishing, but from shoreline protection, where the reefs help to prevent coastal erosion, as well as that from tourism and other recreational uses.

I ask my hon. Friend specifically to task her officials to use tropical coral reefs as an appropriate study to refine their methods of ecosystem valuation. We have a superb opportunity to do that in relation to the current Foreign Office consultation on the future of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The Chagos archipelago in the Indian ocean comprises 55 tiny islands set in 250,000 square miles of what are some of the world’s cleanest seas. It is one of the largest and healthiest coral atolls on the planet. The Foreign Office is consulting on whether that pristine coral reef should be established as a full, no-take marine protection area for the whole of the territorial waters. It is officially an environmental preservation and protection zone, and a fisheries conservation and management zone, and evidence suggests that if that action were to be taken, the British Indian Ocean Territory might be one of the coral reefs to hold out the longest against climate change, and could act as a potential seed bank for the reintroduction of coral to areas where the indigenous tropical reefs had been
degraded and bleached. That could enable coral reefs to be re-established, once anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions were brought down to more manageable levels.

There is one additional unique benefit that such a study of coral reefs may bring in improving our understanding of the valuation of natural capital. It relates to the fact that the degradation of the ecosystem is approaching a threshold of irreversibility. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity climate issues update report of September pointed out:

“Monetary analysis may be misleading if we do not know how close a system is to a threshold. Care needs to be taken not simply to extrapolate using an underlying assumption of continued incremental losses in the ecosystem function. To illustrate with an extreme example, if the marginal quantum of benefits being valued happens to be the last available of its kind, then scarcity and ethics would set a completely different ‘price’ on that last quantum. What we face with coral reefs is not a ‘marginal’ problem, and the economics needs to reflect this. The reported science suggests that anthropogenic emissions have brought the coral reef ecosystem to the brink of potential irreversible collapse. Thus we may have encountered our first major global ecosystem ‘threshold’. As pointed out... we need to move beyond marginal cost-benefit analysis and consider other dimensions of value: the ethical and social as well as the economic. We need to assess survival risks for this entire biome and its implications for ocean and coastal productivity and for human welfare.”

There have been only five great extinction events in the history of all life on Earth. None have taken place within the span of the human species. Scientists believe that each began with the collapse of a global ecosystem. If coral reefs were to collapse, it could presage an extinction event such as humanity has never before witnessed. The loss of fish stocks would almost certainly result in a global food crisis, but of potentially far more serious consequence is the fact that it would almost certainly change the very nature of the oceans and their interaction with the rest of life on our planet. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal was famous for his wager in which a lifetime of religious observance was staked against an eternity of damnation. Modern accounting for natural capital must similarly be able to reflect in its assessment of risk and probability the fact that action to prevent the loss of global ecosystems might be costly in economic terms but that when the alternative is global catastrophe, the odds must be adjusted accordingly. Our planet is a delicately balanced system. The continuation of human life and culture—the language of Shakespeare and the music of Bach—depends on the actions of our generation in the next 10 years.

I ask my hon. Friend to give her political commitment to take those tools to a more formal level, with full development and integration alongside national accounts. She will be aware that, at the international level, the London Group on Environmental Accounting is in the process of preparing a handbook on integrated environmental and economic accounting, the draft version of which was approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2003. Eventually there needs to be a statistical standard covering all aspects of environmental accounting, and that is expected to be approved by the commission in 2012.

Without good natural capital accounts, the importance of natural resources to economies will continue to be under-appreciated, and sub-optimal use will continue to be made of those assets—economically, environmentally and socially. As assets underperform, natural capital is being run down, and future benefit streams decrease as the asset base is eroded and product prices fail to reflect their full costs. That results in an environmental debt to future generations and/or to the exporters of commodities that are extracted from degrading ecosystems, often in poor developing countries. For low-income groups, which rely more than others on the ecosystem services supplied by natural capital in the environment, the image given by the current system of gross domestic product, national income and household consumption aggregates is seriously misleading.

Valuable commodities are too often extracted from ecosystems at the expense of those free services and ancillary products, and no heed is given to depreciation of natural capital and the resulting decline in future services. That means that, in terms of total welfare, the poorest in our world can get poorer; even though their monetary income might actually increase in real terms. That comes about because of the degradation of the natural capital that provides the biggest part of the goods they need for survival—food, fibre, water, and so on. By measuring those costs that are not covered by market prices, it must be possible to measure the “GDP of the poor” and how far it declines in proportion to the share of conventional GDP growth, based on ecosystem degradation.

This year, 2010, is the international year of biodiversity. In Nagoya this year, the parties to the United Nations convention on biological diversity will meet. It is often
seen as a poor relation to the United Nations framework convention on climate change, the parties to which have just met in Copenhagen. It is my belief that the CBD is every bit as important as its more glamorous sibling.

A change in climate on its own would not matter were it not for the fact that species and ecosystems will not be able to keep pace with the rate of climate change. It is the inability of species to adapt and maintain biodiversity that will cause the ecosystem services upon which human life depends to break down.

My final request is that my hon. Friend tasks Treasury officials with preparing the UK’s submissions to the Nagoya conference. The environment is too important to be left to the politically weak environment Ministries of the world. The valuation of natural capital and the economic importance of ecosystem services will be essential elements of public policy accounting in the 21st century. Indeed, it is my belief that if Treasuries do not quickly incorporate these issues into the heart of Government accounting practices, the 21st century might well be our last.

12.50 pm

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry): May I take this opportunity, Mr. Atkinson, to wish you a happy new year? It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Barr Gardiner) on securing a debate on the important topic of Treasury accounting in relation to natural capital. When he applied for it, I doubt whether he envisaged us debating the subject on a day on which, if the forecasters are to be believed, Britain will probably be feeling the effects of extreme weather. Of course, the inconvenience of unaccustomed snow in this country is nothing compared to what may happen in developing and poor countries if we cannot stem the tide of climate change. Part of that process will involve a proper understanding of economics in relation to natural capital and an improvement in our evidence base in relation to policy making.

Many of the services provided by the natural environment are not traded, so they have no market value, but their value to society can be substantial. For example, the annual benefits provided by the world’s coral reefs alone, through the provision of food, raw materials, recreational opportunities and protection against extreme events, have been estimated at $172 billion. Those services are threatened by a changed climate. The Government are fostering international and domestic efforts to promote an understanding of the economic benefits delivered by the environment and to improve the evidence used in policy making to ensure that we live within our environmental limits.

The Government’s strategy to help deliver a better quality of life through sustainable development was first set out in 1999, and reviewed in 2005 in “Securing the Future”. That strategy set out the principles which must all follow in our duty of care towards the environment and the need for the Government to lead by example, to ensure the well-being of ourselves and of future generations.

The development of policies and the selection of options for their implementation by the Government are governed by the guidance provided in the Treasury’s Green Book. It provides guidance on how the total costs and benefits to society of any proposed interventions should be assessed. It recommends social cost-benefit analysis as the main tool of assessment, which quantifies in monetary terms as many of those costs and benefits as feasible. It stresses that it includes any environmental impacts, which are often difficult and controversial to value in monetary terms.

Much valuation research is ongoing, however, to improve the way in which such environmental impacts are accounted for. For example, updated guidance on the value of greenhouse gas emissions will be published shortly, with the intention of reviewing those values every two years as our knowledge of their impact and cost develops. Guidance already exists on adapting long-term policies to the expected impacts of climate change, and on how to value changes in biodiversity and in air quality.

Invaluable though it is for aiding the inclusion of natural capital impacts into the appraisal of policy, it is recognised that social cost-benefit analysis cannot, on its own, fully inform decision making if significant changes are involved. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is therefore leading a group of economists and experts on sustainable development from across government, which will draw on leading academics in these fields, in a review of the economics of sustainable development. The group was set up in autumn 2008 to investigate whether current approaches were sufficient to ensure that sustainability was taken into account in the design of policy changes, or whether revised or additional supplementary Green Book guidance was required.

The group published an interim report in October 2009, in which it concluded that

“Social Cost Benefit Analysis...when done properly, goes a very long way towards ensuring the sustainability of policy is reflected in decision making.”

It went on to say that substantial work remains to be done to provide policy makers with a more complete toolkit, and noted that there are still many environmental assets for which we do not yet have agreed recommended values.

The group’s report also noted that more consideration needs to be given to the appraisal of policies that have large or so-called non-marginal impacts. Relevant in that respect are policies that impact on certain critical assets—assets that, if allowed to decline below certain levels, could change the long-term growth path of the economy and its potential for wealth creation. For other assets—for example, clean air—there will again be limits to the acceptable degree of pollution. A key limitation of cost-benefit analysis in that regard is that it treats all forms of capital as if they were completely substitutable for one another.

There is therefore a need to limit the use of natural assets to supplement cost-benefit analysis assessments in many areas. Some limitations already exist—for example, the land use planning regulations in the UK. The use of minimum standards in certain contexts is being investigated for air quality issues—for instance, when uncertainty is particularly prevalent and it might pay to invoke the precautionary principle. An asset check study is also being considered; it would give greater clarity on the assets that should be sustained, the levels below which they should not be allowed to fall and the actions that would be necessary if those levels were breached.
The Government are fostering further work to promote the understanding of natural capital issues and improve the evidence used in policy making. We are funding the work of the UK climate impacts programme, which helps organisations to assess the effects of climate change on construction, working practices, service delivery and health in their localities. It is funding a £1 million national ecosystem assessment, which will report in 2011 and will be the first comprehensive analysis of the UK’s natural environment and the benefits that it provides to society and economic prosperity. It is also supporting the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity study—a major international initiative that aims to draw attention to the global economic benefits of biodiversity, that highlights the growing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and that draws expertise together to enable practical action.

So far, I have focused on taking account of natural capital in policy making. Including elements of natural capital in the public accounts is a relatively recent concept; it is being discussed as part of the wider debate but is not yet the subject of fully worked-out and agreed accounting standards and practices.

The Government are keen that the UK should remain at the forefront in developing best practice in relation to public accounting. We therefore propose the introduction of a system of regular sustainability reporting, including related expenditure, by all Departments in their annual public accounting. We therefore propose the introduction of a system of regular sustainability reporting, including related expenditure, by all Departments in their annual reports and accounts. That will begin in 2011-12. As a minimum, Departments will be required to report annually their performance against their sustainability targets for greenhouse gas emissions, waste minimisation and management and their use of finite resources.

A great deal of work has already been done and continues to be undertaken to improve the framework for policy making in relation to the natural environment, climate change and sustainability. Valuation research has already been published in relation to a large number of assets, and further research is ongoing.

Barry Gardiner: I realise that I did not leave my hon. Friend a full quarter of an hour to answer the debate, but will she respond specifically to some of my questions? I asked specifically whether her officials will be engaged in working towards the Nagoya conference later this year.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I have taken on board all my hon. Friend’s questions, and I assure him that all those points will be considered. I shall take them to Treasury officials, so that we can consider them. In principle, of course, we want to improve our accounting systems to take account of natural capital; and we want to improve our evidence base for policy making.

As I said, it has been concluded that the current policy framework goes a long way towards ensuring that sustainability concerns are reflected in decision making. The interdepartmental group on sustainability is due to report again in the spring, with more specific recommendations on the potential improvement areas already identified.

1 pm

Norman Baker (Lewes) (LD): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the topical issue of non-doms, which is important in terms of both income to the Government and an ethical approach to politics. I do not pretend that it is a new issue; in November 1995, a Labour party policy paper said that “the taxation of...non-domiciles...should be overhauled in line with the recommendations of the Inland Revenue.”

In one of its publications, the Inland Revenue said that one defect of the remittance basis of non-dom status was “that it is easy for the well advised to arrange to bring back money from overseas to meet their expenditure in the United Kingdom without it being regarded under the present law as a ‘remittance’.”

One might have hoped that a progressive Government would have dealt with that inequity early on in their term of office. Instead, we had to wait, after applying constant pressure, until 2002 for the announcement of a review. When it finally came forward, we hoped that the changes to the arrangements would lead to far-reaching consequences. In the 2002 Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report, the Government said:

“The Government is reviewing the residence and domicile rules as they affect the tax liabilities of individuals. The Government believes that modernisation of these rules needs to be based on clear principles: the rules should be fair, clear, easy to operate, and support the competitiveness of the British economy.”

That was provisionally adopted in 2002. I will come back to the word “fair” as I move on. In 2003, the publication of the discussion document ensued, and there was a long gap in which nothing much appeared to happen despite the fact that a number of Members of Parliament from both my party and the Labour party were asking questions about why so little progress had been made.

In April 2007, we ended up with some progress, but it was not sufficient. I raised the matter myself in an oral question to one of the Chancellor’s colleagues on 12 July 2007. I asked somewhat cynically whether the inordinate amount of time that the review was taking was in any way connected with the large sums of money given to the Labour party by those who qualify for non-domiciled status. Heaven forbid that that should be the case, and it was disgraceful of me to suggest that. Nevertheless, there was not much of a denial from the Financial Secretary. What is extraordinary is that despite the length of the review—over all these years—the Government seem to have amassed very little information on which to base their forward projections. For example, the question I asked the Paymaster General, the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Dawn Primarolo), on 23 April 2007 elicited this response:

“HM Revenue and Customs does not ask for information on whether individuals are registered to vote in the UK on (a) tax self-assessment forms, (b) form DOM1 or (c) other tax forms.”—[Official Report, 23 April 2007: Vol. 459, c. 993W]

I would have thought that knowing whether someone is registered to vote in this country is quite a good indication of whether or not they are domiciled in this country. It was not alone in as. 1
non-domiciled residents’ tax status. One might have thought that after four years of review, that would have been clarified. The Minister at the time, the right hon. Member for Normanton (Ed Balls), said:

“No overall figure for the number of individuals with non-domicile tax status is available. Estimates of the tax foregone in the UK as a consequence of the use of the remittance basis by those not domiciled in the UK are not routinely made... No estimates have been made of the economic benefits to the UK from the retention of the domicile laws on taxation.”—[Official Report, 30 April 2007; Vol. 459, c. 1382.]

In 2002, we were told that one of the purposes of the review was to support the competitiveness of the British economy. Yet, four years on, no assessment has been made of what that was. It seems a rather curious review that does not seem to go far in its depth.

In 2008, we had an announcement that represented the worst of all possible worlds. It did nothing to deal with the rich oligarchs of whom the Government appear to be so enamoured these days, and yet it introduced a £30,000 poll tax for non-domicile qualifiers, which hits people such as university lecturers temporarily resident in my constituency and elsewhere. In other words, it clobbers the small fry and lets the big fish off the hook. That cannot be regarded as fair or sensible. After four or five years waiting for this review—or 14 years since the Labour party first proposed it in 1994—I have to say to the Minister that, coming from Lewes with a huge tradition of fireworks, I know a damp squib when I see one, and that was a damp squib par excellence. Even worse than that, in his Budget speech on 12 March 2008, the Chancellor said:

“There will be no further changes to this regime for the rest of this Parliament or the next.”—[Official Report, 12 March 2008; Vol. 473, c. 293.]

We now have the Chancellor apparently tying the hands of the next Government—whomever that may be—the next Parliament and future Chancellors over the way in which they deal with the matter. That seems to be unconstitutional as much as anything else.

Non-domicile tax status is an important matter for the Treasury, because it is to do with income, fairness and equity in the taxation system. Why should my hard-working constituents in Lewes, Newhaven, Seaford, Polegate and elsewhere, who do an honest day’s work and pay their taxes in full, have to put up with a regime that sees freeloaders millionaires swan around avoiding tax apparently with the help of Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs and the Treasury? For the Chancellor’s party, I have to say that such an unfortunate position seems to be a long way from Keir Hardie, Clement Attlee and even Harold Wilson.

Further consideration must be given to this matter, and not simply for reasons of income, fairness and equity but because of the integrity of the political process—something that has been the focus of many of our minds for some time, not least because of the MPs’ expenses issue. There is a general consensus, in words at least, that Parliament needs to clean up its act. We cannot have clean politics in this country until we set and apply a very clear principle, which is that no Member of Parliament, whether in the Commons or the Lords, should be sitting here if they declare themselves to be non-domiciled for tax purposes. That is a very clear position that we should adopt. It is perhaps the reverse of Reverend Jonathan Mayhew who said in 1750 “No taxation without representation.” I think that we should have no representation without taxation.

A party that fails to tackle its own internal non-domicile issues can barely hope to be taken seriously if it then pretends to argue for a clean-up of politics, which the Minister will be pleased to know leads me on to the Conservative party and its problems with its own members. I have to refer to Lord Ashcroft, who bails out the Conservative party to a very large degree. He took a seat in the Lords in October 2000. At the time, it was reported that the then leader of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), had insisted that Lord Ashcroft end his tax exile before taking up his seat. That assurance was apparently given. It was a most interesting condition. The Honours Scrutiny Committee attached the condition to his peerage that “to meet the requirements for a working peer, Mr. Michael Ashcroft has given his clear and unequivocal assurance that he will take up personal residence in the United Kingdom again before the end of the calendar year.”

In other words, that should have happened before the end of 2000. More than nine years later, we are still no clearer in definitive terms about whether or not he has taken up that tax status. What we have had from Conservative spokesmen is a series of evasions punctuated by embarrassed silences when they are asked about these matters on radio and television programmes.

Back in 2001, I wrote to the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks, who was then the leader of the Conservative party and who is presently the shadow Foreign Secretary, about these matters and I asked him 10 questions about Lord Ashcroft. Let me just list a few of those questions:

“Is Lord Ashcroft non-resident in the UK for tax purposes? Has Lord Ashcroft or his agents notified the Inland Revenue of any change, or impending change in his tax status? Is Lord Ashcroft registered as a UK voter or an overseas voter? He is apparently still listed on the voters’ register in Maidenhead as an overseas voter. Why is that the case when he was said in 1999 to be returning to Britain?”

I would suggest that those questions and other questions that I put were quite germane. The reply that I received was not from the then leader of the Conservative party, but from the hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale), his Parliamentary Private Secretary at the time, who said in a very short reply: “regarding Lord Ashcroft’s financial affairs, these are matters for him and I have sent him a copy of your letter”. No answer came forth from the Conservative party to those germane questions. However, I did receive a letter—

Mr. Peter Atkinson (in the Chair): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he should be slightly careful that the debate is actually on Government policy on the tax status of non-domiciles and not on the official Opposition’s policy on the tax status of non-domiciles. I would be grateful if he reflected that in his remarks.

Norman Baker: Yes. I was hoping to make the case that the Government need to change their policy and that was my intention in what I said. So I am sorry that that was not clear in my remarks. However, I am giving a couple of examples to show why it is necessary for the
Government to change the position that they have adopted, which is inadequate for the challenge that we face in cleaning up politics in the House across all parties. That is the case that I am making.

I was about to say that the only other response that I received to my letter to the right hon. Member for Richmond, Y orks was from Lord Ashcroft’s solicitors, who were basically not particularly pleasant towards me in their response.

I referred to some of the quotes that we have heard on TV and radio, but it is important that all three main parties in the House commit themselves fully to an open regime. If we do not do that collectively, we will not be able to clean up politics in a way that is very important and that we can all hopefully agree on. The reality is that a position of “Ashcroft’s taxes nothing to do with me, says Cameron”, which was a headline in The Independent, is not a sufficient response from the leader of the main Opposition party in the House.

I conclude on this matter by noting that my colleague in the Lords, Lord Oakeshott, wrote to Lord Ashcroft in December 2009, asking him very bluntly whether or not he was a non-dom, to which no response has been forthcoming.

There have been suggestions from the official Opposition that they have plans to change the taxation regime that relate to those people who do not pay full UK tax. Of course, those suggestions do not deal with non-doms in the same way.

I also want to refer to potential parliamentary candidates. It seems to me that, if we are to clean up this place, it is important that the Government should not simply review their policy with regard to the declarations by Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Lords, although those declarations are important in terms of non-domicile status, but consider whether it is necessary to review their policy on non-domicile status in so far as it reflects declarations by parliamentary candidates. We now have a more open regime in the House for Members of Parliament to declare what they earn and we are moving in the right direction on that issue, but no such restrictions or requirements apply to parliamentary candidates. It seems to me that when voters go to the polling booths, whenever that may be this year, they are entitled to decide, particularly in the present circumstances with all the expenses problems, whether or not they approve of the ethical, financial and moral positions adopted by their parliamentary candidates in so far as they relate to their public duties. However, that is clearly not the case at present.

As another example in regard to parliamentary candidates, I give Zac Goldsmith, who has said: “My non-domicile status is a reflection of my father’s international status”. Of course, as the Minister will confirm, that is simply not the legal position, because non-domicile status is a matter of choice after someone is 16 and not a matter of fact. One must conclude that the attempt to avoid paying proper taxes in this country by Mr. Goldsmith, as appears to be the case, is one that undermines both the House and politics generally. I also reflect on the fact that he has spent £250,000 or more in the Richmond Park constituency trying to buy the seat—money that should have been paid to the Exchequer in terms of proper taxation. It is one thing to bribe the electorate; it is another thing for the electorate to be bribed with their own money, which appears to be what is happening in that constituency.

I hope that I have made the case that the position regarding non-dom status is not satisfactory in this country; that the review that the Government conducted and concluded in 2008 has, in fact, been inadequate; that the Government have not dealt with the big fish, who continue to escape proper taxation while hard-working families pay it; and that the Government have, in fact, only clobbered small fry with a £30,000 poll tax—people who should not be clobbered in that way when a better and much more equitable solution would be to have no tax and then full tax applied after seven years. I have also given an indication of how the present arrangements undermine the integrity of Parliament and the integrity of what we are trying to achieve in this place by tidying up politics.

Therefore, I hope that the Government will first commit to review the non-dom rules and, secondly, that they will undertake before the election to take urgent action in line with the Bill that my colleague Lord Oakeshott introduced in the House of Lords to ensure that no Member can sit in either the Commons or the Lords unless they have given a clear indication that they are paying taxation in full in this country and are domiciled here. If the Government are not prepared to do that, they must explain why.

1.15 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Timms): Let me begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Lewes (Norman Baker) on securing the debate. I welcome the opportunity to set out the Government’s policy on the taxation of non-domiciles. I recognise the strength of feeling that he and others have expressed and I want to respond to that strength of feeling in my remarks today.

Of course, there has been a good deal of debate about this issue recently, prompted in particular by the case that the hon. Gentleman mentioned at the conclusion of his remarks: the media and political interest in the non-dom status of the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Richmond Park, Zac Goldsmith, who is of course standing against the hon. Gentleman’s colleague, the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Susan Kramer). What that issue has highlighted, again, is that there might well be Members of Parliament—present Members or indeed prospective Members—who do not pay UK tax in full on all their income. However, before addressing that issue, I will follow the hon. Gentleman’s lead by first outlining the Government’s policy on the taxation of non-domiciles more generally, because that policy rightly provides the context for this debate.

Domicile is a common-law concept that connects a person with a system of law. It is not a tax-law concept—tax law simply uses domicile status to determine certain tax issues—so the question of whether a person is domiciled in the UK is to be decided primarily by reference to principles of common law. Domicile potentially depends on a wide range of factors, and it is a concept that is quite hard to define. It is often said to equate to an individual’s “permanent home”. It is sometimes suggested that it is the place that someone expects to be buried, although that is only a rather approximate definition. Normally, a person takes his or her domicile at birth
from their father, but once that person reaches adulthood they can change their domicile and make a domicile of choice in a different country, if that is their wish.

People who are resident in the UK but who are not domiciled or ordinarily resident are eligible to claim the remittance basis of taxation for income tax and for capital gains tax. That means that they are taxable on their foreign income and gains only if they are brought—if they are remitted—into the UK. Any UK-source income, however, is fully taxable in the UK. I would be interested to know a little more about the issue that the hon. Gentleman raised in his remarks about university lecturers in his constituency, because the only impact of those arrangements, of course, would be on people who were receiving income from outside the UK above a de minimis level, in addition to what I presume would be his constituents’ university incomes in the cases to which he referred. However, I would be perfectly happy to have a look at the details of those cases, if he wanted me to do so.

The alternative to the remittance basis is the arising basis, under which a UK resident pays UK income tax and capital gains tax on all his or her worldwide income and gains wherever they arise, subject to any relief due under double taxation agreements. The hon. Gentleman’s constituents could certainly take advantage of that basis if they chose, in which case they would be taxed in exactly the same way as people resident and domiciled in the UK. That is the basis on which the vast majority of the UK population is taxed.

The remittance basis has existed for a long time. The hon. Gentleman said that it sat ill with the party of Clement Attlee and Harold Wilson, but the remittance basis in fact goes back long before their premierships to the 1800s, and both those extremely distinguished former leaders of my party saw fit to leave it in place. Businesses see it as playing an important role in ensuring that the UK attracts skilled people from abroad to work, do business and invest. We would place ourselves at a significant competitive disadvantage if we simply scrapped the remittance basis at a time when countries with low tax regimes are competing to attract talent and investment—that would be an own goal. I do not think that that was what the hon. Gentleman was calling for, but as he mentioned competitiveness, it is important to explain why the arrangements exist.

We considered that the tax rules for non-domiciles needed to be reformed to make them fairer and more sustainable, which was why we implemented a major package of reforms to the remittance basis in the Finance Act 2008. The hon. Gentleman criticised us for taking time over the reforms, but they are complicated and it was important to take the time to get them right. In particular, as he said, we introduced a £30,000 annual tax charge for those non-domiciles choosing to use the remittance basis who have lived in the UK for more than seven years. We also abolished personal allowances for income tax and the annual exempt amount for capital gains tax for those claiming the remittance basis, closed a number of loopholes allowing non-domiciles unfairly to remit offshore income and gains to the UK without paying tax on them—that is the loophole to which he referred early in his speech—and tightened the day counting rules to make it more difficult for people to become non-resident and avoid UK tax, as some were unfairly doing.

The reforms were designed to strike the right balance between promoting fairness and maintaining UK competitiveness. People choosing to make their home in the UK for the longer term now make a greater contribution through the tax system than previously. At the same time, the remittance basis continues to play a valuable role in supporting competitiveness, which is particularly important, as I have said, in the current economic climate and as the economy moves back towards growth. Of course, it should not be forgotten that non-domiciles still contribute a significant amount of tax—it is estimated at £4 billion a year—to the Exchequer. The hon. Gentleman complained about the lack of data. The nature of the subject means that there is sometimes not as much data as one might like, but I can give him information about the total amount of tax that we estimate is contributed currently.

The reforms have achieved their objective. We estimate that, as a result, the Exchequer will gain an additional £700 million this year and about £500 million next year and thereafter. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear during the 2008 Budget that we would not make further substantive changes to the remittance basis during this Parliament or the next. The hon. Gentleman asked me to renounce my commitment, but I will not do so. We stand by that commitment, because we take the view that it is the right thing to do—that is something that I have in common with Clement Attlee and Harold Wilson.

Since 2008, we have worked with external stakeholders to ensure that the new rules deliver what we promised. As a result, we made further minor changes in the Finance Act 2009 to address concerns, particularly those raised by people on low incomes. That work has been widely praised and has helped to ensure that we deliver sustainable and fair changes.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Gentleman’s view that some people with a privileged position in the democratic process should pay UK tax in full on all their global income, gains and assets, wherever they arise. This is how the vast majority of the UK population is taxed, so it seems right to me, as it does to him, that MPs and Members of the House of Lords should be taxed on that basis and should not have access to the remittance basis. The hon. Gentleman asked some perfectly reasonable questions about Lord Ashcroft, and I would be as intrigued as to whether he knows the answers. He will, of course, recognise that it is not for me to answer them, although I am disturbed to hear that he received a threatening letter from the noble Lord’s solicitors.

The Government have consistently promoted the principle that that Members of Parliament should be full UK taxpayers. For example, the 2008 White Paper on House of Lords reform proposed that members of the reformed second Chamber should be resident in the UK for tax purposes. We are now finalising draft legislation setting out the framework for a reformed second Chamber. Gentlemen the intention behind the private Members’ Bills introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) in this place and by Lord Oakeshott of Seagrove Bay in the other place, both of which sought to restrict membership of Parliament to those paying full UK taxes.

People other than parliamentarians can, of course, participate to a significant degree in the democratic process, and we have stated our view that the relationship
between tax status and democratic participation deserves wider consideration. In view of strong support in both Houses, we took action and legislated in the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 to provide that anyone wishing to donate or loan more than £7,500 to a political party in a calendar year would be required to confirm that they were resident, ordinarily resident and domiciled in the UK for tax purposes at the time at which the donation was made. Without such a declaration, the donation or loan will not be regarded as permissible. The provisions will ensure that anyone wishing to donate or loan a significant amount to a political party or other regulated entity must pay UK tax in full. I think that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that legislation.

Returning to the hon. Gentleman’s specific question about MPs and Members of the House of Lords, I assure him that we are committed to introducing legislation in this Parliament to ensure that Members of Parliament are taxed in the same way as the vast majority of UK taxpayers. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House made that clear at Prime Minister’s questions on 16 December when she made the point that, as the hon. Gentleman put it, there should be no representation without taxation. She said: “We will introduce legislation to ensure that people are domiciled, resident and ordinarily resident in order to sit in this House or in the House of Lords.” —[Official Report, 16 December 2009; Vol. 502, c. 960.]

Norman Baker: Briefly, what are the Minister’s intentions regarding parliamentary candidates, and voters’ rights to understand the taxation status of candidates as well as sitting MPs?

Mr. Timms: We are considering how to bring about the change that I described. It is helpful that there is now clear, albeit rather belated, cross-party support for action, following the Conservative’s change of position supporting the principle that MPs and Members of the House of Lords should be required to pay tax in full on their overseas income, gains and assets. We are considering in detail how to do so and what the right legislative vehicle is. After we resolve those issues, the answer to the hon. Gentleman’s question will be clear.

Two amendments to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill were tabled in December with the aim of achieving our objective. We support and sympathise with the principle behind the amendments, but the drafting needed some attention, for example to cover inheritance tax as well as income tax and capital gains tax, which are dealt with by the remittance basis. We will introduce measures during this Parliament to ensure that parliamentarians cannot avoid UK tax on offshore income, gains and assets. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that commitment. The detail will become clear as soon as the amendments are brought forward.

I welcome this debate. It is an important contribution to the Government’s commitment to fairness in the tax treatment of non-domiciles. I hope that I have made clear the importance of the current non-domicile tax regime for the UK economy but, equally, I underline that we are committed to ensuring that MPs and Members of the House of Lords pay tax on their worldwide income and gains, alongside the vast majority of the UK population.

1.30 pm

Jeff Ennis (Barnsley, East and Mexborough) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the important matter of mobility scooters and pedestrian safety. Let me say from the outset that mobility scooters are great and that they enhance the quality of life of many of my elderly and disabled constituents. Indeed, my mother and mother-in-law, who are both in their 80s, have mobility scooters and benefit greatly from them.

As you know, Mr. Atkinson, my constituency has the highest number of claims in the country from former miners for chronic bronchitis and emphysema. That means that it contains more people who are disabled than the national average, particularly in the former pit villages. However, my main reason for calling this debate was not that, but an e-mail I received from Kerry McNair, who is from Shafton in my constituency:

“Hello. I was advised to contact you regarding my daughter. She is 23 months old and was recently run down in Doncaster by a mobility scooter. We were in the pedestrian zone when I was struck from behind, then watched in horror as my little girl was knocked to the ground and driven over. The old lady did not stop, she kept going, dragging my baby under her machine. I screamed at her to stop. Eventually some men lifted her off, she refused to dismount, and I grabbed my little girl. The old lady then tried to drive off but someone grabbed her keys. An ambulance was called and took us to hospital. The old lady was spoken to by police but allowed on her way. She did not apologise and has made no effort to be in touch. No charges can be brought against her as there are no laws covering mobility scooters. This is wrong. My daughter has had a patch of her SCALP ripped off, she is covered in cuts and bruises. At night she takes ages to go to sleep as is afraid to close her eyes. I struggle changing her nappy as she now hates being laid down. And she is terribly clingy. I have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress. Why can this lady be allowed to ruin our lives. I close my eyes and picture it all the time. Please help me to fight this. I want to take a stand. I will not allow my daughter to be treated like this by anyone. Justice needs to be done. Can you help. I would be grateful for your advice. Kind regards, Kerry McNair”.

That sums up in a nutshell the trauma that people experience when small children are knocked down by mobility scooters.

Mrs. McNair is right that there are currently no suitable laws covering mobility scooters. The death of a 90-year-old lady called Lilian Macey last September led to no action by the police. Since I raised this issue, I have received many e-mails in support of Mrs. McNair’s point from across the nation. I recently received a short e-mail from a constituent of my neighbouring MP, my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham). Jane Kaye from Barugh Green wrote:

“I have been reading in the Barnsley Chronicle about your concerns regarding mobility scooters. I’m pleased you are looking into this as we (myself and my husband) have witnessed some near misses and scooters being driven at a worrying speed round streets in town where young children are walking.”

For the rest of my speech I will investigate possible solutions, which the Minister can consider, to make mobility scooters as safe as possible for their users and other members of the public. I would like him to consider an e-mail from Mr. Michael Rushton from Wombwell in my constituency:

“Dear Jeff Ennis,

I’m glad to hear at last on the local radio station someone’s taking up the problem of Motability Scooters. My son was nearly crushed against a wall a couple of years ago. Let me tell you the motability scooters weigh quite a bit. There are 2 or 3 questions that come to mind.”
1. Why are motability scooter owners not made to take a test, such as a proficiency test that the suppliers could enforce?

2. Why are scooter owners seemingly exempt from prosecution for dangerous driving? For example, driving straight down the white line or going straight across at junctions while traffic is turning in to it, which I have witnessed dozens of times at Main Street in Wombwell.

3. Why are the owners also not penalised for carrying passengers?

4. Why are motability owners not breathalysed when they have been drinking in pubs and clubs? Surely this is drink driving. If riding a bicycle, they would be stopped for drink driving.

I understand the need for the scooters as I have a child with cerebral palsy and can appreciate the need for mobility, but safety for pedestrians and also the mobility scooter user must be paramount. The story on the radio must be repeated up and down the country.

As the Minister knows, there is currently no requirement for people to undergo training before taking a mobility scooter on to the streets. Many reputable retailers provide rudimentary instruction, but whether they do so is at their discretion. More people are now buying mobility scooters over the internet and second-hand ones through local newspapers, so the first time many mobility scooter users sit on their scooter is the day on which they take it out on to the streets.

The crux of the problem is how we can ensure that mobility scooter users are proficient at riding their machines and are safe for themselves and other road users. I do not believe that the answer is a compulsory test for mobility scooter users like a driving test. That would be using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. However, serious consideration should be given to allowing users the opportunity to take a proficiency test on a voluntary basis, along the lines of the scheme recently trialled by Norfolk police in Great Yarmouth. The impetus for that scheme was generated by the high volume of complaints about accidents caused by mobility scooter users on Great Yarmouth’s streets and pavements.

The scheme is run by Penny Carpenter, a crime prevention officer with Norfolk police. In a recent article, she was quoted as saying:

“Anyone can get a mobility scooter and you don’t have to have a licence… There’s no test involved. There’s no legal requirement to have insurance and anybody can drive one with no training at all.”

However, it is recommended that users should have at least third-party cover. The article continued:

“The courses, there have been two of them so far, aim to fill that gap. Improving users’ handling skills and creating an awareness of road safety are all key, as is installing a sense of pavement etiquette.

It takes about 25 minutes to complete, but there is no pass or fail. So far more than 50 people have volunteered to do it. And it is not just for beginners. The majority are people who have been using their scooters for years.

Shiela Adair, 64, is one of them. "Even though I’ve used a scooter before the course was ideal to learn about reversing.”

Norfolk police started the scheme because it believed that the number of accidents involving mobility scooters was on the increase. That cannot be proved nationally because mobility scooters come under the Department’s “other motorised vehicles” category, which includes ambulances, fire engines, motor caravans, motorised wheelchairs and quad bikes. Over the last three years, the number of accidents involving all vehicles in that category has increased substantially. For example, there were 1,970 accidents in 2006, 2,971 accidents in 2007 and 3,238 in 2008, which is the last year for which statistics are available. Those figures show a 60-odd per cent. increase over three years in that category. However, we cannot say how many of those accidents are directly attributable to mobility scooters. The Minister should therefore consider creating a separate category for mobility scooters, so that we can build up an evidence base on this important issue and find out one way or the other whether accidents involving mobility scooters are on the increase.

My final point regards a matter I have recently written about to the Chairman of the Transport Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs. Ellman). I asked her whether her Select Committee would consider the issue and I am pleased to say—this is for the Minister’s information—that in the coming months she has indeed agreed to carry out a short inquiry into the issue of mobility scooters. I obviously hope that the Minister will give evidence to that inquiry.

In conclusion I shall cover three key points, which I would like the Minister to specifically address in his closing remarks. First, will he consider the merits of introducing a voluntary proficiency test, preferably at no charge to the user? Such a test could be administered in conjunction with reputable retailers and local police authorities working together, as is currently done in Norfolk and one or two other police authority areas. I certainly intend to write to the chief constable of South Yorkshire to draw the matter to his attention, and to see if we can establish a course similar to the Norfolk one in South Yorkshire. I hope that the Minister will talk to his counterpart in the Home Office, the Minister for Policing, Crime and Counter-Terrorism, the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson), on the matter to establish whether progress on such a course can be made.

The second issue I would like the Minister to address is whether he will consider introducing the new offence of riding a mobility scooter in a dangerous way. That was very much the point that Mrs. McNair made in her revealing e-mail, which I read out at the beginning of my contribution. Finally, will the Minister consider introducing the specific category of “mobility scooter” in relation to the departmental statistics issue that I have already outlined, so that we can definitely say whether this is an increasing problem?

Hugh Bayley (City of York) (Lab) rose—

Mr. Peter Atkinson (in the Chair): Order. Before I call the hon. Gentleman, I know that the hon. Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough (Jeff Ennis) is happy for him to intervene, but may I confirm whether the Minister is happy?

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr. Sadiq Khan) indicated assent.

Mr. Peter Atkinson (in the Chair): The Minister is happy. I call Hugh Bayley.

1.43 pm

Hugh Bayley (City of York) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough (Jeff Ennis) on securing this important debate. I am grateful to him and the Minister for
allowing me a few moments to speak about my constituent, Mrs. Margaret Macalagan, who was hit by a mobility scooter when out shopping in 2008. She suffered serious injuries that meant she was admitted to hospital and her own mobility was badly affected. The driver of the scooter that hit her was untrained and uninsured, and was also elderly, disabled and of limited means. Mrs. Macalagan was therefore unable to gain any compensation for the injuries she sustained.

York Older People’s Assembly asked me to take up the issue and I raised it in 2008 with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Transport. I do not want to stop people using mobility scooters—they are a benefit—but I want to create an environment in which they are used safely and to ensure as far as possible that other people are not injured.

I would particularly like the Government to consider making insurance for such scooters compulsory. The DWP funds a number of people to run scooters through the disability living allowance scheme. One scheme under which people obtain scooters that are paid for with their DLA is the Motability powered wheelchair and scooter scheme. Those who get scooters under that scheme are required to insure the scooters, both for injury to third parties and for fire and theft. So when the Government fund scooters, they believe that insurance is not only reasonable but necessary. The same prescription should be applied to others who use scooters.

Like my hon. Friend, I am concerned that statistics about the number of accidents involving these scooters have not been collected. The Department for Transport should change that. In October 2009, I wrote again to the Department for Transport about the problem. The Minister who is present today replied very promptly in November, and told me:

“We are considering consulting on issues such as compulsory insurance and training”.

I am glad that is being considered, but I simply urge the Minister to start consulting on making these changes. Such changes are overdue and the sooner they are made, the better.

1.46 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr. Sadiq Khan): It is a pleasure to respond to a debate with you in the Chair, Mr. Atkinson—I think it is the first time I have done so. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough (Jeff Ennis) for raising some important issues about the use of mobility vehicles, for the way he has done so and for proffering some solutions to the problems he has highlighted—that makes one’s life a lot easier, when one is in the hot seat.

May I put on the record my sadness and concern to hear about the serious injury suffered by his constituent, Madison McNair, who is two years old, and the impact the injury she suffered has had on her family? I was also sad to hear about the other examples he gave, including the recent fatality.

By way of background, Britain has one of the best road safety records among developed countries. Since 2000, we have reduced the number of deaths and serious injuries by 40 per cent. and we remain committed to do more to make our roads and pavements safer still. All the evidence suggests that the use of mobility vehicles is growing and that trend is likely to continue as our population ages. Indeed, the number of people aged over 80 is likely to increase by 85 per cent. over the next 20 years.

One of the reasons I welcome the comments made by my hon. Friends the Members for City of York (Hugh Bayley) and for Barnsley, East and Mexborough is because of the balance of their remarks. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough referred to the benefits of mobility scooters both to his direct family and constituents. Unfortunately, some people have physical or social needs that require something more innovative to enable them to get around. In providing for that innovation, it is important for us to balance the rights of people with disabilities with the rights of other people to feel safe. I thank my hon. Friend for his letter to the Chair of the Transport Committee, which I believe will mean that I give evidence. The Committee is considering an important subject and I genuinely thank him for his interest. I also encourage him to give evidence to that inquiry—I am sure he will enjoy doing so and revel in it as much as I will.

My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that similar considerations for innovative transport modes and the opportunities that new technologies offer has meant that, earlier today, we launched parallel consultations on whether we should allow electric personal vehicles such as the Segway on our roads and cycle tracks, and on the requirements for electrically assisted pedal cycles. That is why, considering the increasing numbers of these vehicles, I am considering whether to consult on changing legislation concerning mobility scooters.

I shall return to some of the points raised by my hon. Friends. I am keen to work with my hon. Friend on the recent rates of incidents involving scooters and I would be grateful if he could provide the sources for any data he has reported today, so that we can build up an evidence base. I should start by saying that, as he said, information on incidents involving and injuries caused by mobility scooters is not recorded centrally. However, some research databases have given us an indication of the risk that they pose. Primarily, mobility scooters are used among pedestrians, who I am afraid do occasionally trip over them or are perhaps hit by them. However, because pavement speeds are limited to 4 mph, injuries are rare and mostly minor. That assertion is supported by several studies.

Estimates from a set of data collected from 18 representative A and E departments from a survey undertaken between 2000 and 2002 suggested that nationally there might be around 750 incidents a year involving three or four-wheeled mobility vehicles that warrant a hospital visit, although regrettably no indication of the severity of such incidents is available. I accept that since 2002 the number of people using mobility scooters has increased.

Fortunately, data are recorded from certain hospitals about people who have an NHS hospital stay of three days or more due to trauma. That suggests that each year across the country fewer than 40 people are injured by mobility scooters severely enough to require a lengthy stay in hospital. It is worth noting that about 95 per cent. of the injuries were to mobility scooter drivers, rather than to people being hit by them. That is an important point, and I will come back to the point...
about proficiency training, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough referred, because it is linked to that point as well.

For fatal injuries, we have scanned press reports, which show that it is likely that a mobility scooter incident was the cause of at least one pedestrian death in 2009, and at least one in 2008. Of course, we would wish to avoid any incidents if possible, but the figure of one death a year should be compared with the seven deaths a day on the roads overall. I am not minimising the deaths caused by mobility scooters, but merely stating that the risk they pose to pedestrians is small when compared to the deaths caused by road vehicles overall.

To summarise that point, it would be fair to say that the evidence suggests that mobility scooters are reasonably safe, certainly when compared to other modes of transport. However, it is worth recognising that their primary design consideration appears in most cases to be to improve mobility, rather than to ensure the safety of the pedestrians with which they are most mixed.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware, perhaps from Christmas presents he has bought for younger people, that it is possible to buy a remote control car that, when it comes into contact with an object, such as a table, TV or CD rack, will do a U-turn to avoid hitting that object. As a lay person, I do not have technical expertise on that, but I do not see why mobility scooters could not do something similar. I would like to look at that in the design standards and in any consultations we have as well.

Another big issue that was raised is whether users of mobility scooters can be prosecuted for dangerous use. I should start by saying that that is a separate issue to how they should be prosecuted. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 specifically exempts “invalid carriages”—I am afraid that that is the language they used in those days—from road traffic legislation, defining them as “mechanically propelled vehicles”, rather than “motor vehicles”.

There is an offence in law under paragraph 35 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which gives the police powers to deal with those who use mobility vehicles in a dangerous manner, and in proven cases a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment may be carried. Section 28 of the Road Safety Act 2006 now permits the application of discretionary points or disqualification for drivers with a driving licence. Of course, a person who has been injured by a scooter may also file a civil claim for damages or personal injury. For that reason, we strongly recommend that scooter users take out insurance, and available figures suggest that around 90 per cent. of them may already do so. I do, however, take on board the points raised by my hon. Friend.

Jeff Ennis: I thank the Minister for his reasoned response, which I am really happy with so far. On his point about the number of accidents and the actions that can be taken against individuals who are guilty of dangerous driving, I accept that that can be covered by the 2006 Act. However, Mr. Rushton from Wombwell, whose e-mail I read out, mentioned people using mobility scooters when drunk. One cannot be breathalysed when riding a mobility scooter, but one can still be prosecuted under the Licensing Act 1872 for riding a horse and cart when drunk. Surely we should introduce legislation. We should not be relying on laws from 1861 and 1872 for issues such as this. We should be bringing the legislation up to date.

Mr. Khan: My hon. Friend is in danger of making better than I have the points about why consultation is needed on some of the challenges that we face as the number of users increases and the potential risks that they pose to pedestrians increase as well. I was struck not just by his point but also by what my hon. Friend the Member for City of York said about the apparent anomalies in requirements and prescription when it comes to insurance for some mobility scooter users and others as well. Clearly, those are issues that any consultation would need to take on board.

There is a caveat in respect of the lack of evidence for reasons that have been discussed over the past 25 minutes, but, on the available evidence, it appears that mobility vehicles are not having a significant impact on road safety, and that existing law does permit prosecution, with the caveats that we discussed in the last interaction.

A point was raised about users not being required to undergo compulsory training. The advice and training that are available from retailers, local authorities and charities are not compulsory, but the Department and I strongly recommend that scooter users avail themselves of them. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough gave examples of proficiency courses available to mobility scooters, and I commend organisations such as the Norfolk police, who have been in the media today, who have put in place voluntary training schemes.

The key questions for any compulsory training would be who would be responsible for the training standards, which body would apply them and how the trainers themselves would be trained and assessed. I am interested in rolling out the idea of voluntary proficiency tests, which is perhaps an issue for consultation.

Another point that has been canvassed is remedial training for users who have been involved in an accident. There are practical problems with doing that, as there is no specific offence in law of riding a mobility scooter in a dangerous manner. It is difficult to see how we would do remedial training schemes, but training is an issue on which any consultation would seek views. I am also not opposed to the idea that was proffered about the Department creating a separate statistical category to collect evidence.

The legislation is now more than 20 years old. My hon. Friend has reminded me that we rely on an Act from 1861 for this area. In the last period, the use of such vehicles has increased. In 2005-06, for example, there were an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 powered mobility vehicles. A more recent estimate from the national travel survey suggests that there could now be up to 330,000, and the figure is likely to grow for the reasons that I have set out. The increasing number of such vehicles and the increasing interest in safety concerns present an opportune time to look again at the legislation covering mobility vehicles. In doing so, our aim would remain to balance the mobility needs of scooter users with the safety needs of pedestrians and other road users.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Barnsley, East and Mexborough and for City of York for articulating in a proportionate and balanced manner some of the challenges that we face. I hope to work with them to try to find some of the solutions, and
[Mr. Khan]

to return to this matter with some better news in the not too distant future.

Question put and agreed to.

1.58 pm

Sitting adjourned.
The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Hilary Benn): I am today publishing the Government’s new food strategy—“Food 2030”, which follows up the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit July 2008 report “Food Matters”.

Last August, we published our assessment of the UK’s food security, and we held an online discussion forum on the future of food between August and October 2009. In total, over 600 people and organisations responded.

Food security has come to the fore following food prices rising sharply in 2008 for the first time in a generation, provoking riots in some parts of the world. With a growing global population, a changing climate, and pressure being put on land, we are going to need to produce more food, to do so sustainably, and to ensure that the food we eat safeguards our health.

“Food 2030” sets out the steps that all those involved in food can take to put us on this path, in particular by helping consumers to be better informed and able to buy healthy food from sustainable sources; by minimising waste; by making sure every part of the supply chain is resilient, competitive and has the skills that match the challenge; and by using science and technological advance to assist us.

All of this will require leadership and co-operation from all those involved in farming, fisheries, food production and public health. I will update the House as the strategy is implemented.

Copies of the strategy are available in the Libraries of both Houses and on DEFRA’s website.

HEALTH

Generic Substitution in Primary Care

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. Mike O’Brien): The Department committed to the introduction of generic substitution in primary care in the national health service, subject to discussion with affected parties, in the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme 2009. The Department is today commencing a consultation on the proposals to implement generic substitution, where a generic medicine is dispensed instead of a branded medicine.

Discussions with, and views expressed by, stakeholders during the course of the last year have proved invaluable, endorsing in particular the need to appropriately account for patient safety in the implementation of generic substitution, and enable prescribers to continue to meet individual patient clinical need. Further to this engagement, the Department is consulting on three options for the implementation of generic substitution in primary care in England. These options are to:

- do nothing;
- introduce dispensing flexibility, but with specific exclusions, so that the arrangements do not apply to a selected group of products on an exempt list; and
- introduce dispensing flexibility, but limiting the scheme in such a way that the arrangements only apply to a selected group of products on a select list.

The Department’s preferred approach is the third option, supplemented by an “opt out endorsement”. The reasons for this include considerations relating to patient safety and clinical need, savings to the NHS and manageability of implementation for clinicians and prescription infrastructure providers.

This consultation runs from 5 January 2010 to 30 March 2010. Further details, including the consultation document and how to respond, can be found at: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/index.htm. There will be consultation events, and details of these will be published on the NHS Primary Care Commissioning website at: www.pcc.nhs.uk/events.

A copy of the consultation document has been placed in the Library and copies are available for hon. Members from the Vote office.

JUSTICE

Boundary Commission for Wales

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills): I should like to inform hon. Members that the Secretary of State for Justice has received notice in writing from the Boundary Commission for Wales of the commencement of an interim review. The review will be of the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies of Brecon and Radnorshire CC and Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney CC and will be based upon the number of electors on the electoral register at 21 December 2009. The review will include consideration of proposals for the Assembly constituencies and electoral regions as required by the Government of Wales Act 1998.

Dangerous Driving

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Claire Ward): The Government have been working throughout this Parliament to improve safety on Britain’s roads. In recent years we have enacted a number of measures designed to deal more effectively with those whose driving puts others at serious risk. We have:

- introduced the new offences of causing death by careless driving and causing death while driving unlicensed or uninsured, which have maximum penalties of five years and two years imprisonment, respectively; and
- increased the maximum penalty for serious driving offences, including causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs, from 10 to 14 years imprisonment (Criminal Justice Act 2003, came into effect on 27 February 2004).
But we need to do more. Dangerous driving is still too prevalent. We should not underestimate the devastating effect that bad driving can have on people’s lives. I have listened to the representations from those who are campaigning for increased penalties for dangerous driving. I have come to the conclusion that they are right, and that the current penalties are insufficient.

I therefore intend to increase the maximum penalty for dangerous driving from two years imprisonment to five years imprisonment. This will require primary legislation. An appropriate provision will be included in a suitable Bill when parliamentary time allows.

**Mortgages (Power of Sale and Residential Property)**


The consultation paper proposes that lenders be legally required to seek a possession or sale order from the courts, or obtain the agreement of the borrower, before selling the borrower’s home to settle the outstanding mortgage debt. This will guarantee homeowners the opportunity to access the protections available from the court before their home is sold or repossessed. This will prevent possible abuse of the power of sale in the future.

The proposals would apply only to owner-occupied properties and would not affect buy-to-let and other commercial mortgage loans. The consultation paper does not extend to issues concerning the financial regulation of lenders.

Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The paper is also available on the Ministry of Justice website at: www.justice.gsi.gov.uk. The consultation period will close on 28 March 2010.

**TRANSPORT**

**Electric Personal Vehicles and Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Clark): My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Adonis, has made the following ministerial statement:

The Department for Transport is today publishing two 12-week consultations.

One seeks views on the principle of changing the law to permit the use, on public roads and cycle tracks, of small electric personal vehicles (EPVs), which do not meet current legal requirements for such use.

The consultation does not include consideration of the use of pedestrian footways or footpaths by these vehicles.

New technologies may offer new opportunities. At present any EPV which does not comply with existing road traffic law may only be used on private land, with landowner permission. I am keen to ensure a full consideration of the issues. As a result, this consultation invites opinions, and supporting evidence, about whether the law should be changed to permit such EPVs on public roads and cycle tracks. Depending on the consultation results, legislative proposals and further detailed consultation may follow.

The second concerns electrically assisted pedal cycles and seeks views on proposals to provide closer alignment of GB regulations with European provisions. The proposals will provide greater clarity regarding the type of product considered to be an electrically assisted pedal cycle and those considered to be motor vehicles, for example, mopeds.

The consultation documents and response forms are available on the Department’s website and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The consultations will close on Tuesday 30 March 2010.
Petitions

Tuesday 5 January 2010

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Badman Report (North East Cambridgeshire)

The Petition of persons resident in the North-East Cambridgeshire parliamentary constituency,

Declares that they are concerned about the recommendations of the Badman Report, which suggests closer monitoring of home educators, including a compulsory annual registration scheme and right of access to people’s homes for local authority officials; further declares that the Petitioners believe the recommendations are based on a review that was extremely rushed, failed to give due consideration to the evidence, failed to ensure that the data it collected were sufficiently robust, and failed to take proper account of the existing legislative framework.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families either not to bring forward, or to withdraw, proposed legislative measures providing for tighter registration and monitoring of children educated at home in the absence of a thorough independent inquiry into the condition and future of elective home education in England; but instead to take the steps necessary to ensure that the existing Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities are properly implemented, learning from current best practice, in all local authorities in England.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

OBSErvATIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Sri Lanka

The Petition of constituents of Hon. Dominic Grieve MP for Beaconsfield and others,

Declares that following the end of hostilities in Sri Lanka as announced by President Mahinda Rajapakse, more than 280,000 Tamil civilians, including at least 50,000 children, remain detained indefinitely in cramped, squalid military-run camps in the north of the island in breach of international law; further declares that there is a severe lack of medical and humanitarian aid for the needs of these wounded malnourished and severely traumatised war victims; further declares that there has been a failure of movement, with the intention of moving these camps permanent; further declares that the traditional lands of these people are being colonised and illegally occupied by the armed forces; further declares that it is suspected that thousands of Tamils who are not accounted for are being detained incommunicado by the Sri Lankan armed forces; further declares that the perpetrators of war crimes and breaches of international law in Sri Lanka remain free from prosecution.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges HM Government to press for the implementation of the following: the United Nations, International Red Cross and voluntary agencies must be given full access to care for and protect the civilians in the camps, and then help them to return to their traditional homeland in the north and east; a list of all those still alive and in custody should be published, so that families can stop searching for loved ones who are dead; any who continue to be detained as alleged LTTE combatants must be treated in accordance with the provisions of international law, and urgently given access to legal representation; accountability processes must be established to ensure that international aid is not diverted to purposes other than those for which it was given; UN monitors must be given free access to all parts of the island; there must be a full UN investigation into war crimes committed during the war.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Dominic Grieve, Official Report, 1 December 2009; Vol. 501, c. 1079.]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, received 23 December 2009:

Since the end of conflict in Sri Lanka in May 2009, the UK Government have remained actively engaged in working for an improvement in the humanitarian situation and for long-term reconciliation between Sri Lanka’s communities.

Our priority has been the return of the more than 250,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their homes as soon as it has become safe to do so. We have taken every opportunity both bilaterally and with international partners to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to resettle the IDPs without further delay. In recent weeks there has been significant progress in this regard, with over 150,000 IDPs having left the camps and resettling in their home areas. The announcement that IDPs would be granted freedom of movement as of 1 December is a positive step. Some IDPs have already left, and we believe the opening of the camps and granting real freedom of movement will enable the thousands still living in the camps to start to rebuild their lives. It is now imperative that humanitarian agencies are given full access to the IDPs so that they can provide them with the help they need both in the camps and in their places of return.

Since September 2008, the UK Government have allocated £12.5 million to support the work of international humanitarian agencies and NGOs so that they have been able to provide much needed assistance to IDPs. None of this money has been provided directly to the Sri Lankan Government. In order to assist the return of IDPs the UK Government have been funding de-mining agencies and transport, and will provide help to returnees in rebuilding their livelihoods. UK Government funds have also been used to help the International Organisation for Migration with a registration scheme that has issued ID cards to IDPs. This is already helping them to access services and entitlements.
We continue to work with the Government of Sri Lanka and other partners in the international community to ensure that the end of the conflict leads to sustainable peace. We have urged the Government of Sri Lanka to make progress on securing an inclusive political solution to address the underlying causes of conflict. Genuine reconciliation between Sri Lanka’s communities will depend in a large part on the Government promoting and protecting the rights of all Sri Lankans—Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese.

Reconciliation will also require a process to address possible violations of international humanitarian law committed by both sides during the conflict. President Rajapakse made a commitment to take such measures following the visit to Sri Lanka of the UN Secretary-General in May. We continue to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to live up to this commitment. The report issued by the US State Department in October into incidents during the recent conflict in Sri Lanka underlines the importance of establishing a credible process. We welcome President Rajapakse’s decision to appoint an independent committee to look into the incidents cited in the US State Department’s report. The credibility of the committee will depend in part on its independence.
Written Answers to Questions
Tuesday 5 January 2010

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION
Members: Allowances

Mr. Pickles: To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission whether the Commission plans to publish claims made under the additional costs allowance for 2004-05 by those who are no longer hon. Members; and if the Commission will make it its policy to publish additional costs allowance claims for the period 2004-05 made by former hon. Members who are now prospective parliamentary candidates.

Nick Harvey: This is a matter for the Members Estimate Committee; I am replying on behalf of the Committee. The Committee decided not to publish, as a matter of course, claims made under the additional costs allowance for 2004-05 by those who left the House of Commons in May 2005. This was a pragmatic decision based on the difficulty of getting information to be published to the former Members for checking. The Committee has no plans to make it its policy to publish additional costs allowance claims for the period 2004-05 made by former hon. Members who are now prospective parliamentary candidates.

WOMEN AND EQUALITY
Banks: Equal Opportunities

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Minister for Women and Equality what recent progress has been made on increasing the level of access of women to senior positions in the banking profession.

Maria Eagle: The Government are committed to increasing the representation of women in senior positions. The Government Equalities Office (GEO) sponsors the annual Female FTSE Report, which benchmarks women’s progress on the boards of FTSE 100 companies. The 2009 report found that women make up 12.2 per cent. of directors across FTSE 100 companies, but only 9.3 per cent. of directors across the five banks in the FTSE 100.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is conducting a formal inquiry into the nature and causes of gender inequality and discrimination in the financial services sector. The EHRC is currently in the third stage of their inquiry, and is currently taking forward a series of round tables with the finance sector. In addition, the Treasury Select Committee will shortly report on their inquiry on women in the City. We will carefully consider the result of both inquiries.

In giving evidence to the Treasury Select Committee, the Minister for Women and Equality set out our intention to create a strong partnership with business organisations, trade bodies and recruitment firms to encourage companies to commit to their own internal targets and actions to increase diversity in senior positions. GEO will be holding an event in the spring with business to agree a practical plan of action.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Baron: To ask the Minister for Women and Equality how much the Government’s Equalities Office spent on works and refurbishment to offices allocated to Ministers in the Office in the last 12 months.

Michael Jabez Foster: The Government Equalities Office has not spent any money on refurbishing its ministerial offices over the past 12 months.

Departmental Plants

Grant Shapps: To ask the Minister for Women and Equality how much the Government and Equalities Office spent on (a) cut flowers and (b) pot plants in 2008-09.

Michael Jabez Foster: The Government Equalities Office did not spend any money on cut flowers or pot plants in 2008-09.

Equality Bill

Robert Neill: To ask the Minister for Women and Equality what representations she has received from Roman Catholic bishops on the potential effects of the provisions of the Equality Bill on Christmas celebrations.

Michael Jabez Foster: We have not received any representations from Catholic Bishops on the potential effects of the Equality Bill on Christmas celebrations. There is nothing in the Equality Bill which will ban Christmas celebrations, or indeed, any other religious festivities. The Bill contains an Equality Duty that will require public bodies to think about different groups when planning and delivering services. However it will not require public bodies to interfere with anybody’s religious celebrations.

OLYMPICS
Departmental Energy

Grant Shapps: To ask the Minister for the Olympics what the energy (a) rating and (b) band of each building occupied by the her Office was in each year for which figures are available.

Tessa Jowell: Information concerning the energy rating of my offices will be covered in the answers provided by the Minister of State for the Cabinet Office and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at DCMS, respectively.
Departmental Written Questions

Mr. Harper: To ask the Minister for the Olympics how many and what percentage of Parliamentary Questions tabled for written answer by her Department on a named day in session 2008-09 received a substantive answer on that day. [307530]

Tessa Jowell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Creative Industries on 14 December 2009, Official Report, column 670W.

Olympic Games 2012: Anniversaries

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Minister for the Olympics whether she plans to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee as part of the ceremonies the London 2012 Olympic Games. [308483]

Tessa Jowell: Planning for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee is at an early stage. We have had some preliminary discussions with The Palace to consider whether there may be opportunities to link the celebrations to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Business Secretary intends to make a statement to Parliament today on the Government's initial plans for the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

Olympic Games 2012: Construction

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Minister for the Olympics how many people were employed on the main Olympic construction site on the latest date for which figures are available. [308478]

Tessa Jowell: The latest information, released at the end of October in the Olympic Delivery Authority's (ODA) Jobs, Skills, Futures newsletter, showed that at the end of September 2009 there were 7,270 people working on the Olympic Park and Village. Of this, there were 4,842 people working on the Park, 21 per cent. were resident in one of the five Olympic Host Boroughs, and 12 per cent. were previously unemployed. The ODA reported in November that there were 120 apprentices working for the contractors on the Olympic Park, over a third of the way towards its target of 350 apprentices by 2012.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

Elections

Mr. Pickles: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission what guidance the Electoral Commission has issued on when electoral returning officers should commence general election counts. [308300]

Mr. Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it has written to all Returning Officers, advising that it is entirely appropriate for them, as independent statutory officers, to decide to hold the count on Friday if they are clear that this is necessary to ensure an accurate result. Returning Officers have also been advised to consider any relevant local factors, such as geography, availability of staff and venues, the security of the ballot boxes and the volume and management of postal votes as part of the decision-making process. The next general election will, for example, be the first general election at which new security checks on postal votes will need to be conducted, and this will introduce an additional stage in the process.

Mr. Pickles: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission what guidance the Electoral Commission has given to electoral returning officers on political party representatives or counting agents taking tallies of validated votes during an election count. [308301]

Mr. Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that its September 2009 planning guidance for Returning Officers and the recently published full guidance manual for UK Parliamentary (Acting) Returning Officers advise that no part of the count should take place out of the sight of candidates and agents and that procedures should be transparent at all times.
The Commission recognises the important role carried out by candidates and agents in scrutiniing the verification and counting processes. Candidates and agents may keep a tally of valid votes at the count.

**Mr. Pickles**: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission what discussions the Electoral Commission has had with Ofcom on its proposals for the number of party political broadcasts allocated to minority parties.

[308303]

**Mr. Streeter**: The Electoral Commission informs me that Ofcom consulted the Commission in June 2009 on changes it was considering to its Rules on Party Political and Referendum Broadcasts. The Commission set out its views in a letter to Ofcom on 17 July 2009, including that there should be more detailed guidelines for determining the number of broadcasts to be offered to qualifying parties. The Commission wrote again to Ofcom on 20 November 2009 during the formal consultation on the proposed new Rules, welcoming proposed changes.

Copies of these letters have been placed in the Library of the House and are available on the Commission's website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

[308306]

**Mr. Pickles**: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission what information the Electoral Commission holds on the number of postal ballot papers handed in on polling day in each of the last five by-elections.

**Mr. Streeter**: The Electoral Commission informs me that returning officers are not required to keep records of the number of postal ballot packs handed in at polling stations on polling day. However, the returning officers for the last five UK parliamentary by-elections have provided the following estimates of the number of postal ballot packs handed in at polling stations on polling day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of postal ballot packs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow, North-East</td>
<td>12 November 2009</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich, North</td>
<td>23 July 2009</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenrothes</td>
<td>6 November 2008</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow, East</td>
<td>24 July 2008</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haltemprice and Howden</td>
<td>10 July 2008</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dr. Pugh**: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission how many electoral commissioners have been an electoral (a) candidate or agent and (b) returning officer.

[308333]

**Mr. Streeter**: The Electoral Commission informs me that none of the current Electoral Commissioners have been an electoral candidate or agent, and one commissioner has been a returning officer.

Electoral Commissioners are appointed under the Political Parties, Referendums and Elections Act 2000 (part 1 section 3), as amended by the Political Parties and Elections (PPE) Act 2009. Before the passage of the PPE Act, the law disqualified people who had been actively involved in political parties in the previous 10 years from office as a Commissioner. The law now provides for four new Commissioners to be appointed following nomination by political parties, and without that disqualification. For the remaining Commissioners, the time ban period has been reduced from 10 to five years.

**Electoral Commission**

**Mr. Pickles**: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission with reference to the answer of 21 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 1439W, on elections: investigations, how long the Electoral Commission's investigation into 5th Avenue Partners took; and what steps the Electoral Commission is taking to improve the efficiency of its investigations.

[308284]

**Mr. Streeter**: The Electoral Commission informs me that its investigation into 5th Avenue Partners took approximately two years and 10 months—excluding a 20-month period from March 2007 to November 2008, when it suspended its inquiries at the request of City of London police.

The Commission further informs me that since this investigation was opened, it has established strict time targets for key phases of its enforcement work. In 2009, the Commission met its targets of conducting 90 per cent. of initial case assessments within five working days, and 90 per cent. of case reviews within 90 days. The Commission also aims to complete 90 per cent. of its investigations within six months and following questions from the Speaker’s Committee, has set a target from 2010-11 of completing all its investigations within one year. The Commission has instituted enhanced case planning and supervision to ensure that these targets are met.

**European Parliament**

**Mr. Pickles**: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker’s Committee on the Electoral Commission to what region the Electoral Commission plans to allocate the UK’s additional European Parliament seat following the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon.

[308304]

**Mr. Streeter**: The Electoral Commission informs me that it has not yet recommended which of the 12 UK electoral regions should receive the additional European Parliament seat, and can only do so following receipt of a statutory direction from the Secretary of State for Justice.

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Departmental Art Works**

**Mr. Philip Hammond**: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on art works in the last 12 months.

[306446]
Paul Goggins: The Northern Ireland Office (NIO), including its arm’s length bodies and the Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland but excluding its agencies and NDPBs, has had no expenditure on art works in the last 12 months.

Departmental Billing

Jenny Willott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what proportion of invoices submitted to his Department have been paid within 10 days in each month since October 2008; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Goggins: The following table shows what proportion of invoices submitted to the Northern Ireland Office, including its arm’s length bodies and the Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland but excluding its agencies and NDPBs, have been paid within 10 days from October 2008 to November 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total number of invoices subject to prompt payment</th>
<th>Total number of invoices achieving prompt payment</th>
<th>Percentage processed within 10 working days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>4,170</td>
<td>2,002</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>4,328</td>
<td>2,554</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>2,692</td>
<td>2,221</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>3,122</td>
<td>2,466</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>3,231</td>
<td>2,669</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>3,611</td>
<td>2,968</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>3,632</td>
<td>3,026</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>3,357</td>
<td>3,074</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>3,577</td>
<td>3,305</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>3,268</td>
<td>2,911</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>2,309</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>2,920</td>
<td>2,797</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>2,981</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>2,658</td>
<td>2,555</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not possible to provide a breakdown of conferences held in external venues attended by NIO staff in the past five years. The Department does not capture information at this level through financial coding, so to provide this would incur a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent by his Department and its agencies on conferences they organised which were subsequently cancelled in each of the last three years; and what the title was of each such conference.

Paul Goggins: The Northern Ireland Office has not spent any funds on conferences which were subsequently cancelled in any of the last three years.

Departmental Pay

Mr. Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been paid in bonuses to civil servants in his Department in each year since 2006.

Mr. Woodward: Non-consolidated performance payments are made to staff in the senior civil service in line with Cabinet Office guidance and also to staff at grades D2 to A in line with HM Treasury guidance. These payments are made to reward performance throughout the previous reporting year. Under a separate scheme, non-consolidated special performance payments are awarded to staff to reward particularly meritorious contributions throughout the year.
The total amount of non-consolidated performance payments made to Northern Ireland Office staff since 2006 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost to the public purse was £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>731,882.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>837,224.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>859,913.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This figure does not include non-consolidated performance payments made by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to staff below senior civil service.

**Departmental Training**

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many overseas training courses were attended by his Department’s civil servants in the latest period for which figures are available; how many were attended by his Department’s civil servants in the Northern Ireland Prison Service to staff below senior civil service, and the cost to the public purse was of each course. [305890]

**Mr. Woodward:** The following table provides a summary of the training courses attended by Northern Ireland Office (NIO) staff from 1 March 2008 to date. The NIO policy is to ensure that training courses attended by staff support delivery of business objectives and are cost effective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Duration (days)</th>
<th>Number of staff</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Builders Programme, New York</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders for Tomorrow, Harvard</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17,108.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership in a Changing World, Harvard</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5,691.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Costs include course fees, travel and accommodation/subsistence costs.

The Community Builders Programme was initiated as a confidence building measure out of the Good Friday Agreement. The aim was to bring key community activists and local opinion formers together with PSNI and Criminal Justice personnel in an environment which promoted partnership working and networking. Two staff attended the four week programme in March 2008.

The three week Leaders for Tomorrow programme at Harvard is designed to provide high calibre leadership development for public and private sector staff from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The programme is arranged through NICS Centre for Applied Learning. Each year, 48 people from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland attend the three week programme, with the NIO providing two participants in January 2009.

The one week Leadership in a Changing World programme is designed for senior leaders from the public and private sector. The programme was arranged through NICS Centre for Applied Learning. One member of the NIO Senior Civil Service attended the programme in November 2008.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much (a) his Department and (b) its agencies have spent on away days in the last 12 months; and what the (i) subject and (ii) location of each away day was. [306404]

**Mr. Woodward:** Table A provides a summary of the development days for divisions and teams organised by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) in the last 12 months (from 1 December 2008). The Northern Ireland Office policy is to ensure that development days have a clear business benefit and are cost-effective. The Department places emphasis on team development through volunteering, to meet corporate social responsibility commitments.

---

**Table A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Venue/Location</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>40.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights Elections and Legacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Centrepoint, London</td>
<td>93.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Operation Support Division</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>464.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Services Directorate</td>
<td>Management Event</td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>568.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Services Event</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Stormont Hotel</td>
<td>2,446.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Lorne House, Belfast</td>
<td>474.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Services</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Lorne House, Belfast</td>
<td>558.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Office</td>
<td>PA Development Event</td>
<td>Stormont Hotel</td>
<td>3,569.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service</td>
<td>Management Event</td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>878.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioners</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Stormont Hotel</td>
<td>171.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioners</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Lorne House, Belfast</td>
<td>446.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Stream Cadre</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Lorne House, Belfast</td>
<td>221.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Irish Secretariat/Visits</td>
<td>Development and Planning Event</td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>1,116.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Lorne House, Belfast</td>
<td>87.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directorate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Stormont Hotel</td>
<td>87.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Protection</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Stormont Hotel</td>
<td>87.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B provides a summary of the development days for divisions and teams organised within Northern Ireland Office agencies in the last 12 months (from 1 December 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Venue/Location</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Justice</td>
<td>Corporate Services Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Lorne House, Belfast</td>
<td>415.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP</td>
<td>Development Event</td>
<td>Castle Ward, County Down</td>
<td>3,542.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP</td>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>Radisson Hotel, Limavady</td>
<td>690.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Radisson Hotel, Limavady</td>
<td>952.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP</td>
<td>Criminal Justice Order</td>
<td>Bushtown Hotel, Coleraine</td>
<td>440.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM Hydebank</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Rosspark Hotel, Kells</td>
<td>2,618.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maghaberry</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Stormont House</td>
<td>28.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIPS: Press</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Stormont House</td>
<td>550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Reorganisation of Prison</td>
<td>Conference facility at Portstewart Golf Club</td>
<td>550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP</td>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td>Rosspark Hotel, Kells</td>
<td>1,760.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hotels

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hotel room nights were booked by officials in (a) his Department and (b) its agencies in each year since 2007; and how much (i) his Department and (ii) its agencies spent on the fees of third party agents in booking hotel accommodation in each of those years.

Paul Goggins: Staff in my Department book hotels through a central booking service using our appointed agents. The agent makes no charge for booking hotels which are on a central list of frequently used hotels. Such bookings make up 94 per cent. of all hotel bookings. There is a charge of £5.00 per booking for the remaining 6 per cent. of one off bookings for hotels not on the frequently used list.

Arrangements vary within the agencies which use either the core Northern Ireland Office contract or the Northern Ireland civil service central contract. The necessary information is held in a number of different formats across a number of locations. It is therefore not possible to answer this part of the question except at disproportionate cost.

Human Rights

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the government of the Irish Republic on human rights.

Mr. Woodward: I have had regular meetings with the Irish Foreign Minister during the past few months, at which we have discussed current issues, including the consultation on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which was launched on 30 November.

Prisons

Sammy Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the capital expenditure on the prison estate in Northern Ireland will be in (a) 2010 and (b) 2011.

Paul Goggins: The planned expenditure on the prison estate in Northern Ireland in 2010-11 is £26 million.

While a similar level of expenditure is currently envisaged as part of the service’s estate strategy in 2011-12, the available funding is not yet known.

Sammy Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the total capacity is of prisons in Northern Ireland.

Paul Goggins: 1,775.

Sammy Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the average daily cost was of detaining a person in prison in Northern Ireland in the last period for which figures are available.

Paul Goggins: The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not calculate the cost per prisoner but rather the average cost per prisoner place, which is published in its annual report and accounts.

In 2008-09, the average daily cost per prisoner place was £223.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL

Departmental Billing

Jenny Willott: To ask the Solicitor-General how many and what proportion of invoices submitted to the Law Officers’ Departments have been paid within 10 days in each month since October 2008; and if she will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Law Officers’ Departments are committed to improving their systems in order to meet the Government’s target of paying all invoices within 10 days of receipt. At present, approximately 90 per cent. of all invoices submitted to the Law Officers’ Departments are handled by the Crown Prosecution Service and of these around 80 per cent. are paid within 10 days.

Full details on the performance of all the Law Offices’ Departments against the Government target since October 2008 are detailed in the following tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Invoices paid within 10 days</th>
<th>As percentage of all invoices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crown Prosecution Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Invoices paid within 10 days</th>
<th>As percentage of all invoices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasury Solicitor’s Department, Attorney-General’s Office and Her Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Invoices paid within 10 days</th>
<th>As percentage of all invoices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Serious Fraud Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Invoices paid within 10 days</th>
<th>As percentage of all invoices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Fraud Office

The Serious Fraud Office provides transactional services for the payment of all National Fraud Authority’s invoices. The Agency is unable to disclose its payment performance as it uses the Serious Fraud Office’s accounting system and NFA-specific payments cannot be differentiated.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Baron: To ask the Solicitor-General how much the Law Officers’ Departments spent on works and refurbishment to offices allocated to Law Officers in the last 12 months.

The Solicitor-General: In the last 12 months AGO has spent £3,694.00 on works and refurbishment to offices allocated to Law Officers.

Departmental Conferences

Mr. Baron: To ask the Solicitor-General which conferences held overseas have been attended by civil servants based in the Law Officers’ Department in the last three years; and what the cost to the public purse was of such attendance at each conference.

The Solicitor-General: The information requested is contained in the following tables.

Staff from the Attorney-General’s Office have attended the following overseas conferences in the last three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Travel and subsistence cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OECD conference on anti-bribery</td>
<td>124.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors in 2008—Singapore</td>
<td>2,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors in 2009—Kiev</td>
<td>2,666.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treasury Solicitor’s (Tsol) staff have attended the following overseas conferences in the last three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Travel and subsistence cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in adoption procedures in Europe ensuring the best interests of the child conference—a joint Council of Europe and European Commission conference in Strasbourg</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Services Conference in Madrid—work in connection with AGO shared services project</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Bar Association Antitrust Spring Meeting 17 to 20 April 2007</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht on State Aids on 29 to 30 March 2007</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European State Aid Law Institute—Annual Conference Brussels—May 2008</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European State Aid Law Institute seminar in Luxembourg in December 2008</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Institute of Public Administration—State Aid to the Financial Sector—4 to 5 December 2008</td>
<td>396.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Society of European Law, Dublin</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symposium on ECJ, Berlin 2007</td>
<td>694.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar European Group Annual Conference, Istanbul, 2008</td>
<td>995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech EU Presidency Conference on Implementation of EU law, 2008</td>
<td>282.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar European Group Annual Conference, Madrid, 2009</td>
<td>191.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European State Aid Law Annual conference in Brussels, June 2009.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¹ The costs identified are those incurred by Tsol. It has not been possible to identify travel and subsistence costs in all instances within the disproportionate cost threshold. Additionally Tsol officials have attended conferences as speakers or as advisers to their clients where costs for these have been met by either conference organisers or clients and it is not feasible to identify these costs within the disproportionate costs threshold.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff from Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office (RCPO) have attended the following overseas conferences in the last three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Travel and subsistence cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors in 2007—Hong Kong</td>
<td>30,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors in 2008—Singapore</td>
<td>22,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Prosecutions Agencies Conference (HOPAC) in Canada in 2007</td>
<td>1,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurojustice Conference in Slovenia in 2007</td>
<td>893.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proliferation Security Initiative—Operational Experts Group in New Zealand, in September 2008</td>
<td>704.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff from the HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HM CPSI) have attended the following overseas conferences in the last three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Travel and subsistence cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International</td>
<td>2,916.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Prosecutors in 2006—Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International</td>
<td>2,349.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Prosecutors in 2007—Hong Kong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Conference of the International</td>
<td>4,866.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Prosecutors in 2008—Singapore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff from the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) have attended the following overseas conferences in the last three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Travel and subsistence cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 Years of Criminal Justice Reform—22 to 26 June</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007, Vancouver, Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Recovery Analysis—5 to 15 March 2007, Chicago,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAP European Regional Conference—17 March 2007, Den</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haag, Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Data Recovery—10 to 14 September 2007,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Conference on Economic Crime—22 October 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007, location not recorded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICLN Conference—10 to 14 December 2007, location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Forensics, Investigation and Response—7 to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April 2008, Dublin, Ireland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Phone Forensics World Conference—8 to 10 May</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008, New York, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybercop 202 Forensic Application—28 to 31 July 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hat USA 2008 Briefings—6 to 7 August 2008,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techno Forensics—27 to 20 October 2008, Washington,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handheld Forensics—10 to 11 November 2008, Washington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POCLA Conference—26 June 2009, Amsterdam, Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 14th Annual Conference and General Meeting of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the International Association of Prosecutors—6 to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 September 2009, Kiev, Ukraine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No conferences held overseas were attended by National Fraud Authority staff in 2008-09 when the Agency launched.

The Crown Prosecution Service is a devolved organisation. Although expenditure data on overseas travel are available, the Department has not kept central records of the reason for travel or which overseas conferences have been attended by CPS staff in the last three years. To provide this information would involve checking paper records across the CPS and would incur disproportionate costs.

**Departmental Legislation**

Chris Huhne: To ask the Solicitor-General what criminal offences have been (a) created and (b) abolished by secondary legislation sponsored by the Law Officers’ Departments since 1 May 2008. [307795]

The Solicitor-General: The Law Officers’ Departments have not sponsored any secondary legislation since 1 May 2008 that has created or abolished a criminal offence.

**Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office: Conferences**

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Solicitor-General how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office’s buildings attended by civil servants in the Revenue and Customs Prosecution Office there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307449]

The Solicitor-General: Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office (RCPO) is committed to providing a rewarding and stimulating working environment in which our employees can develop and excel. Consequently, RCPO organises a number of events to set strategy, develop and engage its employees, including:

- senior managers’ away days to review corporate performance and set future plans
- all-staff conferences to deliver key messages, outline strategy and celebrate corporate successes
  - (a) Since 2005 RCPO has organised seven senior manager away days, at a cost of £39,286.
  - (b) RCPO has accounted for domestic conference charges as a separate item of expenditure from September 2007. Since that date staff have attended 34 conferences, including all-staff conferences, at a cost of £166,390.
  - (c) Staff from RCPO have also attended nine overseas conferences since 2005, at a cost of £60,988.

**Trials**

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Solicitor-General in respect of each case which went to trial and resulted in a judge-directed acquittal, what the original Crown Prosecution Service lawyer decision had been before it proceeded to trial in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [308849]

The Solicitor-General: A case can only proceed to trial in the Crown court where the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has first decided that a defendant should be charged and which charges should be brought, by applying the two stage test of the Code for Crown Prosecutors: that the evidence supports a realistic prospect of conviction; and that it is in the public interest to proceed with a prosecution. Additionally, after a defendant is charged, each case is subject to a process of continuous review to ascertain that both the evidence and the public interest continue to weigh in favour of a prosecution.

However, while this process is intended to ensure, wherever possible, that weaker cases are identified and
dropped before reaching trial, it is neither possible nor desirable that every prosecution should result in a conviction. There will always remain a small number of cases in which essential facts only become apparent later in the process, and even in the course of the trial itself.

Both the volume and proportion of directed acquittals have improved over recent years.

The following table shows the number of defendants whose case resulted in a judge directed acquittal during each of the last five years, and expresses these as a proportion of all cases completed in the Crown court. The table also shows the reasons for which cases resulted in a directed acquittal. Information in this format is held only for the last four years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Judge directed acquittals</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E10 Key witness does not support case</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11 Unreliable/lack of identification</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1 Inadmissible evidence-breach of PACE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2 Inadmissible evidence-other than breach of PACE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3 Unreliable confession</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4 Conflict of evidence</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5 Essential medical evidence missing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6 Essential forensic evidence missing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7 Essential legal element missing</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8 Unreliable witness or witnesses</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9 Key victim does not support case</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidential reasons</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12 Effect on victim's physical or mental health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13 Suspect/Defendant elderly or in significant ill health</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14 Loss or harm minor and single incident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15 Loss or harm put right</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16 Long delay between offence/charge or trial</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17 Very small or nominal penalty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18 Other indictment/sentence</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19 Informer or other public interest immunity issues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20 Caution more suitable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P21 Youth of offender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P22 Conditional caution more suitable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P36 Inappropriate to compel victim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P37 Inappropriate to compel witness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public interest reasons</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U22 File not received from police-adjourment refused</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U23 CPS not ready-adjourment refused</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U24 Offence taken into consideration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U25 Victim refuses to give evidence or retracts</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U26 Other witness refuses to give evidence or retracts</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U27 Victim fails to attend unexpectedly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U28 Other civilian witness fails to attend unexpectedly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U29 Police witness fails to attend unexpectedly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U30 Victim intimidation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U31 Other civilian witness intimidation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U32 Documents produced at court</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to proceed reasons</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>033 Bind over acceptable</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>034 Acquittal after trial</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons for Judge directed acquittals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Percentage of total completed cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>035 Other</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Judge directed acquittals</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1,254</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total unsuccessful outcomes</td>
<td>69,832</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>69,549</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>77,428</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>84,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total convictions</td>
<td>21,526</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>20,720</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>20,101</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>19,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total completed case outcomes</td>
<td>91,358</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>90,269</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>97,529</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>103,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEFENCE

Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has made any payments to protect the provision of supplies to UK forces in Afghanistan from Pakistan.

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The Ministry of Defence contracts with industry for the provision of supplies to UK forces in Afghanistan from Pakistan. The Department has not made any payments to protect the provision of these supplies.

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in searching for Osama bin Laden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: We have not received any reliable intelligence on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden for a number of years.

Air Force: Military Bases

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 7 December 2009, Official Report, column 90W, on the Royal Air Force: military bases, what the (a) name and (b) rank of the US base commander is at (i) RAF Croughton, (ii) RAF Barford St John, (iii) RAF Menwith Hill, (iv) RAF Fairford, (v) RAF Welford, (vi) RAF Alconbury, (vii) RAF Molesworth, (viii) RAF Lakenheath and (ix) RAF Mildenhall.

Bill Rammell: The name and rank of the US base commander at the RAF stations listed as follows are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and rank of US base commander</th>
<th>RAF station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Renner</td>
<td>RAF Croughton/RAF Barford St John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel O’Brien</td>
<td>RAF Menwith Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel Price</td>
<td>RAF Fairford/RAF Welford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Cashdollar</td>
<td>RAF Alconbury/RAF Molesworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Silvertia</td>
<td>RAF Lakenheath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Manske</td>
<td>RAF Mildenhall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Armed Forces: Aviation

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of flights of (a) military aircraft and (b) aircraft chartered by his Department to and from Afghanistan have been delayed by more than six hours in each month since January 2008.

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The information on flights delayed by more than six hours is provided in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of military flights</th>
<th>Percentage of military flights</th>
<th>Number of civilian flights</th>
<th>Percentage of civilian flights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Up to 10 December 2009
2. The figures for military aircraft only include passenger flights as delays to freight flights are not recorded. The charter flight figures are only for freight.

Armed Forces: Bomb Disposal

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what potential sites are proposed for the recently announced bomb disposal training centre.

Mr. Kevan Jones: Wimbish in Essex is being considered as the potential location for the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Task Force training facility announced by the Prime Minister on 14 December 2009.
Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many bomb disposal robots (a) have been ordered in each of the last five years and (b) are currently on order.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am withholding details on the number of bomb disposal robots ordered over the last five years and currently on order, as disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the armed forces.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the armed forces' TALON bomb disposal robots have been damaged due to human error in the last 12 months.

Bill Rammell: No TALON bomb disposal robots have been damaged by human error in the last 12 months.

Armed Forces: Officers

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) commodores, (b) brigadiers and (c) air commodores there were in each year since 1997.

Mr. Kevan Jones: The number of Commodores, Brigadiers and Air Commodores each year since 1997 can be found in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Naval</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Royal Air Force</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Naval Service figures include Royal Navy commodores and Royal Marines brigadiers.

Data provided for 2007 to 2009 should be considered provisional due to the ongoing validation of data from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) System. Figures above 100 have rounded to the nearest 10.

Armed Forces: Training

Mr. Lancaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect on attendance at Officer Training Corps of the in-year savings announced earlier in 2009.

Bill Rammell: Following a reduction in the University Officer Training Corps (UOTC) budget in October, cadet pay has been suspended until April 2010. This was one of a number of budgetary measures taken this year by the Army to enable resources to be better focused on the MOD’s main effort in Afghanistan.

A number of UOTC commanders have reported reduced attendance since the suspension of cadet pay. Attendance levels normally drop away at this time of year, as first year undergraduates decide which activities are for them. We will have a clearer picture of students’ intentions once they have returned from their Christmas break. Our intention is to restore cadet pay in the next financial year and we hope that the majority of officer cadets will be able to ride out this temporary difficulty.

Mr. Lancaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the attendance levels have been at Officer Training Corps for each unit as a percentage of (a) establishment and (b) actual strength in each of the last 12 months.

Bill Rammell: The attendance levels at each unit of the Officer Training Corps, in each of the last 12 months, as a percentage of establishment and actual strength, is shown in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>January Estab</th>
<th>January Actual</th>
<th>February Estab</th>
<th>February Actual</th>
<th>March Estab</th>
<th>March Actual</th>
<th>April Estab</th>
<th>April Actual</th>
<th>May Estab</th>
<th>May Actual</th>
<th>June Estab</th>
<th>June Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow and Strathclyde</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester and Salford</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumbrian</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These figures are average monthly figures, collated by the OTC units. December figures are as at 11 December. Actual activity levels vary from month to month and are typically low during exam periods and holidays.

**Mr. Lancaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what categories of service personnel train at the Officer Training Corps; and which of those categories (a) receive and (b) do not receive payment while undertaking such training. [307272]

**Bill Rammell:** The categories of service personnel involved in training at the Officer Training Corps are as follows:

Permanent Staff Regular Army staff;
Permanent Staff Group A Territorial Army (TA) staff; and
Territorial Army (TA) Group B Officer Cadets (Students).

Following the temporary in-year savings measures introduced in October 2009, the only categories currently receiving pay are Regular Army personnel, group A TA staff and those group B officer cadets who are TA second lieutenant instructors delivering military leadership development programme levels 1, 2 and 3 training.

Bursars are receiving their bursars grants but are unpaid for officer cadet activity.

All remaining officer cadets have temporarily had their pay suspended.

**Dr. Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his statement of 15 December 2009, *Official Report*, columns 801-4, on the future defence programme, what assessment he has made of the effects on (a) the Defence Training Review and (b) RAF St Athan of implementation of the measures announced in the statement. [309271]


**Armed Forces: Weapons**

**Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) Javelin missiles, (b) multiple rocket launcher rockets and (c) mortar rounds have been fired in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what the cost is of each missile fired in each category. [306745]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The following table sets out the number of Javelin missiles, guided multiple rocket launcher system rockets and mortar rounds that have been fired on operations and in training in the last 12 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Javelin</th>
<th>GMLRS</th>
<th>81mm</th>
<th>Mortar 60mm</th>
<th>51mm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21200</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Javelin missiles fired in the last 12 months have been procured under two different contracts. The average cost of each missile would have been approximately £49,000.

The cost of 51mm mortars ranges from approximately £80 to approximately £160 depending on the variant fired. The cost of 60mm mortars ranges from approximately £185 to approximately £640 depending on the variant fired. We do not hold data for the expenditure of 60mm mortars in all months. The cost of 81mm mortars ranges from approximately £190 to approximately £890 depending on the variant fired.

Defence: Expenditure

Mr. Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on defence in (a) 1997 and (b) the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The MOD’s total expenditure (outturn), in near cash and non-cash, including and excluding the cost of all military operations for each year since 2001-02 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Near Cash</th>
<th>Non-Cash</th>
<th>Total Near Cash</th>
<th>Total Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>24,511,054</td>
<td>13,483,254</td>
<td>37,994,308</td>
<td>37,994,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>26,930,775</td>
<td>21,180,812</td>
<td>48,111,587</td>
<td>48,111,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>27,795,583</td>
<td>12,734,259</td>
<td>40,529,842</td>
<td>40,529,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>28,876,022</td>
<td>10,233,569</td>
<td>39,109,591</td>
<td>39,109,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>29,635,000</td>
<td>11,664,951</td>
<td>41,299,951</td>
<td>41,299,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>31,245,735</td>
<td>11,299,240</td>
<td>42,544,975</td>
<td>42,544,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>31,820,049</td>
<td>3,031,915</td>
<td>34,851,964</td>
<td>34,851,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>35,568,736</td>
<td>4,091,204</td>
<td>39,659,940</td>
<td>39,659,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Department did not produce full accounts until the introduction of Resource Accounting and Budgeting for the financial year 2001-02. Prior to this, the Department’s outturn was reported in the end of year ‘Appropriations Accounts and Estimates Reports’. Copies are placed in the Library of the House. Appropriations accounts do not, however, separately identify the cost of operations or the costs of the security and intelligence services, and that information is not held centrally. The figures for this current financial year will be available in the annual report usually published in July.

The only way to compare historic MOD defence spending is through the near cash element of the budget, as laid out in the spending review letters, but this does not include all aspects of the MOD spend, e.g. depreciation and cost of capital.

1997-98 MOD near cash budget was £21,800 million.

2009-10 MOD near cash budget is £31,921 million.

2010-11 MOD near cash budget is planned to be £33,328 million.

Departmental Air Travel

Dr. Murrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department’s policy is on the accumulation and use of air miles by his Department’s personnel flying at public expense.

Mr. Kevan Jones: Crown servants travelling by air on MOD business, paid for from public funds, must not make private use of frequent flyer bonuses that arise as a result of that expenditure, for example air miles. They may, however, collect such bonuses to enable them to use the associated benefits in respect of official travel. The receipt of any benefits accruing from official travel must be recorded in hospitality books.

These rules apply to all MOD civilian staff and service personnel, described collectively as “Crown servants”.

Departmental Pay

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) full-time employees of his Department with 25 years or more service and (b)
full-time employees of his Department earn £15,000 per annum or less. [307909]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The total number of full-time employees in the Department with 25 years or more service is 9,971 of whom 144 earn less than £15,000. The total number of full-time employees in the Department who earn £15,000 or less is 5,185.

Departmental Public Expenditure

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the 2009 Pre-Budget Report affects his Department’s spending plans for (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; and if he will publish an updated version of Table 1.2 on pages 20 and 21 of his Department’s Annual Report and Accounts 2008-09. [309066]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The Pre-budget Report (PBR) did not change the Ministry of Defence’s budget up to the end of the current spending review period in 2010-11. The only change announced at the PBR that will affect the MOD’s spending plan is the 0.5 per cent. further increase in national insurance, which will cost approximately £35 million per annum from 2011-12.

We currently have no plan to reissue the total departmental spending table until the next publication of the Departmental Annual Report and Accounts in July 2010.

Future Large Aircraft

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what meetings his Department has had with EADS on renegotiating the initial contract for the Airbus A400M. [308623]

Mr. Quentin Davies: Officials from the UK, along with those from partner nations and OCCAR, have participated in a range of meetings with both EADS and Airbus Military and I have myself had several meetings with them.

As these discussions are ongoing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on them at this stage.

Germany: British Forces Post Office

Willie Rennie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funding will be provided to the British Forces Post Office in Germany in (a) 2009, (b) 2010, (c) 2011 and (d) 2012. [304327]

Bill Rammell: The British Forces Post Office (BFPO) mail service to and within Germany comprises two services.

The first is a six day a week return contracted road container service from BFPO Northolt to Dulmen, which takes outward mail from Northolt and returns UK-addressed mail from Dulmen. This service is controlled and funded by BFPO, at a cost of £530,000 per annum.

The second service, within Germany, comprises the distribution of outward mail from Dulmen to forces post offices and to units, and the collection of inward mail from forces post offices for delivery to Dulmen.

The forecast costs to provide the postal support role, including personnel, equipment and infrastructure costs are provided as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Approximate cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>5,293,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>5,402,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>5,509,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>5,617,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gibraltar: Navy

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Royal Navy warships are stationed in British Gibraltar territorial waters. [309100]

Bill Rammell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 15 June 2009, Official Report, column 8W.

Hotels

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hotel room nights were booked by officials in (a) his Department and (b) its agencies in each year from 2007; and how much (i) his Department and (ii) its agencies spent on the fees of third party agents in booking hotel accommodation in each of those years. [309057]

Mr. Kevan Jones: This information is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Iraq Committee of Inquiry

Jenny Willott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) documents and (b) other items of information held in electronic format at each security classification have been submitted to the Iraq Inquiry; and if he will make a statement. [309364]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to her by the Minister for the Cabinet Office on 14 December 2009, Official Report, column 840W. My Department is in the process of providing the Iraq Inquiry with all the documents and electronic information it holds that has been requested to date. This information spans every level of Government security classification.

Iraq Committee of Inquiry: Reserve Forces

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many reservists from each branch have (a) been called up and (b) volunteered to assist with the Iraq Inquiry; and (2) what length of time the reservists appointed to assist the Iraq Inquiry are expected to serve in that role; and (3) what steps his Department is taking to (a) accommodate in military barracks the reservists aiding the Iraq Inquiry and (b) reimburse their living costs. [309236]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: No reservists have been deployed to assist the Iraq Inquiry.
Iraq: Oil

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many UK armed forces personnel are involved in the protection of Iraqi oil facilities. [308617]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** To the nearest 50, there are 200 UK armed forces personnel involved in the protection of Iraq’s off-shore oil platforms. No UK personnel are involved in defending oil facilities on land.

The precise number of personnel in theatre fluctuates on a daily basis for a variety of reasons, including mid-tour rest and recuperation, temporary absence for training, evacuation for medical reasons, the roulement of forces, visits and a range of other factors. We do not therefore publish actual figures for personnel deployed in theatre.

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions UK armed forces have had to engage hostile forces in the defence of Iraqi oil facilities.[308618]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Iraq: Prisoners

**David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to the Statement by the Secretary of State of 26 February 2009, *Official Report*, column 396, on records of detention (review conclusions), what recent legal advice his Department has received on its responsibilities to the two individuals detained by British forces in Iraq in 2004 and transferred to the Bagram Theater Internment Facility in Afghanistan. [307061]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** The Department takes legal advice where appropriate and necessary. Any such advice is subject to legal professional privilege because communications between lawyers and their clients are confidential.

Met Office

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what meetings are planned for the Met Office Review Group; whether the group plans to consider the Cabinet Office Asset Portfolio; and if he will make a statement. [308394]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Met Office Review Group plans to meet regularly over the coming months to continue the work of the Operational Efficiency Programme review as outlined in the Asset Portfolio.

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when (a) Ministers and (b) officials of his Department next plan to meet the Shareholder Executive to discuss the future of the Met Office; and if he will make a statement. [308395]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Shareholder Executive officials are represented on the Met Office Review Group, which next plans to meet in early 2010. There are no plans for MOD Ministers to meet Shareholder Executive officials to discuss the Met Office.

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the composition of the Met Office Review Group will be changed in consequence of the publication of the Cabinet Office’s Asset Portfolio; and if he will make a statement. [308396]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** There are no plans to change the composition of the Met Office Review Group.

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the likely effects of the publication of the Cabinet Office’s Asset Portfolio on the work of the Met Office Review Group; whether any consequential changes will be made to the terms of reference of the Met Office Review Group; and if he will make a statement. [308397]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Asset Portfolio gave an update on the findings of the Met Office Operational Efficiency Programme Review to date, and set a direction for future work which will be taken forward by the Review Group over the coming months.

There are no plans to change the terms of reference of the Met Office Review Group.

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department plan to meet representatives from private sector weather companies to discuss the recent publication of the Cabinet Office’s Asset Portfolio; and if he will make a statement. [308398]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** There are no current plans for Ministry of Defence Ministers or officials to meet with private sector weather companies as part of the Met Office Operational Efficiency Programme review.

**Military Aircraft: Deployment**

**Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where will the Joint Force Harrier be deployed to when RAF Cottesmore closes. [309143]

**Bill Rammell:** As announced by the Secretary of State for Defence on 15 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 803, RAF Cottesmore will close and the Harrier Force will be consolidated at RAF Wittering.

**Military Aircraft: Procurement**

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effects on the economy of the procurement of 24 Chinook helicopters from Boeing. [308608]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** The procurement of the new Chinook replaces the planned future medium helicopter competition, for which there was no guaranteed UK work content.
The Chinook programme provides significant through-life opportunities for UK industry, for example, these new aircraft, as with our current Chinook fleet, will be supported onshore. Furthermore, we anticipate that much of the investment required to deliver other elements of the new Rotary Wing Strategy announced on 15 December 2009, such as the modification of Merlin helicopters, will be made in the UK, supporting UK jobs, and sustaining key onshore skills as well as delivering value for money.

**Mr. Hendick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on military aircraft procured from BAE Systems since 1997.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Complete information on the costs of aircraft procured from BAE Systems since 1997 is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available, relating to initial procurement costs, is contained in the following table. The table excludes the costs of enhancements and modifications to aircraft originally procured before 1997.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Procurement cost (£ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nimrod MRA4</td>
<td>12,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawk T2</td>
<td>2557</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Costs to date of development and manufacture programme.
2 Costs to date of design and development contract and manufacture contract.

Since 1997, MOD has also made payments for work performed by BAE Systems on the Typhoon aircraft. The Typhoon is procured by the NATO Eurofighter and Tornado Management Agency (NETMA), which manages the programme and funding arrangements on behalf of the four partner nations (UK, Germany, Italy and Spain). Payments for work on Typhoon are made to NETMA. Information on monies paid for work performed by BAE Systems therefore is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, total expenditure on the Typhoon acquisition programme since 1997 is £9.3 billion.

**Military Bases: Edinburgh Castle**

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet representatives of Historic Scotland to discuss basing arrangements at Edinburgh Castle.

Bill Rammell: My officials met with Historic Scotland on 17 December 2009 to discuss both the Army’s and Historic Scotland’s development needs at Edinburgh castle and areas of mutual interest. Such meetings take place roughly every six months.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to downsize or close the military garrison at Edinburgh Castle; and when a decision will be made on the future of the garrison.

Bill Rammell: There are no plans to downsize or close the garrison at Edinburgh castle.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions have been made on the future role of the Governor of Edinburgh Castle.

Bill Rammell: There are no plans to alter the role of the Governor of Edinburgh Castle, which is currently performed by General Officer Commanding 2 Division.

**Military Bases: Scotland**

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to downsize or close the 2nd Division HQ at Craigiehall; and when a decision will be made on the future of the HQ.

Bill Rammell: The Army is currently reviewing its top-level structures in order to make them clearer and more accountable, and to remove any ambiguity or duplication. This will mean better and more efficient support to the front-line, and to soldiers and their families. Changes at 3 Star level have already been implemented in HQ Land Forces. The review will look at the detail below this level over the coming months. A key part of this will be the examination of the regional forces structures, centred on the Divisional Commands in Scotland, Aldershot, London and Shrewsbury, in the light of the new 3 Star responsibilities. It is too early to say when this work will conclude, what its outcome will be or what implications this may have for particular establishments or locations.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the maintenance costs were for 2nd Division HQ at Craigiehall in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Kevan Jones: Building maintenance costs for the 2nd Division HQ at Craigiehall since October 2003 are shown in the following table. Information prior to October 2003 is not held.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2003-March 2004</td>
<td>115,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>511,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>636,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>467,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>408,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>267,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April-November 2009</td>
<td>174,565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures do not include running costs, such as cleaning or utilities, which could not be separately identified in the time available.

**Nimrod Aircraft**

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his statement of 15 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 801, on the future defence programme, what steps are being taken to ensure the safety of British submarines following the planned withdrawal of Nimrod MR2.

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: As indicated in the oral statement, other platforms are capable of providing the maritime patrol responsibilities. I am not prepared to disclose further details as this would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the armed forces.
Offenders

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many employees of his Department and its agencies have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 1997. [308510]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: The information on the number of employees of the Department and its agencies that have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 2007 is as follows:
1 April 2007 to 31 December 2007: 13;
1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008: 20;
1 January 2009 to 18 December 2009: 22.
The information for 1997 to March 2007 is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Radioactive Materials: Transport

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to the answer of 10 November 2009, Official Report, column 237W, on radioactive materials: transport, what the reason is for the difference in the expected in-service date for refurbished truck cargo heavy trailers and the date originally specified in the initial gate business case. [308140]

Bill Rammell: There has been no change in the expected in-service date for this capability.

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of his Department’s previous convoy support operations are now undertaken by the Atomic Weapons Establishment. [308188]

Bill Rammell: There has been no recent change to the scope of the tasks undertaken by the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in support of convoy operations. Plans are in place however to transfer to the AWE contractor, during the second quarter of 2010, the responsibility for managing four areas of support. These are administrative support of the Special Safety Cell, maintenance of the fleet of escort vehicles, documentation management and training. The Ministry of Defence retains control of all these tasks.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Derek Wyatt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what audit has been undertaken of the work of private companies servicing the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Mr. Quentin Davies [holding answer 14 December 2009]: We have carried out a range of audits and reviews of the work carried out by the five through-life cluster support contractors servicing the vessels of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Examples include quality audits, periodic performance reviews, work package acceptance procedures, and MOD and Third Party assurance processes. These will continue throughout the life of the contracts and will ensure that works are carried out in accordance with requirements.

In addition, the five contractors are required to hold the appropriate ISO 9001 Quality Management System certification, which is subject to regular independent audit.

Security

Mrs. Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many UK private military and security companies have been awarded contracts by his Department to carry out work in (a) Afghanistan, (b) Iraq, (c) Sudan, (d) Israel, (e) Somalia, (f) Pakistan, (g) Colombia, (h) Ethiopia and (i) Eritrea in (i) 2005, (ii) 2006, (iii) 2007, (iv) 2008, (v) 2009 and (vi) future years; and what the monetary value is of each contract. [306911]

Mr. Bob Ainsworth: Ministry of Defence staff have frequent and regular communication with their US equivalents in order to ensure our coherence on a range of issues. The subject of private military security companies (PMSCs) has been discussed at staff level in broad terms over recent months as part of this routine interaction.

Mr. bob Ainsworth: The US, UK and Swiss Governments have all been working together closely to agree a set of draft international standards for the PMSC industry. As the lead UK Department on PMSC policy, the FCO hopes to agree these standards with the US and Swiss Governments in the course of next year through a series of workshops and a plenary conference where MOD will be represented.

Territorial Army: Manpower

Mrs. Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department (a) has had recently and (b) is planning to have with US officials on regulation of private military and security companies in Iraq and Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement. [307013]

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement. [306759]

Bill Rammell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 11 November 2009, Official Report, column 410W to the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox).

**Type 45 Destroyers**

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the estimated cost is of procurement and installation of the Sea Viper Missile system on the Type 45 destroyers.  
[308609]

Mr. Quentin Davies: The costs for designing and manufacturing the Principal Anti Air Missile System (PAAMS), renamed Sea Viper by the Royal Navy, and for installing it on each of the six Type 45 Destroyers are included as part of the overall Type 45 programme costs of £6.5 billion. These costs also include the design and manufacture of the six Type 45s and are broadly split 60 per cent (£4 billion) for the ships and 40 per cent (£2.5 billion) for the weapons system.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to equip Type 45 destroyers with the Sea Viper Missile system; and if he will make a statement.  
[308610]

Mr. Quentin Davies: The Sea Viper missile system is to be fitted to all six of the Type 45 Destroyers being built for the Royal Navy. The first ship in the Class, HMS DARING, is currently undergoing final MOD controlled Trials and Acceptance activity, including integration and trials of the Sea Viper missile system, prior to entering service with the Royal Navy.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many test firings of the Sea Viper missile have taken place; how much each firing cost; and how many of each firing have been successful.  
[308611]

Mr. Quentin Davies: Four test firings of the Sea Viper missile have taken place. These trials have all successfully provided vital system and performance evidence. This has enabled Sea Viper qualification and ship trials to progress in accordance with the planned Type 45 programme. Two of the test firings did not, however, meet all the planned trials objectives.

The test firings form part of the contract for the development and initial production of the Sea Viper system and the costs are not separately identifiable.

**Warships**

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to his Statement of 15 December 2009, when the minehunter will be decommissioned; and what the UK base is of that minehunter.  
[308636]

Mr. Quentin Davies: On current plans HMS Walney will be withdrawn from service in April 2010. Her base port is Faslane.

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many employees of his Department have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 1997.  
[308522]

Mr. Hain: None.

**WALES**

**Offenders**

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

**Arts Council England: Advertising**

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much Arts Council England has spent on advertising in each of the last five years.  
[307331]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Arts Council England, which operates independently of Government.

I have therefore asked Arts Council England's chief executive to consider the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East and to write to him direct.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

**Arts Council England: Audit**

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what audits have been undertaken since 1994 on restructuring of Arts Council England.  
[307330]

Margaret Hodge: Arts Council England’s costs and savings are recorded as part of their external audit and are published with their annual report and accounts.

**Arts Council England: Consultants**

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many consultants Arts Council England has hired in each of the last five years; and at what cost in each of those years.  
[306830]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Arts Council England, which operates independently of Government.

I have therefore asked Arts Council England’s chief executive to consider the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East and to write to him direct.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

**Arts Council England: Redundancy**

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much Arts Council England has set aside for redundancy payments in respect of its proposed restructuring; what proportion of this sum the organisation plans to spend on redundancy payments to employees in the West Midlands; and if he will make a statement.  
[307493]
Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Arts Council England, which operates independently of Government. I have therefore asked Arts Council England’s chief executive to consider the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East and to write to him direct.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Arts Council England: Venture Capital

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much venture capital Arts Council England has provided to small creative enterprises since its inception under the Creative Arts Council England has provided to small creative enterprises. [306364]

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what freedom of information requests have been received by Arts Council England in each of the last three years. [307889]

Margaret Hodge: The information requested relates to matters that are the responsibility of Arts Council England. Accordingly, I have asked the chief executive of Arts Council England to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East. Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) for what private members’ clubs used by (a) staff and (b) board members of Arts Council England that organisation pays membership (i) subscription and (ii) part-subscription; (2) what overseas conferences were attended by Arts Council England (a) staff and (b) board members in each of the last three years; (3) what catering facilities are provided for staff at Arts Council England’s head office in London; (4) how many mobile telephone devices are used by Arts Council England where the cost of calls is (a) fully and (b) partially paid for by the organisation; (5) how much has been spent on (a) furnishing and (b) decoration of the Office of the (i) Chief Executive and (ii) Chair of Arts Council England in each of the last three years; (6) how many domestic flights were taken by Arts Council England (a) staff and (b) board members in each of the last three years; (7) how much Arts Council England spent on overnight (a) accommodation and (b) expenses for (i) its staff and (ii) its board members in each of the last three years; (8) how much has been spent on (a) maintenance and (b) redecoration by Arts Council England in each of its regional offices in each of the last three years; (9) how much was spent by Arts Council England at its head office on (a) cut flowers and (b) pot plants in each of the last three years; (10) how much Arts Council England spent on car parking costs in each of the last three years; (11) how much has been spent on carpets by Arts Council England for its (a) head office and (b) regional offices in each of the last three years; (12) how many (a) desktop and (b) laptop computers have been purchased for use at Arts Council England’s (i) head office and (ii) regional offices in each of the last three years; (13) how much was spent on (a) taxi, (b) bus and (c) train journeys undertaken by staff employed at Arts Council England’s head office in each of the last three years; [307890]

Margaret Hodge: Arts Council England funds individuals and organisations through its Grants for the Arts scheme, rather than providing venture capital for small creative enterprises.

Arts Council England provided £46,021,104 in Grants for the Arts funding in 2008-09. So far in 2009-10 it has made grants totalling £22,375,366. Many of these grants have gone to organisations that could be described as creative enterprises.

Arts Council England: Executive

Margaret Hodge [holding answer 14 December 2009]: Arts Council England provides (a) for the Arts in the regions, and (b) for the regions. This is a matter for Arts Council England, which operates independently of Government.

I have therefore asked Arts Council England’s chief executive to consider the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East and to write to him direct.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Margaret Hodge [holding answer 15 December 2009]: This is a matter for Arts Council England, which operates independently of Government.

I have therefore asked Arts Council England’s chief executive to consider the question raised by the Member for West Bromwich, East and to write to him direct.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if he will publish the guidelines issued to Arts Council England staff who (a) accept secondary jobs and (b) hold contracts which provide a secondary income; (2) if he will publish the equal opportunities policy of Arts Council England; (3) if he will publish the standard redundancy agreements used by Arts Council England; (4) if he will publish the standard contract used by Arts Council England for employing staff.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) for what private members’ clubs used by (a) staff and (b) board members of Arts Council England that organisation pays membership (i) subscription and (ii) part-subscription; (2) what overseas conferences were attended by Arts Council England (a) staff and (b) board members in each of the last three years; (3) what catering facilities are provided for staff at Arts Council England’s head office in London; (4) how many mobile telephone devices are used by Arts Council England where the cost of calls is (a) fully and (b) partially paid for by the organisation; (5) how much has been spent on (a) furnishing and (b) decoration of the Office of the (i) Chief Executive and (ii) Chair of Arts Council England in each of the last three years; (6) how many domestic flights were taken by Arts Council England (a) staff and (b) board members in each of the last three years; (7) how much Arts Council England spent on overnight (a) accommodation and (b) expenses for (i) its staff and (ii) its board members in each of the last three years; (8) how much has been spent on (a) maintenance and (b) redecoration by Arts Council England in each of its regional offices in each of the last three years; (9) how much was spent by Arts Council England at its head office on (a) cut flowers and (b) pot plants in each of the last three years; (10) how much Arts Council England spent on car parking costs in each of the last three years; (11) how much has been spent on carpets by Arts Council England for its (a) head office and (b) regional offices in each of the last three years; (12) how many (a) desktop and (b) laptop computers have been purchased for use at Arts Council England’s (i) head office and (ii) regional offices in each of the last three years; (13) how much was spent on (a) taxi, (b) bus and (c) train journeys undertaken by staff employed at Arts Council England’s head office in each of the last three years; [307837]

Margaret Hodge: The issues raised are the responsibility of Arts Council England. This Department does not hold the documents mentioned.

I have asked the chief executive of Arts Council England to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.
Margaret Hodge: The information requested relates to operational matters that are the responsibility of Arts Council England.

Accordingly, I have asked the chief executive of Arts Council England to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many (a) desktop and (b) laptop computers have been lost by staff employed by Arts Council England in each of the last three years.

Margaret Hodge: Arts Council England (ACE) has advised that the following are members of the audit committee:

Anil Ruia (chair)
Alistair Spalding
Rosemary Squire
Gill Laver (independent member)
David Carter (independent member).

Membership of the ACE audit committee is due to change in January 2010.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if he will publish the policy used to guide board members of Arts Council England on what issues should be discussed in (a) public and (b) private.

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Arts Council England. Accordingly, I have asked the chief executive to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East.

Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many former Arts Council England national council members have subsequently been employed (a) by Arts Council England and (b) on projects that have received Arts Council England-approved funding in each of the last five years.

Margaret Hodge: The information requested is not held centrally by my Department and is a matter for Arts Council England.

Accordingly, I have asked the chief executive to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East. Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.
Christmas

David T.C. Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many Christmas trees were purchased by his Department and its agency in each of the last five years; what the cost was of those trees in each year; from where the trees were sourced; what account was taken of the sustainability of the sources of the trees; and by what process the trees were disposed of.

Mr. Simon: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Department for Culture, Media and Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of trees purchased</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a = Not available.

The Department’s Christmas trees are purchased each year from sustainable sources within the United Kingdom, through its facilities management contractor. The trees are composted after use.

(b) The Royal Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of trees purchased</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Royal Parks’ Christmas trees are purchased each year from sustainable sources within the United Kingdom, through its nursery contractor. They include those placed in offices, playgrounds, memorial gardens, outside in the parks, in catering outlets and those passed on to other stakeholders. Some of these costs are therefore charged to contractors. All the trees are disposed of as part of the Royal Parks’ green waste recycling scheme.

Departmental Conferences

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much was spent by his Department and its agency on conferences they organised which were subsequently cancelled in each of the last three years; and what the title was of each such conference.

Mr. Simon: The Royal Parks Agency has confirmed it has not cancelled any conferences in the last three years.

DCMS does not keep a central record of the information requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Public Relations

Mr. Hurd: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what payments the Royal Parks Agency has made to (a) Cavendish Communications and (b) Bellenden Public Affairs in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available; for what purpose; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the contracts under which such payments have been made.

Margaret Hodge: The information is as follows:

(a) The Royal Parks Agency (TRP) made the payments in the table to Cavendish Communications in each of the last 12 months. The purpose of this work was to design and run a programme of research with key stakeholders to identify and enable improvements to the relationships with partners and improvements to the delivery of services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>December 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>January 3,000, February 3,000, March 3,000, April 3,000, May 3,000, June 3,000, July 3,000, August 3,000, September 0, October 0, November 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All fees exclude VAT.

(b) The Royal Parks Agency paid Bellenden Public Affairs £4,600 (including VAT) in 2009, for annual subscription to the publications and activities of the All Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group.

Departmental Fines

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what powers (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) have to impose administrative penalties; what the statutory basis is for each such power; and how much (i) his Department and (ii) each of its agencies and NDPBs have recovered in administrative penalties in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Simon: DCMS does not keep a central record of the information requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Training

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much (a) his Department and (b) its agency spent on away days in the last 12 months; and what the (i) subject and (ii) location of each away day was.

Mr. Simon: The Department and its agency, the Royal Parks, are strongly committed to developing their staff and equipping them with the skills, knowledge and expertise they need to carry out their work. Away days contribute to these objectives.
Within the Department, away days are arranged by individual teams and details of away days are not centrally recorded. The Department’s accounting system does not record expenditure on away days separately from other staff training and developmental costs. To obtain the information requested would therefore incur disproportionate cost.

The Royal Parks has provided the information set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Amount (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 May 2009</td>
<td>Staff conference</td>
<td>Greenwich</td>
<td>6,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 November 2009</td>
<td>Management Board Awayday</td>
<td>Government Art Collection, London</td>
<td>5,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 December 2009</td>
<td>Park Managers Awayday</td>
<td>Forestry Commission, Bedegbury Pinetum</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hotels

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many hotel room nights were booked by officials in (a) his Department and (b) its agency in each year since 2007; and how much (i) his Department and (ii) its agency spent on the fees of third party agents in booking hotel accommodation in each of those years. [309052]

Mr. Simon: All accommodation costs are incurred in accordance with rules set out in the Department’s staff guide and are consistent with the Civil Service Management Code.

Information regarding the number of room nights booked via the Department’s agent is listed in the table. However, hotel accommodation booked independently, through individual travel and subsistence claims, is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Department’s agency, The Royal Parks, do not record the number of hotel nights separately and it would incur disproportionate cost to obtain this information.

Neither the Department nor its agency incurred fees of third party agents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of hotel nights booked via Department’s agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Museums and Galleries: West Bromwich

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on what dates meetings were held between Arts Council England and Advantage West Midlands to discuss The Public building in West Bromwich between 2003 and 2006. [307898]

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Arts Council England.

Accordingly, I have asked the Chief Executive to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East. Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on what dates meetings were held between Arts Council England and Advantage West Midlands to discuss The Public building in West Bromwich between 2003 and 2006.

Margaret Hodge: This is a matter for Arts Council England.

Accordingly, I have asked the Chief Executive to write direct to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East. Copies of the reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

National Lottery: Translation Services

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much funding has been given by (a) Heritage Lottery Fund and (b) the Big Lottery Fund to projects to translate information into foreign languages in the last 12 months. [308224]

Mr. Simon: The information requested is not held centrally in the manner requested; to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

Funding of this nature is usually part of a larger project.

Offenders

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many employees of his Department and its agency have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 1997. [308509]

Mr. Simon: The number of employees from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and its agency, the Royal Parks, convicted of a criminal offence since 1997 is zero.

Olympic Games 2012: Culture

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much had been spent in each region on programmes launched as part of the Cultural Olympiad on the latest date for which figures are available. [307131]

Margaret Hodge [holding answer 14 December 2009]: Many of the Cultural Olympiad initiatives, such as the London 2012 Open Weekends and the projects within the Inspire Mark Programme, operating in the regions are designed, delivered and financed by local organisations rather than by central direction. Therefore, this information is not held centrally.

Three Major National Projects of the Cultural Olympiad have also been launched: Artists Taking the Lead; Stories of the World and Unlimited have been launched and all will have a strong regional presence. They are in their early stages. Therefore, expenditure figures are not yet available.

Margaret Hodge: The information you have requested is not held centrally by the Department and is a matter for Arts Council England.
Nevertheless, The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games estimate that over £80 million of private and public money has been allocated to the Cultural Olympiad programmes overall and, of this sum, an estimated £14.49 million has been spent so far around the regions, on cultural projects awarded the Inspire Mark.

Olympic Games: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assistance his Department has provided to Olympics-related sporting projects in (a) Bermuda, (b) the British Virgin Islands and (c) the Cayman Islands in the last five years.

Mr. Sutcliffe: My Department has given no assistance to Olympics-related sporting projects in Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands in the last five years.

Olympic Games: Canada

Kate Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport which (a) Ministers and (b) officials of his Department expect to attend the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver in February in the course of their official duties; for how many days each expects to attend; and what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse in each such case.

Mr. Simon: The Minister for Sport is expected to attend the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver for four days to represent UK interests. The annual list of all ministerial travel costing over £500, which was last published on the Cabinet Office website in July 2009, includes the cost, destination and purpose of the trip. It also provides information on the number of officials who accompany Ministers.

Party Political Broadcasts

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions his Department has had with Ofcom on its proposals for the number of party political broadcasts allocated to minority parties.

Mr. Simon: Decisions on the allocation of party political broadcasts are a matter for the relevant broadcasters, acting in accordance with the rules established by Ofcom, the BBC Trust and the Welsh Authority, having regard to any views expressed by the Electoral Commission.

Officials in my Department have had no recent discussions with Ofcom on their rules for party political and referendum broadcasts. However, I understand that Ofcom recently consulted on proposed changes to the rules in this area. Ofcom’s new rules will include updated guidance on how the allocation of party election broadcasts to major parties and other registered parties should be determined. Ofcom’s intention is to have the revised rules in place ahead of the next general election. However, in the event that a general election is called before new rules are finalised, the existing rules will apply.

Swimming: Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many (a) under 16 years old and (b) over 60 years old resident in Nottingham North constituency have participated in free swimming through the Swimming Challenge Fund.

Mr. Sutcliffe: The number of unique participants in the Free Swimming Programme is not collected centrally. Local authorities are responsible for collecting data on the number of free swims that have taken place in their area each month. The following table shows the total number of free swims that have taken place under the free swimming scheme by (a) people aged 16 years and under, and (b) people aged 60 and over in the east midlands region in a given time period (April to September 2009). This is not a measure of the total number of individual participants taking part in free swimming, as the Department does not hold these figures.

The Department holds figures by local authority; county and region.

Accordingly, figures for Nottingham, North are included within those for the east midlands as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 16-year-olds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Under 16-year-olds    | 371,628 |
| Over 60               | 383,275 |

The Government have commissioned a robust independent evaluation of the Free Swimming Programme which is led by PricewaterhouseCoopers. PricewaterhouseCoopers will draw together a range of data over the coming months to provide an estimate of the number of people that have taken part in free swimming. We expect an evaluation report to be published in summer 2010.

Written Questions: Government Responses

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when he plans to answer Question 301896 on restructuring of Arts Council England, tabled on 26 November 2009.

Margaret Hodge: I will answer the question from the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East shortly.

JUSTICE

Veteran Support

12. Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what recent steps his Department has taken to support veterans in custody.

Maria Eagle: We have just completed a data matching exercise jointly with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to identify the number of veterans in custody. The results show that 3 per cent. of the prison population have served in the armed forces. I am currently considering with MOD Ministers what future work needs to be done about offence types and military service to guide future research and policy development.
Injunctions.

Justice for what reasons the Government plan to

debt.

and employment on release or help them manage their

with prisoners to help them get suitable accommodation

include learning and skills activities and the work done

for offenders with an alcohol or drug problem.

sexual offending. A range of interventions is available

reoffending.

effectiveness of programmes to reduce level of prisoner

Justice what recent assessment he has made of the

Service in partnership with statutory, voluntary and

allow the courts to lift restrictions around the anonymity

families involved. The legislation includes provisions to

report the detail of family proceedings is being balanced

addressing individual issues. Allowing the media to

comprehensive solution to the issue of how we increase

served by a Church of England chaplain.

Justice how many and what proportion of prisons are

Vacancy, it will ordinarily be the case that there is

England chaplain other than where there is a vacancy,

or in exceptional ad hoc circumstances. Where there is a

England chaplain in every prison, except in cases of

of children and families in specific circumstances, provided

that it is safe to do so.

Probation Service Funding

14. Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice what plans he has for the future funding of the

probation service; and if he will make a statement.

[308933]

Mr. Straw: The budget for 2010-11 for the Probation

Service is £870 million. This equates to a reduction of

2.7 per cent. year on year, consistent with the savings

expected across public services, but is £26 million more

than the original indicative budget.

Probation areas expect to make the required savings

through back-office and management rationalisation

and efficiency improvements, protecting front-line services.

Probation funding has increased since 1997 by 70 per

cent. in real terms—a faster rate than the increase in

case load and almost twice the growth rate of the Prison

Service.

Prisoner Rehabilitation

17. Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice what programmes his Department has to

rehabilitate prisoners.

[308936]

Claire Ward: The National Offender Management

Service in partnership with statutory, voluntary and

Third Sector organisations delivers a broad range of

interventions aimed at rehabilitating prisoners and preparing

them to live crime free lives.

There are a number of accredited offending behaviour

programmes addressing thinking skills; anger management,

domestic and other types of violent crime as well as

sexual offending. A range of interventions is available

for offenders with an alcohol or drug problem.

Other interventions with a significant part to play

include learning and skills activities and the work done

with prisoners to help them get suitable accommodation

and employment on release or help them manage their

debt.

Prisoner Reoffending

18. Andrew Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice what recent assessment he has made of the

effectiveness of programmes to reduce level of prisoner

reoffending.

[308937]

Maria Eagle: Reducing reoffending is one of the key

strategic objectives of MOJ. Statistics published in May 2009

show that there was an 11.1 per cent. reduction in the

rate of reoffending for adults and 7.5 per cent. for


Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill

19. Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice what recent representations he has received on

the provisions of the Constitutional Reform and

Governance Bill; and if he will make a statement.

[308938]

Mr. Wills: A number of amendments have been tabled

to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill for

debate on the resumption of Committee stage. We will

consider any amendments to the Bill carefully.

Electoral Register

20. Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice what his most recent assessment is of the

integrity of the electoral register.

[308939]

Mr. Wills: There is no evidence that electoral fraud is

a major problem in this country. However, there is never

room for complacency. More can be done to enhance

the integrity of the register by improving its security,

accuracy and comprehensiveness. The phased introduction

of individual electoral registration will support these

aims.

Prison Chaplains

21. Mr. Bone: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice how many and what proportion of prisons are

served by a Church of England chaplain.

[308940]

Maria Eagle: All prisons are served by a Church of

England chaplain other than where there is a vacancy,
or in exceptional ad hoc circumstances. Where there is a

vacancy, it will ordinarily be the case that there is

Church of England cover available to provide weekly

services and pastoral care.

Young Offender Institutions

22. Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for

Justice what assessment he has made of the

effectiveness of young offender institutions in reducing

reoffending.

[308942]

Maria Eagle: The number of reoffences committed

by those young people released from custody has been

cut by 25.5 per cent. between 2000 and 2007, the latest

date for which reoffending rates are available.

Young offender institutions provide young people

with a range of interventions and programmes designed
to tackle their offending behaviour and reduce the

likelihood of their reoffending.

The Youth Justice Board is currently in the process of

carrying out a study entitled “Young People, Interventions

and the Secure Estate” being carried out during 2009-12.

It will explore outcomes for young people in each of

the three sectors of the under-18 secure estate, including

what types of interventions young offender institutions

provide and the association between these and positive

outcomes.
Legal Aid: Human Trafficking

23. Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the availability of legal aid funding to victims of human trafficking. [308943]

Bridget Prentice: Civil legal aid is available to anyone who qualifies, including victims of human trafficking, provided the case is within the scope of the scheme. Each application is assessed on an individual basis to justify the grant of public funding, being subject to statutory tests of the applicant’s financial means and the legal merits of the case.

Probation Service Performance

24. Mr. Vaizey: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what plans he has to improve the performance of the probation service. [308944]

Maria Eagle: Probation boards and trusts are continuing to perform well and deliver against targets. 40 out of the 42 areas are meeting or exceeding their performance targets compared with 26 nine months ago, with 23 being rated as performing above the required standard. In areas where performance has fallen short of what the public can expect, we have taken decisive action. In London, for example, we appointed a new chief officer who has overseen encouraging improvements in performance.

Dangerous Driving

Greg Mulholland: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people have been convicted of causing death by dangerous driving in (a) West Yorkshire, (b) Leeds and (c) Leeds North West constituency in each of the last five years. [307766]

Claire Ward: Information on the number of persons found guilty at all courts in the West Yorkshire police force area for causing death by dangerous driving, from 2003 to 2007 (latest available) is given in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causing death by dangerous</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of persons found guilty at all courts in the West Yorkshire police force area for causing death by dangerous driving, 2003 to 2007.

1 Road Traffic Act 1988, section 1.

2 The statistics relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences the principal offence is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

3 Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

Source:
Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice

Departmental Assets

Dr. Cable: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assets of his Department are planned to be sold in each year from 2009-10 to 2013-14; what the (a) description and (b) book value of each such asset is; the expected revenue from each such sale is; and if he will make a statement. [300205]

Mr. Straw: The Government have stated their intention to realise £16 billion in asset disposals over the period 2011-14 and will publish further details of opportunities to commercialise business assets in the coming weeks.

The following table details the asset description and the book value of each asset that the Ministry of Justice has disposed of or plans to dispose of from 2009-10 to 2011-12. The expected revenue is detailed as an annual figure due to the commercial sensitivities attached to the expected revenue of each individual asset.

Plans for asset disposals in 2012-13 and 2013-14 have yet to be finalised and agreed, and are therefore not included in the list.

In March 2008, the Ministry of Justice published its asset management strategy, which will be pursued within the financial environment set by the Treasury. MOJ has developed a property asset management plan that will centralise, and significantly enhance, the management of the national and regional administrative estate, and has implemented its estates strategy to ensure the accommodation meets the business needs while providing best value for money.

Ministry of Justice planned disposals 2009-10 to 2011-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner Asset description</th>
<th>Book value (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>484.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Leicester</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Norfolk</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building London</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Norfolk</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Medfield</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Shropshire</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building West Yorkshire</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Medfield</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Shropshire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 NOMS Land and building Shropshire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Received revenue for 2009-10: £2,835,790.80

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner Asset description</th>
<th>Book value (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 HMCS Land and building North Yorkshire</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 HMCS Land and building Caernarfon</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 HMCS Land and building Salisbury</td>
<td>1,290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected revenue 2009-10: £1,289,500.00

<p>| 2010-11 NOMS Land and building London | 73,800 |
| 2010-11 NOMS Land and building Medfield | 190 |
| 2010-11 NOMS Land and building Durham | 105 |
| 2010-11 NOMS Land and building Liverpool | 170 |
| 2010-11 NOMS Land and building Rugby | 120 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Asset description</th>
<th>Book value (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building West Yorkshire</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Winchester</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Devon</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Devon</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building West Sussex</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Dorset</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Gloucestershire</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Gloucestershire</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Gloucestershire</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Oxfordshire</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Staffordshire</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Shropshire</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Dorset</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Staffordshire</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected revenue for 2010-11: £52,276,000.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Asset description</th>
<th>Book value (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Staffordshire</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Oxfordshire</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Staffordshire</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Shropshire</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Dorset</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Staffordshire</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Worcestershire</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Suffolk</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Liverpool</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building East Yorkshire</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Doncaster</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Cottingham</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Isle of Wight</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building West Yorkshire</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Nottinghamshire</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Worcestershire</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 NOMS</td>
<td>Land and building Wales</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected revenue for 2011-12: £10,438,000.00

**Departmental Consultants**

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many external consultants work for his Department.

Mr. Straw: There were 694 consultants working for the Ministry of Justice in the financial year of 2008-09. There will be a manual count of live consultancy contracts which was conducted the week commencing 14 December 2009. Further data of the current live contracts will be available in due course.

**Departmental Information and Communications Technology**

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice on what pay band his Department’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed; whether the CIO is employed on a fixed-term or permanent contract; and what the size is of the budget for which the CIO is responsible in the period 2009-10.

Mr. Wills: The Department’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed on a three-year fixed term contract at senior civil service pay band 2 level, with a salary range of £82,900 to £162,500. He is responsible for a budget of £242 million for 2009-10.
Departmental Sick Leave

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many days of sick leave were taken by staff in his Department and its agencies in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what the cost to his Department was of such sick leave. [305553]

Mr. Straw: The number of annual working days lost per employee in the 12 months from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 was 9.5 days.

The Ministry of Justice reports its sick absence on the basis of a 12-month rolling year. These figures are provided by the Ministry's payroll provider. To obtain this information on a monthly basis would require the Ministry to obtain separate reports from payroll which would incur disproportionate cost. We are unable to provide details of the cost of such absence for a similar reason, but I have asked officials for advice as to whether a reliable estimate of the cost of 12 months absence in aggregate could be provided and I will write in due course to the hon. Member.

An important part of the personal development of high potential senior civil servants (SCS) are the targeted training programmes provided by the Cabinet Office, some of which involve overseas travel. The Ministry sends a limited number of delegates to two of these programmes (Top Management Programme and Leadership Across Borders Programme). In the past three years, the following numbers of SCS shown in the table have attended:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Numbers attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total cost of these places for the period April 2007 to November 2009 was £91,950.

Departmental Training

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many overseas training courses were attended by his Department’s civil servants in the latest period for which figures are available; how many civil servants attended each course; and what the total cost to the public purse was of each course. [305899]

Mr. Wills: An important part of the personal development of high potential senior civil servants (SCS) are the targeted training programmes provided by the Cabinet Office, some of which involve overseas travel. The Ministry sends a limited number of delegates to two of these programmes (Top Management Programme and Leadership Across Borders Programme). In the past three years, the following numbers of SCS shown in the table have attended:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Numbers attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the response to the Procedure Committee Report on written parliamentary questions, the Government accepted the Committee’s recommendation that Departments be required to provide the Procedure Committee with sessional statistics in a standard format on the time taken to respond to written parliamentary questions, accompanied by an explanatory memorandum setting out any factors affecting their performance. This will be taken forward as soon as possible.

National Offender Management Service: Equal Opportunities

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice when he expects to publish the National Offender Management Service staff diversity report for 2008-09; and what the reasons are for the time taken to publish it. [307734]

Maria Eagle: The Staff Diversity Review 2008-09 for the directly employed staff of the National Offender Management Service is expected to be published within NOMS by the end of December 2009. A copy will also be placed on the NOMS website. Unfortunately publication has been delayed because of a communication error in the Department.

Overseas Residence: Crime

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what representations he has received on allowing the Victims’ Commissioner to work with British citizens who are victims of crime overseas. [306960]

Claire Ward: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Jack Straw) has not received any representations on allowing the Victims’ Commissioner to work with British citizens who are victims of crime overseas.

The Victims’ Commissioner will not undertake individual casework. The Victims’ Commissioner will be informed by the experience of victims and make representations regarding the support and services available for victims and witnesses. The role does not exclude learning from the experience of British citizens who are victims of crime overseas and where appropriate making recommendations regarding their needs.

Prisoners Transfers

Alan Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice when he expects to publish the report into transfer of prisoners from HM Prison Brixton prior to inspections or security audits. [300951]

Maria Eagle: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Jack Straw) informed the House during his oral statement on 20 October 2009, Official Report, columns 777-83, that if any evidence emerges from the analysis of transfer of prisoners prior to inspection he would update the House.

Probation

Mr. Roger Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether a decision has been made on the future of the Dyfed Powys Probation Trust office in Brecon, Powys. [307316]
Maria Eagle: There are currently no plans to close the Brecon Probation Office.

An estates review is undertaken annually by Dyfed-Powys Probation Trust as part of its business planning strategy. The next review will occur during the next financial year to ensure resources are provided in the most appropriate locations for offender management purpose.

The review will also enable the trust to respond to any changes in caseload, and any requirements for specific interventions which are delivered on behalf of courts.

**Thinking Skills Programme: Yorkshire**

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the outcomes of the Thinking Skills programme in Yorkshire were; and if he will make a statement. [307227]

Maria Eagle: The Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) was piloted in custody (Lindholme and New Hall and Wealstun—one fixed group each) and in community in Leeds (one group) and York (one group) probation offices. The group at York was a community-run pilot but was attended by women offenders from Askham Grange prison alongside community-based male and female offenders.

TSP community completions from April 2009 to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Yorkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TSP Custody completions from April 2009 to date**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HMP Everthorpe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Hull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Lindholme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Moorland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP New Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Wealstun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMP Wolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOMS has conducted two reviews of the Thinking Skills Programme pilots:


This was an internal review which has helped inform the development of the programme and its implementation.

2. **Gender responsivity and the new Thinking Skills Programme (September 2009)**

A qualitative evaluation of the thinking skills pilots with female offenders which was undertaken to understand women’s experience of the Thinking Skills Programme. This showed that the TSP was relevant to the women who participated on the programme, helping them to address their behaviour and bring about change. Recommendations from the evaluation are being incorporated into TSP and will inform its implementation.

**Young Offenders: Convictions**

Mr. Lancaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what percentage of young offenders under the age of 18 years who appeared in court in (a) England and (b) Milton Keynes was convicted in each year since 1997. [308088]

Claire Ward: The number of persons aged 10 to 17-years proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty of criminal offences at all courts in England and the Thames Valley police force area, from 1997 to 2007 (latest available) is given in the following table.

Court proceedings data are not available at town or local authority area level. Therefore data are included in the table for the Thames Valley police force area.

Data for 2008 are planned for publication on 28 January 2010.

**Table 1: Number of persons aged 10 to 17-years proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for all offences, England 1997 to 2007.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proceeded against</th>
<th>Found guilty</th>
<th>Conviction rate (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>113,645</td>
<td>73,707</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>121,848</td>
<td>80,608</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>126,199</td>
<td>84,199</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>132,456</td>
<td>85,568</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>140,489</td>
<td>89,369</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>136,881</td>
<td>88,477</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>131,581</td>
<td>86,572</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>127,710</td>
<td>90,174</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>123,835</td>
<td>90,560</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>119,123</td>
<td>88,520</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>119,986</td>
<td>92,543</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Number of persons aged 10 to 17-years proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for all offences, Thames Valley Police force area 1997 to 2007.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proceeded against</th>
<th>Found guilty</th>
<th>Conviction rate (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2,874</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,878</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,937</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,355</td>
<td>2,156</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4,049</td>
<td>2,542</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,770</td>
<td>2,437</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3,446</td>
<td>2,168</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,899</td>
<td>1,986</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3,338</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3,689</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>2,704</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The statistics relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences the principal offence is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

2 Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

3 Proportion proceeded against who were found guilty. Source: Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice.

**Young Offenders: Foster Care**

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 8 December 2009, *Official Report*, columns 279-80W, on young offenders: foster care, what the reasons are for the time taken to complete the peer review process. [307259]

Maria Eagle: It is usual for a robust peer review process to take some time. The Youth Justice Board received the first draft of the Final Intensive Fostering
Evaluation report in December 2008, with a further chapter on costs submitted at the end of January 2009. Following comments from the Youth Justice Board a revised version was received from researchers in April and sent out to peer review in June 2009. Researchers considered comments from peer review, and submitted the final evaluation report is expected to be published in the first quarter of 2010.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what guidance relating to compliance with regulations his Department and its agencies have issued to farmers in the last 12 months.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Guidance on compliance with regulation, of interest to all farmers, was provided in "Protecting Our Water, Soil and Air: A Code of Good Agricultural Practice for Farmers, Growers and Land Managers", published in January 2009. This guidance brought together and updated three codes for water, soil and air. Information on the Single Payment Scheme and other direct payments is updated and sent annually to farmers.

Other guidance may be intended for specific farming interests. In response to the Sarah Anderson report on Guidance (published in January 2009), DEFRA is identifying its most frequently used guidance on compliance with regulations, much of which applies to farmers, and by 21 December 2009 will publish on the DEFRA website a list of the most frequently used guidance, together with information on when that guidance will be reviewed to bring it in line with Code of Practice on Guidance on Regulation. The Code of Practice was revised in October 2009 to include recommendations from the Anderson review.

Agriculture: EU Law

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of farms are required under EU regulations to be inspected for cross compliance; and what proportion of farms were inspected for cross compliance in each of the last five years.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Each Competent Control Authority is required by European legislation to inspect at least 1 per cent. of farmers receiving payments that are conditional on meeting the cross-compliance requirements.

The legislation specifies that member states can use pre-existing inspection regimes to satisfy the above requirements. The Rural Payments Agency is required to inspect 5 per cent. (formerly 10 per cent.) of cattle keepers in respect of cattle identification and 3 per cent. of sheep keepers in respect of sheep identification.

The legislation also requires increased inspection control rates following significant non-compliance findings. Rates have duly been increased in some cross compliance areas.

The following table shows the proportion of farms inspected in each of the last five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rural Payments Agency</th>
<th>Environment Agency</th>
<th>Animal Health Agency</th>
<th>Veterinary Medicines Directorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rural Payments Agency Cross Compliance Database.

Agriculture: Subsidies

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many representations he has received in respect of procedures used by the Rural Payments Agency in mapping individual farms for the purposes of the Single Payment scheme in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Dan Norris: The number of representations received by Ministers in respect of mapping issues relating to the single payment scheme (SPS) in each of the last three years are shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of representations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Roger Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the (a) smallest and (b) largest penalty for cross-compliance is that has been applied to a payment under the Single Payment scheme in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Dan Norris: The figures in the following table represent the smallest and largest penalty reductions in monetary terms that the Rural Payments Agency has applied to Single Payment Scheme (SPS) claims in England following breaches of the cross-compliance requirements in the years 2005-08. We do not have a comprehensive set of data for 2009 as processing checks and inspections are not yet complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Smallest penalty imposed</th>
<th>Largest penalty imposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>20,819.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>105,263.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>65,229.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>55,797.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The smallest ‘penalty imposed figures’ reflect the fact that under the European legislation governing cross-compliance percentage reductions as low as 1 per cent. may be applied to SPS payments in certain circumstances.
Further details regarding cross-compliance payment reductions can be found on the RPA website at:  
www.rpa.gov.uk

**Animal Welfare**

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on enforcing minimum standards of animal welfare for animals moved between different countries in Europe. [307338]

Dan Norris: The Secretary of State raised the need for improved enforcement of welfare in transport rules across Europe at the Agriculture Council on 7 September 2009.

**Bees**

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage the British Beekeepers’ Association to participate in the Project Board charged with implementing the Food and Environment Research Agency’s Healthy Bees Plan. [307646]

Dan Norris: The chief executive of the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) has been in dialogue with the president of the British Beekeepers’ Association (BBKA), about the Association’s decision to withdraw from the Healthy Bees Plan’s Project Management Board (the Board). This board represents a wide range of interests which is essential in order to explore solutions to the complex problems affecting pollinators. While both the Board and Fera have expressed their disappointment at the BBKA’s decision to withdraw, a clear signal has been given to the Association that it is hoped they will all continue to work together on bee health issues and that the BBKA will rejoin the board at some point in the future.

Lord Davies and Fera have also recently met the BBKA to discuss how this may be taken forward. Subsequently Lord Davies has written to the BBKA with a series of proposals covering matters within DEFRA’s control as to how BBKA might re-engage with the board and the range of stakeholders who have an interest in bee health who are represented there.

Meanwhile, Fera continues to work with the BBKA at a number of levels and is working with it to develop the relationship, and has appointed one of its top scientists to lead on this role.

**Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control**

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many cattle were slaughtered because of bovine tuberculosis precautions in (a) Lancashire and (b) the north west in each of the last six months. [307339]

Huw Irranca-Davies: As data from Vetnet are produced three months in arrears, figures cannot be provided for the last three months. The following table shows the number of animals slaughtered due to a TB incident in Lancashire and the north-west in the last six months for which figures are available (up to August 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Lancashire</th>
<th>North-west (Government office region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The north-west Government office region includes: Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside.

2. Data from Vetnet are provisional and subject to change as more data become available.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of records relating to cows born in the UK that have been lost since September 2008; and if he will make a statement. [307662]

Dan Norris: There are currently 8,768,528 cattle registered on the Cattle Tracing System. From 1 September 2008, 12,638 of these have been reported as being lost or not traced for reasons such as alleged theft. In addition to these, there are 25,289 cattle whose final destination is presently unreported. This is because the British Cattle Movement Service has received notification that the animal has left the holding but has not yet received the subsequent movement report on to the next holding.

**Chasewater Reservoir**

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) whether (a) his Department and (b) its agencies plan to provide financial assistance to Lichfield district council to meet its statutory obligations for the repair and maintenance in the earth embankment retaining the Chasewater Reservoir; and if he will make a statement; [307774]

(2) if he will undertake an assessment of the effect on the local environment if the earth embankment constructed to retain the Chasewater Reservoir in Lichfield district were to be breached; and if he will make a statement. [307775]

Huw Irranca-Davies: While DEFRA has overall policy responsibility for reservoir safety, the Department is unable to intervene in individual cases.

The Environment Agency is the enforcement authority for the Reservoirs Act 1975 in England and Wales. I understand that the Environment Agency has no plans to provide financial assistance to Lichfield district council to repair and maintain Chasewater Reservoir.

As part of the Government’s response to the Pitt Review of the summer 2007 floods, the Environment Agency has prepared inundation maps for all large raised reservoirs. As part of this exercise, it has prepared a map showing the area that would be inundated in Lichfield district in the event of an unplanned breach of
the embankment. Details of the outline breach assessment have been supplied to Lichfield district council, the registered owners of the reservoir. We understand that Lichfield district council has also carried out a further detailed breach inundation study.

**Christmas**

**David T.C. Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many Christmas trees were purchased by his Department and its agencies in each of the last five years; what the cost was of those trees in each year; from where the trees were sourced; what account was taken of the sustainability of the sources of the trees; and by what process the trees were disposed of. [305631]

**Dan Norris:** Historic information giving the expenditure on Christmas trees by DEFRA and its agencies, from where the trees were sourced, what account was taken of the sustainability of the sources of the trees and the disposal process is outlined as follows.

Information shown is the actual expenditure incurred by DEFRA on Christmas trees by the facilities management partners employed at that time. Historic information held shows that trees were grown in nurseries and taken from site to either be re-cycled or allowed to decay naturally on composting facilities.

Identifying expenditure incurred in 2004-05 could only be achieved at disproportionate cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>15,240</td>
<td>17,539</td>
<td>6,015</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Christmas tree sourced in 2008 was from the British Tree Growers Association of Sustainable Standards. It was disposed of using on-site waste management plant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Payments Agency (RPA)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: RPA have not purchased any Christmas trees over the last five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Environment, Fisheries, Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All Christmas trees were sourced locally. Trees were re-cycled by external waste management contractor.

**Countrywide Rights of Way Act 2000**

**Mr. Grogan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much land has been designated under section 16 of the Countrywide Rights of Way Act 2000 since 1 January 2009; how much such land has been designated for the use of (a) walkers, (b) cyclists, (c) horse riders and (d) other equestrians; and at what locations land has been so designated. [307614]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Since 1 January 2009 there have been three section 16 dedications, a total of 631 hectares. All of these have been for walkers only. No land has been dedicated for the use of cyclists, horse riders or other equestrian pursuits.

Locations of the section 16 dedications are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Wood near Hereford</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharncliffe near Sheffield</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High House Waste near Ivybridge, Devon</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Of which only five hectares was land not already mapped as Countrywide and Rights of Way access land.

These dedications will be displayed on the Countrywide and Rights of Way access maps when the updated maps are published on Natural England’s website in January 2010.

**Dairy Farming: Lancashire**

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the change in the number of dairy farmers in (a) Chorley and (b) Lancashire between (i) 2008 and 2009 and (ii) 2009-10. [307340]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** The grid referencing of the 2009 data is not yet complete so the latest information available is for 2008. This is shown in the following table, along with a comparison to 2007 to show the annual change.
In the UK, the trend in dairy production is towards fewer, larger and more productive herds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of dairy holdings</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of farmers on dairy holdings</strong></td>
<td>717</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>1,531</td>
<td>1,477</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Dairy holdings are defined here as the number of holdings on the Cattle Tracing System on 1 June each year with more than 10 dairy cows in the milking herd.
2 The number of farmers is defined as full and part-time farmers, partners, directors and spouses if working on the holding.
3 Lancashire is defined as Blackburn, Blackpool and Lancashire county council.

**Departmental Advertising**

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much (a) his Department and (b) its agencies have spent on advertising in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [302494]

**Dan Norris:** Since the beginning of the current financial year DEFRA has spent around £2 million on campaign advertising through COI. This was primarily on campaigns for conservation volunteering, water saving and resource efficiency. A further £23,841.12 was spent on advertising vacancies within the same time period.

Detailed spend on advertising by DEFRA agencies is not held centrally and could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

**Departmental Manpower**

**Mr. Blunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many staff of his Department were in its redeployment pool on (a) January, (b) April, (c) July and (d) October 2009. [306717]

**Dan Norris:** On 1 January 2009 seven DEFRA employees were recorded on the Department’s redeployment register, seven employees were recorded on 1 April 2009, 16 were recorded on 1 July 2009 and 10 employees were recorded on 1 October 2009.

**Departmental Buildings**

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) residential properties his Department owns; and how many (b) have been empty for more than six months; (2) how many residential properties his Department owns; and how many (a) are occupied and (b) have been empty for more than six months. [303997]

**Dan Norris** (holding answer 3 December 2009): The Department owns 38 residential properties of which (a) 36 are occupied and (b) two are vacant and have been vacant for more than six months. [303996]

**Departmental Conferences**

**Mr. Graham Stuart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside his Department’s building attended by civil servants in his Department there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307519]

**Dan Norris:** The Department uses structured away days to enable staff to develop the skills and policies needed to deliver the Department’s objectives. We also run conferences on specific issues and send delegates to other organisations’ conferences whose work is relevant to our own.

Statistics on away days and conferences are not collated centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Departmental Pay**

**John Mason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what (a) bonuses and (b) incentives have been paid to (i) consultants and (ii) contractors engaged by executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which his Department is responsible in each of the last three years. [300628]

**Dan Norris:** This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Any bonuses and incentives paid to consultants and contractors would be subject to the provisions of managing public money.

**Departmental Public Relations**

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what payments the Environment Agency has made to (a) Four Communications and (b) Bellenden Public Affairs in the last 12 months; for what purposes; and if he will place in the Library a copy of each contract under which such payments were made. [305428]

**Dan Norris:** The Environment Agency has spent £5,000 in the last 12 months with Four Communications. This was to provide an understanding of the potential for new media in helping to engage with stakeholders on water and pollution issues. It has spent £27,471 with Bellenden Public Affairs for the provision of training and support for its engagement with local authorities on climate change issues.

The Environment Agency will place copies of contracts in the Library subject to supplier consent.
Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much his Department has spent on (a) Ministerial photoshoots and (b) production of videos in which Ministers appear in the last three years for which figures are available. [305516]

Dan Norris: Since the beginning of the current financial year we have spent around £850 on ministerial photoshoots and just under £20,000 on the production of videos in which Ministers appear. A comparable amount was spent in 2008-09. We do not hold a record for 2007-08.

These funds are generally used when filming ministerial speeches to play at conferences or other live events which they cannot attend due to diary or other logistical reasons.

Departmental Telephone Services

Mark Lazarowicz: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many telephone lines with the prefix (a) 0870, (b) 0845 and (c) 0800 his Department (i) operates and (ii) sponsors; how many calls were received to each number in the last 12 months; and whether alternative numbers charged at the BT local rate are available in each case. [305211]

Dan Norris: DEFRA operates one comprehensive helpline, the DEFRA Helpline, which has a prefix of 0845. DEFRA receives no income from this helpline.

The DEFRA Helpline has received 77,385 calls during the period 1 November 2008 to 30 November 2009.

Some callers may attract the BT local rate. Charges vary depending on callers’ service providers, where and when they are calling from, the package the caller may be subscribed to and whether they are using a mobile.

The Cabinet Office, through the Contact Council, is currently developing a numbering strategy. This will cover a range of issues related to public sector numbering, including providing greater transparency and value for money for service users. In the meantime, the Council issued a “Clarification Statement on Telephone Number Ranges”.

Departmental Training

Mr. Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many overseas training courses were attended by his Department’s civil servants in the latest period for which figures are available; how many civil servants attended each course; and what the total cost to the public purse was of each course. [305896]

Dan Norris: Within DEFRA, training courses overseas are authorised locally by individual project managers with budgetary responsibility.

To collate such data at departmental level would incur disproportionate cost in excess of £750.

Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether his Department has made an assessment of the visual effect of wheeled refuse containers street scene and street clutter. [308763]

Dan Norris: No such assessment has been carried out by DEFRA.

Elephants: Conservation

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much money his Department has spent on the conservation of African elephants in each country in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [307653]

Huw Irranca-Davies: This Department has contributed the following funds towards African elephant conservation over the past five years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Amount (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MIKE</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ETIS</td>
<td>42,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Initiative project: capacity building to alleviate human-elephant conflict in Kenya</td>
<td>68,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MIKE</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ETIS</td>
<td>42,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Initiative project: capacity building to alleviate human-elephant conflict in Kenya</td>
<td>68,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>7th Dialogue Meeting of African Elephant Range States</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ETIS</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Initiative project: capacity building to alleviate human-elephant conflict in Kenya</td>
<td>73,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>MIKE/ETIS</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Initiative project: capacity building to alleviate human-elephant conflict in Kenya</td>
<td>79,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>MIKE/ETIS</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Initiative project: capacity building to alleviate human-elephant conflict in North Kenya</td>
<td>39,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Initiative project: Enhancing ETIS to guide Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) policy</td>
<td>32,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>732,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 MIKE and ETIS are monitoring tools used by Parties to CITES to track illegal activities involving elephants.
2 The IUCN/SSC’s African Elephant Specialist Group is a group of experts whose aim is to promote the long-term conservation of Africa’s elephants and, where possible, the recovery of their populations to viable levels.

Except where detailed above, DEFRA’S funding has not been country-specific.

In addition to these amounts, DEFRA has spent over half a million pounds on projects during the past five years which may indirectly benefit the African elephant.
Farms: Inspections

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with reference to the answer of 15 October 2009, Official Report, column 1004W, on farm inspections, against which regulations compliance is monitored by each inspection body.

Huw Irranca-Davies: The information is as follow:

Rural Payments Agency

- (Basic Conditions) Regulations 1997 (SI 1997/189)
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- Animal Health Act 1981
- Cattle Identification Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/529)
- Commission Regulation (EC) No. 509/1999
- Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2772/95
- Commission regulation (EC) No. 911/2004
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/2716)
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/2716)
- Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 (SI 1986/1510)
  - Council Directive 96/22/EC
  - Council Regulation (EC) No. 1257/1999
  - Council Regulation,(EC) No. 1698/2005
  - Council Regulation (EC) No. 2078/92
  - Council Regulation (EC) No. 21/2004
- Countryside Act 1968
- Crop Residues (Burning) Regulations 1993(1]
- Energy Crops Regulations 2000
- Entry Level Agri-Environment Scheme (Pilot) (England) Regulations 2003
- Environmental Impact Assessment (England)(No. 2) Regulations 2006
- Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Feed (Hygiene and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/3298)
- Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/14)
- Forestry Act 1967
- Game Act 1831
- General Food Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/3279)
- Heather and Grass etc. Burning (England) Regulations 2007(2]
- Hedgerows Regulations 1997
- Highways Act 1980—
- National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2008 (SI 2349/2008)
    - Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002
    - Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005
    - Regulation (EC) No. 396/05
    - Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004
  - Regulation (EEC) No. 2377/90
  - Regulation 178/2002
  - Regulation 83/2005
  - Regulation 852/2004
  - Regulation 999/2001
  - SI 2000/3042
  - SI 2003/838
  - SI 2005/3459
  - SI 2007/2003
  - SI 2007/3154
  - SI 2007/3304
  - SI 2008/962— the Bluetongue Regulations 2008
  - SI 853/2004
  - The Animals and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1997 (SI 1997/1729:
  - The Bluetongue (No. 2) Order 2007 (SI 2007/3304)
  - The Cattle Plague Order 1928 (1928 No. 206)
  - The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/3538)
  - The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (waste management licences)
  - The Foot and Mouth Disease (England) Order 2006 (2006/182)
  - The Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (England) Order 2007 (SI 2007/3493) supplements the EC Regulation, and the provisions relating to animal identification and on-farm records apply for cross compliance purposes
  - The Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989/1263)
  - The Specified Diseases (Notification) Order 1996 (SI 1996/2628)
    - The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/2539):
    - The Water Resources Act 1991
    - The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
    - The Weeds Act 1959
    - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
    - Council Regulation (EC) No. 73/2009

Veterinary Medicine Directorate

The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2009 (these regulations were first made in 2005 and are revoked and remade annually): The Animals and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1997
**Animal Health**

Animal Health Act 1981  
Animal Health Act 2002  
Animal Welfare Act 2006  
Animal Health and Welfare Act 1984  
Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006  
Tuberculosis (England) Order 2007  
Tuberculosis (Scotland) Order 2007  
Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2006  
Tuberculosis (Testing and Powers of Entry) (Wales) Order 2008  
Tuberculosis (Deer) Order 1989  
Tuberculosis (Deer) Notice of Intended Slaughter and Compensation Order 1989  
Welfare of Animals (Slaughter and Killing) Regulations 1995  
Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Scotland) Order 2006  
Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007  
Welfare of Farmed Animals (Scotland) Regulations 2000  
Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007  
Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2009  
The Animals and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1997 as amended

**Environment Agency**

The Environment Agency monitors regulatory compliance on farms using integrated visits. During farm visits EA officers assess Land Managers compliance against relevant regulations under the following regime.

- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (Nitrates Directive)
- Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) (Waste and Integrated Pollution Prevention Directives)
- Exemptions from EPR Waste regulation including land-spreading
- Hazardous Waste Regulations
- Groundwater Regulations (Groundwater Daughter Directive)
- Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil Regulations
- Sewage Sludge Regulations
- Water Resources Act (Abstraction licensing, Consent to Discharge, avoiding pollution)
- Land Drainage Act
- Reservoirs Act

**Flood Control: Finance**

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what funding his Department allocated to (a) regional development agencies and (b) other bodies following the flooding in summer 2007 for flood prevention works; how much funding has been provided to each such body; and what criteria apply in respect of qualification for such funds.

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Regional development agencies (RDAs) are financed through a single budget, a fund which pools money from all the contributing Government Departments. From this single pot, RDAs provided over £111 million support for the businesses affected in their regions, as part of the wider £136 million that Government made available to assist the affected regions and help those in greatest need. This includes funding for schools, transport and businesses. No specific funding was given to RDAs in respect of the 2007 floods.

Spending on flood risk management across central and local government have increased from £307 million in 1996-97 to over £655 million in 2008-09, and is due to reach £715 million in 2009-10 and £780 million in 2010-11. This will bring the total spent by DEFRA, the Environment Agency and local authorities over three years to £2.15 billion. £20 million of the original £800 million for 2010-11 was brought forward into this year’s budgets as part of the fiscal stimulation package announced in the 2008 pre-Budget report.

Since the 2007 floods, DEFRA has given funding to a considerable number of bodies to plan for and reduce the risk of flooding and its impacts and ensure that communities and the essential services which supply them are protected. The sums outlined as follows represent the most significant of these funding allocations.

The majority of the funding is through the Environment Agency which allocates funding to regional flood defence committees for both new capital schemes and to maintain existing defences on the basis of national priorities to ensure that the funding is spent in the best way possible. Delivery is managed through the Environment Agency’s regional offices.

The allocation to Environment Agency regions was £495.3 million in 2008-09 and £548.6 million in 2009-10.

In April 2006 the Environment Agency took on responsibility for the administration of capital grants payable to local authorities and internal drainage boards under delegation from DEFRA for all schemes promoted under the Land Drainage Act and for schemes under the Coast Protection Act from April 2008. In 2008-09 and 2009-10 £64 million was allocated in each year for projects delivered by these bodies.

£1 million has been made available to the Environment Agency to manage the intake of local authority trainees in September 2009 and to finance the trainees on the two-year Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Risk Engineering Foundation Degree. A further £175,000 has been made available to fund an intake of local authority trainees in September 2010.

As noted in annex A of the Progress Report (published 15 December 2009) on the Government’s Response to Sir Michael Pitt’s Review of the summer 2007 floods, £34.5 million is being allocated by DEFRA to delivery organisations to help cover the additional costs of taking forward the recommendations they are responsible for.

The following table shows how much has been allocated to date. It shows that a total of £20.2 million has been allocated to individual agencies and bodies by DEFRA so far.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allocation to:</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
<th>Allocated by December 2009</th>
<th>To deliver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td>£15 million</td>
<td>£10 million between 80 local authorities</td>
<td>Local authority leadership on flood risk management in the highest priority areas, including surface water management plans, tackling surface water problems, mapping of drainage assets, and oversight and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems for new housing, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The breakdown of the major funding schemes originating from Pitt Review recommendations and the criteria that apply for qualifying bodies are reproduced as follows:

1. Property level grant scheme

Local authorities allocated grants from the first round of the £5.5 million property level grant scheme (announced in June 2009 by the Secretary of State) amounted to £3 million. As yet, no claims for grant have been made against these allocations. Table 1 shows the geographical breakdown of recipients.

Table 1: Local authority recipients of property level grant scheme funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Environment Agency region</th>
<th>Awarded (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ribble Valley BC</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>119,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossendale BC</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigan Council</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>83,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale Royal BC</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds City Council</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>131,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakefield MDC</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>85,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle City Council</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>216,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wycheavon DC</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>121,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City Council</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>153,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Derbyshire DC</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>33,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale DC</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>325,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes Council</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>39,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utlesford DC</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>79,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford City Council</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>119,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oxfordshire DC</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>171,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale of White Horse DC</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>51,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wokingham DC</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>114,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes DC</td>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>282,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basic criteria for the scheme is based on property type and the frequency and type of flooding. The full guidance for the scheme can be found at:


2. Surface wafer management

On 18 August the Secretary of State announced £16 million funding to help local authorities tackle surface water flooding.

£9.7 million was been awarded to 77 local authorities for areas where evidence shows that the risk and potential impact of surface water flooding could be highest. Local authorities for all other areas will also be able to bid for a share of £5 million to help them deal with known local flooding problems. £1 million has been allocated for building skills and capacity within local authorities.

The £9.7 million funding has been allocated to the following local authorities. The first payments are being made in December 2009. All London borough funding
In addition, local authorities were able to bid for a part of the £5 million to help deal with known surface water problems. We are aiming to make an announcement to successful local authorities in January 2010. Funding will be made available after March 2010. The criteria for bids can be found at:


Additionally, £300,000 was allocated in December 2008 for six areas (Warrington, Thatcham, Leeds, Kingston upon Hull, Richmond upon Thames and Gloucestershire) to carry out first edition surface water management plans with the aim to test DEFRA's Draft Surface Water Management Plan Guidance.

3. Building skills and capacity for local authorities

An additional £1 million will be available for building skills and capacity within local authorities. This will include the provision of training, guidance and support tools to all local authorities and a programme for this will be developed with local authorities and their representatives over the next few months.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the 
(a) take-up and 
(b) geographic distribution has been of funding made available by his Department following the flooding of summer 2007 for flood prevention works; how much such funding has yet to be allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Spending on flood risk management across central and local government has increased from £307 million in 1996-97 to over £655 million in 2008-09, and is due to reach £715 million in 2009-10 and £780 million in 2010-11. This will bring the total spent by DEFRA, the Environment Agency and local authorities over three years to £2.15 billion. £20 million of the original £800 million for 2010-11 was brought forward into this year’s budgets as part of the fiscal stimulation package announced in the 2008 pre-Budget report.

The majority of the funding is through the Environment Agency which allocates funding to Regional Flood Defence Committees for both new capital schemes and to maintain existing defences on the basis of national priorities to ensure that the funding is spent in the best way possible. Delivery is managed through the Environment Agency’s regional offices.

The following table provides a regional analysis of Government funding to the Environment Agency for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>£ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>135.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>90.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>495.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In April 2006 the Environment Agency took on responsibility for the administration of capital grants payable to local authorities and Internal Drainage Boards under delegation from DEFRA for all schemes promoted under the Land Drainage Act and for schemes under the Coast Protection Act from April 2008.

In 2008-09 and 2009-10 £64 million was allocated in each year for projects delivered by these bodies. In both years the Environment Agency fully utilised the entire grant in aid allocation on its own projects or those delivered by local authorities and Internal Drainage Boards.

Another major tranche of funding since 2007 has been allocated to taking forward the Pitt review recommendations over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11.

As noted in Annex A of the Progress Report (published 15 December 2009) on The Government’s response to Sir Michael Pitt’s review of the summer 2007 floods, up

Table 1: DEFRA Grant in aid to the Environment Agency Regions 2008-09 to 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>£ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>115.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>102.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>548.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to £34.5 million will be allocated by DEFRA to delivery organisations to help cover the additional costs of taking forward the recommendations they are responsible for.

The following table shows that a total of £20.2 million has been allocated to date to individual bodies and agencies.

Table 2: Funding allocations for implementing the Pitt review recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allocation to:</th>
<th>Allocation (£)</th>
<th>Allocated by December 2009 (£)</th>
<th>To deliver:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
<td>Local authority leadership on flood risk management in the highest priority areas, including surface water management plans, tackling surface water problems, mapping of drainage assets, and oversight and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems for new housing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency and Met Office</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
<td>3,760,000</td>
<td>A new joint forecasting and warning centre, including the extreme rainfall alert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>8,500,000</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
<td>All other recommendations where the Agency lead, including their new strategic overview of all types of flood risk in England, better modelling, forecasting and mapping for flooding particularly surface water, roll-out of ex-directory flood warnings, reservoir inundation maps, and a national flooding exercise to test the new response arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Office</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>230,000</td>
<td>Research to make use of new detailed forecasting models for flooding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Office</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>New team within the Civil Contingencies Secretariat to run a national campaign to improve the resilience of critical national infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>To fund the Risk and Regulatory Advisory Council to consider the communication of flood risk to the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>5,100,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>To provide a contingency fund in case allocations need to be increased in some areas, and to include: Up to £2 million for an improved flood rescue capability; Up to £1.25 million to support the production of reservoir emergency plans by Local Resilience Forums. Funds have also been provided to the following additional activities announced since the Government’s response: £750,000 to support local authority flood risk management, apprenticeships this year and next. A further £250,000 is being funded from other budgets. £140,000 to fund a reservoir inundation mapping tool.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 34,500,000 20,200,000

1 Between 80 local authorities

Source:

The break-down of the major funding schemes originating from Pitt review recommendations is as follows:

1. Property level grant scheme

   DEFRA is committed to encouraging the adoption of property level protection and resilience, especially where community protection is not available or planned for in the near future.

   Local authorities allocated grants from the first round of the £5.5 million property level grant scheme (announced in June 2009 by the Secretary of State) amounted to £3 million. As yet, no claims for grant have been made against these allocations. Table 3 shows the geographical break-down of recipients.

Table 3: Local authority recipients of property level grant scheme funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Environment Agency region</th>
<th>Amount awarded (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle City Council</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>216,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wychavon DC</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>121,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City Council</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>153,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Derbyshire DC</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>33,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale DC</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>325,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes Council</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>39,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ullswater DC</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>79,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford City Council</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>119,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oxfordshire DC</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>171,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale of White Horse DC</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>51,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wokingham DC</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>114,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes DC</td>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>282,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset CC</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>267,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Devon DC</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>96,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester CC</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>68,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster CC</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester CC and Tewkesbury BC</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>119,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincolnshire CC</td>
<td>Anglian</td>
<td>96,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Surface water management

On 18 August Hilary Benn announced £16 million funding to help local authorities tackle surface water flooding.

£9.7 million was been awarded to 77 local authorities for areas where evidence shows that the risk and potential impact of surface water flooding could be highest. Local authorities for all other areas will also be able to bid for a share of £5 million to help them deal with known local flooding problems. £1 million has been allocated for building skills and capacity within local authorities. The £9.7 million funding has been allocated to the following local authorities. The first payments are being made in December 2009 and will then be made monthly until the end of March 2011. All London borough funding is being made through the Drain London Forum.

### Table 3: Local authority recipients of property level grant scheme funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Environment Agency region</th>
<th>Amount awarded (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Riding of Yorkshire Council</td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,010,611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Local authority recipients of SWMP funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County or unitary authority</th>
<th>Funding received (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham (Metropolitan)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston upon Hull Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Bristol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool (Metropolitan)</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester (Metropolitan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Nottingham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds (Metropolitan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire County</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield (Metropolitan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex County</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Portsmouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Wolverhampton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry (Metropolitan)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slough Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex County</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Southampton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirklees Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southend on Sea Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Stoke on Trent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindon Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderdale (Metropolitan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Plymouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Somerset Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middleborough Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackpool Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicestershire County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northants County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwell Unitary (West Midlands)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington and Chelsea (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandsworth (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewisham (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromley (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith and Fulham (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haringey (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwich (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merton (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnet (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Hamlets (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waltham Forest (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newham (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillingdon (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hounslow (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond upon Thames (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrow (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berks (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbridge (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston upon Thames (LB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barking and Dagenham (LB)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancashire County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournemouth Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition local authorities were able to bid for a part of the £3 million to help deal with known surface water problems. Bids closed on 30 November 2009.

Applications are currently being assessed and we are aiming to make an announcement to successful local authorities in January 2010. Funding will be made available after March 2010.

Additionally £300,000 was allocated in December 2008 for six areas (Warrington, Thatcham, Leeds, Kingston upon Hull, Richmond upon Thames and Gloucestershire) to carry out first edition surface water management plans with the aim to test DEFRA’s Draft Surface Water Management Plan Guidance.

3. Building skills and capacity for local authorities

An additional £1 million will be available for building skills and capacity within local authorities. This will include the provision of training, guidance and support tools to all local authorities and a programme for this will be developed with local authorities and their representatives over the next few months.

Food

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what volume of (a) wheat, (b) barley, (c) fresh vegetables, (d) potatoes, (e) fresh fruit, (f) beef and veal, (g) pork, (h) bacon and ham, (i) mutton and lamb, (j) poultry meat, (k) eggs and (l) liquid milk was produced in England in each year since 1997. [308079]

Huw Irranca-Davies: England figures are not available for all the products listed. However, the following tables show UK production figures for each product in each year since 1997. To reduce the burden on the industry some companies with sites in different parts of the UK provide information on their total UK production. Also, particularly for livestock and livestock products, where something is produced does not necessarily reflect its origin. For example sheep slaughtered in England may be raised in Wales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wheat (thousand tonnes)</th>
<th>Barley (thousand tonnes)</th>
<th>Potatoes (thousand tonnes)</th>
<th>Vegetables (thousand tonnes)</th>
<th>Fruit (thousand tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>15,018</td>
<td>7,828</td>
<td>7,128</td>
<td>2,937</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>15,449</td>
<td>6,623</td>
<td>6,422</td>
<td>2,863</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14,867</td>
<td>6,581</td>
<td>7,131</td>
<td>2,952</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>16,704</td>
<td>6,492</td>
<td>6,178</td>
<td>2,932</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11,580</td>
<td>6,660</td>
<td>6,674</td>
<td>2,865</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>15,973</td>
<td>6,128</td>
<td>6,921</td>
<td>2,573</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>14,288</td>
<td>6,370</td>
<td>6,058</td>
<td>2,543</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>15,473</td>
<td>5,816</td>
<td>6,246</td>
<td>2,559</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>14,863</td>
<td>5,495</td>
<td>5,979</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14,735</td>
<td>5,239</td>
<td>5,727</td>
<td>2,597</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13,221</td>
<td>5,079</td>
<td>5,564</td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17,227</td>
<td>6,144</td>
<td>5,999</td>
<td>2,607</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2008, DEFRA

Forestry Commission: Conferences

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Forestry Commission's buildings attended by civil servants in the Forestry Commission there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307459]

Huw Irranca-Davies: The Forestry Commission in England does not hold the information centrally and it could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Forestry Commission: Hotels

Anne Main: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much the Forestry Commission has spent on hotel accommodation for its officials in each of the last five years. [306036]

Huw Irranca-Davies: The Forestry Commission does not hold the information in the format requested and it could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ivory

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he has had discussions with the African Elephant Coalition on the level of elephant-poaching for ivory since the 2008 ivory stockpile sales; and if he will make a statement. [307495]
**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Neither I nor the Secretary of State have had discussions with the African Elephant Coalition.

**Mr. Benyon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he has had discussions with African range states on the 2008 ivory stockpile sales; and if he will make a statement.

[307496]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Neither I nor the Secretary of State have had discussions with the African range states on the 2008 ivory stockpile sales.

**Mr. Benyon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he has received reports on the effects on the level of elephant poaching in African range states of stockpile sales of ivory held in October and November 2008; and if he will make a statement.

[307497]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) and the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programmes have each provided reports to be considered at the next CITES Conference of Parties to be held in Qatar in March 2010. These consider the effects of the one-off legal sale of ivory in 2008. The reports can be found on the CITES website.

**Mr. Benyon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he has had discussions with his EU counterparts on the proposals to extend the moratorium on ivory sales at the 15th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species conference of the Parties; and if he will make a statement.

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Officials are engaged in discussions with EU member states to reach agreed positions on all the proposals to be considered at the 15th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species Conference of Parties. Final positions have yet to be agreed and discussions will continue up until the conference which will take place in March.

**Ivory: China**

**Mr. Benyon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent (a) reports he has received and (b) discussions he has had with his (i) Chinese and (ii) Japanese counterparts on the controls in place in respect of illegal ivory imports to each of those countries; and if he will make a statement.

[307633]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** A report on inspections and control checks undertaken in China and Japan upon the arrival of the legal ivory, from the sale which took place in 2008, was prepared for the 58th meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species Standing Committee held between 6 and 10 July 2009. I have received no other reports, or held discussions with either Chinese or Japanese officials on the controls in place, in respect of illegal ivory imports to those countries since the ivory sale in 2008.

**Joint Waste Authorities**

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the latest timetable is for the establishment of joint waste authorities; and in which areas he expects the first such authorities to be established.

[308601]

**Dan Norris:** No formal assessment of the effectiveness of the EU Morocco agreement has been made but Joint Committees are held each year where both parties discuss how they consider the agreement is working. The UK attends these meetings in order to represent the interests of the vessels that operate in Moroccan waters under the agreement.

**National Bee Unit: Finance**

**Mr. Benyon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much of the £2.3 million funding allocation to the National Bee Unit announced in January 2009 has been spent under each budget heading.

[307636]

**Dan Norris:** The additional funding of £2.3 million allocated to the Food and Environment Research Agency’s National Bee Unit to implement the Healthy Bees plan was spread over two years—£1.137 million in 2009-10 and £1.158 million in 2010-11. Details of the amounts spent to 30 November 2009 are set out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Spend (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Seasonal Bee Inspectors</td>
<td>375,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Education Officer Post</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Bees Plan Project Board Educational and Promotional Activities</td>
<td>£180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Bees Plan Stakeholder Steering Group and Project Workstreams</td>
<td>£60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Diagnostics</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The balance for 2009-10 will focus on advice and training to beekeepers at the start of the new season; completion of Beebase development; and additional diagnostics following the completion of the Random Apiary Survey.

Office of Water Services: Conferences

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Office of Water Services (Ofwat) buildings attended by civil servants in Ofwat there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each.[307452]

Huw Irranca-Davies: The following tables set out the cost of Ofwat’s away days and conferences attended and held by Ofwat and its staff members.

It has not been possible to provide figures for away days/team building and conferences for the years 2004-05 and 2005-06. Previous recording methods did not separately identify such spending.

It has not been possible to separate out all away days attended by Ofwat staff as they are recorded across a number of reporting codes. Team building days have to be signed off by Ofwat’s director of operations. The cost of events coded as team building are provided in the following table.

Ofwat is only able to provide the total expenditure recorded under its conferences and seminars reporting codes. This includes conferences attended by Ofwat staff but also conferences and seminars held by Ofwat both in its building and externally. This information is given in the following table.

Pets: Animal Welfare

Mr. Roger Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what his Department’s policy is on signing the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals; and if he will make a statement. [305955]

Dan Norris: We recognise that the European convention has been an important catalyst in raising animal welfare standards. The introduction of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales—as well as the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006—means that our laws are now consistent with the principles set out in the convention. Nevertheless, there are aspirations in the convention, in particular the resolution on breed standards, which may not necessarily be the most effective way of promoting welfare. We therefore do not consider signing the convention to be a priority for Government.

Rights of Way

Mr. Grogan: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many incidents involving animals resulted in (a) injury and (b) death on (i) public rights of way and (ii) land to which the public has access; and what the requirements for reporting such incidents are. [307615]

Jonathan Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

The statistics gathered under reporting arrangements cannot distinguish between rights of way and other open access land. The following information is for incidents involving animals where the injured person was classed as a member of the public and the incident was related to agriculture.

Besides responsibilities of employers in respect of employees, the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) place a legal duty on those in control of premises where work is going on to report to the enforcing authorities for health and safety at work all serious injuries to members of the public arising out of or in connection with the work activity. This would apply to injuries causing the death of the person or requiring their removal to hospital for treatment. The requirement is to report the incident by the quickest practicable means.

The Incident Contact Centre which was set up by the Health and Safety Executive in 2001 provides a one-stop reporting service for work related health and safety incidents in the UK. Reports can be made by phone, letter, fax, on-line or email.

Rural Payments Agency: Data Protection

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps have been taken to ensure the security of farmers’ personal data held by the Rural Payments Agency since the data losses in July 2009. [307337]

Dan Norris: Though no farmers’ data are believed to have been lost, the Rural Payments Agency has put in place a number of improvements to the way farmers’ personal data are secured. The core IT infrastructure supplier has been instructed to increase the physical security access to our data centres. Tracking and logging processes for all removable media at all sites, including the transit between sites, has been strengthened. In addition, confirmatory reporting of all dispatches and receipts has been introduced.
Sheep: North West

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many attacks there were by dogs on sheep in (a) Lancashire and (b) the north west in the latest period for which figures are available.

Dan Norris: The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 provides for the protection of livestock from attack by dogs. Centralised records are not kept on species-specific livestock attacks by dogs. However, the following table shows the number of defendants cautioned, proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts in relation to the wider category of ‘Dogs worrying livestock on agricultural land’, for the North West Government Office Region and for Lancashire during the latest period (2007) for which figures are available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cautioned</th>
<th>Proceeded against</th>
<th>Found guilty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North West Government Office Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of which:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancashire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFA6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The cautions statistics relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been cautioned for two or more offences at the same time the principal offence is the more serious offence.
2 From 1 June 2000 the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 came into force nationally and removed the use of cautions for persons under 18 and replaced them with reprimands and warnings. These figures have been included in the totals.
3 The statistics relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences the principal offence is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.
4 Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.
5 Includes the following police force areas: Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.
6 PFA: Police Force Area.

Source: Ministry of Justice

Total Allowable Catches

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what representations he has received on negotiations under the Common Fisheries Policy on Area 7 Nephrops total allowable catch quota for 2010; [307302]

(2) what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Minister for Agriculture on the December EU Fisheries Council. [307303]

Huw Irranca-Davies: I am well aware of the importance of the Nephrops fishery in the Irish Sea to UK fishermen. I visited Portavogie earlier in the year, to see this at first hand and have since received a significant number of representations both from the relevant sections of the fishing industry and hon. Members either with constituency or policy interest. The Commission had originally proposed a 30 per cent. cut in the total allowable catch (TAC) for the stock and although it was not possible to argue away the cut altogether, working closely with Michelle Gildernew (Minister for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) and deploying more up-to-date science, we succeeded in limiting the reduction to 9 per cent. In the circumstances this was a very credible result. In the meantime, we will also be exploring the potential for supplementing the UK’s quota with international swaps from other member states. However, for the future, it will be important to balance the short-term interests of the fishermen, with the longer term sustainable management of the stock.

The Minister for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development was present throughout the December Council and she and I have been in regular contact in the lead-up to the negotiations to discuss the full range of Northern Irish interests.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made on the development of an electronic system to record waste transfer rates, with particular reference to the compilation of a comprehensive and contemporary database.

Dan Norris: The “Electronic Duty of Care” is a pilot project which is part of The Waste Crime Innovation Programme funded by DEFRA and managed by the Environment Agency. The project is supported by an industry-led advisory team.

Work started in May 2009, with six waste companies volunteering to take part across South East England, and is planned to be extended in the new year. The pilot aims to test the effectiveness of waste tracking technologies and should deliver business benefits to waste companies, including substantially reducing regulatory compliance costs. With more accurate and timely data, business should be able to invest with greater confidence in infrastructure to recover and re-use wasted raw materials.

The Environment Agency has recently sought funding through the European Union LIFE+ Programme to develop a national system from January 2011. This would support the roll out of a nationally integrated system for the electronic capture of waste transfer data. This will potentially displace a large proportion of the current paper-based system and considerably reduce the administrative burden to business, industry and Government. If successful we will use an open tender process to develop and maintain the waste monitoring database.

Waste Disposal: Fixed Penalties

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many fixed penalty notices for household waste offences were issued in each Government Office region in each of the last three years.

Dan Norris: DEFRA does not hold such information.

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information (a) his Department and (b) the Waste and Resources Action Programme holds on those local...
authorities which have used their powers to fine households for breaching a (A) no side waste collection policy and (B) closed lid policy. [308767]

Dan Norris: Neither DEFRA nor the Waste and Resources Action programme hold the information requested.

Whales: Conservation

Bill Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he plans to update his Department’s document Protecting whales—a global responsibility prior to the International Whaling Commission in June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [307287]

Huw Irranca-Davies: DEFRA’s publication “Protecting whales—a global responsibility” sets out the ecological, economic and moral arguments for protecting whales. Since its publication in 2007, the UK’s position on whaling has remained strong and we continue to support the arguments set out in the publication.

The main objectives of the publication were to raise awareness of the situation in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and persuade ‘like-minded’ conservation countries of the merits of joining the organisation. Both these objectives have been achieved with a number of ‘like-minded’ conservation minded countries recently joining the IWC.

An update of the publication “Protecting whales—a global responsibility” will be considered following the outcome of the discussions on the reform of the IWC currently taking place.

Bill Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions he has had with ministerial colleagues on whaling in the last 12 months; whether he plans to hold further such discussions before the 2010 International Whaling Commission meeting; and if he will make a statement. [307296]

Huw Irranca-Davies: Following last year’s International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting, I wrote to all hon. Members, which included a report on the latest developments within the IWC. I will write again in the build-up to this year’s meeting.

In June 2009, I also met the hon. Peter Garrett, MP—Australian Minister for the Environment—to discuss whaling and the IWC.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Departments: Cost-effectiveness

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Prime Minister how many staff worked on the Operational Efficiency Programme; how many (a) meetings and (b) video conferences were held as part of the work of the programme; how much was spent on travel costs for the programme’s advisers to attend meetings; and how much was spent on the programme. [307370]

Mr. Byrne: I have been asked to reply.

The operational efficiency programme final report was the product of work led by five advisers: Dr. Martin Read, Mr. Martin Jay, Mr. Gerry Grimstone, Lord Carter of Coles and Sir Michael Bichard. They worked without pay, but their expenses were recoverable. They were supported by a team based from HM Treasury. At its peak this team numbered 12. Given the cross-cutting nature of the review and the number of organisations involved, HM Treasury does not centrally hold figures showing the total cost, number of meetings or number of video-conferences held.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Prime Minister what arms-length bodies the Government plans to abolish, with reference to page 54 of Putting the Front Line First: Smarter Government, Cm 7753. [307575]

Mr. Byrne: I have been asked to reply.

The recent White Paper “Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government” pledged to reduce the number of arm’s length bodies by over 120. The bodies that are affected, subject to the necessary legislation and consultation required, are as follows:

15 Agricultural Wages Committees in England.
16 Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees in England are being abolished.
The number of Advisory Committees for the Appointment of Justices of the Peace will be reduced from 101 to 49.
Four Court Boards will be removed by 1 April 2010, reducing them from 23 to 19 in line with new court regional areas.
Her Majesty’s Courts Inspectorate is to be abolished.
The Sentencing Advisory Panel and Sentencing Guidelines Council will be merged.
The Postgraduate Medical Education Training Board is being merged with the General Medical Council.
The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is committed to reducing by 30 or more the number of separate publicly funded sector skills bodies over the next three years. Individual bodies have not yet been confirmed, but further details can be seen in chapter 6 of the BIS “Skills for Growth” White Paper (CM 7641) 1.
Four museums sponsored by the Ministry of Defence are being merged into the new National Museum of the Royal Navy—the separate museums are:
Royal Marines Museum
Royal Naval Museum
Royal Naval Submarine Museum
Fleet Air Arm.
In total this represents a reduction of 123 separate arm’s length bodies. In Budget 2010 there will be a further report on arm’s length bodies, which will include further mergers and reductions of bodies. We will also announce ALB governance reforms, which will set out a tougher regime for establishing new bodies, and drive out value for money and efficiencies from the sector as a whole.


Public Sector: Procurement

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Prime Minister whether his planned consultation on Smarter Government will include proposals on access to data held on the monetary value of contracts let by or on behalf of the Government with private sector (a) consultants and (b) contractors. [307372]
Mr. Byrne: I have been asked to reply. Treasury officials are currently in the process of putting together proposals on publishing further financial data. These proposals will be agreed with Ministers prior to the launch of the consultation.

TRANSPORT

Cars: Licensing

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many cars have ceased to be licensed in each year since 1985. [307033]

Paul Clark: The following table gives annual estimates of the number of registration marks that were on a car which ceased to be licensed, of which underwent a “cherished transfer” to another vehicle. Data are not available prior to 1995.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of car registration marks that ceased to be licensed</th>
<th>Estimated number of “cherished transfers” of car registration marks to other vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2,768,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2,549,000</td>
<td>98,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2,726,000</td>
<td>112,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,984,000</td>
<td>136,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,860,000</td>
<td>134,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,012,000</td>
<td>115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,028,000</td>
<td>167,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,177,000</td>
<td>191,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3,385,000</td>
<td>217,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3,203,000</td>
<td>253,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3,189,000</td>
<td>264,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3,289,000</td>
<td>294,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3,281,000</td>
<td>298,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3,264,000</td>
<td>284,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

The first data column counts cars that were not licensed at the end of the years shown, but whose registration mark was licensed (possibly on another vehicle) 12 months earlier. The vehicles that have become unlicensed may have been scrapped, exported or otherwise taken off the road. However, it is possible for unlicensed vehicles to become relicensed again in later years.

The second data column counts the number of “cherished transfers” of registration marks from cars to other vehicles in the years shown. However, cherished transfer registration marks which are held on retention (rather than being transferred directly to other vehicles) are counted in the first column. The available data do not record what happened to vehicles whose registration mark was the subject of a cherished transfer. Some such vehicles would have been taken off the road, but others would have received a new registration mark and been relicensed. The figures are presented as rounded estimates, rather than exact counts, in view of this uncertainty.

Christmas

David T.C. Davies: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many Christmas trees were purchased by his Department and its agencies in each of the last five years; what the cost was of those trees in each year; from where the trees were sourced; what account was taken of the sustainability of the sources of the trees; and by what process the trees were disposed of.

Chris Mole: The information requested for the whole Department, including its agencies is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hunt: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how much his Department has budgeted for Christmas trees in 2009. [307653]

Chris Mole (holding answer 15 December 2009): The information requested for the whole Department, including its agencies is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dartford-Thurrock Crossing: Tolls

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport whether the hours during which tariffs may be charged for motorists’ use of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing are (a) determined by a European Union directive and (b) constrained for the purposes of congestion management; and if he will make a statement. [305758]

Mr. Khan: The charge at the Dartford Crossing is a road user charge designed to combat traffic congestion. Although current EU directives apply to certain tolls and user charges in the UK, none apply so as to determine the hours during which the road user charge at Dartford may apply. The road user charge applies between 6 am and 10 pm when traffic levels generally exceed the crossing’s capacity. There is no charge during the hours of 10 pm to 6 am to encourage traffic to avoid peak times.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Willis: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many residential properties his Department owns; and how many (a) are occupied and (b) have been empty for more than six months. [304001]

Chris Mole: The Driving Standards Agency and the Highways Agency own residential properties.

The Driving Standards Agency owns the freehold of two residential flats situated above a Driving Test Centre. The flats are let on long leases (circa 80 years), and both are occupied.

The Highways Agency owns 428 residential properties of which 325 are occupied.

103 have been empty for more than six months.

Of these 103:

Six currently are being marketed to let.

Four properties are awaiting demolition.

34 are vacant in the disposal process.

Two properties are un-lettable because they are inaccessible due to road construction works.

44 are vacant awaiting repair. 26 of these are in an improvement programme for this financial year and will be available to let by 31 March 2010. The remaining 18 will be considered for improvement in 2010-11.

13 properties are beyond economic repair.
**Departmental Conferences**

**Mr. Graham Stuart:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside his Department’s building attended by civil servants in his Department there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each.

**Chris Mole:** The Department for Transport can only provide the detail of away days and conferences held outside the Department’s building attended by civil servants since 2005 by incurring disproportionate costs.

**Departmental Manpower**

**Mr. Blunt:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many staff of his Department were in its redeployment pool on 1 (a) January, (b) April, (c) July and (d) October 2009.

**Chris Mole:** The Central Department and its Agencies recorded the following number of individuals in our respective redeployment pools in each of (a) January, (b) April, (c) July and (d) October 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invalid Vehicles: Driving Offences**

**Jeff Ennis:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to introduce a new offence of riding a mobility scooter in a dangerous way.

**Mr. Khan:** We have no plans to introduce a new offence of riding a mobility scooter in a dangerous way.

An offence under paragraph 35 of the Offences Against the Persons Act 1861—“Drivers of carriages injuring persons by furious driving”—already exists in law.

We are aware that the use of powered mobility vehicles is growing. In view of this we are now expecting to consult on issues such as compulsory insurance and training, a more comprehensive registration scheme and on the design and safety standards of mobility vehicles. Our aim will continue to be to balance the mobility needs of scooter users with the safety needs of pedestrians and other road users.

**M20: Lorries**

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what the cost was of the moveable concrete barrier on the M20, pursuant to Operation Stack, how many times it has been deployed; and what assessment he has made of its effectiveness.

**Chris Mole:** The installation cost of the moveable concrete barrier on the M20 pursuant to Operation Stack was £6,848,084.

The moveable barrier has been used three times since its introduction in September 2008. The first time was for a period of 10 weeks following the Channel Tunnel fire closure in late 2008. The moveable barrier has been assessed as being highly effective in achieving the safe but rapid implementation of Operation Stack Phase 1 on the M20, so avoiding widespread travel disruption in Kent.

**M4**

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport whether any section of the M4 in the London Borough of Hillingdon would fall within a public safety zone under the terms of his Department’s Public Safety Zone policy as set out in circular 1/2002 on Control of Developments in Airport Public Safety Zones if a third runway is constructed at Heathrow Airport.

**Paul Clark:** The Department for Transport (DfT) only establishes Public Safety Zones (PSZs) for existing airport runways. For proposed new runways it would be a matter for the airport operator—BAA in the case of Heathrow—to produce draft Public Safety Zone contours as part of any future planning application. DfT Circular 1/2002 on “Control of Developments in Airport Public Safety Zones” sets out the PSZ policy in relation to transport infrastructure at paragraph 19.

**M5: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what works are being undertaken between junctions 13 and 11 of the M5; when the work is expected to be completed; what the estimated cost of their work is; and which contractors have been commissioned to complete it.

**Chris Mole [holding answer 16 December 2009]:** The following works are being undertaken between junctions 13 and 11 of the M5—installation of Variable Message Signs which are due for completion by the end of March 2010. The work is being undertaken by Balfour Beatty Mott MacDonald at a cost of £3.275 million.

To take advantage of the traffic management arrangements for these works, new barriers at Naas Lane and Harefield Lane between junctions 11a and 12 are also being installed by the same contractor to protect bridge piers from collision damage at a cost of £1.5 million.

**National Cycle Plan**

**Andrew Stunell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport when he plans to publish the National Cycle Plan; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Khan:** We will publish with Department of Health a joint Active Travel Strategy and National Cycle Plan in the new year.

**Roads: Accidents**

**Andrew Stunell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what recent representations he has received on amending the civil law on accident liability by any driver of a moving motorised vehicle in collision with a cyclist; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Clark:** No recent representations have been received suggesting reform of the civil law on accident liability on this issue.
Seat Belts

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what recent steps his Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to publicise the dangers to motorists of slipping a seat belt shoulder strap under their arm whilst driving; and if he will make a statement. [308228]

Paul Clark: The Department’s leaflet ‘Seat Belts and Child Restraints’ explains that the diagonal strap should lie across the chest and away from the neck. The leaflet is available online at: www.dft.gov.uk/think

There are no plans for further specific publicity to tell motorists how to use seat belts, although the Department will continue to emphasise the importance of wearing them in its safety campaigns and information.

Thames Crossing

Bob Spink: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport if he will visit Castle Point constituency to assess the potential impact on the local environment of a new £4 billion Thames Crossing as proposed by Metrotidal; and if he will make a statement. [307990]

Chris Mole: The Department for Transport announced in April 2009, its intention to investigate further, three potential options for possible new additional crossing capacity in the Lower Thames area.

In reaching its decision, links between the provision of additional crossing capacity and a possible new Thames Barrier were considered inappropriate, given the prospective timescales for the need for a new Thames Barrier.

In promoting their initiative, it is for Metrotidal to set out their assessment of the potential local environmental impacts of their proposals.

Thames Estuary

Bob Spink: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what progress has been made on the dredge in the Thames estuary for the London Gateway Port channel; what safeguards against disturbances of munitions in the SS Richard Montgomery have been put in place; what recent discussions have been held with Dubai World Ports on the financing of the work; and if he will make a statement. [307991]

Paul Clark: Progress with the dredge of the London Gateway Port channel is a matter for the port developer, London Gateway Port Ltd., subject to the relevant statutory consents. Standard dredging practice in the Thames estuary covers matters such as handling the incidental lifting of munitions left on the sea bed. I am advised that magnetometer surveys have been conducted in order to provide the best advance information. The exclusion zone for the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery lies over 2 km from the southern edge of the proposed port access channel.

Financing of the work is also a matter for the port developer.

Transport: Carbon Emissions

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) if he will estimate the level of carbon emissions from (a) rail and (b) road haulage in each year since 1990 (i) per mile and (ii) in total; [306968]

(2) if he will estimate the amount of carbon emissions from rail haulage in each year since 1990 (a) per mile and (b) in total. [306969]

Paul Clark: The following tables are based on data from the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory and Great Britain and Northern Ireland traffic censuses. It summarises carbon dioxide emissions of diesel rail haulage and heavy goods vehicles for the years requested. The tables exclude carbon dioxide emission figures for electric rail haulage and per kilometre for diesel rail haulage which are not available in the form requested.

UK national emission estimates are updated annually and any developments in methodology are applied retrospectively to earlier years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Diesel rail freight</th>
<th>HGVs</th>
<th>HGVs Kt of CO₂/billion km</th>
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<td>23,268</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>23,494</td>
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</table>

Source: AEA Energy and Environment.

CABINET OFFICE

10 Downing Street: Lost Property

Grant Shapps: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many (a) laptop computers, (b) mobile telephones, (c) items of office furniture and (d) works of art have been (i) lost by and (ii) stolen from No. 10 Downing Street in each of the last three years; whether her Department has made an insurance claim in respect of each such item; and what the estimated value of each such item was. [302933]

Angela E. Smith: The Prime Minister’s Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office.
For information for the period 2004 to 2008, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Paul Holmes) on 12 March 2009, *Official Report*, column 717W.

Figures for 2009 are not yet available.

As has been the practice under successive administrations, the Cabinet Office, in common with other Government Departments, 'self insures'.

**Breast Cancer**


**Angela E. Smith**: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

[Letter from Jil Matheson, dated December 2009:


The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer (incidence) are for the year 2007. Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of people diagnosed with cancer, because one person may be diagnosed with more than one cancer.

Table 1 provides the numbers of newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer for each year from 1997 to 2007 for (a) County of Herefordshire unitary authority, (b) Shropshire unitary authority, (c) Telford and Wrekin unitary authority, (d) Cannock Chase district, (e) East Staffordshire district, (f) Lichfield district, (g) Newcastle-under-Lyme district, (h) South Staffordshire district, (i) Stafford district, (j) Staffordshire county, (k) Staffordshire Moorlands district, (l) Stoke-on-Trent unitary authority, (m) Tamworth district, (n) North Warwickshire district, (o) Nuneaton and Bedworth district, (p) Rugby district, (q) Stratford-on-Avon district, (r) Warwick district, (s) Warwickshire county, (t) Birmingham metropolitan district, (u) Coventry metropolitan district, (v) Dudley metropolitan district, (w) Sandwell metropolitan district, (x) Solihull metropolitan district, (y) Wolverhampton metropolitan district, (aa) Bromsgrove district, (bb) Malvern Hills district, (cc) Redditch district, (dd) Worcester district, (ee) Worcestershire county, (ff) Wyre Forest district and (gg) Wyre Forest district.

**Table 1: Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer, persons, counties and local authorities, 1997 to 2007**

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<tr>
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<td>107</td>
<td>103</td>
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</table>

Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Jil Matheson, dated December 2009:


The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer (incidence) are for the year 2007. Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of people diagnosed with cancer, because one person may be diagnosed with more than one cancer.

Table 1: Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer1, persons2, counties and local authorities3,1997 to 20074

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<td>101</td>
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</table>

1 Breast cancer is coded as C50 in the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10).
2 Around 99 per cent. of breast cancers cases are in women.
3 Based on boundaries as of 2009.
4 Newly diagnosed cases registered in each calendar year.
99W

Written Answers

Written Answers

5 JANUARY 2010

100W

Table 1: Registrations of newly diagnosed eases of breast cancer1, persons2, parliamentary constituencies3, 1997 to 20074
Persons
1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Aldridge-Brownhills

43

61

60

56

79

66

51

83

85

51

87

Birmingham Edgbaston

79

47

69

66

56

64

70

48

57

69

79

Birmingham Erdington

59

74

53

63

60

55

71

53

59

87

41

Birmingham Hall Green

55

65

51

56

71

53

63

77

46

53

77

Birmingham Hodge Hill

49

60

52

41

54

43

34

41

61

52

50

Birmingham Ladywood

30

33

36

43

34

33

35

26

34

35

40

Birmingham Northfield

50

41

59

52

37

59

51

44

65

41

39

Birmingham Perry Barr

54

46

63

59

51

48

48

58

62

64

53

Birmingham Selly Oak

59

62

59

65

57

57

79

53

69

55

54

Birmingham Sparkbrook
and Small Heath

38

62

48

38

40

42

46

53

37

36

52

Birmingham Yardley

48

67

43

52

48

52

48

60

53

53

47

Bromsgrove

70

75

58

78

81

65

84

67

67

101

75

Burton

79

55

53

73

32

63

81

55

94

92

66

Cannock Chase

54

56

56

79

58

69

81

52

87

89

69

Coventry North East

58

61

60

48

60

54

63

82

56

51

66

Coventry North West

79

70

74

87

56

80

79

52

67

57

65

Coventry South

72

60

48

48

63

78

48

71

76

61

76

Dudley North

66

70

66

67

75

89

63

89

73

61

89

Dudley South

61

61

57

64

62

60

77

76

61

74

71

Halesowen and Rowley Regis

61

73

62

71

59

78

65

55

64

66

59

Hereford

83

83

66

85

64

74

89

91

76

89

92

Leominster

81

58

72

63

66

75

90

89

90

93

95

Lichfield

50

60

67

73

55

71

63

42

120

82

85

Ludlow

64

73

68

94

75

59

82

81

71

63

102

Meriden

57

76

90

74

79

90

87

84

93

77

72

Newcastle-under-Lyme

59

58

66

66

62

81

61

64

96

63

78

Nuneaton

57

56

54

62

56

96

88

51

82

74

62

Redditch

55

51

52

49

68

69

42

72

63

45

70

Rugby and Kenilworth

71

96

83

69

83

94

65

87

100

65

102
94

Shrewsbury and Atcham

55

69

92

84

85

97

68

79

80

81

North Shropshire

75

59

69

80

79

73

91

83

74

113

74

Solihull

72

102

109

81

87

102

86

114

91

101

93

Stafford

57

57

57

64

82

71

66

68

117

68

74

Staffordshire Moorlands

75

50

54

49

63

66

78

57

71

65

49

South Staffordshire

60

64

55

57

88

60

75

98

98

94

105

Stoke-on-Trent Central

53

62

41

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44

46

66

64

38

60

54

Stoke-on-Trent North

46

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54

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54

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Stoke-on-Trent South

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73

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62

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51

92

Stone

82

59

73

82

60

84

97

55

95

101

53

Stourbridge

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49

65

56

69

66

73

65

76

65

69

Stratford-on-Avon

95

77

79

88

77

103

115

76

121

98

96

Sutton Coldfield

77

80

90

80

93

79

67

78

92

69

103

Tamworth

47

51

48

63

88

58

47

93

68

73

103

Telford

31

48

50

54

43

52

41

36

67

52

56

The Wrekin

44

47

76

64

49

63

73

72

70

82

63

Walsall North

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53

53

60

60

65

72

73

76

73

57

Walsall South

48

52

52

56

67

46

63

64

47

67

52

Warley

39

72

48

62

51

45

55

45

47

52

50

Warwick and Leamington

86

78

70

73

99

75

103

99

74

94

89

North Warwickshire

57

67

68

63

61

74

81

90

66

59

77

West Bromwich East

43

48

54

46

49

57

48

36

67

47

58

West Bromwich West

47

64

62

66

69

41

54

53

62

69

65

Wolverhampton North East

52

50

55

53

50

47

70

65

64

65

61

Wolverhampton South East

31

31

49

53

40

43

57

39

48

59

42

Wolverhampton South West

51

67

58

62

72

72

58

77

44

85

85

Worcester

64

50

78

62

73

66

73

57

78

65

73

Mid Worcestershire

79

66

72

52

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64

68

126

80

75

109

West Worcestershire

69

73

74

81

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67

71

78

88

88

64

Wyre Forest

78

78

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69

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94

106


Central Office of Information: Conferences

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Central Office of Information’s (COI) buildings attended by civil servants in the COI there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307464]

Angela E. Smith: I have asked the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mark Lund, dated 11 December 2009:

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question [307464] on conferences that took place outside COI and attended by COI civil servants.

The Central Office of Information (COI) does not hold a central record of away days held outside of COI buildings and attended by civil servants from COI.

COI does hold records of conferences centrally but does not differentiate between attendance by civil servants from COI or those in the wider civil service.

Central Office of Information: Public Relations

Robert Neill: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 3 November 2009, Official Report, columns 886-87W, on public relations (1) what the topic was of each contract awarded to the five firms; and at which diverse audience each was aimed; [308512]

(2) whether Travellers are classed as a culturally diverse audience for the purpose of the Framework Agreement; and at which culturally diverse audiences the marketing will be aimed. [308526]

Angela E. Smith: I have asked the chief executive on the Central Office of Information to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mark Lund, dated 23 December 2009:

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question (308512) on conferences that took place outside COI and attended by COI civil servants.

Framework Agreement 2007/S 156-1948 relates to the Marketing Agreement; and at which culturally diverse audiences the marketing will be aimed. [308526]

Charities: Asylum

Dr. Cable: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what support her Department provides to charities working with destitute asylum seekers. [308755]

Angela E. Smith: The Cabinet Office does not hold information on support for charities working specifically with destitute asylum seekers. A number of programmes from the Office of the Third Sector are benefiting organisations working with asylum seekers which may include destitute asylum seekers. Examples of this are Grassroots Grants which provides small grants for organisations working with individuals and communities and the Community Assets Programme which funds the transfer and renovation of unused public sector property to the third sector.

Charity Commission: Political Activities

Mr. Tyrie: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer of 19 October 2009, Official Report, column 1290W, on the Charity Commission, for what reason the declaration of membership of (a) the Labour Party and (b) the Christian Socialist Movement made by the Chair of the Charity Commission on the Commission’s website is not reflected in the declaration of political activity required by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments which she made in July 2009; and if she will make a statement. [308725]

Angela E. Smith: The re-appointment of the Chair of the Charity Commission was undertaken in compliance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments’ “Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies (August 2005)”. The political activity questionnaire, which should be completed as part of the re-appointment process, asks for information about political activities and does not ask for personal information about voting preferences or membership of political parties.

Death: Cancer

Mr. Hendrick: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the mortality rate from cancer was in (a) 1997 and (b) the latest period for which figures are available. [308861]
Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Jil Matheson, dated December 2009:

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking what the mortality rate from cancer was in (a) 1997 and (b) the latest period for which figures are available.

The table attached provides the age-standardised mortality rate, where cancer was the underlying cause of death, for England and Wales, in (a) 1997 and (b) 2008 (the latest year available).

Table 1. Age-standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population,1, 2 where cancer was the underlying cause of death,3 England and Wales,4 1997 and 20085—rate per 100,000 population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>95 per cent. confidence interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>(195-197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>(172-174)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.

2 Confidence intervals are a measure of the statistical precision of an estimate and show the range of uncertainty around the estimated figure. Calculations based on small numbers of events are often subject to random fluctuations. As a general rule, if the confidence interval around one figure overlaps with the interval around another, we cannot say with certainty that there is more than a chance difference between the two figures.

3 Cause of death for cancer was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision (ICD-9) codes 140-208 for 1997 and Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes C00-C97 for 2008.

4 Figures for England and Wales include deaths of non-residents.

5 Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

Departmental Art Works

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much her Department spent on art works in the last 12 months.

Angela E. Smith: No expenditure has been incurred on art works in the last 12 months.

Departmental Conferences

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much was spent by her Department and its agency on conferences they organised which were subsequently cancelled in each of the last three years; and what the title was of each such conference.

Angela E. Smith: The information requested is not centrally held and is therefore available only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Marketing

Mr. Hurd: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the advertising, marketing and publicity budget is of (a) Real Help Now and (b) Building Britain’s Future campaign in 2009-10.

Angela E. Smith: Both Real Help Now and Building Britain’s Future are cross-government campaigns. There is no specific advertising, marketing and publicity budget held within Cabinet Office for either Real Help Now or Building Britain’s Future (BBF).

Costs associated with Real Help Now and BBF for which Cabinet Office is liable have been met from the over-arching departmental communications budget.

To date, £112,282.50 of this budget has been committed to BBF activity and Cabinet Office has spent £105,704 (excluding VAT) on publicity and marketing for the Real Help Now campaign.

Departmental Pay

Kate Hoey: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many officials in her Department have received allowances to buy a second home in London in each of the last five years.

Angela E. Smith: No officials in the Cabinet Office have received an allowance to buy a second home in the last five years.

Departmental Plants

Grant Shapps: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much No. 10 Downing Street spent on (a) cut flowers and (b) pot plants in 2008-09.

Angela E. Smith: The information requested is not readily available and is therefore available only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Sick Leave

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many days sickness absence were taken by staff in her Department and its agency in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what the cost to her Department was of such absence.

Angela E. Smith: The Cabinet Office publishes reports on levels of sickness absence on a quarterly basis. These reports can be accessed at this website:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/absence.aspx

Copies of the previous four quarterly reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

Data on the total cost of individual staff absences could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Written Questions

John Mason: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many questions tabled for answer on a named day her Department received in each of the last 12 months; and to how many such questions her Department provided a substantive answer on the day named.

Tessa Jowell: 274 named day questions were tabled to Cabinet Office for the period 1 December 2008 to 30 November 2009. Of these 175 received substantive answers on the day named.

Tessa Jowell: 252 named day questions were tabled to Cabinet Office for the session 2008-09. Of these 157 received substantive answers on the day.
Flood Control

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office when she expects the National Hazards Team to conclude its review of critical infrastructure at risk from future floods; whether (a) public and (b) private (i) reservoir and (ii) dam safety will be included in that audit; and if she will make a statement. [306332]

Angela E. Smith: The revised Emergency Response and Recovery Guidance was published in August 2009 on the Cabinet Office website at:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/response.aspx

Floods

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office when she expects the Natural Hazards Team to conclude its review of critical infrastructure and to coordinate the development of Sector Resilience Plans by the lead Government Department for each sector of national infrastructure, to ensure essential services are restored as quickly as possible; the Natural Hazards Team will be available to advise, if required.

Ms Butler: The Natural Hazards Team in the Cabinet Office is developing a programme to improve the resilience of critical infrastructure and essential services to severe disruption from natural hazards. The Natural Hazards Team is co-ordinating the development of Sector Resilience Plans by the lead Government Department for each sector of national infrastructure. These plans are expected to set out the risks from flooding to the most critical sites (i.e. critical national infrastructure) in each infrastructure sector, and a programme of measures that is necessary to improve resilience. These initial sector resilience plans will include public and private reservoirs where the sites are deemed to be critical national infrastructure.

The Natural Hazards Team will conclude its review of critical infrastructure and risks from natural hazards with the publication of a National Resilience Plan in late 2010. This plan will set out the Government's policy and standards for the resilience of critical infrastructure. It will be based upon the evidence submitted in Sector Resilience Plans and the responses to the current consultation on the draft Strategic Framework and Policy Statement on Improving the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure to Disruption from Natural Hazards.

Following Sir Michael Pitt's recommendation 58, the draft Floods and Water Management Bill will include provisions relating to dam and reservoir safety.

Floods: Cumbria

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what role the National Hazards Team will play in recovery from the recent floods in Cumbria. [302142]

Ms Butler: The main role of the Natural Hazards Team within the Cabinet Office is to develop a programme to improve the resilience of critical infrastructure and essential services to severe disruption from natural hazards.

Members of the team shared information on critical national infrastructure at risk of flooding with regional and local responders at the onset of the recent flood emergency in Cumbria. Within Government, the Department for Communities and Local Government is leading on the recovery from the floods including, in conjunction with the lead Government Departments for each sector of national infrastructure, to ensure essential services are restored as quickly as possible; the Natural Hazards Team will be available to advise, if required.

Government Departments: Computer Software

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what proportion of (a) her Department's and (b) other Government departments' software was open source software (i) in February 2009 (ii) at the latest date for which information is available. [307323]

Angela E. Smith: Information on the current and future use of open source software in my Department and in other Government Departments is not held centrally and can be collected only at disproportionate cost.

The Cabinet Office follows the Government’s Open Source Software (OSS) Policy (the most recent version was published in February 2009), which requires that Government consider OSS solutions alongside proprietary ones in IT procurements, and award contracts on a value for money basis. They do not therefore have plans in place to raise the level of OSS use, but rather will make software procurement decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Government Departments: Security

Chris Huhne: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many different intrusion detection systems operate across Government departments in guarding against computer hacking. [307920]

Angela E. Smith: It would not be in the interest of the UK’s national security for Departments to give information on the specific systems used to protect their networks.

The Security Policy Framework requires that Departments have effective information security policies and procedures in place including preventing unauthorised access to ICT systems. The Data Handling Report published in June 2008 requires that Departments conduct independent penetration testing of their systems to protect against hacking and other forms of malicious attack.

Hakluyt

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer of 5 November 2009, Official Report, column 1228W, on Hakluyt, if she will publish the submission to the Minister of State setting out (a) the (i) reasons and (ii) justifications for not providing the information requested in question 296746 and (b) the estimated cost of providing the information requested, as required in accordance with section 7.28 of the Cabinet Office's Guide to Parliamentary Work. [302818]

Angela E. Smith: Officials’ advice to Ministers is not normally disclosed. The previous question (296746) was responded to as disproportionate costs because the information requested is not held centrally. To obtain
the information would have required contacting each management unit and then each management unit manually interrogating their records. This interrogation would have exceeded the disproportionate cost threshold of £750.

Intelligence Services: Finance

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to her Department’s press release of 10 October 2007, what the outcome was of the most recent review of the Single Security and Intelligence Budget; and if she will make a statement. [304021]

Angela E. Smith: Information relating to the proceedings of Cabinet and Cabinet Committees, covering the Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development, including the number of meetings held and topics discussed, is generally not disclosed as to do so could harm the frankness and candour of internal discussion.

The Security and Intelligence Agencies represents the largest component of the Single Security and Intelligence Budget. It has been the policy of successive Governments not to reveal details of the Security and Intelligence Agencies’ spending, beyond what is already published.

National School of Government: Valuation Office

Robert Neill: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what courses representatives of the Valuation Office Agency attended at the National School of Government in (a) 2006-07, (b) 2007-08 and (c) 2008-09. [308708]

Angela E. Smith: This is a matter for the National School of Government. I have asked the Principal and Chief Executive to assist by writing to you.

Letter from Rod Clark, dated December 2009:

In the Written Ministerial Statement to the House on 9 January 2007 (Official Report Col 5WS), the then Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office (Pat McFadden MP) announced that the National School of Government was now a Non Ministerial Department. Consequently, the Minister for the Cabinet Office has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about the National School of Government.

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has sent staff on a number of events at the National School of Government. A copy of the table which sets out the events will be placed in the House Library.

Pay

John Battle: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if she will establish a commission to inquire into high pay; and if she will make a statement. [307439]

Mr. Byrne: I have been asked to reply.

Pre-Budget report 2009 announced a set of fundamental reforms for pay-setting of senior public sector staff focusing on:

- New scrutiny of pay levels above £150,000 and bonuses above £50,000
- New requirements to publish salaries of senior public sector staff to increase transparency and accountability

The Prime Minister will ask Bill Cockburn as chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body to lead a review of senior pay across the public sector, reporting by Budget 2010.

Public Expenditure

Lyne Jones: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many civil servants earned over £150,000 in the last 12 months; and what the total monetary value was of the budgets of (a) central government departments, (b) agencies and non-departmental public bodies and (c) local government. [307617]

Angela E. Smith: The information requested in relation to the number of civil servants earning over £150,000 falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

The information requested in relation to budgets of (a) central government departments, (b) agencies and non-departmental public bodies and (c) local government is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Letter from Jil Matheson, dated December 2009:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning how many civil servants earned over £150,000 in the last 12 months; what the total monetary value was of the budgets of (a) central government departments, (b) agencies and non-departmental public bodies and (c) local government. (307617)

The Office for National Statistics collects the annual salaries of civil servants, as part of the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES). At 31 March 2008, 100 civil servants earned over £150,000.

Information requested with respect to the total monetary value of the budgets of (a) central government departments, (b) agencies and non departmental public bodies and (c) local government is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and not the Office for National Statistics.

UK Statistics Authority: Hotels

Anne Main: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much the UK Statistics Authority has spent on hotel accommodation for its staff in each of the last five years. [305705]

Angela E. Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Jil Matheson, dated 16 December 2009:

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning how much the UK Statistics Authority has spent on hotel accommodation for its staff in each of the last five years. 305705

The information requested in relation to the number of civil servants earning over £150,000 falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority.

Information requested in relation to budgets of (a) central government departments, (b) agencies and non-departmental public bodies and (c) local government is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and not the Office for National Statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main supplier</th>
<th>Other suppliers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UK Statistics Authority: Internet

**David T.C. Davies:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what redesigns of websites operated by the UK Statistics Authority have been carried out since 27 June 2007; and what the (a) cost to the public purse and (b) date of completion of each such redesign was. [306205]

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Jil Matheson, dated December 2009:*

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question requesting to list the redesigns of websites operated by the UK Statistics Authority since 27 June 2007; and what the (a) cost to the public purse and (b) date of completion of each such redesign was. (306205)

The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 lead to the creation, on 1 April 2008, of the UK Statistics Authority, of which the Office for National Statistics is the Executive Office. On the same date, the Authority launched a new Publication Hub which provides a single portal to new National Statistics releases. This was part of a wider programme of web delivery activities undertaken by ONS, including work to redesign the ONS website and supporting back office processes. The cost of this wider programme, incurred up to financial year-end 2008-09, was £4.643m.

Ongoing enhancements and redesign of elements of the Publication Hub have been undertaken by ONS on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority, as part of a wider Web Programme. This resulted in an enhanced version on 27 July 2009. The costs associated with this amount to £218,000.

WORK AND PENSIONS

**Carers’ Benefits**

**Mr. Harper:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when her Department first determined that there would be no cash losers from the implementation of reforms proposed in the Green Paper, Shaping the future of care together; and if she will make a statement. [307202]

**Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 14 December 2009]:**

As we said in the Green Paper, if we reform disability benefits, anyone receiving an affected benefit at the time of reform would continue to receive the equivalent level of support and protection—thereby not experiencing a cash loss as a result of the reforms.

**Children: Maintenance**

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will review her Department’s policy of excluding councillors’ allowances from earnings in the calculation of child maintenance liabilities; and if she will make a statement. [303773]

**Helen Goodman:** We are still considering how allowances will be treated in the future scheme, currently planned for introduction in 2011. Maintenance calculations will be largely based on gross income information, received directly from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs. Future scheme regulations to be laid before Parliament between late 2010 and early 2011 will include definitions of the income to be taken into account. These regulations will of course be subject to public consultation.

There are no plans to review this policy in respect of the current statutory child maintenance scheme.

Council Tax

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of households were in receipt of a 100 per cent. council tax reduction on the latest date for which figures are available. [308704]

**Helen Goodman:** The estimated number of people receiving 100 per cent. council tax benefit is 4.3 million, constituting 17.1 per cent. of households in Great Britain.

Notes:
1. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.
2. The caseload figure is rounded to the nearest one hundred thousand.


Departmental Billing

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of invoices submitted to her Department have been paid within 10 days in each month since October 2008; and if she will make a statement. [307970]

**Jim Knight:** DWP began collecting 10-day payment performance information from November 2008. DWP 10-day payment performance, by volume and as a percentage of all payments made for all of its suppliers, from November 2008 to the present date is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Volume of invoices</th>
<th>Percentage paid within 10 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>44,457</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>45,505</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>43,915</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>58,281</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>61,768</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>50,393</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>46,448</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>63,855</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>67,597</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>59,798</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>66,170</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>80,344</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>90,070</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Internet

**David T.C. Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what redesigns of websites operated by (a) her Department and (b) its Agencies have taken place since 27 June 2007; and what the (i) cost to the public purse and (ii) date of completion of each such redesign was. [306157]

**Jim Knight:** Since 27 June 2007 the following websites operated by this Department or its Agencies have been redesigned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Table of websites redesigned]
Departmental Theft

Grant Shapps: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many officials of (a) her Department and (b) its agencies have (i) been reprimanded, (ii) had their contract of employment terminated and (iii) been prosecuted for theft of departmental property in each of the last three years; and what items were stolen in each case. [300967]

Jim Knight: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) records the numbers of staff disciplined for theft under the general heading of fraud, theft and loss of DWP funds. To extract more detailed information from individual records under this category could be done only at disproportionate cost.

The number of people disciplined for fraud, theft and loss to DWP funds in each of the last three years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Pensions, Disability and Carers Service</th>
<th>DWP total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child Support Agency</td>
<td>Corporate Shared Services</td>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information on how many officials have been prosecuted for theft of departmental property in each of the last three years, and what items were stolen in each case, is not available in the exact format requested; such information as is available is set out in the following table which shows the number of staff convicted in the last three years for theft of cash, consumables or instruments of payment that were subsequently cashed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items stolen</th>
<th>Number of staff convicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2006 to March 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girocheques</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2007 to March 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girocheques</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-paid envelopes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2008 to March 2009</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Translation Services

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much was spent by her Department on providing translation services for its customers in each of the last 12 years. [304380]

Jim Knight: The DWP provides a range of language translation services for customers across Great Britain (as Northern Ireland is excluded), namely:

1. Face to Face
2. Telephone.
3. Translating by a range of services which includes the translation of departmental information leaflets and other documents that are provided to customers in a range of ethnic languages, audio and Braille, as well as all publications for Welsh speaking customers living in Wales.
4. We are also able to offer an ad hoc service to convert documents into Easy Read format.

The contractual arrangements for the services have been developed over a number of years and as a result spend has not been applicable for some of these services in each of the last five years or data have not been able to be gathered for spend during some years. Disproportionate cost would be incurred in trying to identify such spend.

We are also unable to provide data prior to 2003-04 as data were not held centrally prior to then.

The range of services also includes the translation of departmental information leaflets that are provided to customers into a range of ethnic languages, as well as all publications for Welsh speaking customers.

NDPB’s have access to our frameworks but we do not hold centrally any data relating to their specific spend, if any, via these services. To ascertain this would incur disproportionate cost.

The information requested is given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face to face and telephone</td>
<td>2,643,448</td>
<td>2,967,756</td>
<td>3,443,334</td>
<td>4,496,008</td>
<td>3,515,722</td>
<td>3,761,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic document translation</td>
<td>1/n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>120,720</td>
<td>267,500</td>
<td>134,945</td>
<td>3459,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>24,973</td>
<td>30,855</td>
<td>20,766</td>
<td>50,759</td>
<td>65,789</td>
<td>66,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>45,309</td>
<td>59,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>35,572</td>
<td>33,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Read</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2,668,421</td>
<td>2,998,611</td>
<td>3,584,820</td>
<td>4,814,267</td>
<td>3,797,337</td>
<td>4,380,993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Not available without incurring disproportionate cost as data not held centrally or are combined within other category data and not possible to separate.
2 This figure includes all translation spend for the International Pensions Centre (IPC) which previously was not held centrally—total £381,370.59 for 2008-09.
Employment and Support Allowance

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what her Department’s policy is on referring to an independent advocate those persons in need of support when applying for employment and support allowance.

Jim Knight: I refer the hon. Friend to the written answer I gave to the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Sanders) on 2 November 2009, Official Report, column 724W.

Employment and Support Allowance: Medical Examinations

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many appeals against an original outcome of a work capability assessment have been upheld to date.

Jonathan Shaw: The most recent data published on appeal outcomes following a Work Capability Assessment was published in October 2009 and is provided as follows:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_arc.asp

Work Capability Assessment appeals heard on ‘Fit for Work’ decisions—data to end of August 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeals heard</td>
<td>4,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWP decision upheld</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision in favour of appellant</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Includes clerical assessments, we can infer that an appeal that links to a clerical assessment was very likely to be against a ‘fit for work’ decision.
2. Due to the time it takes for appeals to be submitted to Tribunal Service and heard, a very limited volume of appeals heard data is held currently. Volumes will increase in the coming months as more appeals are processed giving a more robust picture of appeal volumes and outcomes.

Employment Schemes: Tourettes Syndrome

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what provision is made in the training of disability employment advisers to enable them to recognise and support people with Tourette syndrome seeking employment; and if she will make a statement.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 15 December 2009]: The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, Darra Singh. I have asked him to provide the hon. Member with the information requested.

Letter from Darra Singh:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question concerning what provision is made in the training of disability employment advisers to enable them to recognise and support people with Tourette syndrome seeking employment. This is something that falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) are not specifically trained to recognise customers with Tourette Syndrome, however they are equipped to identify and either deal with or signpost customers to specialist help to address a diverse range of circumstances. Jobcentre Plus policy is to develop its people with the skills required to support a range of customers and to respect their individual needs.

The learning programme for Jobcentre Plus DEAs focuses on customers requiring more extensive support regarding their personal circumstances and the challenges they may have in their ability to look for and move into sustainable employment.

Equality 2025

Mr. Harper: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent discussions (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have had with representatives of Equality 2025; and if she will make a statement.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 30 November 2009]: Equality 2025 is an advisory non-departmental public body established in response to a recommendation in the 2005 report by the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit “Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People”. It is sponsored by (but is not part of) the Office for Disability Issues, part of the Department for Work and Pensions.

I meet with the chair and deputy chair of Equality 2025 which meet on a quarterly basis; the most recent meeting took place on 30 November. In addition, the chair and some members of Equality 2025 recently accompanied me to a number of events around the country. I also attended, and spoke at, Equality 2025’s Annual Public Meeting in October 2009.

Meetings take place between Equality 2025 members and officials within the Office for Disability Issues and the Department for Work and Pensions on a range of matters, such as the UN Convention on Disability Rights, the Independent Living Strategy, the Hate Crime Strategy, the Equality Bill, and communication strategies. Equality 2025 members are also members of the ad hoc advisory groups supporting the Independent Living Strategy and Right to Control project.

As a cross-government group, Equality 2025 also meets with Ministers and officials beyond DWP. The chair has a standing invitation to the Life Chances ministerial group which I chair and is attended by Ministers from each ‘Life Chances’ department. The group meets quarterly. Equality 2025 members also have bi-lateral discussions with officials across Government in support of the Equality 2025 Workplan and in response to requests for advice from Government Departments.

More formally, the Minister for Disability issues and I have recently been reviewing the work of Equality 2025 and its achievements over the last three years. With the agreement of Equality 2025, we are now taking the opportunity to further develop its strategic role as an ‘expert group’ and to streamline its size. Instead of running regional engagement events to find out disabled people’s views, the group will build strong links with key disability organisations, umbrella groups and others across the United Kingdom. This will enable them to acquire a more representative picture of disabled people’s views.

Future Jobs Fund

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress has been made towards the target of 10,000 Future Jobs Fund jobs being green jobs.
Jim Knight: One fifth of all jobs created by rounds two and three of the Future Jobs Fund are green jobs. The information is not yet available for other rounds.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress has been made towards the target of 15,000 Future Jobs Fund jobs created by social enterprises. [304396]

Jim Knight: We know that just over a sixth of all jobs created by rounds two and three of the Future Jobs Fund are in social enterprises. This information is not yet available for other rounds.

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions by what mechanism the quality of Future Jobs Fund bids was assessed. [305106]

Jim Knight: The quality of Future Jobs Fund bids is assessed in four stages: initially against minimum criteria, followed by a regional assessment against six qualitative criteria. The scores are then moderated by a panel including a trade union representative, before being agreed by the Regional Minister (or Secretary of State in Scotland and Wales). Finally, each bid’s score is quality-checked by the central team, who moderate the scores across regions to a set of recommendations. A Central Assessment Panel consisting of officials from the Department for Work and Pensions (Project team, Finance and Commercial), Jobcentre Plus, HM Treasury, the Department of Communities and Local Government, Wales Office and Scotland Office then review the bids and make their recommendations to departmental Ministers.

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what procedure her Department has established to monitor and record the number of weeks a young person remains in a job created under the Future Jobs Fund; and if she will make a statement. [306357]

Jim Knight: To monitor length of time spent on Future Jobs Fund we will be using data returned monthly by employers on start and end dates for each customer referred to them.

Health and Safety Executive: Public Relations

Mr. Hurd: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what payments the Health and Safety Executive has made to (a) Weber Shandwick and (b) Mandate Communications/AS Biss in the last 12 months for which figures are available; for what purpose; and if she will place in the Library a copy of the contracts under which such payments have been made. [305147]

Jonathan Shaw: HSE has retained Weber Shandwick on a number of projects over the last 12 months. Across those projects, Weber Shandwick has provided the services of: public relations support, support with key stakeholder engagement, consultation, event production and national media support across Scotland, England and Wales. Those projects were:

- HSE strategy consultation and launch
- Agricultural safety campaign
- Lord Gill Inquiry (ICL Plastics explosion)
- Tower Crane register consultation
- Caiman Commission

The combined cost of this work is £323,722.82. It is not appropriate to place copies of the relevant contracts in the Library of the House, for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

HSE made no payments to Mandate/AS Biss in the last 12 months.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of social tenants were receiving housing benefit on the latest date for which figures are available. [308053]

Jim Knight: 69.2 per cent. of social tenants were receiving housing benefit in Great Britain at August 2009.

Source:
Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE).

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions with reference to the answer of 2 November 2009, Official Report, column 771W, on housing benefit: travelling people, what methodology is used to calculate housing benefit for those who live in mobile homes or caravans. [308799]

Helen Goodman: Like any tenant or licensee, the rental costs of those liable to pay a social sector landlord are generally met in full, while those liable to a private sector landlord are individually referred to the rent officer.

Incapacity Benefit

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many incapacity benefit claimants there were in each year since 1997; and how many of them (a) reached retirement age, (b) died and (c) found a job in each of those years. [304394]

Jonathan Shaw: The available information on the number of incapacity benefit claimants who reached retirement age in each year since 1997 is provided in the table. Information on the number of claimants who died or found employment in each year is not available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total numbers of claimants reached retirement age</th>
<th>Total numbers of claimants who died</th>
<th>Total numbers of claimants who found employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2,837,900</td>
<td>160,240</td>
<td>17,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,784,600</td>
<td>175,400</td>
<td>17,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,744,400</td>
<td>175,200</td>
<td>17,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,728,090</td>
<td>179,900</td>
<td>17,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,795,340</td>
<td>187,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,807,620</td>
<td>192,800</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,815,660</td>
<td>195,800</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,814,710</td>
<td>201,800</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2,783,720</td>
<td>207,100</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,730,000</td>
<td>213,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2,685,320</td>
<td>218,900</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,637,560</td>
<td>224,800</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The HSE will continue to do safety at this site. HSE will continue to do any significant changes that are made to the site and to Oikos Storage Ltd’s site on Canvey Island.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 3 December 2009]:
As part of a programme for approved health care professionals (HCPs) to carry out medical assessments, the Department for Work and Pensions has produced “Update to Standard—Prescribed Disease A14 (PD A14)”, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

The Department is also in the process of producing a further distance learning guide “PD A14 Osteoarthritis of the Knee in Miners (MED-PDA14-001)”. As this guide is due for future publication, it is at the moment exempt from release. The guide will be available to interested parties upon publication.

Industrial Health and Safety: Hazardous Substances

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment the Health and Safety Executive has made of BP’s contract to lease the Oikos terminal on Canvey Island; and if she will make a statement.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 14 December 2009]:
The Health and Safety Executive has made no assessment of BP Oil UK Ltd’s contract to lease storage facilities at Oikos Storage Ltd’s site on Canvey Island.

It is not HSE’s role to assess this and will assess any significant changes that are made to the site and to the sites’ CO commercial contracts. HSE’s role is to monitor safety at this site. HSE will continue to do MAH safety report as a result of the implementation of this contract.

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what safety measures will be put in place by BP for the duration of its contract to lease the Oikos terminal on Canvey Island.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 16 December 2009]:
Oikos Storage Ltd. will remain the operator of the fuel storage facility on Canvey Island for the purposes of the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) and will have overall responsibility for safety throughout the contract with BP Oil UK Ltd. As a user of the facility to store fuel, BP Oil UK Ltd. will be obliged to co-operate with Oikos Storage to assist and enable them to meet their responsibilities as COMAH operator.

Oikos Storage Ltd. will be required under the COMAH to put in place all measures necessary to prevent major accidents and limit their consequences to persons and the environment. This will include implementing and maintaining the minimum safety and environmental standards for fuel storage sites that have been developed in response to the Major Incident Investigation Board recommendations following the explosion and fires at the Buncefield fuel storage site in December 2005, and recently published in the Process Safety Leadership Group’s (PSLG) final report. The PSLG report is available on the HSE website.

Jobseeker’s Allowance: Leeds

John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average length of time was for which claimants resident in Leeds West constituency were in receipt of jobseeker’s allowance in (a) each of the last 12 months and (b) each of the last five years.

Angela E. Smith: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply.

Letter from Jil Matheson, dated December 2009:
As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what the average length of time was for which claimants resident in Leeds West constituency were in receipt of jobseeker’s allowance in (a) each of the last 12 months and (b) each of the last five years. (306502)

The number of people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) is taken from the Jobcentre Plus administrative system. The length of a claim has been defined as the time between the start of an individual’s claim and the count date in each reference month. Table 1 shows the median length of live claims during the last 12 months for which claimants resident in Leeds West constituency were in receipt of jobseeker’s allowance in (a) each of the last 12 months and (b) each of the last five years. (306502)

Table 1: Median length of claims of jobseeker’s allowance of persons1 resident in Leeds West constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Median length of claim (months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2006</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2007</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Median length of claims of jobseeker’s allowance of persons resident in Leeds West constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of pensioner benefit units in receipt of any income related benefits</th>
<th>Percentage of pensioner benefit units in receipt of any income related benefits</th>
<th>Number of working age benefit units (with children) in receipt of any income related benefits</th>
<th>Percentage of working age benefit units (with children) in receipt of any income related benefits</th>
<th>Number of working age benefit units (without children) in receipt of any income related benefits</th>
<th>Percentage of working age benefit units (without children) in receipt of any income related benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>2,600,000</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1,900,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>2,600,000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>900,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>900,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100,000. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest per cent.
2. A benefit unit is defined as a single adult or a couple living as married and any dependent children.
3. Income-related benefits include: back-to-work bonus, extended payment of council tax benefit, extended payment of housing benefit, income support, pension credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit, rates rebate, disability working allowance, social fund grant for funeral expenses, social fund grant for maternity expenses, jobseeker’s allowance (income-based), community care grants, return to work credit, child maintenance bonus, tax credits are excluded.
4. The Family Resources Survey is a nationally representative sample of approximately 26,000 households. Since 2002-03 the FRS has covered the United Kingdom, prior to 2002-03 the FRS covered Great Britain.
5. Part of the fall in the number and percentage of working age benefit units with children in receipt of at least one income-related benefit between 1997-98 and 2001-02 may be explained by the replacement of family credit with tax credits in 1999. Tax credits are excluded from the definition of income-related benefits in these tables.
6. The Family Resources Survey is known to under-record benefit receipt so the estimates presented should be treated with caution.

Source: Jobcentre Plus Administrative System

Low Incomes: Water Charges

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the effect of levels of water charges on households in poverty.

Jim Knight: The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has not held recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the effect of levels of water charges on households in poverty. However the Department for Work and Pensions has been contributing during this year to the Independent Review of Water Charging, commissioned by Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Welsh Assembly. The review team, led by Anna Walker, published its final report on 8 December. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Means Tested Benefits

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of (a) pensioners and (b) working age adults (i) with and (ii) without children who have received (A) means-tested benefits and (B) more than 50 per cent. of their income from means-tested benefits in (1) 1979, (2) 1983, (3) 1987, (4) 1992, (5) 1997, (6) 2001, (7) 2005 and (8) the latest year for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement.

Angela Eagle: The available information is in the following tables.

Members: Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when she expects to reply to the letter of 3 November 2009 from the hon. Member for Walsall North concerning a constituent.

Jonathan Shaw [holding answer 8 December 2009]: A reply was sent to my hon. Friend on 16 December 2009.
New Deal for Lone Parents

Mrs. May: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of participants in the New Deal for Lone Parents have (a) undertaken a work trial and (b) undertaken a work trial for six weeks. [304378]

Jim Knight: The information requested is not available.

New Deal Schemes: Wales

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have entered employment as a result of participating in the New Deal in (a) Newport East constituency and (b) Wales in each year since its introduction. [303475]

Jim Knight: The available information can be found in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jobs gained, Newport, East parliamentary constituency (thousand)</th>
<th>Jobs gained, Wales (thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>5,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>13,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>12,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>13,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>17,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>20,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>20,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>22,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>20,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>16,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>18,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,410</td>
<td>182,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jobs gained, Newport, East parliamentary constituency (thousand)</th>
<th>Jobs gained, Wales (thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>5,740</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>13,170</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>12,610</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>13,790</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>17,200</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>20,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>20,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>22,240</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>20,320</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>490</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>18,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,410</td>
<td>182,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. The latest new deal figures will be affected by the introduction of the new jobseekers regime and flexible new deal (gradual implementation started from April 2009). More information is available on the employment programme statistics landing page.
3. The year means the calendar year the job was gained.
4. Some additional disclosure control has also been applied.
5. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
6. The latest data available are to May 2009.
7. The total number of jobs gained refers to the sum of all jobs (spells) obtained through new deal for young people, new deal for 25-plus, new deal for lone parents, new deal for disabled people, new deal for 50-plus and new deal for partners.
8. Spells are not available for new deal 50-plus and new deal for partners so individual level data are used instead.
9. Participants may have had more than one spell on new deal.

Source:

Pensioners: Poverty

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in (a) Chesterfield constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) England her Department estimated to be in absolute poverty at the latest date for which information is available. [307166]

Angela Eagle: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Steve Webb: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will estimate the total savings to her Department against expenditure on (a) pension credit, (b) housing benefit and (c) council tax benefit consequent on a 2.5 per cent. increase in 2010-11 in (i) additional pension, (ii) increments to basic pension, (iii) increments to additional pension, (iv) increments to graduated retirement benefit, (v) increments to the inheritable lump sum, (vi) contracted-out deduction from additional pension in respect of contracted-out earnings from April 1988 contracted-out earnings, (vii) contracted-out deduction from additional pension in respect of contracted-out earnings from April 1988 to 1997, (viii) graduated retirement benefit, (ix) increase of long-term incapacity for age, (x) basic pension addition at the age of 80 years, (xi) increase of long-term incapacity for age and (xii) invalidity allowance (transitional) for state pension recipients. [308335]

Angela Eagle: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.
Personal Accounts

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions from what budgets funding for the proposed personal accounts will be drawn. [307344]

Angela Eagle: The cost of establishing the personal accounts scheme is currently being met via a loan from the Department for Work and Pensions. The loan will be repaid by the trustee corporation through charges levied on scheme members.

Poverty

John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what definitions of poverty are used in her Department; and if she will make a statement. [307092]

Helen Goodman: It is generally accepted that low income is central to any poverty measurement. Definitions of low income households are set out in the annual National Statistics publication ‘Households Below Average Income’. This reports numbers of individuals in households below or persistently below 50 per cent., 60 per cent. and 70 per cent. of median household income both before and after deducting housing costs.

The public service agreement (PSA) 17, ‘Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and wellbeing in later life’, sets out indicators of pensioner poverty for which the Department for Work and Pensions is responsible alongside a range of other non-poverty indicators which are shared between the Department for Work and Pensions and other Government Departments. As no single measure captures all aspects of poverty, the PSA includes a range of indicators related to low income for pensioners. These are relative low income (below 50 and 60 per cent. contemporary median household income), absolute low income (below 60 per cent. of 1998-99 median income uprated in line with prices). Further information is given in the Government’s PSA Delivery Agreement 17, which is available in the Library.

The joint PSA 9 between the Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Children, Schools and Families to halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020, sets out indicators of child poverty. These are relative low income (below 50 per cent. of contemporary median household income), absolute low income (below 60 per cent. of 1998-99 median income uprated in line with prices), and combined low income and material deprivation (based on below 70 per cent. of contemporary median household income). The Child Poverty Bill includes targets on these three measures and, in addition, a target will also be set using a persistent poverty measure (below 60 per cent. of median income in three or four out of the last four years). The indicators of child poverty reflect the fact that income is a key aspect of child poverty. The combined low income and material deprivation indicator provides a wider measure of families’ living standards. The latest version of the Child Poverty Bill (10 December 2009) is available from the Public Bill Office. Further information is given in the conclusions document of the Department’s ‘Measuring Child Poverty’ consultation, which is available in the Library.

Poverty: West Yorkshire

John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of (a) adults and (b) children were living in poverty in (i) England, (ii) the West Yorkshire region and (iii) Leeds West constituency in each year since 1997. [306934]

Helen Goodman: Specific information regarding low income for the UK is available in “Households Below Average Income 1994/95 to 2007/08”. This annual report, which is a National Statistics publication, includes the numbers and proportions of individuals, children, working age adults and pensioners with incomes below 50 per cent., 60 per cent. and 70 per cent. of median income, and the proportions in persistent poverty. For children, it also contains a measure of combined low income and material deprivation.

Estimates of poverty, published in the households below average income series, only allow a breakdown of the overall number of people in poverty at Government office region level. Therefore, information for the Leeds, West constituency and West Yorkshire region are not available. The Government are in the process of developing a child poverty indicator for use at the local level within the local area agreements; capturing children in households in receipt of out of work benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent. of median income.

The information covering parts (a), (b) and (i) of the question is given in the following table for periods where data are available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>2000-01</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>2001-02</td>
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<td>2002-03</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
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<td>2003-04</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Security Benefits

John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much on average was received by an individual claimant of (a) incapacity benefit, (b) housing benefit and (c) income support weekly in the latest period for which figures are available. [306925]

Jonathan Shaw: The most recent available information is in the table. Figures relate to the weekly amount of benefit paid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Security Benefits</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income support (IS)</td>
<td>85.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacity benefit/SDA</td>
<td>95.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allowance (IB/SDA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Longitudinal Study as at May 2009. (IS and IB/SDA) DWP Information Directorate: Work and Pensions


1. The amount of IB/SDA and income support is affected by the introduction in April 2003 of child tax credit. From that date there were no new child dependency increases awarded to IS claimants, although existing CDIs were transitonally protected.

2. Average amounts are shown as pounds per week and rounded to the nearest penny.

3. IB/SDA excludes credit only cases and also excludes employment and support allowance.

4. Average weekly amounts will include some claims relating to partners and other dependents.


### Social Security Benefits: Autism

**Mr. Hollobone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps her Department is taking to assist people with autism when applying for benefits and seeking employment. [304231]

**Jonathan Shaw:** The administration of Jobcentre Plus is a matter for the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, Darra Singh. I have asked him to provide the hon. Member with the information requested.

### State Retirement Pensions

**Dr. Kumar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate she has made of the average net change in income of a pensioner receiving no more than the basic state pension in each year since 1997. [306269]

**Angela Eagle:** Pensioners receiving no more than the basic state pension have been defined as those individual pensioners whose total individual income was below the basic state pension threshold for each relevant year.

The information that is available is shown in the following table. Figures are presented in 2007-08 prices in order to allow comparison over time. The information has been derived from the Family Resources survey and is presented as a three year average to help take account of small sample sizes that exist for subsets of the population.

For context, the basic state pension threshold in 2007-08 was £87.30.

It should be noted that the data is based on individual incomes. As shown in Table 1 above, just 4 per cent. of the individuals’ income in this group in 2005-08 provided the total household income. That is, 96 per cent. of this group live in households with other income earning adults and therefore their overall household income is likely to be much higher. The vast majority of this second group are female.

When considering income, household income is most commonly used. This is because the living standards of an individual depend not only on his or her own income, but also on the income of others in the household. Consequently, considering an individuals income is often not indicative of that individuals overall living standards.

The figures in Table 1 should therefore be used to signify the change in this income level, rather than as an indicator of the average level of income that an individual has to live on and consequently a gauge of living standards.

### Winter Fuel Payments: Nottingham

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Nottingham North constituency are receiving the higher levels of winter fuel payments; and what the average increase in the level of that payment per pensioner has been in the last three years. [308499]

**Angela Eagle:** The basic winter fuel payment of £200 for households with someone aged 60 to 79 and £300 for households with someone aged 80 or over has remained the same for the last three years. However, for this winter, and for winter 2008-09, an additional payment of £50 for households with those aged 60 to 79 and £100 for households with someone aged 80 or over has been made, taking payments to £250 and £400 respectively.

For winter 2008-09, 17,100 people in Nottingham North constituency received a winter fuel payment. Of these, 3,550 received the higher winter fuel payment which is for those aged 80 or over.

### Work Capability Assessment: Appeals

**Mrs. Moon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will make an assessment of the financial position of people waiting for an appeal to be heard in respect of the outcome of their work capability assessment after a health professional on an employment tribunal has deemed a person fit for employment. [303280]

**Jonathan Shaw:** The information requested is not available.

**Mrs. Moon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will make an assessment of the financial position of people waiting for an appeal to be heard in respect of the outcome of their work capability assessment after a health professional on an employment tribunal has deemed a person fit for employment.
capability assessment after a health professional at an employment tribunal has deemed a person fit for employment.

Jonathan Shaw: For employment and support allowance, where a customer does not satisfy the work capability assessment, but continues to provide medical evidence that they should refrain from work, entitlement to benefit continues at the assessment phase rate pending the outcome of the appeal. This policy was introduced to ensure that customers have ongoing financial support until the outcome of their appeal is decided.

If the appeal is decided in the customer’s favour, arrears are backdated to the date from which the higher rates are awarded.

Written Questions: Government Responses

Andrew Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when she will respond to Question 301334, tabled by the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire on 19 November 2009, on departmental working practices.

Jim Knight [holding answer 10 December 2009]: I replied to the hon. Member’s question on 8 December 2009, Official Report, column 243-4W.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Action Plan Orders

Mr. Ruffley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many action plan orders relating to those aged (a) 10 to 11, (b) 12 to 14 and (c) 15 to 17 years old have been (i) given and (ii) breached in each year since 1997.

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

The following table shows the number of action plan orders that have been given to young people by courts, broken down by financial year and age group. Data on breaches of action plan orders are not held centrally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td>3,015</td>
<td>1,448</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>1,695</td>
<td>1,592</td>
<td>1,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>4,928</td>
<td>6,276</td>
<td>3,877</td>
<td>3,679</td>
<td>3,704</td>
<td>3,879</td>
<td>3,989</td>
<td>3,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,386</td>
<td>9,472</td>
<td>5,398</td>
<td>5,210</td>
<td>5,318</td>
<td>5,629</td>
<td>5,639</td>
<td>5,482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and may be subject to change over time.

Alcoholic Drinks: Crime

Ms Keeble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many alcohol-related crimes were recorded as being committed by 16 to 24 years olds in (a) Northamptonshire, (b) the East Midlands and (c) England and Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Alan Campbell: The information requested is not available from the recorded crime statistics collected centrally by the Home Office. With the exception of the specific offence of ‘causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs’, it is not possible to identify those offences which are alcohol-related. In addition, details of the age of the alleged offender are not collected centrally.

Animal Experiments: Wales

Mr. Roger Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many infringements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in Wales were recorded in 2008; and how many of those resulted in a prosecution.

Meg Hillier: During 2008 there was one infringement of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 recorded for a designated establishment in Wales, it did not result in a prosecution.

Mr. Hanson: As of 10 September 2009, the last date covered by the most recent written ministerial statement on control orders, 44 individuals had been subject to a control order since the implementation of such orders.

In relation to the locations and status of these individuals, I would refer the hon. Member to written ministerial statements in relation to control orders published on 11 December 2006, 16 January 2007, 22 March 2007, 24 May 2007, 21 June 2007 (two statements), 17 September 2007 and 13 March 2008. These statements give as much information as we can provide about the individuals concerned given the national security sensitivities of these cases and the need to avoid publishing any information that could lead to the identification of an individual who is subject to an anonymity order.

Anti-Terrorism Control Orders

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have (a) been subject to a control order and (b) absconded (i) in the UK and (ii) abroad while subject to a control order since the implementation of such orders.

Mr. Ruffley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many action plan orders relating to those aged (a) 10 to 11, (b) 12 to 14 and (c) 15 to 17 years old have been (i) given and (ii) breached in each year since 1997.

Dawn Primarolo: I have been asked to reply.

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<td>5,629</td>
<td>5,639</td>
<td>5,482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and may be subject to change over time.
Arrests: Football

Mr. Ruffley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to publish statistics relating to football-related arrests and banning orders for 2008-09. [302445]

Mr. Alan Campbell: Football-related arrest and banning order statistics for the 2008-09 football season was published on 22 December 2009.

Asylum

Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent steps he has taken to reduce the asylum backlog; whether any additional staff have been assigned to this task in the last three months; and if he will make a statement. [307094]

Mr. Woolas: Lin Homer updated the Home Affairs Select Committee on 19 October 2009 on steps the UK Border Agency has taken to reduce the asylum backlog. Lin Homer will provide a further update to the Committee in January 2010.

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has set a timetable for the consideration of the backlog of non-Arab Darfuri asylum claims in respect of the new Operation Guidance Note on Sudan. [303810]

Mr. Woolas: The backlog of asylum claims from Darfuris will be considered in line with existing priorities as set out by the Case Resolution Directorate. All cases will be dealt with on their own individual merits and in accordance with these priorities.

British Nationality: Assessments

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the benefits to migrants to the UK of the use of citizenship tests. [303810]

Mr. Woolas: We consider citizenship tests to be an important element in helping people to integrate into their wider community in the UK. Passing the citizenship test ensures that migrants have an understanding of life in the UK and the requisite skills, including English, to allow them to fully integrate. Preparing for the test gives applicants the practical knowledge needed to live in the UK and to take part in society.


Crime

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many crimes were recorded (a) in total and (b) per capita in (i) Wales and (ii) England in each year since 1997; (2) how many recorded incidents of robbery there were (a) in total and (b) per head in (i) Wales and (ii) England in each year since 1997. [306645]

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 14 December 2009]: The available information relates to offences recorded by the police and the number of offences and rates per 1,000 population are given in the following tables. Rates per 1,000 population is the usual method of presenting this data.

Table 1: Offences recorded by the police—1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area and numbers</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>236,936</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>4,361,391</td>
<td>62,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Offences recorded by the police—1998-99 to 2001-02

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of offences</td>
<td>261,994</td>
<td>255,487</td>
<td>238,449</td>
<td>241,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of offences</td>
<td>4,847,095</td>
<td>5,045,698</td>
<td>4,932,394</td>
<td>5,283,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>65,982</td>
<td>83,368</td>
<td>94,264</td>
<td>120,329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Offences recorded by the police—1998-99 to 2001-02

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area and numbers</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The coverage was extended and counting rules revised from 1998-99. Figures from that date are not directly comparable with those for 1997.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The data in this table is prior to the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in April 2002. These figures are not directly comparable with those for later years.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Offences recorded by the police—2002-03 to 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area and numbers</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>All offences</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of offences</td>
<td>294,780</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>289,263</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td>267,624</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>258,024</td>
<td>1,137</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of offences</td>
<td>5,602,916</td>
<td>106,652</td>
<td>5,645,314</td>
<td>99,914</td>
<td>5,291,998</td>
<td>87,889</td>
<td>5,220,763</td>
<td>94,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crime: Knives

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving the use of a knife were recorded by each police division in England in each of the last 10 years. [306464]

Mr. Hanson: The Home Office has collected data on knife and sharp instrument offences since April 2007 via a special additional data collection. Data are therefore only available for two years.

In 2007-08, the data collection covered the following offences: attempted murder, GBH and robbery. In 2008-09, the collection was expanded to include threats to kill, ABH, rape and sexual assaults. There were also changes in how both GBH with and without intent was recorded by forces following clarification of counting rules. Therefore, the figures between the two years are not comparable.

There is a further reason why the figures are not fully comparable. Some forces in 2007-08 included, for technical reasons, a number of ‘unbroken’ bottle offences, which is outside the defined scope of the collection. For 2008-09, the majority of forces within England could supply data excluding unbroken bottles, with four Home Office forces still unable to remove them from their returns.

The data for each police force in both England and Wales are published in ‘Crime in England and Wales 2008-09’ at the following link: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1109chap7new.xls

Data for 2007-08 are shown in Table 7.11 and data for 2008-09 are shown in Table 7.12.

These figures do not include homicide, as these are collected from the separate Homicide Index. The 1998-99 to 2007-08 homicide data for each police force in England are shown in Table A.

Homicide figures for 2008-09 are pre-announced to be published on 21 January 2010.
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| England                      | 189     | 204     | 208     | 247     | 256     | 239     | 247     | 212     | 257     | 258     |

1. As at 5 January 2009; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.
2. Offences are shown according to the year in which police initially recorded the offence as homicide. This is not necessarily the year in which the incident took place or the year in which any court decision was made.

**Crimes of Violence: Cambridgeshire**

**Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of (a) grievous bodily harm and (b) actual bodily harm were recorded by each police division in Cambridgeshire in each of the last 10 years. [306354]

**Mr. Hanson:** Cambridgeshire is divided into three basic command units (BCUs): central, northern and...
southern. These were set up in 2000-01, so data at this level are not available prior to this year.

There was a major change in police recorded crime recording practices in April 2002 that means that figures from 2002-03 are not comparable with figures prior to that year.

The introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in April 2002 brought in a more victim-focused reporting system, where victim accounts had to be accepted unless there was credible evidence to the contrary. In its first year, this was estimated to have artificially increased recording of violence against the person by 23 per cent.

From 1 April 2008 there were also changes in offence classification which for the first time collected separate information on grievous bodily harm (GBH) without intent (rather than as part of a broader ‘other wounding’ category) and a clarification in the counting rules for grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent. This led to a step change in the levels of most serious violence for some police forces. This means figures for 2008-09 are not comparable with those for earlier years.

Data for GBH offences for each BCU in Cambridgeshire are given in Table A (1999-2000 to 2001-02) and Table B (2002-03 to 2008-09).

Data for actual bodily harm (ABH) offences for each BCU in Cambridgeshire are given in Table C (1999-2000 to 2001-02) and Table D (2002-03 to 2008-09).

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1 BCUs were set up in 2000-01 so data at this level are not available prior to this year.

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### Table B: Number of recorded offences of grievous bodily harm by basic command unit (BCU) in Cambridgeshire, 2002-03 to 2008-09

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1. Cambridgeshire BCUs were revised in 2006-07, so figures from 2006-07 are not comparable with previous years.

2. A clarification of counting rules in April 2008, in relation to GBH with intent, led to a step change in the levels of GBH offences for some police forces. The offence of more serious wounding or other act endangering life was also disaggregated. Therefore, figures for 2008-09 are not comparable with previous years.

### Table C: Number of recorded offences of actual bodily harm by basic command unit (BCU) in Cambridgeshire, 1999-2000 to 2001-02

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1. BCUs were set up in 2000-01 so data at this level are not available prior to this year.

### Table D: Number of recorded offences of actual bodily harm by basic command unit (BCU) in Cambridgeshire, 2002-03 to 2008-09

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less serious wounding</td>
<td>1,068</td>
<td>1,694</td>
<td>1,661</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racially or religiously aggravated less serious wounding</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ABH</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>1,715</td>
<td>1,681</td>
<td>1,425</td>
<td>1,315</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>1,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less serious wounding</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>2,225</td>
<td>2,261</td>
<td>1,926</td>
<td>1,812</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racially or religiously aggravated less serious wounding</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ABH</td>
<td>1,538</td>
<td>2,283</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,957</td>
<td>1,838</td>
<td>1,709</td>
<td>1,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less serious wounding</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>1,815</td>
<td>1,907</td>
<td>1,574</td>
<td>1,464</td>
<td>1,496</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racially or religiously aggravated less serious wounding</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ABH</td>
<td>1,157</td>
<td>1,826</td>
<td>1,921</td>
<td>1,594</td>
<td>1,483</td>
<td>1,510</td>
<td>1,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>3,709</td>
<td>5,734</td>
<td>5,829</td>
<td>4,913</td>
<td>4,578</td>
<td>4,277</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less serious wounding</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racially or religiously aggravated less serious wounding</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Custodial Treatment: Shotgun Certificates

Mr. Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance his Department has issued in respect of the length of time for which a person who has served a custodial sentence in respect of a motororing offence may be refused a shotgun licence.

[306814]

Mr. Alan Campbell: Home Office guidance draws specific attention to the provisions of section 21 of the Firearms Act 1968 which provides that persons who are sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three years or more are prohibited from ever possessing firearms; persons who are sentenced to a term of three months or more but less than three years must not possess firearms until five years have passed since the date of release. Otherwise it is for chief officers to satisfy themselves on the individual merits of each case that an applicant can be permitted to possess a shotgun without danger to public safety or to the peace.

Departmental Domestic Visits

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions he visited (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland in an official capacity in the last 12 months.

[303488]

Alan Johnson: I visited Scotland in an official capacity on 9 November 2009 and visited Wales on 23 July, 27 September and 25 November 2009. I have not visited Northern Ireland in an official capacity over the past 12 months.

My predecessor visited Scotland on 16 April 2009.

Departmental Electronic Equipment

Mr. Hands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many iPod must devices have been bought by his Department since 2005; and what the cost to the public purse was of buying the devices.

[305983]

Mr. Woolas: The Home Department bought 20 video iPods at a cost of £7,580 plus VAT in 2007.

Departmental Internet

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) page hits and (b) visitors his Department’s website received in 2008-09.

[301844]

Mr. Woolas: The page hits and visitors to the Home Office website (www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk) received in 2008 to 23 November 2009 are shown in the following table.

### Departmental Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Page views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>542,536</td>
<td>2,914,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>494,334</td>
<td>2,600,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>502,010</td>
<td>2,413,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>483,484</td>
<td>1,864,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>452,250</td>
<td>1,679,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>436,067</td>
<td>1,615,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>447,976</td>
<td>1,698,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>400,380</td>
<td>1,483,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>484,514</td>
<td>1,794,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>526,969</td>
<td>1,911,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>545,229</td>
<td>1,878,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>475,790</td>
<td>1,553,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2008</td>
<td>5,791,539</td>
<td>23,408,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>623,950</td>
<td>2,046,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>583,124</td>
<td>1,951,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>653,774</td>
<td>2,208,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>571,472</td>
<td>1,829,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>568,288</td>
<td>1,706,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>515,707</td>
<td>1,600,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>502,079</td>
<td>1,511,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>485,073</td>
<td>1,448,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>516,224</td>
<td>1,478,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>556,992</td>
<td>1,622,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>428,522</td>
<td>1,252,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2009</td>
<td>6,005,205</td>
<td>18,655,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,796,744</td>
<td>42,063,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum March 2009</td>
<td>653,774</td>
<td>2,914,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum August 2008</td>
<td>400,380</td>
<td>1,252,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>512,902</td>
<td>1,828,858</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David T.C. Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what redesigns of websites operated by (a) his Department and (b) its agencies have taken place since 27 June 2007; and what the (i) cost to the public purse and (ii) date of completion of each such redesign was.

[306168]

Mr. Woolas: The costs and completion dates of website redesigns since 27 June 2007 for the Home Office and its agencies are detailed in the following table. The costs considered and included are as follows:

- strategy and planning;
- design and build;
- content provision;
- testing and evaluation.

It is not possible to disaggregate associated staff costs for these redesigns. There are no additional hosting/infrastructure costs as a consequence of the redesigns.
**Departmental Training**

**Daniel Kawczynski:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the (a) date, (b) location and (c) cost was of each of the last four Departmental away days that he attended. [305507]

**Mr. Woolas:** There have been no away days as such since the Home Secretary arrived in the Home Office. Regular meetings between Ministers and senior officials have all been held on Home Office premises. One of those was preceded by a dinner in central London on the previous evening at a cost of £1,636 for 22 people.

**DNA: Databases**

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which organisations were able to access data on the National DNA Database on 1 October 2009; [303817]

(2) which organisations were able to access data on the National DNA Database on 1 December 2009. [306628]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** Direct access to information on the National DNA Database (NDNAD) is restricted to 34 designated personnel working for the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). Police forces and other organisations do not have access to the information on the NDNAD, however they receive reports from the NDNAD Custodian Delivery Unit of matches between DNA taken from crime scenes and that taken from individuals.

On both 1 October and 1 December 2009, the police forces of England, Wales and Scotland, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the British Transport police and 11 additional organisations were authorised to receive match reports from the NDNAD. The 11 additional organisations are listed as follows.

Additional organisations authorised to receive NDNAD match reports on 1 October 2009
- Criminal Cases Review Commission
- Guernsey Police
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Isle of Man Constabulary
- States of Jersey Police
- Joint Armed Services Police
- Ministry of Defence Police

Ministry of Defence Police (Scotland)
NDNAD Data Quality Team—Prisoner Sampling Program
Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency
Serious Organised Crime Agency

Foreign law enforcement organisations do not have access to the NDNAD, but may request that a comparison is made between a DNA profile from, for example, an unsolved crime scene or an unidentified deceased person in their country, and profiles on the NDNAD. Such requests are routed through Interpol to the UK National Central Bureau (UK NCB) based at the Serious Organised Crime Agency.

These requests are only processed where it is clear that the request is in the interest of prevention and detection of crime, national security or the data subject. They are also subject to a risk assessment, taking into account the justification for and proportionality of disclosure of the information in line with human rights. If cleared for processing, a one-off search of the NDNAD is made and information on any matches are fed back to UK NCB who will liaise with the foreign law enforcement organisation.

**Driving Under Influence**

**John Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were stopped and tested for drink driving (a) in West Yorkshire, (b) in each police authority area and (c) in total in each of the last five years. [306944]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The information requested is provided in the following tables.

Figures on West Yorkshire and the total in each of the last five years can be found highlighted in the table.

Total breath tests for each police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police force</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
<td>24,492</td>
<td>27,297</td>
<td>21,928</td>
<td>15,779</td>
<td>15,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
<td>6,633</td>
<td>7,764</td>
<td>6,704</td>
<td>3,093</td>
<td>2,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire</td>
<td>11,854</td>
<td>20,155</td>
<td>22,005</td>
<td>35,747</td>
<td>32,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>8,716</td>
<td>8,056</td>
<td>10,826</td>
<td>11,308</td>
<td>10,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria</td>
<td>5,513</td>
<td>8,430</td>
<td>13,577</td>
<td>13,804</td>
<td>16,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>32,570</td>
<td>31,023</td>
<td>17,685</td>
<td>16,019</td>
<td>15,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon and Cornwall</td>
<td>10,914</td>
<td>10,690</td>
<td>10,423</td>
<td>13,562</td>
<td>16,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>8,464</td>
<td>6,938</td>
<td>7,917</td>
<td>8,706</td>
<td>8,038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E-mail: Fraud

Mr. Letwin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures his Department has in place regarding the monitoring of emails making fraudulent offers to recipients; and if he will make a statement. [306809]

Mr. Alan Campbell: The Government do not routinely monitor the internet. Where law enforcement agencies are investigating a crime initiated on the internet such as fraud, they are able to use a number of powers, including those under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which are proportionate and specific to the case. [306809]

Entry Clearances

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many workers were permitted to enter the UK in the categories listed in paragraphs 8.4 and 8.5 of the Migration Advisory Committee’s October 2009 review of the shortage occupation lists for the UK and Scotland in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [302853]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 30 November 2009]: The information is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 3 December 2009, Official Report, columns 888-9W, on entry clearances, what the average caseworking time to process a (a) postal, (b) premium and (c) student batch application was in the latest period for which figures are available. [306371]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 14 December 2009]: The information requested is as follows:

(a) For postal applications during October 2009 UKBA delivered concluded applications against published service standards for the different routes as follows:

   Family—53 per cent. against the service standard of 65 per cent. in four weeks.
   Employment—89 per cent. against the service standard of 75 per cent. in four weeks.
   Study—91 per cent. against the service standard of 75 per cent. in four weeks.
   Visits—61 per cent. against the service of 65 per cent. in four weeks.

(b) For premium applications during November 2009 UKBA provided 82 per cent. of applicants with same day service.

(c) Student batch applications cannot be measured and are included in the study route performance at (a).

The data used is from Internal Management Information only and does not constitute national statistics.

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to issue a visa to Mr. Hapinderjit Singh, ref 2616562; what the reason is for the time taken to issue the visa; and if he will make a statement. [306737]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 14 December 2009]: The UK Border Agency Operation in New Delhi only received confirmation on 11 December that Mr. Singh’s appeal against their decision to refuse him entry clearance had been allowed. UKBA has now written to Mr. Singh informing him of this and asking him to submit his passport so that his visa can be issued without further delay.

Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Susan Kramer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to ensure that any changes to Tier 4 of the points-based system do not reduce the attractiveness of the UK as a study destination to foreign students. [306345]

Mr. Woolas: The Prime Minister announced on 12 November 2009 that a review of tier 4, the student tier of the Points Based System, would be conducted by a joint team from the UK Border Agency and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. The review team have been asked to assess whether the current tier 4 policy strikes the appropriate balance between facilitating access of genuine students to education in the UK and preventing abuse by economic migrants.
The review is looking at evidence gathered from the early stages of tier 4, which was launched in March this year, to look at the case for or against any policy changes. The review will consider all of the available data and evidence, including the potential effect of any changes on the attractiveness of the UK as a study destination for international students.

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-EU IT contractors in the Tier 2 category (a) applied for permission to stay in the UK and (b) were granted permission to stay in the UK in each month since the inception of Tier 2 of the points-based system. [307728]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 15 December 2009]: The information requested is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only by the detailed examination of individual case records at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-EU IT contractors in the Tier 2 category have permission to stay in the UK. [307729]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 15 December 2009]: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only by examination of individual case records at disproportionate cost.

Foreign Workers: Entry Clearances

Mr. Liddell-Grainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what level of security clearance is required for IT specialists employed on temporary visas by IBM (India) who work in Somerset with access to private information about staff of Avon and Somerset Police. [306347]

Mr. Hanson: This is a matter for the chief constable of Avon and Somerset.

Identity Cards

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have voluntarily applied for an identity card (a) since 30 November 2009 and (b) to date. [306360]

Alan Johnson: Since 20 October 2009, and up to and including 10 December 2009, over 2,400 applicants have been enrolled or have made an enrolment appointment for an identity card. Approximately 1,600 of those applicants have enrolled or have made an appointment since 30 November 2009.

Identity Cards: Databases

Chris Grayling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information will be held on the National Identity Register on identity card holders that is not held on the UK Passport Database in respect of passport holders. [306359]

Alan Johnson: The information currently held on the UK passport database is very similar to that which is held on the National Identity Register. In addition, the Register holds:
1. Fingerprint biometrics, which will be required for passport issue in due course.
2. Some different administrative information to support the efficient operation of the National Identity Service. This includes:
   (a) National insurance number to aid identity verification checks for identity cards, and in time, passports.
   (b) Answers to “shared secrets” chosen by applicants which will allow them to identify themselves over the telephone, facilitating quicker reporting of lost or stolen documents and change of address
   (c) A unique number, the national identity registration number, which binds recorded details relating to one person together in the same record.

Identity Cards: Expenditure

Mr. Leech: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost to his Department of providing identity cards has been to date; and what his most recent estimate is of the cost of the identity card trial scheme in Greater Manchester. [305388]

Meg Hillier: The National Identity Service (NIS) Cost Report presented to Parliament in October 2009 sets out the latest estimated 10-year future costs of the NIS, which includes the initial costs of roll-out which started in Greater Manchester on 30 November.

The Identity and Passport Service (IPS) Annual Report and Accounts for 2009-10 will include audited disclosure of operational identity card income and expenditure.

The National Identity Service combines a number of programmes to deliver modern passports which include facial images and fingerprints, as well as identity cards and other improvements. This is the most cost-effective way to deliver these initiatives because much of the technology and operational processes involved are shared. Total spend on NIS future development projects since April 2006 to September.

Illegal Immigrants: Bail

Mr. Timpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegal immigrants on bail have broken the conditions of their bail in the last five years. [305793]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 10 December 2009]: The UK Border Agency does not hold data centrally on breaches of immigration bail.

Obtaining the information requested would entail a search of case records relating to all individuals who have been placed on immigration bail in the last five years, thereby incurring disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Richard Younger-Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his most recent estimate is of the average time taken by the UK Border Agency to process an application for leave to remain in the UK. [305715]
Mr. Woolas [holding answer 10 December 2009]: The following table shows performance for LTR casework by application type for the most recent reporting month (October 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance by workstream</th>
<th>Service standard</th>
<th>Percentage of applications dealt with within service standard for month end October 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>65 per cent. of cases within 20 working days</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>75 per cent. of cases within 20 working days</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting the UK</td>
<td>75 per cent. of cases within 20 working days</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>75 per cent. of cases within 20 working days</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These data are not provided under National Statistics protocols. They have been derived from local management information and are therefore provisional and subject to change.

Immigration: Detention Centres

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made to residential and operational staffing of immigration removal centres over Christmas 2009 and the New Year period. [304953]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 10 December 2009]: Immigration removal centres operate throughout the year and are open during Christmas 2009 and New Year period. Each centre is making arrangements to celebrate Christmas. Staffing will be maintained at the standard level for each centre to provide continuity of service and to ensure a safe environment for all persons detained.

Immigration: Nepal

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent changes there have been to Immigration Rules in respect of Nepal. [306767]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 14 December 2009]: There have been no recent changes to the Immigration Rules in respect of Nepal. Chapter 15 section 2A of the Immigration Directorate Instructions was updated in June to reflect the Home Secretary’s announcement that any Gurkha with more than four years service who had been discharged from the Brigade of Gurkhas before 1 July 1997 would be eligible to apply for settlement in the UK.

Independent Safeguarding Authority

Mr. Hurd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a privacy impact assessment was produced in relation to the (a) creation and (b) operation of the schemes overseen by the Independent Safeguarding Authority. [305154]

Meg Hillier: The Independent Safeguarding Authority was formally vested on 2 January 2008 and commenced operations in March 2008. This pre-dated the mandatory requirement to produce a privacy impact assessment.

The Vetting and Barring Scheme programme, which includes establishment of the Independent Safeguarding Authority is being delivered in phases. The programme is currently in its fourth phase and a Privacy Impact Assessment is scheduled to be completed during the remaining phases of the programme.

National Public Order Intelligence Unit: Finance

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer of 10 November 2009, Official Report, column 339, on the National Public Order Intelligence Unit, what the budget of the unit was in each financial year since 2003. [302960]

Mr. Alan Campbell: The National Public Order Intelligence Unit has provided the following information on its annual budget for each financial year since 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>£ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>2.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>4.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>5.946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>5.702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Offenders: Radicalism

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many units within his Department are developing interventions and programmes for extremist offenders following their release from a custodial sentence. [308121]

Mr. Hanson: One unit, the Prevent Interventions Unit, is working with a number of community based organisations to develop a range of interventions to support individuals; this target group will include some offenders convicted of terrorist related offences. The unit also work with statutory partners, such as the National Offender Management Service, to develop interventions that support offenders convicted of a terrorist offence as well as offenders who are vulnerable to recruitment or have already been recruited by violent extremists.

Offensive Weapons: Convictions

Dr. Kumar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people charged with carrying an offensive weapon in (a) England, (b) the North East and (c) Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency in 2008-09; and what sentences those convicted of such offences received. [306268]

Mr. Straw: I have been asked to reply.

The number of offenders that were charged with carrying an offensive weapon is not available. Data relating to possession of an offensive weapon is based on offences resulting in a caution or sentence.

The table shows the number of offences involving the possession of an offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence between Q1 2008 (January to March) to Q3 2009 (July to September) in England and Wales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 2008</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td>9,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 2008</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>9,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 2008</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td>9,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further regional breakdowns by police force area are not given as the numbers are too small for reliable interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposal category</th>
<th>Q1 2008</th>
<th>Q2 2008</th>
<th>Q3 2008</th>
<th>Q4 2008</th>
<th>Q1 2009</th>
<th>Q2 2009</th>
<th>Q3 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caution</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>1,602</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>1,218</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>1,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute/Conditional discharge</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community sentence</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended sentence</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate custody</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other disposal</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of total offences</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caution</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community sentence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended sentence</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate custody</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 As recorded by the police on the police national computer.
2 Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and final warnings.

Notes:
1. These figures have been drawn from the police’s administrative IT system, the police national computer (PNC), which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police.
2. PNC data has been used here rather than court data, which is the usual source of published sentencing statistics, as PNC data provides more up to date figures ahead of the finalised annual court data.

Passports

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of replacing a (a) passport damaged by the passport holder and (b) passport containing a defective component. [305201]

**Meg Hillier:** The information is as follows:

(a) There is no cost to the public purse of replacing a passport damaged by the passport holder as the process requires a new application to be processed and the applicant must pay the full passport fee.

(b) The cost to the public purse of replacing defective passports is commercial in confidence information.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what mechanisms are in place to assist those to whom passports with a faulty chip have been issued; and if he will make a statement. [305202]

**Meg Hillier:** In some instances, a machine reader may not recognise the passport when it is read. This could be due to a number of reasons such as a faulty passport reader, a manufacturing fault in the passport chip or because damage has been caused by the holder to the biometric chip. If a customer encounters difficulties at UK immigration, the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) can have the passport checked by the manufacturer. However, if a customer has travel requirements while the passport is being checked, IPS will issue a replacement passport, free of charge, upon production of proof of travel. This is a change to previous IPS policy, which required customers to pay for a replacement passport if they needed to travel while the passport was being tested.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports issued in each of the last three years have been found to contain faulty chips. [305203]

**Meg Hillier:** The recording of statistical data relating to faulty chips in passports began in January 2007 and, as at 31 October 2009, a total of 1,342 passports were returned to the supplier with suspected faulty chips, but only 1,107 of those were confirmed as faulty. The majority of defective chips are identified at the quality assurance stage of the passport issuing process, prior to the passports being dispatched to customers.

Police

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) police constables there were in each year since 1997 and (b) police community support officers there were in each year since 1992 in (i) England and (ii) Avon and Somerset constituency. [307367]

**Mr. Hanson:** The available data can be seen in the following tables.

The first police community support officers started work in September 2002, following legislation which was introduced as part of the Police Reform Act 2002. Therefore, data on police community support officers are not available prior to 31 March 2003.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>118,459</td>
<td>118,138</td>
<td>117,195</td>
<td>115,324</td>
<td>116,440</td>
<td>120,073</td>
<td>124,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
<td>2,989</td>
<td>2,976</td>
<td>2,999</td>
<td>2,934</td>
<td>2,994</td>
<td>3,096</td>
<td>3,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>129,691</td>
<td>131,950</td>
<td>132,105</td>
<td>132,474</td>
<td>132,313</td>
<td>136,481</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
<td>3,401</td>
<td>3,384</td>
<td>3,389</td>
<td>3,375</td>
<td>3,339</td>
<td>3,303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Full-time equivalent. All officers less staff on career breaks or maternity/paternity leave (comparable with previously published figures).
2. This and other tables contain full-time equivalent figures that have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Because of rounding, there may be an apparent discrepancy between totals and the sums of the constituent items.
3. Comparable strength (excludes those on career breaks, or maternity/paternity leave). The police numbers task force (2001) recommended that a clear presentation was made of the numbers of staff employed by police forces including those seconded into the force and those on any type of long or short term absence. These new calculations were first used in 2003, and are not comparable with data prior to March 2003. The data from 2003 onwards used here are termed comparable because they have been calculated on the old basis to allow comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>129,961</td>
<td>131,950</td>
<td>132,105</td>
<td>132,474</td>
<td>132,313</td>
<td>136,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon and Somerset</td>
<td>3,401</td>
<td>3,384</td>
<td>3,389</td>
<td>3,375</td>
<td>3,339</td>
<td>3,303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. This table contains full-time equivalent figures that have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Because of rounding, there may be an apparent discrepancy between totals and the sums of the constituent items.
2. Full-time equivalent include those on career breaks or maternity/paternity leave.
3. Police community support officers were introduced in statute in 2002, therefore data is not available prior to 2002-03.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have paid to release private vehicles to their owners from local authority compounds in each of the last five years.

[308013]

**Mr. Hanson:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

**Police: Ethnic Groups**

**Greg Mulholland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers of each ethnicity there were in Leeds North West constituency in each year since 2005; and what percentage of the total number of police officers was in each ethnic group in each such year.

[307763]

**Mr. Hanson:** Data on ethnicity of police officers are only collected centrally at police force area level.

**Police: Pay**

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what proportion of police officers earn more than £18,000 a year.

[306335]

**Mr. Hanson:** All full-time police officers earn above £18,000 per annum. As from 1 September 2009, the starting salary for a full-time police officer is £22,680.

**Radicalism**

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what cross-departmental committees with the purpose of tackling extremism there are; which Departments are represented on each such committee; and what the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference are of each.

[301468]

**Mr. Hanson:** The Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID) exists to consider issues relating to national security, and the Governments’ international, European and international development policies. The NSID Sub-Committee on Tackling Extremism (NSID(E)) considers issues relating to tackling extremism. Details of these committees’ membership and terms of reference are as follows.

In support of NSID there are, at official level, a range of specific programme boards, projects boards and working groups across government which consider extremism.

**Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID)**

**Composition**

- Prime Minister (Chair)
- Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (alternate Chair)
- Secretary of State for the Home Department (alternate Chair)
- Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor
- Secretary of State for Health
- Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
- Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Secretary of State for International Development
- Secretary of State for Defence
- Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
- Secretary of State for Transport
- Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
- Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change
- Minister for the Cabinet Office; and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
- Attorney-General
- Minister for Security and Counter-Terrorism

Other Ministers, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Heads of the Intelligence Agencies, the Commissioner of the...
Metropolitan Police, and the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers may be invited to attend as required.

Terms of Reference

“To consider issues relating to national security, and the Government’s international, European and international development policies”.

Sub-Committee on Tackling Extremism (NSID(E))

Composition

Prime Minister (Chair)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for International Development
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills
Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Minister for the Cabinet Office; and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Attorney-General
Minister for Security and Counter-Terrorism
Other Ministers, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers, and other officials, may also be invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of Reference

“To consider issues relating to tackling extremism; and report as necessary to the Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development and the Committee on Domestic Affairs”

Repatration

Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average payment to a foreign national under the Facilitated Returns Scheme has been since its inception.

Mr. Woolas: The Facilitated Returns Scheme (FRS), launched in October 2006, accounted for around a quarter of the total removals of foreign national offenders in 2007 and around a third of removals in 2008. Of those removed under FRS in 2008, less than three-quarters took up the reintegration package on return.

The average amount received per foreign national offender who claimed the reintegration assistance in 2008 was less than £2,500.

Security: Greater London

Mr. Holloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the official threat level in respect of the new year celebrations in London.

Mr. Hanson [holding answer 16 December 2009]: The threat level is kept under constant review. The current threat level to the United Kingdom from international terrorism is assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre to be SUBSTANTIAL, meaning an attack is a strong possibility. SUBSTANTIAL indicates a continuing high level of threat and that an attack might well occur without further warning.

The overall threat level to the UK is the only threat level which is made public. There are a number of other sector, area and event specific threat levels which are not made public but which are communicated to the police and security practitioners.

As always, the police will take all measures they deem necessary and appropriate to protect the public during the new year celebrations in London.

Serious Organised Crime Agency: Bullying

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints of bullying of staff within the Serious and Organised Crime Agency have been brought in each year since 2006.

Mr. Alan Campbell: The information is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar year</th>
<th>Number of bullying cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UK Border Agency

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to his letter to the hon. Member for Thurrock of 1 June 2009 in respect of case reference W1035264—CTS M11279/9, handled by the UK Border Agency’s Case Resolution Team, for what reason the undertaking to conclude the case within three months has not been complied with; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 10 December 2009]: The Home Secretary replied to my hon. Friend on 8 December 2009.

TREASURY

Banks: Loans

Alan Simpson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent estimate he has made of the number of banks which have secured the agreement of customers to long-term fixed-rate mortgages for periods during which such banks had forecast that interest rates would be reduced in each of the last three years; and what his policy is on that practice.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The Government do not hold this information.

Benefits: Children

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many child tax credit applications were contested with two or more individuals asserting claims for the same child in (a) 2005-06, (b) 2006-07, (c) 2007-08 and (d) 2008-09;
(2) in how many cases two or more individuals asserted child benefit claims for the same child in (a) 2005-06, (b) 2006-07, (c) 2007-08 and (d) 2008-09.

Mr. Timms: Reliable information is not available, as HM Revenue and Customs’ system does not accurately capture the number of competing claims.

Boilers: Government Assistance

Mr. Moore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the statement of 9 December 2009, Official Report, column 365W, on the pre-Budget report, when the boiler scrappage scheme will become operational; what the (a) eligibility criteria and (b) application process will be for the scheme; whether the scheme will be open to applications from Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The Greenener Boiler Incentive scheme is being implemented by the Department of Energy and Climate Change, which is working to launch the scheme at the earliest opportunity in 2010.

The incentive will be available to all households in England replacing a working G rated boiler with a high efficiency boiler or renewable heat technology, and application details will be published in due course.

The scheme will be available in England only, as the encouragement of energy efficiency other than by prohibition or regulation is a devolved matter in Scotland and Wales, and in Northern Ireland responsibility for energy policy, including energy efficiency, is also a devolved matter.

Child Benefit

Mr. Chaytor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims for child benefit have been made in each of the last three years.

Mr. Timms [holding answer 9 December 2009]: The information requested is provided in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Thousand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 New claims, claims for an additional child, or a claim for transfer of entitlement.

These figures do not include child benefit claims already in payment.

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many requests to expedite individuals’ child benefit claims were made (a) by (i) local authorities, (ii) voluntary agencies, (iii) Jobcentre Plus office, (iv) hospitals, (v) hon. Members, (vi) local councillors, (vii) claimants and (b) in total in (A) 2005-06, (B) 2006-07, (C) 2007-08 and (D) 2008-09.

Mr. Timms: The information requested is not available, as the Child Benefit Office does not collect the number of requests to expedite individuals’ child benefit claims.

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the longest time was for payment of a child benefit claim to be started for (a) UK nationals, (b) non-UK EEA nationals, (c) A8 EEA nationals, (d) A2 EEA nationals and (e) non-European nationals in (i) 2005-06, (ii) 2006-07, (iii) 2007-08 and (iv) 2008-09.

Mr. Timms: The information is not available broken down by the categories requested. However, for information on the time taken to pay new child benefit claims in 2006-07; 2007-08 and 2008-09 I refer my right hon. Friend to the answers given to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, South and East Cleveland (Dr. Kumar) on 2 February 2009, Official Report, column 894W; the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) on 22 October 2008, Official Report, column 356W and to the hon. Member for Glasgow, East (John Mason), on 27 April 2009, Official Report, columns 1046-47W.

I also refer my right hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) on 12 January 2009, Official Report, column 328W and to the hon. Member for Glasgow, East (John Mason), on 27 April 2009, Official Report, columns 1046-47W.

HM Revenue and Customs aims to pay 66 per cent. of new child benefit claims in nine working days in 2009-10 and all claims in an average of 20 calendar days.

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the largest sum of child benefit paid retrospectively to an individual or couple was in (a) 2009, (b) 2008 and (c) the last five years.

Mr. Timms: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost, as HM Revenue and Customs does not systematically compile information about the size of individual child benefit payments made each year.

Child Trust Fund

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much his Department has spent on advertising and promoting the Child Trust Fund in each year since its establishment;

Mr. Timms: The information is not available.

(2) what recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Minister of Finance on the operation of the Child Trust Fund in Northern Ireland;

Mr. Timms: The information is not available.

(3) how many Child Trust Fund vouchers have been issued to people in North Belfast in each year since their introduction;

Mr. Timms: The information is not available.

(4) how many Child Trust Fund accounts have been opened by people in each constituency in Northern Ireland;

Mr. Timms: The information is not available.

(5) how much money has been paid into Child Trust Fund accounts in Northern Ireland.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Various statistical information regarding the Child Trust Fund is published on HM Revenue and Customs website at: http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/ctf/stats.htm
The total number of accounts opened and vouchers issued in each constituency can be found within the constituency statistics. Information about each year’s media expenditure can be found in the relevant statistical reports. The value of contributions to accounts by country can be found in the detailed distributional analysis.

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government’s practice to provide details of all such meetings.

Christmas

David T.C. Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Christmas trees were purchased by his Department and its agencies in each of the last five years; what the cost was of those trees in each year; from where the trees were sourced; what account was taken of the sustainability of the sources of the trees; and by what process the trees were disposed of.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: One tree is supplied each year by the PFI provider for the offices at 1 Horse Guards Road at no direct cost to the department. In each of the past three years, the Department’s office in Norwich has purchased one tree, sourced from a local forest, at a cost of approximately £150 each year. The tree is subsequently recycled.

Mr. Hunt: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department has budgeted for Christmas trees in 2009.

Mr. Timms: [holding answer 15 December 2009]: The Treasury does not have a budget for Christmas trees in 2009-10 as one is supplied by the building’s PFI provider.

Climate Change Levy: Agriculture

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the monetary value of the contribution to Climate Change Levy receipts to the Carbon Trust from the (a) horticulture, (b) pig and (c) poultry industry since 2001.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: In general, the Government do not hypothecate revenue. Income from taxes and other revenues are pooled in the consolidated fund so that spending can be prioritised across the range of Government activities in the most efficient way.

When the Climate Change Levy package was introduced in 2001 some revenue was notionally hypothecated to help establish the Carbon Trust—an independent body now sponsored by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). It is primarily grant-funded by DECC and the Devolved Administrations, and in 2008-09 also received grant funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Corporation Tax: Patents

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue accrued to the Exchequer from corporation tax applied to patents in each year since 1997.

Mr. Timms: The information requested is not available, as companies are not required to distinguish income from patents when assessing their liability to corporation tax.

Departmental Art Works

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department spent on art works in the last 12 months.

Mr. Timms: Works of art form part of antiques spending, which is shown in note 11 to the 2008-09 annual report and accounts (HC 611), available from www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/annual_report09.htm

Departmental Billing

Jenny Willott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department spent on art works form part of antiques spending, which is shown in note 11 to the 2008-09 annual report and accounts (HC 611), available from www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/annual_report09.htm

Departmental Conferences

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Public Works Loan Board’s buildings attended by civil servants in the Public Works Loan Board there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each;

(2) how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Debt Management Office’s buildings attended by civil servants in that Office there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each.

Ian Pearson: No central records are held on Debt Management Office (including the Public Works Loan Board which is an operational unit of the DMO) away days and attendance at conferences. This information could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.
Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside his Department's building attended by civil servants in his Department there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307523]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr. Hammond) on 14 December 2009, Official Report, column 850W.

Departmental Coordination: Scotland

Mr. MacNeil: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what (a) written correspondence, (b) electronic correspondence, (c) meetings and (d) other communications he has had with the Secretary of State for Scotland communicated on a number of matters in 2008-09.

Mr. Byrne [holding answer 14 December 2009]: The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Scotland communicated on a number of matters in 2008-09.

Departmental Information and Communications Technology

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what pay band his Department's Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed; whether the CIO is employed on a fixed-term or permanent contract; and what the size is of the budget for which the CIO is responsible in the period 2009-10. [307557]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed on a permanent contract at senior civil service pay band 1. The budgets allocated to work related to these CIO responsibilities in 2008-09 total £20 million (rounded to the nearest £5 million).

Departmental Legal Costs

Mr. Drew: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department has spent on external legal advice in respect of (a) the Assets Protection Scheme, (b) bank bail outs, (c) the merger of HBOS and Lloyds TSB and (d) the Northern Rock rescue; and if he will make a statement. [307587]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the NAO report ‘Maintaining financial stability across the United Kingdom’s banking system’, published in December (page 24, figure 7) which is available at:


Agreements between the Treasury and certain institutions mean that the majority of these fees are recoverable and this sum does not therefore represent a net cost to the Treasury.

Mr. Drew: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what process is used to appoint or draw up contracts with external lawyers to advise his Department; and if he will make a statement. [307588]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The Department uses a call-off process from any appropriate Collaborative Framework Agreement, or competitive tendering, to procure external legal services from solicitors' firms. For external counsel, the Department uses the Panel and nomination procedures approved by the Attorney-General, details of which are set out on the website of the Attorney-General's Office.

Departmental Legislation

Chris Huhne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criminal offences have been (a) created and (b) abolished by secondary legislation sponsored by his Department since 1 May 2008. [307793]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: No offences were abolished during the relevant period.

The following offences were created during the relevant period by secondary legislation:


2. The Landsbanki Freezing Order 2008 (SI 2008/2668), which came into force on 10 October 2008, created the following offences:

   (i) Article 5: Breach of a freezing prohibition in article 4.
   (ii) Article 7: Knowingly or recklessly providing false information in relation to licenses.
   (iii) Article 11: Liability of officers of bodies corporate.

3. The Burma/Myanmar (Financial Restrictions) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009/1494), which came into force on 18 June 2009, created the following offences:

   (i) Regulation 13: Prohibition against financing designated enterprises.
   (ii) Regulation 14: Prohibition against creating a joint venture.

4. The Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2009 (SI 2009/1747), which came into force on 10 August 2009, created the following offences, in relation to financial sanctions imposed on persons for reasons in relation to terrorism:

   (i) Article 10: Freezing funds and economic resources of a restricted person.
   (ii) Article 11: Making funds or financial services available to a restricted person.
   (iii) Article 12: Making funds or financial services available for the benefit of a restricted person.
   (iv) Article 13: Making economic resources available to a restricted person.
   (v) Article 14: Making economic resources available for the benefit of a restricted person.
   (vi) Article 16: Circumventing prohibitions etc.

5. To ensure the effective transposition of the Payment Services Directive (2007/64/EC) (in force on 1 November 2009) by the Payment Services Regulations (“PSR”) (SI 2009/209), the following offences in Part 9 of the PSR were created:

   (i) Regulation 110: Prohibition on provision of payment services by persons other than payment service providers.
(ii) Regulation 111: False claims to be a payment service provider or exempt.
(iii) Regulation 113: Contravention of regulation 49(2) (disclosure of charges and rate for currency conversion) or regulation 50(2) (disclosure of charge for use of payment instrument).
(iv) Regulation 114: Misleading the FSA or the OFT.
(v) Regulation 116: Liability of officers of bodies corporate etc.

Departmental Manpower

Mr. Blunt: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff of his Department were in its redeployment pool on (a) January, (b) April, (c) July and (d) October 2009. [306711]

Mr. Timms: HM Treasury retain a rolling record of staff in the redeployment pool, rather than a month-by-month record. On 14 December there were 19 staff in the HM Treasury redeployment pool.

Departmental Written Questions

Mr. Harper: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of Parliamentary Questions tabled for written answer by his Department on a named day in session 2008-09 received a substantive answer on that day. [307537]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, East (John Mason) on 9 December 2009, Official Report, column 405W.

Employee Benefit Trusts

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department considers the provision of an interest free loan to be a qualifying benefit for the purpose of tax relief on contributions to an employee benefit trust. [305572]

Mr. Timms [holding answer 9 December 2009]: Provision of an interest free loan is not a qualifying benefit for the purpose of ‘tax relief’ on contributions to an employee benefit trust.

Dr. Cable: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employee benefit trusts registered with HM Revenue and Customs have only one beneficiary. [305761]

Mr. Timms: There is no obligation to notify HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of the number of beneficiaries per Employee Benefit Trust (EBT). In HMRC’s experience EBTs with only one beneficiary are very uncommon.

Equitable Life Ex-gratia Payment Scheme Review

Chloe Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will require Sir John Chadwick to report by a specified date his advice on an ex-gratia payment scheme to Equitable Life policy holders. [306648]

Mr. Byrne: Sir John is making good progress with his work and the Government expect him to submit his final report in spring 2010.

Once the Government have had the opportunity to consider Sir John’s advice, details of a payment scheme that is fair to both taxpayers and policyholders will be announced.

Government Actuary’s Department: Conferences

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Government Actuary’s Department’s buildings attended by civil servants in the Government Actuary’s Department there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307458]

Ian Pearson: The information is as follows:

(a) The Government Actuary and his senior management team currently hold two away days each year to review the Department’s strategy and to formulate a yearly business plan. Prior to May 2008 one away day took place each year. The cost each financial year since 2005-06 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>669</td>
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<td>2007-08</td>
<td>512</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>1,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 (to date)</td>
<td>1,689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) GAD’s staff, as part of their ongoing professional development, attend a number of conferences and seminars. The number of conferences attended and associated costs in each financial year since 2005-06 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of conferences</th>
<th>Cost (£000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 (to date)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Government Securities

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many gilts have been issued by the Government through (a) pre-announced auctions, (b) syndication and (c) mini-tenders in each of the last five years. [307333]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The information requested is available on the DMO’s website at: http://www.dmo.gov.uk/

Housing: Valuation

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the answer of 16 October 2009, Official Report, column 1123W, on housing: valuation, when the code of practice, Valuations for Right to Buy, Right to Acquire and Equity Sharing of Social Housing was (i) first produced and (ii) last updated; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the methodology used by the Valuation Office Agency when calculating the financial value of the potential for further development. [305817]
Ian Pearson: The code of practice, ‘Valuations for Right to Buy, Right to Acquire and Equity Sharing of Social Housing’ was published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in October 2006 and was updated in May 2009.

The method of valuation (‘methodology’) used by the Valuation Office Agency in ‘hope value’ cases, where the valuer reflects the potential for further development in the market value, will vary according to the individual circumstances and attributes of the property being valued. There is no prescribed methodology. The valuation approach adopted is a matter of professional judgement for the valuer using his/her experience and skills (having regard to relevant case law), knowledge of potential purchasers and how the latter would approach the valuation of the subject property.

Inheritance Tax

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many estates paid inheritance tax in each of the last 10 years; (2) how much revenue has accrued to the Treasury from inheritance tax in each of the last 10 years; (3) how many estates he estimates will pay inheritance tax (a) in 2010-11 and (b) in the subsequent 20 years.

Mr. Timms: The numbers of estates which paid inheritance tax can be found at:

The amounts of inheritance tax received each year can be found at:

for years since 2001-02. Annual receipts for older years can be found at:
http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/tax_receipts/1_2_v2_dec05.pdf

Receipts and numbers of estates paying inheritance tax for the years 1999-2000 to 2008-09 are summarised in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax year</th>
<th>Number of estates paying inheritance tax (nearest 1,000)</th>
<th>Inheritance tax receipts (£ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>2,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>2,221</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>2,355</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>2,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>2,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>2,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>3,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>3,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>3,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>2,838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure of 16,000 taxpaying estates in 2008-09 represents 3 per cent. of all estates left on death in that year.

The current forecast for 2009-10 and 2010-11 is for about 15,000 estates paying tax each year. Forecast numbers of taxpayers are not available for later years as they are subject to a great deal of uncertainty because of possible changes to forecasts of asset prices.

Interest Rates

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) pursuant to the Pre-Budget Report, Cm 7747, what assessment he has made of the effect on long-term interest rates of the Government’s borrowing requirement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on UK interest rates of his forecasts for financing and debt management set out in paragraph 7.61 of the Pre-Budget Report, Cm 7747; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to Table B3 of the Pre-Budget Report, Cm 7747, what assessment he has made of the effect on UK interest rates of the level of net debt; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what assessment he has made of future long-term trends in UK interest rates; and if he will make a statement.

Ian Pearson [holding answers 14 December 2009]: UK public debt levels are forecast to remain in line with other major economies, and debt interest costs in 2010-11 as a share of GDP and public expenditure are forecast to remain below the levels in 1997. The Government have set out a credible plan for delivering a sustainable consolidation in the public finances over the medium-term, including the requirement set out in the Fiscal Responsibility Bill that public sector net borrowing is reduced to 5.5 per cent. of GDP or less by 2013-14. The average 10-year yield on government bonds for the current decade (to 9 December 2009) is significantly below the average in any of the previous three decades.

The debt interest forecast uses interest rates based on latest market expectations. The short-term interest rates used for the 2009 pre-Budget report forecast are set out in box B1 in the pre-Budget report 2009 document.

The relationship between gilt yields and gilt supply is not straightforward: it is difficult to separate out the effects of the level of supply from other influences on yields.

Mortgages

Harry Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his policy is on fiscal incentives for people with mortgages on domestic properties who are (a) up to date with their payments and (b) in arrears with their payments to work rather than claim benefits; and what account this policy takes of the practice among mortgage lenders of adjusting their fees to reflect whether or not an applicant is receiving an income from employment.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Contributions can be made towards the mortgage interest costs of homeowners through income support (IS), income-based jobseeker’s allowance (JSA), income-related employment and support allowance (ESA), and pension credit (PC). This is intended to provide a reasonable contribution towards customers’ mortgage interest liabilities in order to protect against repossession. Where the amount paid is less than that charged by the lender, the onus is on the customer to keep the account in order by making any additional payments that are necessary.
For working age customers, a waiting period is served before assistance can be provided. This is because Government believe that those of working age taking on major financial commitments should ensure they are able to maintain these in the short term in the event of a change in circumstances. Last year we announced a temporary reduction in the waiting period from 39 weeks to 13 weeks, to provide additional support during the downturn. At the same time, we introduced a two-year time limit to Support for Mortgage Interest payments for customers claiming jobseeker's allowance. There is also a four week run-on for customers who have been in receipt of IS, ESA or JSA for at least 26 weeks to provide additional security when taking up a new job or entering work.

We are not aware of any practice among mortgage lenders of adjusting their fees to reflect customers' employment status.

**National Debt**

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on steps to reduce the level of Government debt included in the 2009 pre-Budget report, Cm 7747; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Byrne: Treasury Ministers and officials receive representations from a wide variety of organisations. The 2009 pre-Budget report set out the Government's plan to halve the deficit over four years, which is consistent with debt falling as a per cent. of GDP in 2015-16. The Government’s Fiscal Responsibility Bill will enshrine these plans in legislation.

**NHS: Information and Communications Technology**

Mr. Stephen O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the pre-Budget report, Cm 7747, from which components of the National Programme for IT he expects the proposed efficiency savings to be taken.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I have been asked to reply.

Since its inception, the Department has consulted and communicated with its national health service stakeholders, including clinicians, senior NHS managers and information management and technology staff, and the medical professional representative and health regulatory bodies, on a frequent and regular basis about all aspects of the NHS information technology programme. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has also often discussed issues relating to the programme in his regular meetings with the Chancellor.

As part of the current Government-wide drive to find efficiency savings and better value for money on major projects, officials are holding ongoing discussions with the Treasury, and with suppliers, about how these might be generated in relation to the national programme.

**Public Finance**


Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The requested data from the 2009 Long-term public finance report is set out in the tables.

As noted in the 2009 Long-term public finance report, long-term fiscal projections, unlike forecasts, are not based on a detailed analysis of all relevant factors. They are an illustration of how spending and revenue would evolve under a set of given assumptions and should therefore be caveated as involving a high degree of uncertainty.

### First chart from Box 5.B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2029</th>
<th>2039</th>
<th>2049</th>
<th>2059</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>319</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low migration</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>303</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low population</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>191</td>
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<td>280</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.75 per cent. productivity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 per cent. productivity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>363</td>
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### Second chart from Box 5.B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP per capita</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2029</th>
<th>2039</th>
<th>2049</th>
<th>2059</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>258</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low migration</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>170</td>
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<td>250</td>
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<td>Low population</td>
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<td>121</td>
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<td>175</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.75 per cent. productivity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>159</td>
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<td>2.25 per cent. productivity</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>231</td>
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### Data from chart 6.B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2029-30</th>
<th>2039-40</th>
<th>2049-50</th>
<th>2059-60</th>
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<td>High longevity</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<td>Low population</td>
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<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
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<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 Productivity</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<td>10.3</td>
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<td>1.75 Productivity</td>
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<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings and CPI growth</td>
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<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling drug prices</td>
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<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy ageing</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
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### Data from chart 6.C

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Long-term care</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2029-30</th>
<th>2039-40</th>
<th>2049-30</th>
<th>2059-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>Low migration</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<td>Low population</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<td>2.25 Productivity</td>
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<td>1.75 Productivity</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<td>Constant health</td>
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### Data from chart 6.D

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<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2029-30</th>
<th>2039-40</th>
<th>2049-50</th>
<th>2059-60</th>
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<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low migration</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low population</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 Productivity</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.75 Productivity</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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### Data from chart 6.E

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Public service pensions</th>
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<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2029-30</th>
<th>2039-40</th>
<th>2049-50</th>
<th>2059-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 Productivity</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.75 Productivity</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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### Data from chart 6.F

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pensions</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2029-30</th>
<th>2039-40</th>
<th>2049-50</th>
<th>2059-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low migration</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low population</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 Productivity</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.75 Productivity</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Data from chart 6.1

### Taxes on consumption and production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2029-30</th>
<th>2039-40</th>
<th>2049-50</th>
<th>2059-60</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High longevity</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low life expectancy</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low migration</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS Principal</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 Productivity</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.75 Productivity</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced tobaccos and alcohol</td>
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<td>11.0</td>
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<td>11.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased tobacco and alcohol</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fertility</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Public Sector: Pay

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many higher paid public sector posts will require his Department’s approval for payment of a salary above a defined level.  

**Mr. Byrne:** All public sector posts requiring ministerial approval of the appointment where there is a proposal to pay a salary of £150,000 or more will require my approval. In addition, any proposals to make a non-consolidated performance related payment of £50,000 or more to such posts will also require my approval. Detailed guidance on the process for applying for approval will be issued shortly.

For all other public sector appointments, where ministerial approval is not required, the relevant Secretary of State will expect all public organisations within their sectors to publicly justify any appointments on salaries of £150,000 or more as well as the payment of £50,000 or more in non-consolidated performance pay.

In terms of the number of posts requiring Treasury approval, this will depend on demand for senior public sector staff going forward, and the relevant labour market conditions at the time.

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the likely reduction in the number of higher paid public sector posts in the next three years.

**Mr. Byrne:** The Government are committed to re-shaping the civil service and “Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government” announced that Government will modernise civil service structures and reduce the cost of the senior civil service, saving £100 million annually within three years.

### Revenue and Customs: Conferences

**Mr. Graham Stuart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) buildings attended by civil servants in HMRC there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each.

**Mr. Timms:** The information requested is not available as HM Revenue and Customs’ systems do not separately identify away days and conferences.

### Revenue and Customs: Manpower

**Mr. Liddell-Grainger:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many (a) staff are directly employed and (b) consultants there are in each department of HM Revenue and Customs.

**Mr. Timms:** The number of staff directly employed by each business unit of HM Revenue and Customs as at 1 December 2009 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directorate</th>
<th>Headcount</th>
<th>Full-time equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjudicator’s Office</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Avoidance Group</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits and Credits</td>
<td>7,177</td>
<td>6,382.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Customer Unit</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>202.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business International</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capability Improvement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Compliance</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>293.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Policy</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>145.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman, CEO and Head of Tax</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity, Assets and Residence</td>
<td>2,468</td>
<td>2285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>113.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directorate</th>
<th>Headcount</th>
<th>Full-time equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>210.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance and Enforcement Programme</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>313.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation Tax and VAT</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>354.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Investigation</td>
<td>2,192</td>
<td>2,130.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Contact</td>
<td>12,102</td>
<td>11,193.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Operations</td>
<td>17,330</td>
<td>14,873.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Management and Banking</td>
<td>7,846</td>
<td>6,913.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Transformation Programme</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detection</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates and Support Services</td>
<td>1,751</td>
<td>1,635.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excise, Customs, Stamps and Money</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>1,578.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>354.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Banking Services</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>115.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>87.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Management Services</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td>1,292.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Audit</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>128.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, Analysis and Intelligence</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>410.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Business Service</td>
<td>1,578</td>
<td>1,505.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Compliance</td>
<td>14,558</td>
<td>13,401.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacesetter Business</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Function</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>1,568.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSN (PAYE, SA and NIC)</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>370.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk and Intelligence Services</td>
<td>2,875</td>
<td>2,681.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>99.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor’s Office</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>370.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Investigations</td>
<td>1,646</td>
<td>1,575.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Development</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80,478</td>
<td>73,002.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drivers of Compliance (two phases)
DWP Joint Working trial (2nd phase)
Evaluation of the Changes to Capital Gains Tax Since 1998
Evaluation of the redesign of Enquiry Centres
Gift Aid Donor Research
HMRC Customer Service Survey (four phases)
HMRC Research on SA Online Registration (two phases)
Individuals Prioritisation (two phases)
Innovative Guidance
Key Factsheets for Employees and Pensioners
Learning from Mistakes—Errors Work (two phases)
March 2007 in-year customer service survey
Panel Study of Tax Credit and Child Benefit Claimants 2008-11
Pensioners quantitative survey
Pensions Tax Simplification evaluation—Wave 2
Pensions Taxation Reforms: A Baseline Survey of Individuals
Pre SA mandation research (two phases)
Reputation Index
Reputation Tracking
Research to explore the feasibility of collecting in-year estimates from tax credit claimants
SA Products Evaluation
Saving Gateway Second Pilot—Follow-Up Research
Share Incentives Plan and Save as You Earn Survey of Employers and Employees (two phases)
Survey of Savings and Investments for children: A baseline survey at the inception of the Child Trust Fund
Survey of Trustees and Settlors Behaviour and Reasons for Setting up Trusts
Tax credit claim form—Usability Testing
Tax Credits Campaign Tracking
Tax Credits Campaign Tracking Birmingham Pilot
Tax Credits Campaign Tracking Renewals
Tax Credits Renewals Guidance Notes Testing
Tax Credits Trailblazers
Tax for Business Campaign and Self Assessment Campaign
Tax For Business Campaign Tracking Wave 6
Tax Matters
Taxback Project
Taxpayer Advertising Tracking
Understanding the relationships between HMRC customers, the Voluntary and Community Sector and HMRC.

Revenue and Customs: Sudbury

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many enquiries were made to HM Revenue and Customs enquiry centre at Crown Building, Sudbury in each of the last three years.

Mr. Timms: The number of customers who have visited Sudbury Enquiry Centre since 2006-07 is shown in the following table. The number of appointments represents those customers who needed face to face advice to resolve their enquiry. The remainder had their enquiry dealt with by being directed to HMRC’s telephone helplines or website.
Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many members of staff were employed at HM Revenue and Customs enquiry centre at Crown Building, Sudbury in each of the last three years.

Mr. Timms: The number of full-time equivalent staff employed at the HMRC Enquiry Centre Sudbury is shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December each year</th>
<th>Staff (full-time equivalent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there are plans to reduce the opening hours of the HM Revenue and Customs enquiry centre at Crown Building, Sudbury.

Mr. Timms: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) on 14 December 2009, Official Report, column 855W and confirm that Sudbury Enquiry Centre is included in the first phase of the review. No decision has yet been taken on new opening patterns for this Enquiry Centre.

Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how many calls an interpreter was provided on (a) the tax credits public helpline, (b) the tax credits intermediaries helpline, (c) the child benefit public helpline and (d) all other HM Revenue and Customs helplines in (i) 2005-06, (ii) 2006-07, (iii) 2007-08 and (iv) 2008-09.

Mr. Timms: The breakdown requested is not available, as HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) do not capture the use of interpretation services by helpline. In 2007-08 HMRC used interpretation services across its helpline services in a total of 420,000 occasions; in 2008-09 this figure was 839,000.

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many call-backs should be offered by DWP and HMRC contact centre staff when a customer is calling from a mobile phone, (b) HMRC helpline numbers should be transferred from 0845 to 0800 numbers and (c) the information about the cost of calling HMRC should be improved significantly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has invited feedback and comments on its Race Equality Scheme (RES) for the period 2008-11 via its website at: www.hmrc.gov.uk/about/res-2008-11.pdf

HMRC Contact Centres recognise that some customers can face issues around language and that these issues present barriers in their dealings with the Department. In the last 12 months the Department has carried out a review of the interpretation services it offers those customers. As a result it has introduced a pilot that enables a third party, nominated by the customer, to translate on their behalf. If, when evaluated, this pilot shows the anticipated improvements to customer experience, this approach will be adopted across the entire Contact Centre network.

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken in the last 12 months to improve the service of the child benefit public helpline to disabled people under the disability equality duty in the last 12 months; and what improvements are planned for the next 12 months.

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have actively sought the engagement of both internal and external stakeholders to identify initiatives to improve the provision of services to customers with disabilities through the Department’s Disabled Customer Contact Group (DCCG). As a result of this work HMRC Contact Centres, which administer both the Tax Credits and Child Benefits helplines, carried out a review of the Textphone service which is used to support customers who have a hearing or speech impairment. Following this review HMRC will be implementing a series of changes to improve the access to, and the reliability of, this service.

In addition, as part of its Disability Discrimination Act action plan for 2010, HMRC is looking to improve staff awareness of disability issues through enhanced training so that the Department better identifies and responds to the needs of disabled customers.

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the answer of 11 June 2009, Official Report, column 983W, on welfare tax credits: telephone services, what the evidential basis is that some customers will pay more, others will pay less and for others there will be no change in relation to a charge from 0845 numbers to 0300.

Mr. Timms: In the last year HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have actively sought the engagement of both internal and external stakeholders to identify initiatives to improve the provision of services to customers with disabilities through the Department’s Disabled Customer Contact Group (DCCG). As a result of this work HMRC Contact Centres, which administer both the Tax Credits and Child Benefits helplines, carried out a review of the Textphone service which is used to support customers who have a hearing or speech impairment. Following this review HMRC will be implementing a series of changes to improve the access to, and the reliability of, this service.

In addition, as part of its Disability Discrimination Act action plan for 2010, HMRC is looking to improve staff awareness of disability issues through enhanced training so that the Department better identifies and responds to the needs of disabled customers.
Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs does not hold information on individual customers call charges as calls are charged to the customer based on the tariff arrangements they have with their service provider, the device they use for the call and the location from which they call.

However, reviews carried out of telephone service provider’s tariff websites and Ofcom’s own guide to telephone charges “Number Crunching” available at www.ofcom.org/files/numbering/2009/08/numbering.pdf, indicate that some customers will pay more, others will pay less and for others there will be no change in relation to a change from 0845 numbers to 0300.

Smuggling: Ivory

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much ivory has been seized in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [307634]

Huw Irranca-Davies: I have been asked to reply.

During the five-year period from 2004 to 2009, the UK Border Agency made the following ivory seizures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Seizures</th>
<th>Number of Pieces/weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>248 pieces plus 2,225 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44 pieces plus 857 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>111 pieces plus 3,310 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64 pieces plus 9,747 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19 pieces plus 2,150 grams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some ivory seizures are recorded in weight and others by the number of pieces seized.

We do not hold data on seizures carried out by local police forces.

Tax Avoidance: Yorkshire and the Humber

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the statement of 9 December 2009, Official Report, column 368, on the pre-Budget report, how many of the 100,000 offshore accounts being investigated by HM Revenue and Customs are thought to be held by persons or institutions in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) City of York. [307620]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is not currently available.

The figure of 100,000 refers to the potential number of offshore account details HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will receive once all the relevant data from the banks is received. HMRC will be collating this information into a database and should be able to provide analysis based on this later this year.

Many of these account holders may already be making correct returns and paying the right amount of tax. Others may choose to take advantage of the New Disclosure Opportunity (NDO) and be in the process of disclosing unpaid liabilities voluntarily. HMRC will commence investigations once the NDO has closed on 12 March 2010.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were convicted of tax evasion in each year since 2005; and if he will make a statement. [308377]

The Solicitor-General: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is contained in the following table. This information has only been collected centrally since 2006-07 and figures for earlier years could be determined only at a disproportionate cost. While the number of cases prosecuted remained fairly even over the three years indicated, the number of individuals convicted rose in 2007-08 due to a number of long running complex prosecutions resulting in successful outcomes in that year. Many were multi-handed cases in which most or all defendants were convicted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of individuals convicted in England and Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much and what percentage of total taxation revenue has accrued to the Treasury from taxation on (a) the financial sector and (b) the housing sector in each of the last 12 years. [307332]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is not available.

However, information on tax receipts by head of duty is available as follows:

- Stamp duty, capital gains tax and inheritance tax data are available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/public_finances_databank.xls
- Capital gains tax and inheritance tax figures will reflect both housing and financial assets. Stamp duty will reflect shares, housing and commercial property.
- Pay As You Earn tax deducted from pay in the financial sector is available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stats/income_tax/table2-10.pdf
- This covers the period 1999-2000 to 2006-07.
- Corporation tax data are available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stats/corporate_tax/table11_1.pdf
- This covers the period 2000-01 to 2008-09.

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised through bingo taxation in each year since 2005. [307589]

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised through bingo taxation in each year since 2005.

Taxation: Bingo
Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Information on revenue collected from betting and gaming duties is published by HMRC and can be found in the online betting and gaming bulletin at the following address: https://www.uktradeinfo.com/index.cfm?task=bullbett

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in 2009 on the level of bingo taxation. [307590]

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Treasury Ministers and officials meet with, and receive representations from, a wide range of organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors as part of the usual policymaking process. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government’s practice to provide details of all such representations.

Mr. Dodds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of receipts from indirect taxation was from bingo taxation in 2008-09. [307591]

Revenue collected from bingo duty in 2008-09 equalled 0.05 per cent. of total indirect taxes receipts.

Taxation: Holiday Accommodation

Mr. Weir: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what field research and site visits to self-catering properties were conducted by HM Revenue and Customs prior to the publication of its technical note, Withdrawing the Furnished Holiday Lettings Rules from 2010-11, published on 9 December 2009. [307293]

Withdrawing the Furnished Holiday Lettings Rules prior to the publication of its technical note, properties were conducted by HM Revenue and Customs what field research and site visits to self-catering properties were conducted by HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) and can be found at: https://www.uktradeinfo.com

Revenue collected from bingo duty in 2008-09 equalled 0.05 per cent. of total indirect taxes receipts.

Mr. Dodds [holding answer 16 December 2009]: The technical note entitled “Withdrawing the Furnished Holiday Lettings Rules from 2010-11” was prepared on the basis of representations received and meetings held with interested parties together with other publicly available information. We welcome comments on the note.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Information on receipts from various tax regimes is published by HMRC and can be found at:

https://www.uktradeinfo.com

Revenue collected from bingo duty in 2008-09 equalled 0.05 per cent. of total indirect taxes receipts.

Taxation: Holiday Accommodation

Mr. Weir: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of indirect tax paid by UK residents with qualifying furnished holiday lettings (FHLs) in the European Economic Area have submitted claims under the FHLs rules since the extension of the rules to such properties in April 2009. [307778]

Mr. Timms: Under the self assessment rules, businesses are not required to submit evidence when they make a tax claim, however they are required to maintain records to support their claim. HM Revenue and Customs may ask to see these records if the claim is selected for a compliance check.

Taxation: Revenues

Mr. Sanders: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the proportion of revenue accruing to the Exchequer through indirect taxation from persons in the (a) bottom quintile and (b) top quintile of earners. [306564]

Mr. Timms: Expenditure data are, conventionally, segmented by equivalentised household income, rather than earner income. The proportions of indirect tax paid by the top and bottom quintile of all households ranked by equivalised disposable income can be calculated from the information provided in table 14A of “The effects of taxes and benefits on household income, 2006/07”, available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/elmr/07_08/downloads/ELMR_Jul08_Jones.pdf

Transfer Pricing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many advance pricing agreements (a) have been made and (b) were in force with multinational companies in each year since 2005; and in how many such cases (i) enforcement action was taken and (ii) penalties levied in transfer pricing disputes in each year. [307353]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is provided in the following tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advance pricing agreements</th>
<th>Made</th>
<th>In force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of cases involving large business where transfer pricing adjustments were made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2008-09 49 cases involving smaller businesses were settled involving adjustments.

No penalties were charged on transfer pricing issues in the years 2006-07 and 2007-08, penalties have been charged during 2008-09 but details of the number of cases where a penalty was appropriate is not readily available.
Welfare Tax Credits

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the longest time has been between a tax credit claim being made and payment being started for (a) a UK national, (b) all non-UK EEA nationals, (c) an A8 EEA national, (d) an A2 EEA national and (e) a non-European national in (i) 2005-06, (ii) 2006-07, (iii) 2007-08 and (iv) 2008-09. [308106]

Mr. Timms: The specific information requested is only available at disproportionate cost.

For information about HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) targets and performance outturn in relation to tax credit in 2007-08 and earlier years, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Northavon (Steve Webb) on 24 February 2009, Official Report, columns 534-36W. Information for 2008-09 was published at paragraph 2.6 in the HMRC departmental report published at:

www.hmrc.gov.uk/about/dept-ann-rep09.pdf

More complex claims, including those from customers arriving from abroad, often require HMRC to make more detailed inquiries, and so HMRC may be unable to process and pay them within the usual target times. HMRC is continuously working to identify how resources can be most effectively deployed to achieve its revised aims.

Welfare Tax Credits: Appeals

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many appeals relating to tax credits were lodged by (a) UK nationals, (b) non-UK EEA nationals, (c) A8 EEA nationals, (d) A2 EEA nationals and (e) non-European nationals in (i) 2005-06, (ii) 2006-07, (iii) 2007-08 and (iv) 2008-09; (2) how many appeals in child benefit cases were lodged by (a) UK nationals, (b) non-UK EEA nationals, (c) A8 EEA nationals, (d) A2 EEA nationals and (e) non-European nationals in (i) 2005-06, (ii) 2006-07, (iii) 2007-08 and (iv) 2008-09. [308110]

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) does not collect information on appeals by nationality of the appellants.

For information about the numbers of appeals made against tax credits decisions in 2005-06; 2006-07 and 2007-08 I refer my right hon. Friend to the answers given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and the hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr. Hammond) on 11 March 2008, Official Report, column 371-72W, and the answer I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff Central (Jenny Willott) on 13 October 2008, Official Report, column 1004W. HMRC received around 12,100 appeals against tax credits decisions in 2008-09.

The number of appeals made against child benefit decisions in each year is shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Child Benefit (Thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For information relating to earlier years I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Hoban) on 18 February 2008, Official Report, columns 368-69W.

Welfare Tax Credits: Complaints

John Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the (a) average and (b) longest time to resolve a tax credits complaint by a member of the public was in (i) 2005-06, (ii) 2006-07, (iii) 2007-08 and (iv) 2008-09. [308111]

Mr. Timms: The information on average and longest time is not available.

The following table sets out the time taken to provide a substantive response to written complaints on tax credits in 2008-09.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Taken</th>
<th>Percentage Clearance</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 week</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 weeks</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 weeks</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 weeks</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 5 weeks</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 weeks</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For information relating to earlier years I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Northavon (Steve Webb) on 24 February 2009, Official Report, columns 534-36W.

Welfare Tax Credits: Expenditure

Steve Webb: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of reducing the second income threshold in the tax credit system from £50,000 to £40,000; and if he will estimate the number of people who would have their awards reduced to zero as a result. [304667]

Mr. Timms: The estimated annual saving from reducing the second income threshold from £50,000 to £40,000 is around £135 million. As a result of this change an estimated 195,000 families would have their awards reduced to zero, assuming a 6.67 per cent. taper rate for families with income above £40,000.

Wind Farms

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many wind farms are on the Valuation Office Agency (a) local rating list and (b) national rating list, and what criteria are used to determine the list on which a hereditament is placed. [306728]

Ian Pearson: All 116 onshore wind farms in England and Wales appear on the local rating lists, none are on the central lists.

All hereditaments that are not exempt and not wholly domestic are required to be shown in a local rating list unless the Secretary of State has designated the occupier as a person whose hereditaments are required to be shown in a central list.
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Afghanistan

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department’s policy is on decompression periods for its staff working in Afghanistan.
[305763]

Chris Bryant: Current Foreign and Commonwealth Office policy on decompression breaks in Afghanistan is that staff work a six week at Post/two weeks decompression break rotation. Decompression breaks are linked to the overall security situation, which can change over a posting. Staff may be reduced or withdrawn as the security situation improves.

Mr. Holloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department plans to increase the number of its personnel stationed in Afghanistan in the next 12 months.
[307733]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There are no plans to increase the number of staff in Afghanistan at present. However, we constantly review our staffing requirements to ensure we have sufficient numbers of staff to meet our objectives in Afghanistan.

Mr. Holloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans are in place to ensure that Christmas cards and gifts reach officials of his Department in Afghanistan in time for Christmas.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We have an arrangement with the British Forces Post Office for the delivery of mail to civilian personnel serving in Afghanistan on behalf of the Government.

Afghanistan: Politics and Government

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the Prime Minister’s Statement of 30 November 2009, Official Report, columns 831-36W, on Afghanistan and Pakistan, what agreements have been reached with (a) the government of Afghanistan and (b) international partners on sources of funding for the programme of economic growth; how much such funding he expects to be available to that programme; and when he expects that programme to be implemented.
[304937]

Mr. Douglas Alexander: I have been asked to reply.

In June 2008, the Government of Afghanistan published its Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), covering the period 2008 to 2013. The international community pledged a total of US $21 billion to the ANDS, with Afghan domestic revenues expected to contribute US $6.8 billion.

The Department for International Development (DFID) committed £510 million to implementation of the ANDS between 2009 and 2013. The alignment of DFID funding with ANDS priorities is enhanced by channelling at least 50 per cent. of resources through Afghan Government systems.
It is not possible to provide information on future reductions in funding because plans for financial year 2010-11 are currently being formulated.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects sponsored by his Department in Afghanistan have been wound up or discontinued in each year since 2001; and for which projects sponsored by his Department in Afghanistan a date for winding up or discontinuance has been set. [305472]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Project closure occurs for a number of reasons including: completed delivery; evaluation that further expenditure will not deliver sufficient value-for-money for the project to remain viable; merger with another project; transfer of the project to another donor.

For the financial years 2001-02 to 2005-06 inclusive, the information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Since 2006 the following projects have been closed or have ceased to be funded by the FCO:

**Financial year 2006 to 2007**
- Ministry of Counter Narcotics Communications Project
- Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs Project Team
- Joint training programme for Afghan/Pakistani journalists
- Support for Afghan National Army - patrol vehicles
- Strengthening Peace Programme
- Train the Trainer demining programme
- HALO Trust
- Drug Demand Reduction

**Financial year 2007 to 2008**
- Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan Mobile Detection Teams
- Helmand Police Drug Control Use
- Newsletters for Mullahs
- Campaign to support Reconciliation
- Detention Facility Project
- Women Affecting Change Action Aid
- Afghan Women Council
- Afghan Women’s Hour.

It is not possible to provide information on future project closures because plans for 2010-11 are currently being formulated.

**Andrew Symeou**

**Joan Ryan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions (a) he, (b) other Ministers at his Department, (c) officials of his Department, (d) officials at the British Embassy in Greece and (e) British Consular staff in Greece have had with the Greek authorities on the detention of Andrew Symeou; and if he will make a statement. [308718]

**Chris Bryant:** There have been no ministerial discussions with the Greek authorities over this case.

On 25 November 2009, our ambassador to Greece met the newly appointed Greek Minister of Justice and registered our interest in several consular cases involving British nationals, including that of Andrew Symeou.

Our consular staff in Greece have been liaising with the Greek police and prison authorities since Andrew Symeou was extradited and detained in July 2009. Their role is essentially one of welfare and they are not able to become involved in the legal aspects of his case. The Greek authorities are not obliged to provide consular officials with information about the judicial progress of consular cases involving British nationals and in Andrew Symeou’s case have not done so.

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department is providing to Andrew Symeou, detained in Korydallos prison in Athens; what assessment his Department has made of conditions of detention at the prison; and if he will make a statement. [308720]

**Chris Bryant:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our embassy in Athens have been providing appropriate consular assistance to Mr. Symeou and his family since his extradition to Greece in July 2009 on manslaughter charges. The consular role when a British national is detained overseas is essentially one of welfare. We actively monitor the well-being of British nationals who are arrested or detained and try to ensure that their treatment is in line with internationally accepted standards and local practices.

The British consul in Greece visited Mr. Symeou in Korydallos prison on 18 December 2009. The assessment from the consular staff was that Mr. Symeou’s detention is in line with local standards. The consular section of our embassy in Athens provides a guidance pack for British nationals imprisoned in Greece which explains about the Greek prison system and gives information about general prison conditions. Should consular staff have concerns over the treatment of Mr. Symeou then we would consider raising these with the relevant authorities with Mr. Symeou’s permission.

Consular staff will continue to monitor Mr. Symeou’s welfare and will provide him with all appropriate assistance while he is in Greece.

**Association of South East Asian Nations: Human Rights**

**Mr. Keith Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the Government are providing to the new ASEAN inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights. [308004]

**Chris Bryant:** The UK welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights (AICHR) when it was formally launched in October 2009. At this stage member countries are in the process of deciding where the institution will be based and have appointed national Commissioners. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have already met with the representative of the Philippines. Our accredited Ambassador to ASEAN is following developments. The UK, and the EU as a whole, is currently considering the assistance and technical expertise that it could usefully provide to the AICHR as it develops. The UK will continue to engage with civil society with ASEAN countries on human rights issues, and encourage the establishment of formal links between these groups and the AICHR.
Australia: Foreign Relations

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his Australian counterpart to discuss (a) UK-Australian relations and (b) global issues. [308357]

Chris Bryant: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State speaks to Stephen Smith, his Australian counterpart on a regular basis on a full range of issues including climate change, Afghanistan, Fiji and the Commonwealth and UK-Australian relations. The last formal bilateral talks were held in the UK in November 2008. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met Stephen Smith at the time of the UN General Assembly in October 2009 in New York. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to meet his Australian counterpart at the Afghanistan Conference due to be held in London in January 2010.

British Indian Ocean Territory

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what tsunami-warning systems are in place for the purposes of protecting the British Indian Ocean Territory. [309083]

Chris Bryant: There are no tsunami-warning systems in the British Indian Ocean Territory. However, in the event of a tsunami, military personnel on Diego Garcia would receive warnings from the UK and US.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Environment Protection

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for St Ives of 9 December 2009, Official Report, column 356W, on the British Indian Ocean Territory: environment protection, when he expects the consultation on the establishment of a Marine Protected Area to conclude. [308817]

Chris Bryant: 12 February 2010.

British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many offenders held in prisons in (a) the Cayman Islands, (b) Anguilla and (c) the British Virgin Islands are serving time for knife-related offences. [309077]

Chris Bryant: The prison authorities in the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands have advised that there are currently no offenders serving time for knife-related offences. Anguilla has advised that 20 offenders are serving time for knife-related offences. Of this number, 10 have been convicted and 10 are on remand.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many offenders held in prisons in (a) the Cayman Islands, (b) Anguilla and (c) the British Virgin Islands are serving time for drug-related offences. [309078]

Chris Bryant: The prison authorities in the Cayman Islands, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands have advised that there are 49, four and 21 prisoners serving time for drug-related offences in each territory respectively. There are a further 20 offenders in the Cayman Islands and two offenders in the British Virgin Islands on remand.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any Royal visits to the (a) British Overseas Territories and (b) Crown Dependencies are planned to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. [309081]

Chris Bryant: Planning for the Queen’s diamond jubilee celebrations is at an early stage. Royal visits overseas are not announced until a few weeks before a visit takes place.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on the development of an over-arching, long-term template for energy generation in the British Overseas Territories. [309102]

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for energy issues has been devolved to the overseas territories. I have not discussed the development of an over-arching, long-term template for energy generation in the British overseas territories with the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. However, where necessary our respective Departments liaise over energy issues relating to the overseas territories.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the proportion of those children eligible to attend who are enrolled in the education system in (a) Bermuda, (b) Anguilla and (c) the British Virgin Islands. [309104]

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for education in Bermuda, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands rests with the Government of each territory. The Government do not hold this information.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to take steps to enable British Overseas Territories to apply for funding for environmental conservation projects through the Global Environment Facility. [309108]

Chris Bryant: The Government have asked the independent Global Environment Facility to consider funding for environmental projects in the overseas territories, but this has been refused. We therefore assist the overseas territories in seeking funding for environmental projects from other sources.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British Overseas Territories are members of the Global Island Partnership. [309109]
Chris Bryant: The following British overseas territories are members of the Global Island Partnership:
    British Virgin Islands
    Cayman Islands
    Gibraltar
    St. Helena
    Tristan da Cunha
    Ascension.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much high-level radioactive waste is stored in each of the British Overseas Territories.

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for environmental and energy-related matters rests with the governments of the overseas territories who hold the requested information.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with reference to the answer of 10 June 2009, Official Report, column 166W, on British Overseas Territories: young offenders, how many of the 2,578 records of persons aged 16 years and under held on the Overseas Territories Regional Crime Intelligence System refer to (a) drug and (b) alcohol-related offences.

Chris Bryant: Of the 2,578 records held on the Overseas Territories Regional Criminal Intelligence System that relate to young offenders aged 16 and under, 144 are drug related and 28 are alcohol related.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British Overseas Territories have a National Olympic Committee.

Chris Bryant: Three British overseas territories have a National Olympic Committee which is recognised by the International Olympic Committee: Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands.

Burma: United Nations

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has had with UN counterparts on securing a replacement for Mr Ibrahim Gambari as the UN Special Envoy to Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The replacement of Ibrahim Gambari as UN envoy to Burma is a matter for the UN Secretary General. However, Burma remains high on the Government’s agenda and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister regularly speaks with the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki - moon, about the issue. We have underlined our ongoing support for his personal engagement and the role of his good offices mission. We are aware that Mr. Gambari will become head of the UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur and we look forward to working closely with whoever is chosen to replace him in this important role.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the proportion of waste products (a) disposed of in landfills and (b) recycled in each of the British Caribbean Overseas Territories.

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for waste disposal and re-cycling in the Caribbean overseas territories rests with the government of each territory. The Government do not hold this information.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the average energy consumption by household in each British Caribbean Overseas Territory.

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for energy consumption in the Caribbean overseas territories rests with the government of each territory. The Government do not hold this information.

Caribbean: Crime Prevention

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department has provided to the governments of British Caribbean Overseas Territories to assist with anti-knife and anti-firearms campaigns.

Chris Bryant: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office-funded overseas territories law enforcement adviser based in Miami (a former Metropolitan police officer) provides advice and guidance to governors and overseas territory leaders and police commissioners. Specific assistance is being given to Bermuda where the law enforcement adviser is in contact with the Commissioner of Police and UK and US law enforcement agencies.

Caribbean: Human Trafficking

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had on people-trafficking in the British Caribbean Overseas Territories with representatives of those territories.

Chris Bryant: People trafficking was discussed at a Foreign and Commonwealth Office-funded workshop for Chief Immigration Officers in the Cayman Islands in February 2009, and at the Caribbean Overseas Territories and Bermuda Criminal Justice Conference in the British Virgin Islands in May 2009 attended by customs, immigration, police and prison departments.

The Overseas Territories Law Enforcement Adviser holds regular discussions with the police and immigration department in the Turks and Caicos Islands and the US Coast Guard about the trafficking of Haitian migrants.

Caribbean: Wind Power

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the number of wind turbines operating in each of the British Caribbean Overseas Territories.

Caribbean

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the proportion of waste products (a) disposed of in landfills and (b) recycled in each of the British Caribbean Overseas Territories.

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for waste disposal and re-cycling in the Caribbean overseas territories rests with the government of each territory. The Government do not hold this information.

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Chris Bryant: Responsibility for energy consumption in the Caribbean overseas territories rests with the government of each territory. The Government do not hold this information.

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Caribbean: Wind Power

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the number of wind turbines operating in each of the British Caribbean Overseas Territories.

Caribbean
Chris Bryant: Responsibility for energy and wind turbines in the Caribbean Overseas Territories rests with the Government of each territory.

Climate Change: Antarctic

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British Antarctic Survey has commissioned research into the causes and effects of climate change and global warming in the last three years.

Chris Bryant: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given on 9 December 2009, Official Report, column 376W and on 19 October 2009, Official Report, column 1239W. As indicated previously, the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) has developed a new strategic science plan, Polar Science for Planet Earth. This is described in a new publication (http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/about_bas/publications/pspe_document.pdf) which identifies several critical research challenges concerning climate change and its impacts. In addition, BAS is leading a major initiative (Ice2sea), funded by the EU, aimed at improving projections of the contribution of ice to future sea-level rise.

Colombia

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will visit Colombia to discuss reports of murders of trade unionists in that country.

Chris Bryant: I have no plans to visit Colombia for the time being.

Colombia: EU External Trade

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Government's policy is on proposals for a free trade agreement between Colombia and the EU.

Chris Bryant: The UK supports free trade agreements with developing countries like Colombia because we believe the resulting economic opportunities lead to better social conditions. The UK has led efforts within the EU to ensure that the human rights clause is a key component of the agreement, which enables suspension of the agreement if it is breached. The clause will act as a catalyst for frank dialogue with the Government of Colombia on the issue.

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of representations made by fellow EU members in their respective national parliaments, nor would it be appropriate for me to comment on them.

Chris Bryant: I am neither privy to representations made by fellow EU members in their respective national parliaments, nor would it be appropriate for me to comment on them.

Crown Dependencies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories have not implemented the provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Mr. Wills: I have been asked to reply.

Two Crown Dependencies (the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey) have not yet implemented the provisions of the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women but have begun the necessary preparatory work. The convention and its Optional Protocol have however been extended to the Isle of Man.

The convention has so far been extended to three Overseas Territories (the British Virgin Islands, the Falkland Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands). At the 2009 Overseas Territories Consultative Council, Overseas Territories leaders agreed to finalise action within the territories to enable extension of the convention to all the populated territories during 2010.

Information on the ratification of UN conventions is in the public domain at:


Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories have not implemented the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr. Wills: I have been asked to reply.

Two Crown Dependencies (the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey) have not yet implemented the provisions of the UN convention on the rights of the child but have begun the necessary preparatory work. The convention has been extended to the Isle of Man, though not as yet the Optional Protocols.

The convention has been extended to all of the Overseas Territories except Gibraltar.

Information on the ratification of UN conventions is in the public domain at:


Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories have not implemented the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
Mr. Wills: I have been asked to reply.

None of the Crown Dependencies has yet implemented the provisions of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, but they have begun the necessary preparatory work. No Overseas Territories have yet implemented the provisions of the convention.

Information on the ratification of UN conventions is in the public domain at:

Departmental Art Works

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent on art works in the last 12 months. [306443]

Chris Bryant: Works of art displayed in Foreign and Commonwealth Office buildings in the UK and throughout the network are from the Government Art Collection (GAC), which publishes an annual list of acquisitions. The most recent details of acquisitions made by the GAC were published on 5 October 2009 and are available on the GAC website:
http://www.gac.culture.gov.uk/information/publications.asp

Departmental Conferences

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent by his Department and its agencies on conferences they organised which were subsequently cancelled in each of the last three years; and what the conferences they organised which were subsequently cancelled only one conference: [308827]

Chris Bryant: The information on conferences organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s network of diplomatic posts overseas and Directorates in the UK is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate cost.

Over the last three years Wilton Park has organised and then cancelled only one conference:
- June 2008—Tackling Overseas Bribery: developing the UK strategy

The only cancellation cost incurred was £990.26 for flights.

Departmental Information and Communications Technology

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what pay band his Department’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed; whether the CIO is employed on a fixed-term or permanent contract; and what the size is of the budget for which the CIO is responsible in the period 2009-10. [307565]

Chris Bryant: I refer the hon. Member to pages 94 and 96 of Volume Two of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) Departmental Report and Resource Accounts for Financial Year 2008-09 (HC 460-11), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The FCO’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) is employed on a fixed term contract.

The CIO’s total budget for financial year 2009-10 is £114 million for administration costs and £46 million capital expenditure.

Departmental Manpower

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with reference to the FCO-DfID Shared Services Plan of November 2006, whether the deadline to harmonise the pay and conditions of support staff in co-located offices by March 2009 has been met; and what arrangements exist for harmonisation of the pay and conditions of non-support staff in co-located offices. [307046]

David Miliband: Following a period of consultation and production of guidance, this exercise is now well under way. The process involves review and alignment of terms and conditions of service for locally engaged staff through joint pay reviews. Five posts have already completed the exercise and 12 more have started the process. The remainder of the posts concerned will undertake the exercise during 2010.

Departmental Personnel

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what capacity (a) Nicholas Banner and (b) Gavin Mackay are employed by his Department. [309258]

Chris Bryant: Nicholas Banner is on unpaid leave from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Gavin Mackay has now retired from the FCO.

Departmental Training

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the (a) date, (b) location and (c) cost was of each of the last four Departmental away days that he attended. [305508]

Chris Bryant: The Foreign Secretary attends the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Board away day twice a year. The details of the last four meetings are as follows:
- 17 September 2009 at 1 Carlton Gardens, total cost: £591;
- 5 January 2009 at Chevening Estate, total cost: £1,797;
- 30 October 2008 at 1 Carlton Gardens, total cost: £540;
- 30-31 March 2008 at Chevening Estate, total cost: £5,024.

No venue costs were incurred for the 30 October 2008 and 17 September 2009 meetings.

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside his Department’s building attended by civil servants in his Department there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each. [307517]

Chris Bryant: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) holds away days in the UK and overseas to support delivery of its departmental strategic objectives. Civil servants in the FCO regularly attend conferences, organised by the FCO or by other organisations. Many of these take place outside FCO buildings.
The FCO does not hold centrally data about away days or conferences. It would not therefore be possible to supply data about the number or costs of these attended by civil servants since 2005 without incurring a disproportionate cost.

**Diplomatic Service: South America**

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many consular staff his Department employs in each of its embassies in South America. [308359]

Chris Bryant: The number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff carrying out consular activities in South America is 27.5.

The following table provides the details by post within South America.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post name</th>
<th>Consular FTE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bogota</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brasilia</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caracas</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<td>Lima</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montevideo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quito</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sao Paulo</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**East Asia: EU Action**

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on the appointment of an EU special representative for human rights and security in East Asia, with particular reference to China and North Korea. [308018]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Responsibility for human rights and security in East Asia will be part of the remit of the new EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service which she will manage. The UK will argue for the High Representative to place a high priority on these issues.

**Eritrea**

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether EU defence attachés or military representatives are planned to form part of the EU’s External Action Service; and if he will make a statement. [307916]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, for which the Permanent Court of Arbitration served as registry, delivered its decision on the boundary dispute in April 2002. The dispute remains unresolved and impacts on the wider Horn of Africa security situation.

The Government discuss the issue of the border dispute in their bilateral meetings with the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The wider regional security situation has been discussed at ministerial level by my hon. Friend the Minister for Europe, Chris Bryant, at the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council in November 2009 and by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary with the Somali President Sheikh Sharif in September. Ambassador-level discussion took place at the African Union in October 2009.

**European External Action Service**

Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether EU defence attachés or military representatives are planned to form part of the EU’s External Action Service; and if he will make a statement. [304347]

Chris Bryant: The detailed organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS) will be decided by EU member states by unanimity on the basis of a draft Decision from the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy with the consent of the European Commission and after consulting the European Parliament. But member states (endorsed by their comments to the October 2009 European Council) believe that the current European Security and Defence Policy and crisis management structures should be part of the EEAS. This includes the Military Staff while taking full account of the specificities of these structures and preserving their particular functions, procedures and staffing conditions. The European Council agreed that this Decision to establish the EEAS should be adopted by the end of April 2010.
Falkland Islands: Land Mines

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to mitigate potential adverse environmental effects arising from mine-clearing operations on the Falkland Islands. [309091]

Chris Bryant: The Government’s contracted mine clearance programme for the Falkland Islands has the objective of safely clearing four land mine sites with minimal environmental impact. Pre-clearance activities undertaken by BACTEC International Ltd., the primary de-mining contractor, include submission to the Falkland Islands Environmental Planning department of an environmental restoration plan for each site to the conditions existing before contamination. This has been completed and clearance work is under way.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress the government of the Falkland Islands has made in meeting its obligations under the Ottawa Treaty on mine clearance. [309092]

Chris Bryant: The Government are responsible as a state party to the Ottawa convention for removing anti-personnel mines from the Falkland Islands and as a British Overseas Territory.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently funding a four-site clearance programme, which started on 4 December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the middle of 2010. The sites form a representative sample of the islands’ varied terrain and contain a significant quantity of mines. The results of this programme will inform future work.

The Falkland Islands Government have been and will continue to be consulted on all issues related to de-mining.

Falkland Islands: Oil

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department’s most recent estimate is of the volume of oil deposits off the Falkland Islands. [309093]

Chris Bryant: Companies have not yet found hydrocarbons in commercially viable quantities in Falkland Islands waters. Exploratory drilling is expected to recommence in early 2010 and we will wait for the results of that exploration.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken to mitigate potential adverse environmental effects arising from drilling for oil off the Falkland Islands. [309094]

Chris Bryant: Companies drilling in Falkland Islands waters must take the same measures they would if they were drilling in UK waters. All companies have to complete environmental impact assessments which must be approved by the Falkland Islands Government in consultation with the Department for Energy and Climate Change. The Government also fund external reviews of assessments by UK institutions such as the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and the Scottish Association of Marine Science.

Falkland Islands: Tourism

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of tourists who have arrived in the Falkland Islands in each year since 2005; and how many such tourists arrived by cruise ship in each such year. [309080]

Chris Bryant: Responsibility for tourism in the Falkland Islands rests with the Falkland Islands Government who hold the requested information.

Fiji: Diplomatic Relations

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the state of relations between Fiji and the UK; and if he will make a statement. [308361]

Chris Bryant: I refer my hon. Friend to my previous answer on 27 November 2009, Official Report, column 423W. The UK does not regard the current regime as a legitimate, democratically elected government and we continue to raise our concerns over the human rights situation in Fiji. My most recent statement on Fiji was made after the expulsion of the Australian and New Zealand envoys in which I expressed deep disappointment at the regime’s actions but noted that diplomatic channels must be kept open. We continue to engage with the regime at official level to get across our key messages with the aim of encouraging Fiji towards a return to democratic principles, the rule of law and respect for fundamental human rights.

Gibraltar: Territorial Waters

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made to the European Court of Justice in respect of the application by the Government of Gibraltar to reverse the designation by Spain of Gibraltarian territorial waters as a site of Community importance within BGTW.

The UK is the only State competent to propose a site of Community importance within BGTW.

The UK does not recognise the validity of the Spanish actions in this matter and have placed on record that the UK does not recognise the validity of the Spanish listing. We object that Spain should have sought to have this listing. We object that Spain should have sought to have this listing annulled by the European Court of Justice.

Gibraltar: Territorial Waters

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made to the European Court of Justice seeking annulment of Commission Decision 2009/95/EC updating a list of sites of Community importance for the Mediterranean biogeographical region for which Spain is responsible.

Chris Bryant: The UK has sought and received permission from the European General Court to intervene in support of the government of Gibraltar’s application.

We have made representations to both the European Commission and Spain in order to object to their actions in this matter and have placed on record that the UK does not recognise the validity of the Spanish listing. We object that Spain should have sought to have an area of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) listed and that this listing should have been approved. The UK is the only State competent to propose a site of Community importance within BGTW.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the government of Gibraltar on the dispute over British Gibraltar territorial waters. [309096]
**Chris Bryant**: We are in regular contact with the Government of Gibraltar on this matter and related issues. We fully support the Government of Gibraltar on the dispute over the Spanish listing of “Estrecho Oriental” as a Site of Community Importance (SCI) under the Habitats Directive.

The United Kingdom has sought and received permission from the European General Court to intervene in support of the Government of Gibraltar’s application for annulment of Commission Decision 2009/95/EC updating a list of SCIs for the Mediterranean biogeographical region insofar as it relates to the “Estrecho Oriental” site.

Meanwhile officials from the UK, Spain and Gibraltar are committed to working together through the trilateral forum to improve environmental co-operation.

**Andrew Rosindell**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effects of the Spanish government’s recent assertion of claims to waters off the coast of Gibraltar under the designation of EU environmental protection on (a) fishing rights, (b) aerospace considerations and (c) development rights. [309101]

**Chris Bryant**: The UK does not recognise the validity of the listing of a Site of Community Importance (SCI) in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) by Spain since the UK is the only member state competent to propose a site covering BGTW. We are fully confident of the United Kingdom’s sovereignty of BGTW.

**Government Hospitality: Wines**

**Mr. Watson**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 15 December 2009 to the hon. Member for Monmouth, *Official Report*, column 1033W, on Government Departments: wine, how many bottles of wine from each (a) region of origin and (b) vintage are held in the Government hospitality wine cellar. [309243]

**Chris Bryant**: It is not possible to give a detailed breakdown of the numbers of bottles per vintage of each country and region without incurring disproportionate costs. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Gillian Merron) to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps) on 20 April 2009, *Official Report*, column 512W.

**Horn of Africa: EU Action**

**Mr. Moore**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 28 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 498W, on the Horn of Africa: EU, what progress has been made on the appointment of a European Union special representative to the Horn of Africa. [307915]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis**: Further discussion on the appointment of an EU special representative (EUSR) to the Horn of Africa recently took place at EU working group level in the context of the conclusions on the Horn of Africa agreed at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) of December 2009. It was agreed that should a decision be taken to appoint an EUSR for the Horn of Africa, the terms of reference should reflect the EU policy adopted at the December 2009 GAERC and facilitate its implementation.

**Iran: Politics and Government**

**Sammy Wilson**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made recent representations to the Iranian Government on Baha’i laws in Iran. [309176]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis**: Alongside our EU partners we have expressed concerns about the treatment of the Baha’i community in Iran to the Iranian Government on several occasions. The EU Presidency summoned the Iranian Ambassador on 10 July 2009, and expressed deep concern about the overall situation of the Baha’i’s in Iran, especially the charges ‘espionage and “corruption on earth” against the seven Baha’i leaders imprisoned for over a year without trial. Most recently, on 18 December 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on human rights in Iran for the seventh consecutive year. The resolution condemns ‘attacks on Baha’is and their faith in State-sponsored media, increasing evidence of efforts by the State to identify, monitor and arbitrarily detain Baha’is, preventing members of the Baha’i faith from attending university and from sustaining themselves economically’. We will continue to urge Iran to respect the right to freedom of religion and belief as described in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a State Party.

**Iraq: Casualties**

**Mr. Lidington**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Iraqi locally employed civilians have been killed as a result of their association with the Government since 9 October 2009. [307855]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis**: We are not aware of any such killings since 9 October 2009.

**Israel: Borders**

**Dr. Starkey**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when HM Ambassador to Israel most recently visited the Karni crossing. [306794]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis**: Officials from our embassy in Tel Aviv regularly visit the Karni crossing. Karni is the largest crossing point between Israel and Gaza and is covered by the 2005 agreement on movement and access between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It is the only crossing configured to cope with large-scale flows of humanitarian relief and the commercial imports and exports on which the restoration of the Gazan economy will depend.

**Kirsty MacColl**

**Mr. Watson**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with (a) his Mexican counterpart and (b) the Mexican Ambassador to the UK in the case of Kirsty MacColl; and if he will make a statement. [308356]

**Chris Bryant**: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has not had any discussions this year, on the case of Kirsty MacColl, with either the Mexican Foreign Minister or the Mexican ambassador to the UK. However, our embassy in Mexico City will continue to monitor any developments in the case.
Kosovo: Politics and Government

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Government’s policy is on the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on Kosovo’s declaration of independence; and if he will make a statement. [307788]

Chris Bryant: The UK abstained on the UN General Assembly resolution seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of Kosovo’s declaration of independence. We strongly support the Court, but believe that Serbia’s primary motivation for the question was political and that the resolution was pushed through with insufficient debate on its substance.

The UK has participated actively in the Court’s proceedings, making two written submissions and an oral statement.

The UK explained to the Court that the declaration of independence was not incompatible with either general international law or UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244. UNSCR 1244 set a framework for status negotiations; it did not predestine any particular outcome. The negotiating process was pursued with commitment by many, including the international community. However, these exhaustive attempts to achieve an agreed resolution ultimately failed. This led the UN Special Envoy for the Future Status Process for Kosovo to conclude that independence was the only viable solution.

A number of very particular factual circumstances, including the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, serious human rights abuses against Kosovo Albanians by Serbia, and the sustained involvement of the international community in the attempt to achieve a resolution make Kosovo a sui generis case which creates no wider precedent for developments elsewhere.

To date, 64 countries have recognised Kosovo and it is now a member of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The clock cannot be turned back on Kosovo’s independence—it is a reality.

The text of the UK submissions to the Court are available on the ICJ website:

http://www.icj-cij.org

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has received on whether the blockade of Gaza constitutes collective punishment within the meaning of the Fourth Geneva Convention. [306771]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Although there is no permanent physical Israeli presence in Gaza, given the significant control that Israel has over Gaza’s borders, airspace and territorial waters, Israel retains obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention as an occupying power. We are very concerned at both continued Israeli restrictions and the ongoing threat to civilians in southern Israel from indiscriminate rocket attacks. We will continue to press the Israeli Government to ease their restrictions on the crossings into Gaza.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has reviewed the compatibility of the blockade of Gaza with the obligations of Israel in respect of trade and human rights under (a) the EU-Israel Association Agreement, (b) the EU-Palestinian Authority Interim Association Agreement and (c) its membership of the World Trade Organisation. [306775]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Securing better access to Gaza remains a high priority for the Government.

The relationship between the European Communities, EU member states and Israel set out in the EU-Israel Association Agreement depends on respect for human rights and democratic principles as set out in Article 2. Article 3 of the Agreement establishes a regular dialogue between the EU and Israel which takes place through the annual EU-Israel Association Council, and the preparatory Association Committees and sub-committees. The Government and the EU continue to urge the Israeli Government to open the crossings into Gaza more fully.

The Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Cooperation between the European Community and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (for the benefit of the Palestinian Authority) does not impose obligations on Israel.

The obligations placed upon Israel by its membership of the World Trade Organisation are not relevant to resolving concerns over the Gaza blockade.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on the introduction of the Israeli buffer zone in Gaza. [306783]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: According to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Israeli “buffer zone” inside Gaza makes up approximately 30 per cent. of all arable land. While Israel has the right to defend itself, we are concerned at the impact of the “buffer zone” on Palestinian farmers and the population of Gaza.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to intensify efforts to provide (a) arrangements and (b) guarantees to ensure the sustained reopening of

Members: Correspondence

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to reply to the letter from the right hon. Member for West Derbyshire of 10 September 2009 concerning the visa section in Benghazi, Libya ref: PM/OP/Shafie. [307126]

Mr. Woolas [holding answer 14 December 2009]: I have been asked to reply.

A reply from my hon. Friend, the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier) was sent on 10 December 2009.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has received on whether the blockade of Gaza constitutes collective punishment within the meaning of the Fourth Geneva Convention. [306771]
crossing points on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement as required under action 6 of UN Security Council Resolution 1860; and what arrangements and guarantees have been put in place in the last 12 months. [306785]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We continue to urge the Israeli Government to open the crossings into Gaza not only for humanitarian supplies, but also for reconstruction materials, commercial trade and people—as called for by UN Security Council Resolution 1860. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made this clear to the Prime Minister of Israel on 14 October 2009.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has also recently written to the Israeli Government about this matter, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised this with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 25 November 2009. Securing better access to Gaza will remain a high priority for the Government.

UN Security Council Resolution 1860 was also clear on the need to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition. We also call on Hamas to cease all rocket attacks and immediately release Gilad Shalit.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 30 November 2009, Official Report, column 429W, on the Middle East: armed conflict, what the nature is of (a) the toxic materials that have been identified and (b) the contamination detected; and if he will make a statement. [307178]

Mr. Michael Foster: I have been asked to reply. The contamination found in rubble in Gaza since the end of the conflict comprises items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and parts or pieces thereof (explosive remnants of war—ERW), as well as small arms ammunition. According to the UN Mines Action Team, 28 per cent. of the UXO/ERW found to early June comprised white phosphorus, and 72 per cent. contained high explosives.

With the Department for International Development's (DFID's) support, the UN Mines Action Team is working to remove UXO and other items from destroyed buildings and agricultural land.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 26 November 2009, Official Report, column 305W, on the Middle East: armed conflict, what the legal restraints are that apply to implementation of the Prime Minister's proposal of naval assistance to interdict arms smuggling to Gaza. [307179]

David Miliband: Maritime interdiction operations concerning Gaza must be carried out in accordance with the applicable rules of international law, including the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Interdiction operations must be authorised either by the flag state, as well as the coastal state if in territorial waters, or under a resolution of the UN Security Council, or justified for reasons of self-defence. Action to take forward my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's initiative therefore needs to be carefully considered in light of the facts and circumstances of the particular case.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made at the United Nations General Assembly to ensure that a full investigation is undertaken into the findings of the Goldstone Report on the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. [309023]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK along with our EU partners played our full part in the 4-5 November 2009 UN General Assembly debate on the Goldstone report. We worked hard before the vote to reach a consensus on a resolution we could support. In the end we had to abstain, with France and 42 others, because voting for would have meant endorsing the report and ignoring its flaws. However, we maintain that the issues raised by the report are serious and the parties should address them. We were fully supportive of the core of the resolution: the need for credible, independent investigations.

Middle East: Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the £32 million euro in European Union funding for the reconstruction in Gaza announced by the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy in March 2009 has been disbursed; and if he will make a statement. [307057]

Mr. Michael Foster: I have been asked to reply. The £32 million pledge for Gaza made by the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy in March 2009 was for humanitarian aid and early recovery activities. Since then, the European Union (EU) has more than exceeded disbursement of its pledge through a range of activities including cash for work and removal of rubble and unexploded ordnance. Like the Department for International Development (DFID), the EU has been unable to spend money on formal reconstruction activities in Gaza due to Israeli restrictions on the import of essential materials.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has proposed to his overseas counterparts to overcome restrictions on the entry of materials for reconstruction into Gaza; and what his policy is on overcoming such restrictions. [307058]

David Miliband: Along with our key international allies, the UK continues to press the Israeli authorities to ease border restrictions into Gaza. It is imperative the Israeli authorities permit the passage of essential humanitarian aid and reconstruction material. I have raised my concerns during conversations with my counterpart and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has similarly raised them. These concerns were also highlighted at the EU Foreign Ministers' meeting on 8 December 2009.

The UK is a strong supporter of the UN's Framework for Humanitarian Assistance to Gaza, a statement of key humanitarian principles on access and non-interference with humanitarian aid. The UN will shortly produce its second report against the Framework, the report is expected to focus on the role of the parties to the conflict with the principles in the Framework. We have raised the Framework in discussions with the Government of Israel.
Mott MacDonald

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with reference to the answer of 14 July 2009, Official Report, columns 320-324W, on departmental contracts, what the purpose was of the contract with Mott MacDonald listed as Basra: Hollyoaks-Additional Protection; when funds under that contract were disbursed; what assessment was made of the benefits to his Department of that expenditure; and if he will make a statement. [305476]

Chris Bryant: The purpose of the contract with Mott MacDonald was to design and build additional physical security measures at Basra Air Station. The additional measures were required because in early 2008 the base was experiencing a significant amount of indirect fire from insurgents in the form of mortars and rockets.

Mott MacDonald had a design office at the air base together with access to contractors to carry out the building work. The contract value was £142,082.50 and payment was made in May 2008 following completion of the works on 30 April 2008.

After the work was completed the additional measures afforded staff a greater level of protection on numerous occasions when the base was subjected to mortar and rocket attack.

North Korea: Asylum

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to create a corridor of access to refugees in China. [308016]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We raise the issue of North Korean refugees with Chinese officials at every appropriate opportunity. Most recently I raised it when I visited China in September 2009. We are concerned about the fate of these migrants if they are returned to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We continue to press China to grant the UN High Commissioner for Refugees access to the border region.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the government of the People's Republic of China to take steps to prevent North Korean agents abducting North Korean refugees from China. [308017]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We occasionally hear reports from non-governmental organisations that North Korean agents have abducted North Korean refugees and those working with them in China. We do not have reports of any recent cases. We raise our concerns about the welfare of North Korean refugees with the Chinese Government at every appropriate opportunity. Most recently I raised it during my visit to China in September 2009 and urged China to grant the UN High Commission for Refugees access to the border region.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK is very concerned about the human rights situation in North Korea. For action at UN level, our priority is for North Korea engagement in the Universal Periodical Review process underway and for them to acknowledge the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur, and allow him access to the country. We actively supported the renewal of his mandate at the last Human Rights Council in April 2009.

We believe that the Universal Periodic Review and the Special Rapporteur mechanism remain the most effective way to seek to engage North Korea on their human rights records, rather than a commission of inquiry.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that concerns over human rights violations in North Korea are reflected in the next EU Common Position on North Korea. [307784]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are not aware of any plans for the EU to adopt a new Common Position on North Korea. However, tackling North Korea's serious human rights abuses remain a top priority, as reflected in the EU East Asia Policy Guidelines which were agreed in 2005. The EU co-sponsors the human rights resolutions on North Korea at the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. The EU also looks for every appropriate opportunity to engage North Korea practically on human rights.

Most recently the EU Troika raised their concerns during their visit to Pyongyang in October. The EU continues to work for reinstatement of the Human Rights Dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, suspended by the North Korean side in 2003.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that concerns over human rights violations in North Korea are raised in to bilateral (a) negotiations and (b) discussions with representatives of that country. [307785]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We remain concerned about the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and take every appropriate opportunity to raise human rights issues with DPRK representatives.

Most recently, we raised human rights with the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs during a visit to Pyongyang by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Asia Pacific Director in November 2009. We urged North Korea to restart its human rights dialogue with the EU and allow access for the UN Special Rapporteur on North Korea. Our embassy in Pyongyang also tries to engage practically where it can and this year provided assistance to a nursery, a hospital and an association for the disabled.
Mr. Liddington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to draw attention to the human rights situation in North Korea in the United Nations. [308015]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK supported the resolution on Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) at the UN Human Rights Council in April 2009. As part of the EU, it co-sponsored the UNGA resolution in December to raise awareness of the human rights situation in DPRK and promote action. The UK played an active role in the UN’s Universal Periodic Review of DPRK in December which offers an opportunity to increase practical engagement on human rights. As part of that review, the UK requested further information on a range of issues, including freedom of expression, religious freedoms and the death penalty. We have also urged the DPRK to allow the UN Special Rapporteur for the DPRK to visit the country and suggest technical assistance where needed.

Nosratollah Tajik

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions there have been between the US authorities and the (a) UK Mission in the United States and (b) Foreign and Commonwealth Office on their request for the extradition of Nosratollah Tajik; and if he will make a statement. [308279]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Officials have discussed the extradition of Mr. Nosratollah Tajik with US officials in London and Washington on a number of occasions.

Andrew Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions there have been between the government of Iran and the (a) UK Mission in Tehran and (b) Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the request made to the UK by the United States for the extradition of Nosratollah Tajik; and if he will make a statement. [308280]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Officials and Ministers have discussed the extradition of Nosratollah Tajik with Iranian officials and Ministers on many occasions since Mr. Tajik’s arrest in 2006. Most recently the Iranian Foreign Minister raised this issue with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs during a telephone conversation on 1 November 2009. We have explained to the Iranian authorities that extradition is a judicial process over which the Foreign Secretary has no control.

Official Gifts: Pakistan

Mr. Holloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what official gifts he and his predecessors have received from the President of Pakistan and Ministers in the Pakistani government in each year since 2001. [307735]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Government has published annual lists of gifts given and received by Ministers in an official capacity valued at over £140 since 2001. Copies of the lists are available in the Libraries of the House. The 2008-2009 list was published on 16 July 2009.

Olympic Games 2012

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 15 December 2009, Official Report, column 1036W, on the Olympic Games 2012, how many staff in his Department have responsibility for co-ordinating his Department’s preparations for the games; and what the cost of their annual salaries was in 2008-09. [309242]

Chris Bryant: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office created a new full-time position on 1 September 2008 to co-ordinate its work on London 2012. Two more staff joined the team in June 2009. The salary bill in financial year 2008-09 was £32,503.

Overseas Territories Consultative Council

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 15 December 2009, Official Report, column 1036W, on the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, what the cost to the public purse was of hosting the meeting on 9 December 2009. [309051]

Chris Bryant: The Overseas Territories Consultative Council and Forum took place on 8 and 9 December 2009. The final costs are not yet available, but we estimate them to be under £35,000.

Palestinians: Territorial Waters

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has received on the legal status of territorial waters off Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [306793]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement 1995 provides that the territorial jurisdiction of the Palestinian Council (construed in the Agreement as meaning the Palestinian Authority) includes the territorial waters off Gaza, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement.

The rules of customary international law regarding territorial waters are also applicable.

Pitcairn Islands: Literacy

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on literacy rate among residents of the Pitcairn Islands. [309105]

Chris Bryant: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold any statistical information on the literacy rate of the Pitcairn population.

Security

Mrs. Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many UK private military and security companies have been awarded contracts by his Department to carry out work in (a) Afghanistan, (b) Iraq, (c) Sudan, (d) Israel, (e) Somalia, (f) Pakistan, (g) Colombia, (h) Ethiopia and (i) Eritrea in (i) 2005, (ii) 2006, (iii) 2007, (iv) 2008, (v) 2009 and (vi) future years; and what the monetary value is of each contract. [306913]
The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) currently has contracts with five UK based private security companies in Afghanistan and Iraq. Records of contracts held with UK based private security companies in Sudan, Israel, Somalia, Pakistan, Colombia, Ethiopia and Eritrea are held locally by our embassy or high commission in each respective country. These records could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The contract value for each individual contract in each year for both Afghanistan and Iraq could also be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the value of each contract for the period detailed are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Value (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>January to December 2009</td>
<td>Mobile and static security</td>
<td>20,174,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2008 to March 2009</td>
<td>Police mentors and advisers</td>
<td>317,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 2008 to November 2009</td>
<td>Primary healthcare</td>
<td>379,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligence analysts</td>
<td>387,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>July 2008 to June 2009</td>
<td>Mobile security</td>
<td>26,164,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 2008 to June 2009</td>
<td>Static security</td>
<td>6,969,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 2008 to September 2009</td>
<td>Intelligence analysts</td>
<td>467,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan and Iraq</td>
<td>February 2009 to February 2010</td>
<td>Vehicle maintenance</td>
<td>706,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2008 to March 2009</td>
<td>Overseas security managers</td>
<td>1,035,192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Iraq and Afghanistan combined

In respect of the existing static and mobile security service contracts in Iraq, the FCO has recently retendered these contracts and now has a single new three year contract commencing late 2009/early 2010, which is valued at £61 million over the next three years.

In respect of static and mobile security services in Afghanistan, the retender of this contract is due for completion in the next month or so at which point the new details will be available.

Mrs. Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many (a) complaints and (b) reports of human rights abuses have been received by his Department in relation to the activities of private military and security companies awarded contracts by his Department in each of the last five years.

Chris Bryant: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) have received no complaints and no reports about human rights abuses by private military and security companies in the execution of contracts awarded by the FCO in the last five years.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with reference to the answer of 26 June 2009, Official Report, columns 1154-5W, on Sri Lanka, when the next visit to Sri Lanka by a cross-party delegation of hon. Members sponsored by his Department will take place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There are no plans at the present time for a visit by a cross-party delegation of MPs to Sri Lanka. The Government continues to maintain high level engagement with the Government of Sri Lanka through regular visits, meetings and telephone calls. Most recently Permanent Under-Secretary of State for International Development Mike Foster visited Sri Lanka in October 2009. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Bogollagama in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November 2009 to discuss the current humanitarian situation and progress on a political solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Politics and Government

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the Sri Lankan Government’s progress towards political reconciliation in the country since the end of the military conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in May 2009; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: At the end of May the Sri Lankan President issued a joint statement with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recognising the need to work towards a lasting political solution. The UK has consistently maintained that one of the prerequisites for lasting peace in Sri Lanka is a political settlement that fully takes into account the legitimate grievances and aspirations of all communities. Presidential elections have now been announced for 26 January 2010.

Parliamentary elections in spring 2010 will be a further opportunity for the voice of Sri Lanka’s communities to be heard. Free, fair and credible elections will allow Sri Lanka’s communities to have their say in shaping the country’s future. Adequate arrangements must be made to ensure that internally displaced persons can vote in upcoming elections.
It is important for all those who want to play a role in Sri Lanka’s future to agree to an inclusive political solution that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary released a written ministerial statement on 15 December 2009, which gives a detailed assessment of the political situation in Sri Lanka. A link to the Statement can be found at the following internet address:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091215/wmstext/91215m0003.htm

Sri Lanka: War Crimes

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the Sri Lankan Government’s progress towards establishing an accountability mechanism for allegations of war crimes which took place during the military conflict in the north of the country; and if he will make a statement. [307996]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The EU has made clear its belief that accountability is integral to the process of reconciliation. We therefore welcome President Rajapakse’s decision to appoint an independent committee to look into the incidents cited in the US State Department’s report. We will continue to press the Government of Sri Lanka to live up to this and the earlier commitment made by President Rajapakse to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in May to take measures to address possible violations of international humanitarian law. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary released a written ministerial statement on 15 December 2009, which gives a detailed assessment of the political situation in Sri Lanka. A link to the statement can be found at the following internet address:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091215/wmstext/91215m0003.htm

Travel Information

Mr. Holloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department has spent on the (a) ‘An other side to paradise’ campaign, (b) ‘Don’t be a Dick’ campaign, (c) Don’t miss out campaign and (d) each other campaign co-ordinated by his Department aimed at Britons travelling abroad in each year since 2001.

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

The UK China Task Force has spent approximately £38,000 in 2008-09 and approximately £11,800 in 2009-10.

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times the UK China Taskforce has met since August 2007; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the human rights situation within Western Sahara at the next meeting of the UN Security Council.

ITEN:

Mr. Franke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 26 October 2009, Official Report, column 68W

In addition to the information included in my previous answer, the cost of the ‘Don’t be a Dick’ campaign was approximately £38,000 in 2008-09 and approximately £11,800 in 2009-10.

UK China Task Force

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times the UK China Taskforce has met since August 2007; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Timms: I have been asked to reply.

The China Task Force works to deepen relations, foster mutual understanding, and further co-operation between the UK and China. The taskforce has met five times since August 2007 when the Chancellor took over the chair.

War Crimes: Judiciary

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on extending the mandate of the international judges and prosecutors serving in the War Crimes Chamber of the State Court in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement. [307109]

David Miliband: The Government believe that international judges and prosecutors serving in the War Crimes Chamber of the State Court in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) make an important contribution to the justice system in BiH, and to the ability of the country to meet its international obligations in respect of cooperation with International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Despite repeated requests to do so from the High Representative and Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, the BiH authorities have failed to extend the mandate of these judges and prosecutors.

The Government therefore strongly support High Representative Inzko’s 14 December 2009 decision to extend the mandate of international judges and prosecutors working in the war crimes department of the court of BiH.

Western Sahara: Human Rights

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the government of Morocco on the human rights situation in Western Sahara.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Moroccan Foreign Minister, Mr. Taib Fassi Fihri, on 11 December 2009 to discuss our concerns over the recent rise in tensions over Western Sahara and in particular the case of Aminatou Haidar. Officials from our embassy in Rabat, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London and the UK’s Mission to the UN have held similar discussions with their Moroccan counterparts.

During these discussions we have made it clear that we believe that Haidar’s case should be resolved swiftly and fairly. We have also expressed our concern that recent events risk impeding the UN-led negotiation process on Western Sahara.

We continue to discuss a wide range of human rights and reform issues with Morocco both bilaterally and through the EU.

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the human rights situation within Western Sahara at the next meeting of the UN Security Council.

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Mr. Ivan Lewis: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no plans at this time to raise the issue of Western Sahara at the next meeting of the Security Council. In the negotiations on UN Security Council Resolution 1871, on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara mandate, the UK inserted language calling on all parties to address the human dimension of the dispute.

The UN Secretary-General has issued a statement expressing his concern over recent developments and that both he and the UN are doing as much as possible to resolve matters. He has called upon the parties to work with Christopher Ross, UN Secretary-General’s Personal Envoy, to resolve the situation.

The UK continues to fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General and Ambassador Ross to resolve the dispute over the territory of Western Sahara.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Allotments

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department has issued guidance to local authorities on the sale by allotment holders in municipal allotments of their surplus produce. [308331]

Barbara Follett: The latest version of “Growing in the Community”, the good practice guide for local authority allotment officers, was published by the Local Government Association in March 2008 and includes advice on the sale of produce.

Caravan Sites: Travelling People

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Meriden, of 30 June 2009, Official Report, column 203W, on stop notices: travelling people, if he will change the stop notices rules to allow such notices to be levied against dwellings erected by travellers which are used as dwelling houses. [307008]

Mr. Malik: We have no plans to introduce such a change.

Common Land

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what criteria are used to determine the designation of designated green space or common recreational area as a village green; and what information his Department holds on the number of areas registered as village greens. [307828]

Huw Irranca-Davies: I have been asked to reply.

For land to be registered as town or village green under section 15(1) of the Commons Act 2006, the applicant must broadly demonstrate that the land in question was used by a significant number of the local inhabitants ‘as of right’ for lawful sports and pastimes for no less than 20 years. Where use ‘as of right’ has ceased, the application must be brought within a specified period. ‘As of right’ is an established legal principle which means without permission, force or secrecy.

Registers of town or village greens are held by local authorities. Research in the late 1980s reported 4,332 registered greens in England, and further research in 2005 suggested an increase of about 115 in the number of registered greens between 1993 and 2005. We therefore estimate the present total number of registered greens to be around 4,500.

Community Relations: Finance

Mr. Holloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much his Department has allocated to each group in receipt of funding under the Prevent Partnership area-based grant in each local area since 2008. [307749]

Mr. Malik: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) on 19 June 2009, Official Report, column 509W.

Council Tax

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the monetary value of council tax receipts was in each Government Office region in each year since 2006-07. [307880]

Barbara Follett: Details of the council tax collected in each Government Office region (in £ million) in England in each year since 2006-07 are given in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>2,349</td>
<td>2,475</td>
<td>2,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and the Humber</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>1,755</td>
<td>1,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>1,653</td>
<td>1,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>1,918</td>
<td>1,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>2,345</td>
<td>2,484</td>
<td>2,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>2,888</td>
<td>3,051</td>
<td>3,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>3,691</td>
<td>3,892</td>
<td>4,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>2,158</td>
<td>2,274</td>
<td>2,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>19,315</td>
<td>20,374</td>
<td>21,319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data are taken from the Quarterly Return of Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates (QRC4) returns completed annually by all billing authorities in England.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether the (a) changing of council tax banding multipliers and (b) creation of new council tax bands would require (i) primary and (ii) secondary legislation. [307881]

Barbara Follett: Both the relative proportions between council tax valuation bands, and the number of bands, may be altered by order of the Secretary of State. Such an order must be laid before and approved by resolution of the House of Commons. The relevant provisions are sections 5(4) and 5 (4 A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether re-banding of properties for the purpose of levy council tax would require a partial or full council tax revaluation. [307882]
Barbara Follett: The valuation bandings to which individual properties are assigned are, when necessary, changed by the Valuation Office Agency as part of its statutory duty to maintain accurate valuation lists. The allocation of properties to bands differing from those for which section 5 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides would not be practicable without a general revaluation.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department and its predecessor made of the merits of transferring responsibility for council tax collection to county councils in two-tier areas in the last 10 years. [308257]

Barbara Follett: No assessment has been made.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department and its predecessor made of the merits of transferring responsibility for council tax collection to county councils in two-tier areas in the last 10 years. [308263]

Barbara Follett: The Government have no plans to allow county councils or waste disposal authorities to operate local council tax discounts.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what local council tax discounts are in operation under the Local Government Act 2003.

Barbara Follett: Details of the types of local council tax discount that were being awarded by billing authorities under the Local Government Act 2003 as at 8 October 2009, the latest date for which figures are available, are listed as follows. Authorities reported they were making local council tax discounts to either individuals or a particular class of taxpayer. The discounts shown may have been awarded by one or more authority.

Particular classes of taxpayer or property
- Difficult to let properties
- Occupied and unoccupied furnished properties that do not have the benefit of mains services including beach chalets
- Pensioners
- Properties affected by flooding and external environmental factors
- Annexes that are not exempt and are part of the main residence
- Properties that are no one person’s sole or main residence where access is restricted
- Taxpayers who can comply with the council’s Mooring Policy
- Those to whom, because they have been affected by the change in regulations since a discount was originally awarded, a discount has been awarded so as not to disadvantage them
- Various classes of empty properties.

Other discretionary discounts based on individual cases
- Hard to sell property
- Hardship
- New unfinished property
- Problems with a chalk mine.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department provides to local authorities on the maximum period of time after the issuing of a bill for council tax during which they may pursue payment of that bill. [308330]

Barbara Follett: Communities and Local Government provides occasional advice through its council tax information letters, which are published on the Department’s website. CTIL 1 dated 25 March 2004 provided advice on this issue and is available at the following link.
http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/finance/ctax/ctil/ctil1-04.pdf

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance his Department issues to local authorities on the number of instalments in which council tax may be collected.

Barbara Follett: Communities and Local Government provides occasional advice through its council tax information letters, which are published on the Department’s website. CTIL 10 dated 10 January 1997 provided advice on instalments and is available at the following link.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer of 20 October 2009, Official Report, column 1389W, on council housing: finance, if he will place in the Library a copy of the data relating to the gross council tax receipts collected by each local authority in England in cash and real terms for 1997-98.

Barbara Follett: I have today placed in the Library of the House a table containing details of the gross council tax receipts collected by each local authority in England in 1997-98 in both cash and real terms.

The data are taken from the Quarterly Return of Council Tax and Non-domestic rates returns completed annually by all billing authorities in England and the real terms data are given at 2008-09 prices.

The data for 1997-98 contain information for a number of authorities that are no longer in existence and therefore the data are not strictly comparable with those for subsequent years.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether local authorities may levy credit card (a) fees and (b) surcharges on (i) council tax bills and (ii) parking fines paid by credit card.

Barbara Follett: The Council Tax (Demand Notices) (England) Regulations 2009 prescribes what information is required on, and with, the council tax demand notice (the bill). This does not include credit card (a) fees or (b) surcharges.


Council Tax: Second Homes

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what representations he has received on proposals to levy a higher rate of council tax on second homes under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007.

[307840]
Barbara Follett: The Department has not received any formal representations on levying higher rates of council tax under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (‘the Act’). The Local Government Association, as selector, is considering proposals submitted under the Act and has received a proposal on this subject from Lewes district council and a proposal from Torridge district council. The Government are co-operating with the selector as it draws up a short-list for the Secretary of State to consider.

Council Tax: Valuation

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what proportion of dwellings have been assigned a (a) dwellinghouse code and (b) value significant code by the Valuation Office Agency.

[307832]

Ian Pearson: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 26 October 2009, Official Report, column 142W.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer of 2 November 2009, Official Report, column 759W, on council tax: valuation, whether the addition of a greenhouse is considered by the Valuation Office Agency to be (a) a material increase and (b) value significant for the purpose of council tax valuation and revaluation.

[308393]

Barbara Follett: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Lord Bates on 6 November 2009, Official Report, column 96W.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what new files on council tax revaluation have been created by his Department since September 2007.

[308998]

Barbara Follett: No new files on council tax revaluation have been created since September 2007.

Councillors: Allowances

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department collects data on spending on councillors’ allowances from local spending reports.

[309036]

Barbara Follett: The Department does not collect the information requested.

Departmental Art Works

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much his Department spent on art works in the last 12 months.

[308575]

Barbara Follett: The Department for Communities and Local Government have not incurred expenditure on works of art in the last 12 months.

Works of art displayed in Eland House are from the Government Art Collection (GAC), which publishes an annual list of acquisitions. The most recent details of acquisitions made by the GAC were published on 5 October 2009 and are available on the GAC website:

http://www.gac.culture.gov.uk/information/publications.asp

Departmental Billing

Jenny Willott: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many and what proportion of invoices submitted to his Department have been paid within 10 days in each month since October 2008; and if he will make a statement.

[307966]

Barbara Follett: The following table shows how many invoices and what the percentage of invoices have been paid within 10 days since October 2008.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>3,379</td>
<td>67.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>3,442</td>
<td>77.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>3,248</td>
<td>85.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>3,288</td>
<td>81.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>3,090</td>
<td>82.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>4,461</td>
<td>83.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>4,515</td>
<td>83.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>3,876</td>
<td>91.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>4,550</td>
<td>90.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>4,766</td>
<td>92.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>4,096</td>
<td>89.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>4,285</td>
<td>90.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>4,485</td>
<td>93.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>4,202</td>
<td>93.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Fines

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what powers (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) have to impose administrative penalties; what the statutory basis is for each such power; and how much (i) his Department and its predecessor and (ii) each of its agencies and NDPBs have recovered in administrative penalties in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

[309264]

Barbara Follett: Section 12 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 provides that, if an acquiring authority, or any of their contractors, wilfully enter on and take possession of any of the land subject to compulsory purchase without complying with subsection (4) of section 11 (which requires compensation to be paid or the landowner to consent to entry), it has to pay the person in possession of that land £10 in addition to the amount of any damage done to the land by entering and taking possession (recoverable summarily as a civil debt).

Sections 226 to 235 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 give the Tenant Services Authority the power to impose penalties in the circumstances set out in section 227. None of these provisions has yet been brought into force.

Part 11 of the Planning Act 2008 gives the Secretary of State power, by regulations, to make provision for Community Infrastructure Levy. Section 218 provides that Community Infrastructure Levy regulations may include provision for the imposition of a penalty or surcharge. No regulations under Part 11 have yet been made.
Departmental Legislation

Chris Huhne: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what criminal offences have been (a) created and (b) abolished by secondary legislation sponsored by his Department since 1 May 2008. [307805]

Barbara Follett: Offences were in effect created by the Building and Approved Inspectors (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 2009/1219) when taken in conjunction with section 35 of the Building Act 1984. The 2009 regulations amended the requirements in the Building Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000/2531), in particular relating to matters concerning water. By virtue of section 35 of the Building Act, a person contravening any provision in building regulations (other than one designated as excluded) is liable on summary conviction to a fine.

No criminal offence was abolished since 1 May 2008.

Departmental Marketing

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what rebranding of his Department has been undertaken since its creation; and what the cost to the public purse has been of that rebranding. [308422]

Barbara Follett: I refer the hon. Member to the information provided on the Department’s website at: http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/foi/disclosure-log/disclosurelog2009/brandinglogodesign/

Departmental Ministerial Policy Advisers

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department’s special advisers have signed waivers under the European Working Time Directive. [308804]

Barbara Follett: Special advisers currently working in Communities and Local Government have signed waivers under the European Working Time Directive.

Departmental Procurement

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst of 15 June 2009, Official Report, column 18W, on departmental procurement, (1) how much was spent on

(a) Euro RSCG London Ltd, (b) 7E Communications Ltd, (c) Band & Brown Communications Ltd, (d) Centair Communications Ltd, (e) Coaching Academy UK Limited, (f) Coulmedia, (g) Folio Creative Communication Ltd, (h) GFK NOP Ltd, (i) Media Moguls, (j) Modern Media Communications Ltd, (k) Neal Communication Agency Limited, (l) On Demand PR and Marketing and (m) Opinion Leader Research in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308434]

(2) how much was spent on

(a) 11 King’s Bench Walk Chambers, (b) DLA Piper UK LLP and (c) Holden McAllister Ltd in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308435]

(3) how much was spent on

(a) Al-Mahdi Institute, (b) Arab British Holding Group and (c) Exports Credit Guarantee Department in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308436]

(4) how much was spent on

(a) HMS President, (b) Gordon Engraving, (c) London Zoo and (d) Tummy Time in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308437]

(5) how much was spent on

(a) Connect Public Affairs Ltd. in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308438]

(6) how much was spent on

(a) Gonville Hotels Ltd., (b) Grand Hotel, (c) Grand Hotel Union DD, (d) Grange Hotels, (e) Grange Wellington Hotel, (f) Grosvenor Victoria Hotel Ltd., (g) Harts Head Hotel, (h) Hilton Hotel—Bromsgrove, (i) Hilton Brighton Metropole, (j) Hilton Manchester Deansgate and (k) each of the Holiday Inn entries listed in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308439]

(7) how much was spent on

(a) Bellhouse Hotel, (b) Bewleys Hotel, (c) Birnbeck Hotel Ltd., (d) Boxmoor Lodge Hotel, (e) Brooklands Hotel, (f) Burlington Hotel, (g) Cairn Hotel, (h) Campanile Hotel, (i) Carrington House Hotel, (j) Cedar Court Hotel Bradford, (k) Cedar Court Hotel Harrogate, (l) Charing Cross Hotel, (m) County Hotel, (n) Crowne Plaza London Docklands, (o) Crowne Plaza London St. James, (p) Crowne Plaza Nottingham, (q) De Vere Daresbury Park Hotel, (r) De Vere Royal Bath Hotel, (s) De Vere Wychwood Park Ltd., (t) Donnington Manor Hotel, (u) Expotel Hotel Reservations Ltd. and (v) The Jurys Inn Brighton in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308440]

(8) how much was spent on

(a) Digby Trout Restaurants, (b) Fancy A Pint Ltd., (c) Flavour of Hockley, (d) Il Cappuccino London Ltd., (e) Leith’s, (f) Leiths at the EICC, (g) Majestic Wine Warehouse Ltd., (h) Oddbins of Wimbledon and (i) Posh Nosh (East Midlands) Ltd. in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308441]

(9) how much was spent on

(a) Hotel Maison Rouge, (b) Jolly Hotel St Ermin’s, (c) Jurys Inn Birmingham, (d) Jurys Inn Manchester, (e) Kings Arm Hotel, (f) Lancaster Landmark Hotel Co Ltd, (g) London Marriott Hotel Kensington, (h) Malmaison Hotel, (i) Mandalay Hotel, (j) Manor Hotel, (k) Marriot Hotel Gosforth Park, (l) Mercure Southgate Hotels Ltd, (m) Newcastle Marriott Hotel Metro Centre and (n) Norton Park Hotel Ltd. in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308442]

(10) how much was spent on

(a) Sea Hotel, (b) Stoney Croft Hotel, (c) Sunderland Marriott Hotel, (d) Thistle Hotel Brighton, (e) Thistle Hotel London Tower, (f) Thistle Hotel Westminster, (g) Village Hotel and Leisure Club and (h) Angel and Royal Hotel in 2008-09; and for what purpose such funds were spent in each case; [308443]

(11) how much was spent on

(a) Old Ship Hotel (Brighton) Ltd, (b) Oxford Spire Spires Four Pillars Hotel, (c) Paramount Cheltenham Park Hotel, (d) Park Lane Hotel Ltd, (e) Prince of Wales Hotel, (f) Quality Hotel Westminster, (g) Queens Hotel Brighton, (h)
Barbara Follett: The Department for Communities and Local Government continues to monitor its capital programmes to identify any potential underspends for transfer to the £1.5 billion housing pledge announced in “Building Britain’s Future”. Final levels of capital underspends across the Department’s programmes will be determined at the end of the financial year.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which programmes in his Department were underspent in 2008-09; and by how much in each case. [308344]

Barbara Follett: Programme underspends are published at estimates line level in Note 2 “Analysis of Net Resource Outturn by Section” of our Resource Accounts: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/resourcelaccounts0809

Lower level analysis would be at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Training

Mr. Philip Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much (a) his Department and (b) its agencies spent on away days in the last 12 months; and what the (i) subject and (ii) location of each away day was. [308673]

Barbara Follett: The Department does not hold information centrally on away days for its officials or those of its Executive Agencies. Away days are approved by Deputy Directors and above in accordance with Departmental procedures and guidance and the associated costs have to be met from within agreed budgets for general administrative expenditure. Unfortunately, there would be a disproportionate cost in obtaining detailed information from local line managers.

Eco-Towns

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the latest timetable is for completion of the proposed eco-town developments. [308083]

John Healey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 8 July 2009, Official Report, column 902W.

Fire Services

Mr. Dismore: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on how many occasions fire and incident authorities have been unable to cope with a major fire or incident since 1979; and which fire control room was involved in each case. [307194]

Mr. Malik: The Fire and Rescue Service provides an effective and professional response to the incidents they face, making the best possible use of the equipment and technology available to them at any given point. The Fire and Resilience programme will deliver greater capability, resilience and inter-operability to the Fire and Rescue Service to equip them to meet the challenges they face now and in the future.
Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his most recent estimate is of the cost to the public purse of the New Dimension programme; and what budget was set for that programme at its inception.

Mr. Malik: CLG’s New Dimension project (formerly a programme) was established in 2001 to enhance the capability of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to respond to major incidents whether caused by terrorist attacks or natural disasters. The estimated budget for the project at that initial stage was £318 million to procure, deliver and implement these new resilience capabilities within the FRS. This did not include ongoing resource costs to the FRS to support the continuing delivery of these capabilities which have already responded to several national events such as the Buncefield oil depot fire in 2005, the widespread 2007 floods and more recently the Cumbrian floods, as well as being mobilised around 200 times each quarter to local events.

At the end of financial year 2008-09, the Department had invested a total of £425 million in the New Dimension project, although owing to a difference in view over the accounting used, the National Audit Office estimated costs as some £30 million lower, in its value for money review in 2008.

The overall £425 million cost includes an amount of continuation funding for FRAs including crewing costs which over recent years has amounted to around £14-£15 million per annum.

In 2008, Ministers announced a funding package totalling £80 million over the current spending review period to enable the ongoing delivery of New Dimension capabilities by the FRS. The total New Dimension costs up until 2008-09 includes nearly £24 million of this amount, with a further £56 million allocated until the end of 2010-11.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will publish an updated (a) national and (b) regional business case for the FiReControl project.

Mr. Malik: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Jackson) on 14 December 2009, Official Report, column 899W.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the location was of each local FiReControl emergency control room prior to the implementation of the FiReControl project; and how many staff work in each such control room.

Mr. Malik: The control room location information is held by each Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) individually; responsibility for current staffing figures also rests with the FRAs. The latest information provided to the department by the FRAs is published in full on our website at:


Fire Services: Finance

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to Lord Hanningfield of 18 December 2007, Official Report, House of Lords, column 117W, and to the answer to the hon. Member for Copeland of 2 November 2009, Official Report, column 764W, on fire services: finance, what his most recent estimate is of the total cost to the public purse of regional fire control rooms over 15 years; and on what estimate of the time taken to implement the FiReControl project the estimated cost of £420 million was based.

Mr. Malik: Our most recent estimates of the cost over the 15 year period are set out in the FiReControl Business Case published on 6 May 2009.

Under current planning assumptions the first regional fire control centres are expected to become operational in spring 2011 and the last Fire and Rescue Service will switch over by the end of 2012.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what payments have been made to EADS in respect of the FiReControl project; and what estimate has been made of the monetary value of such payments at the end of the relevant contracts.

Mr. Malik: In line with the contract, to date we have paid EADS £33 million. The total value of the contract is £200 million.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much has been spent on the FiReControl project; and what the estimated (a) gross and (b) net cost of that project is in each of the next five years.

Mr. Malik: The expenditure to date on the project is approximately £190 million. The estimated remaining FiReControl implementation project cost is circa £230 million. Beyond implementation Communities and Local Government has also committed to support any Fire and Rescue Authority for whom operating costs are forecast to increase under the new networked control arrangements. The current estimate for this is £8.2 million each year.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 20 July 2009, Official Report, column 811W, on fire services, if he will publish an updated estimated gross total cost of the FiReControl project.

Mr. Malik: The estimated total cost of implementing the FiReControl project is £420 million.

Fire Services: Industrial Disputes

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance has been issued by (a) his Department, (b) Firebuy and (c) the Fire Service College on actions which contingency staff are permitted to take in...
circumstances in which fire services are affected by industrial action to train on fire appliances currently used by fire-fighters.

Mr. Malik: No advice has been issued by my Department, Firebuy, or the Fire Service college, on the circumstances in which contingency staff are permitted to train on fire appliances or cross picket lines when a fire and rescue service is affected by industrial action. The provision of emergency fire cover during disputes is the responsibility of fire and rescue services, and it is for them to ensure any staff they commission directly or indirectly have received the necessary training and guidance.

Fires: Smoking

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department’s fire research programme has undertaken research into (a) the effects of the ban on smoking in public places on the incidence of smoking-related domestic fires and (b) the proportion of domestic fires which occur as a result of smoking in the home since 2007.

Mr. Malik: No research has been carried out from the Department’s fire and resilience research programme into (a) the effects of the ban on smoking in public places on the incidence of smoking-related domestic fires or (b) the proportion of domestic fires which occur as a result of smoking in the home since 2007.

However, Fire and Rescue Services record details of incidents attended and the proportion of domestic fires which occur as a result of smoking in the home since 2007 are shown in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of ignition</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smokers’ materials</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette lighters</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number</strong></td>
<td>34,960</td>
<td>32,872</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Provisional. Data for total dwelling fires 2008 is provisional and subject to change.

Source: Fire Incident Records database, Communities and Local Government

Flood Control

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his most recent assessment is of progress in the implementation of recommendation 38 of the Pitt Report on flooding in respect of the number of mutual aid agreements with local authorities; and what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of such agreements.

Mr. Malik: The Department’s fire and resilience research programme has undertaken research into (a) the effects of the ban on smoking in public places on the incidence of smoking-related domestic fires and (b) the proportion of domestic fires which occur as a result of smoking in the home since 2007.

The Planning Inspectorate does not hold this information centrally and it could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The Planning Inspectorate does not hold this information centrally and it could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Fire Service college have supplied the following details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of room nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007: 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: 792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009: 681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FSC does not incur a fee with a third party agent.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre has estimated the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of room nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007: 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009: 85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QEIIICC does not pay an agency to book hotel accommodation.

Local Development Frameworks

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what account the Infrastructure Planning Commission will take of a local development framework in considering a planning application.

John Healey: The Infrastructure Planning Commission will determine applications in accordance with any relevant national policy statement but they must also have regard to any local impact report submitted by a relevant local authority, any prescribed matters and any other matters that they think are both important and relevant to their decision. The local development framework will often be an important and relevant consideration.

Local Government Employers

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what funding was provided from the public purse to (a) Local Government Employers, (b) the Improvement and Development Agency and (c) LACORS in the last 12 months.

Barbara Follett: Communities and Local Government provided the following funding in the last financial year (2008-09):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>£84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>£85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local Government Executive

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether a timetable has been set for bringing forward proposals for rules relating to the terms of office of office-holders in the indirectly-elected leader and cabinet executive model of local government referred to in his Department’s White Paper on Communities in Control.

[308299]

Barbara Follett: The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 makes provision for the rules relating to the terms of office of the leader in the indirectly-elected leader and cabinet executive model, and we have no plans to amend this.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of local spending by public bodies which is controlled by local authorities.

[308268]

Barbara Follett: No estimate has been made.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what mechanisms his Department plans to put in place for the purposes of meeting its targets relating to the implementation of participatory budgeting in local authority areas by 2012; and whether he plans to require local authorities to implement participatory budgeting.

[308272]

Barbara Follett: The Government published its National Strategy on participatory budgeting in 2008. This set out the support available to councils, communities and their partners to help them promote and deliver participatory budgeting. The Government funds the Participatory Budgeting Unit (PBU), a project of the third sector organisation ‘Church Action on Poverty’, as a key delivery partner. The PBU helps to promote participatory budgeting and advises community development workers and local authority officials on the development of new projects.

There are no plans to ‘require’ local authorities to introduce participatory budgeting schemes.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department has made an estimate of the level of expenditure by local authorities on litigation relating to the implementation of conditional fee agreements.

[308537]

Barbara Follett: This information is not collected by the Department.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of local authorities whose expenditure on free bus travel has exceeded the value of central Government funding for such travel.

[308591]

Barbara Follett: None, since it is not possible to say how much grant has been provided to each authority for concessionary travel.

Government funding for concessionary travel currently comes from two sources: formula grant and special grant.

Formula grant, which comprises revenue support grant, redistributed business rates and principal formula police grant where appropriate, is largely distributed using the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the authority, together with the number of band D equivalent properties within the authority’s area. We apply the same formula to all authorities that provide the same services and we also use the best data that are available on a consistent basis across all authorities. We then ensure that every authority receives at least a minimum percentage increase year-on-year (the ‘floor’) on a like-for-like basis i.e. after adjusting for changes in funding and function. In order to pay for the cost of the floor, we scale back the increase above the floor for all other authorities.

Within formula grant, there is no specific formula for concessionary fares. It is an unhypothecated block grant i.e. authorities are free to spend the money on any service, provided they meet their statutory duties. For this reason, and due to the method of calculating formula grant, particularly floor damping, it is not possible to say how much grant has been provided for any particular service.

From 2008-09, following the change to national free travel for concessionaires, concessionary travel authorities additionally receive a share of the £212 million concessionary fares special grant from the Department for Transport.

Local Government Finance: East Sussex

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much funding from (a) revenue support, (b) capital grant and (c) supported borrowing was provided by central Government to (i) East Sussex County Council, (ii) Lewes District Council and (iii) Wealden District Council in (A) 2007-08 and (B) 2008-09.

[308455]

Barbara Follett: The following table provides the amount of formula grant, which is made up of Revenue Support Grant and redistributed business rates for non-police authorities, for each of the authorities requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex County Council</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes District Council</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealden District Council</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formula grant is an unhypothecated block grant for such travel. This means that authorities are free to spend the money on any service provided that they meet their statutory duties.
Information on the provision of capital grants is not held centrally.

Supported borrowing or Supported Capital Expenditure (Revenue) is supported through formula grant. Since formula grant is an unhypothecated block grant, and due to the calculations of formula grant, particularly floor damping, it is not possible to say how much grant has been provided for the support of capital expenditure.

Local Government: Bank Services

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much and what proportion of the deposits of each local authority in Icelandic banks have been refunded; when he expects further such repayments to be made; and what his most recent estimate is of the monetary value of (a) deposits that will not be refunded and (b) interest on such deposits. [308590]

Barbara Follett: The Resolution Committee for Landsbanki and Glitnir and the UK administrators of Heritable and Kaupthing, Singer and Friedland Ltd. have published information on likely rates of return and when they expect repayments to be made. Local authorities are in direct contact with these administrators. Reports suggest that the second tranche of repayments for Heritable and Kaupthing, Singer and Friedland Ltd. were made in December 2009.

Local Government: Broadcasting

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department issues guidance to local authorities on funding for their own television (a) channels and (b) programmes. [308619]

Barbara Follett: There is no guidance issued to local authorities by my Department for these purposes.

Local Government: North West

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what information his Department holds on the level of (a) salary, (b) car mileage allowance and (c) other allowances of the (i) chief executive, (ii) assistant chief executives and (iii) deputy chief executives of each county council in the North West. [308994]

Barbara Follett: The information requested is not held centrally.

Local Government: Pay

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by what mechanisms local authorities approve the salary awarded to their chief executives. [307844]

Barbara Follett: The pay of local authority chief executives is a matter for each local authority as the employer. The local authority can have regard to guidance issued by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives: 'National Salary Framework and Conditions of Service Handbook, September 2009'.

Local Government: Pensions

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what plans he has for the future of the Local Government Pension Scheme. [308426]

Barbara Follett: The Government will continue to ensure that the Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales remains affordable, viable and fair to taxpayers while providing decent pensions for its members. Working closely with all scheme stakeholders, we will be taking forward the announcement made in the pre Budget report about the savings to be made by public service pension schemes, including the LGPS, from 2012-13 onwards.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the cost to the public purse was of employers’ contributions to the Local Government Pension scheme in each year since 1997-98. [308594]

Barbara Follett: The information requested is shown in the following table. These figures represent the actual amount of contributions paid by employers participating in the Local Government Pension scheme based on the Local Government Pension Fund (SF3) annual returns submitted to Communities and Local Government by scheme administering authorities in England.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>England (£ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>1,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>1,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>1,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>2,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>2,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>2,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>3,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>3,544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what (a) items of statistical data and (b) regular reports local authority pension funds provide to his Department.

Barbara Follett: A copy of the local government pension fund (SF3) annual return (and its associated guidance notes) that is used to collect statistical data from Local Government Pension scheme administering authorities can be found on the Communities and Local Government website at:


Local Government Pension scheme administering authorities are required under the scheme’s regulations to submit to the Secretary of State copies of their statement of investment principles, governance compliance statements and triennial fund valuation reports. On a voluntary basis, pension fund annual reports and funding strategy statements are also submitted to the Department.

Local Government: Publicity

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department collects information from local spending reports on expenditure by local authorities on publicity for their services.

Barbara Follett: The information is not collected centrally.

Mayors

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to implement the proposal in his Department’s Communities in Control White Paper on reducing the (a) petition threshold for mayoral referendums to two per cent. and (b) time between referendums from 10 to four years.

Barbara Follett: The Government’s Communities in Control White Paper proposed that a consultation should be held on reducing the petition threshold for mayoral referendums—perhaps to 2, 3 or 4 per cent. Our consultation paper “Changing Council Governance Arrangements, Mayors and Indirectly Elected Leaders” invited comments on these proposals by March 2009, and also sought views on the proposal to reduce the time between referendums from 10 to four years where the first one had resulted in no change to governance arrangements. Responses to the consultation showed little support for any of these changes and, having carefully considered all of the comments received, we will be publishing our formal response.

National Policy Statements

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what timetable has been set for the publication of National Policy Statements in their final versions.

John Healey: The timetable for publication of draft and final National Policy Statements is set out in the Route Map for implementation of the Infrastructure Planning Commission regime. An updated Route Map was published on the Department for Communities and Local Government website on 15 December. A copy is available in the Library.

Non-Domestic Rates

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what proportion of eligible businesses of each rateable value he expects to claim small business rate relief in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11.

Barbara Follett: Local authorities reported there were 392,000 businesses in England in receipt of small business rate relief (SBRR) as at 31 December 2006, the only year for which this information is currently available. A recent estimate of the take-up of small business rate relief based on this information is available on the CLG website at:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/smallbusinessmethod

We estimate that around 575,000 small businesses are eligible for SBRR and that 68 per cent. of these (392,000) were claiming SBRR on 31 December 2006. We further estimate that about 92 per cent. of the total relief that would be granted if all 575,000 businesses claimed it was actually paid out in 2008-09.

Information on the number of businesses expected to claim small business rate relief in 2009-10 and 2010-11 is not currently available. Data on the rateable value of businesses claiming small business rate relief are not collected by local authorities.

Relief granted to small businesses has been increasing since SBRR was introduced—from £202 million in 2005-06 to £298 million in 2008-09. This represents a real terms increase of 34 per cent.

We agree that it is important to make it as easy as possible for eligible small businesses to access the relief. We took action in 2008 to remove the requirement for claimants to re-apply each year, so that a small business only has to apply once in each revaluation period. On 18 September 2009 we announced that we would remove the requirement to re-apply for SBRR at revaluation in 2010, a move which has been welcomed by the FSB. The legislation to remove the requirement is contained in the Non-Domestic Rating (Small Business Rate Relief) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2009 which was laid before the House on 9 December.

We understand concerns to ensure that every eligible small business receives the relief by making it wholly automatic, with no requirement to fill in an application form. Unfortunately neither we nor local authorities hold the necessary data to determine which ratepayers are eligible. Automating SBRR would require us to
change the eligibility criteria—meaning that large chains could benefit, and that the supplement paid by other businesses to fund the relief would increase.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Putney of 10 November 2009, *Official Report*, column 283W, on non-domestic rates: valuation, how many hereditaments in each billing authority or closest administrative unit there are in each special category code on the draft 2010 Rating List. [308020]

**Barbara Follett:** I have placed in the Library of the House a table showing the number of hereditaments for England broken down by the full alphanumeric special category code and billing authority on the draft 2010 Rating Lists as at 2 November 2009. These data are consistent with the statistical release titled: “Non-domestic rateable values: 2010 Local Ratings Lists—England and Wales” published on 18 December 2009. A copy of this statistical release is available at the following link:


The number of hereditaments in each special category code has been rounded to the nearest 10.

The five-yearly business rates revaluations make sure each business pays its fair contribution and not more by ensuring the share of the national rates bill paid by any one business reflects changes over time in the value of their property relative to others. The 2010 revaluation will not raise a single extra penny for Government.

Ratepayers occupying over a million properties will see their business rate liabilities come down as a result of revaluation. The Government intends to put in place a £2 billion relief scheme to limit the impact on the minority with bill increases. This is on top of the wider support available to help ease business pressures including discounted rate bills for small businesses and deferring tax payments.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the net cost to the public purse after the application of downward phasing was of providing transitional relief in respect of business rate revaluation in each year of the 2005 to 2010 rating cycle. [307837]

**Barbara Follett:** The net transitional relief for each year of the 2005 and 2010 cycle is presented in the following table. These figures are for the local list only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Net transitional relief (£ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>-870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>-353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures have been taken from national non-domestic rates returns. These do not include adjustments made with respect to previous years.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the take-up rate of the 2009 business rate deferral scheme in respect of the (a) five per cent. rise in business rates in April 2009 and (b) end of the 2005 rating cycle transitional relief. [307838]

**Barbara Follett:** The impact assessment to accompany the Non-Domestic Rating (Deferred Payments) (England) Regulations estimated that between 50 per cent. and 90 per cent. of businesses will choose to defer increases in their rates bills in 2009-10. No estimate has been made of breakdown between those deferring due to the RPI adjustment and those deferring due to the ending of the 2005 transitional relief scheme.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much and what proportion of gross revenue from non-domestic rates was not redistributed to local authorities in each year since 1997-98. [307846]

**Barbara Follett:** All gross revenue from non-domestic rates is redistributed to local authorities but not necessarily in the year in which they are collected. Each year, the Government estimate how much will be redistributed from the pool in the forthcoming year, based on the amount likely to be paid into it and the difference in previous years between the amounts payable to the pool and the amounts paid from it. This is known as the distributable amount and is fixed before the relevant financial year begins. For this reason it is not possible to make a meaningful comparison between what eventually goes into the pool and what is then redistributed from it in any one year.

Information on non-domestic rate yields and the distributable amount are given in Tables 2.3 (d and l) of Local Government Financial Statistics England No 19 2009.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Putney of 10 November 2009, *Official Report*, columns 281-83W,
on non-domestic rates: valuation, how many hereditaments on the 1995 Rating List were in each special category code in 1997. [308021]

Barbara Follett: The available information requested has been deposited in the Library and relates to information contained in the 1995 Rating List as at 1 April 1997. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. The table is based on SCAT codes applicable at the time. The use of SCAT codes for some categories has changed since 1997.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the Statement of Lord McKenzie of 14 October 2009, Official Report, House of Lords, column 298, on non-domestic rating regulations, if he will place in the Library a copy of the correspondence between his Department and the Inspector General of the Insolvency Service. [308648]

Barbara Follett: A copy of the correspondence was placed in the House Library in February 2009 accompanying a letter dated 10 February from my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (John Healey) and my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Mr. Timms) to Michael Fallon, Chairman of the Treasury Sub-Committee.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the estimated (a) maximum and (b) average value of small business rate relief, in cash terms is for (i) 2008-09, (ii) 2009-10 and (iii) 2010-11, including the value of the small business multiplier. [308715]

Barbara Follett: Details of the maximum value of small business rate relief, in cash terms for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 are shown in the following tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum value of small business rate relief</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England (excluding City of London)</td>
<td>1,165.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of London</td>
<td>1,175.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a = not available

Small business rate multiplier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England (excluding City of London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a = not available.

No estimate has been made of the average value of small business rate relief.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he has plans to (a) make or (b) lay before Parliament in draft further statutory instruments relating to business rates in the next six months. [309003]

Barbara Follett: The following table provides details of the amendments to statutory instruments in relation to business rates that my Department intends to make over the next six months.

Non-Domestic Rates: Empty Property

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Putney of 13 July 2009, Official Report, column 131W, on non-domestic rates: empty property, if he will place in the Library a copy of the representations from the six trade bodies; and what the names are of the 349 groups making written representations, excluding any which have requested confidentiality. [308981]

Barbara Follett: The representations from the six trade bodies have been placed in the House Library. The names of other groups that made representations to my Department are:

- Association of Convenience Stores;
- Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation;
- The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire;
- Weymouth Chamber of Commerce;
- Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce;
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

The names of private individuals who made representations are not being disclosed on data protection grounds.

Our reforms to empty property relief are principled and right for the long-term. They provide a strong incentive on owners to bring empty property back into use, helping to improve access to premises for businesses and so to exert a downward pressure on commercial rents.

However, we provided owners with real help to manage short-term pressures in a difficult property market by exempting all empty properties with rateable values up to £15,000 from business rates in 2009-10.

We have listened to the continued concerns of owners and are extending the temporary measure for a further 12 months—to cover the whole of 2010-11—and we are uprating the threshold to £18,000 in line with the general movement of property values at revaluation.
Non-Domestic Rates: Entertainments

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what methodology is to be used by the Valuation Office Agency to value travelling funfairs and circuses for the purposes of the 2010 business rates revaluation.

Barbara Follett: Travelling funfairs and circuses do not, by their nature, occupy a permanent site for shows and will not, therefore, be valued for rating. The permanent occupiers of these sites may be liable to rates, e.g. as a car park and valued as such. Winter quarters, where a permanent retained occupation, will be liable to rates.

Non-Domestic Rates: Ports

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to Lord Bates of 12 November 2009, Official Report, House of Lords, column 208WA, on non-domestic rates: ports, how many hereditaments in ports are liable for backdated business rates following the implementation of the new arrangements; how many businesses have fully discharged their backdated liability; how many businesses have been granted a schedule of payments; and how many have received lower valuation consequent on a review of a valuation under the new arrangements.

Barbara Follett: As of 4 January 2010, there are 723 hereditaments within the 45 large, statutory, ports and container terminals in England with a liability for business rates backdated to 1 April 2005. 94 of these hereditaments have seen a change to their rateable value as a consequence of an appeal.

As at 8 October 2009, local authorities had reported that businesses occupying 221 properties within ports had fully discharged their backdated liability and that businesses occupying a further 200 business properties within ports had been granted a schedule of payments.

Properties located within the ports that satisfy the tests of rateability have always been subject to separate assessment—this is not a new regime. The purpose of the review of ports that has been carried out by the Valuation Office Agency is to ensure that all individual business properties within and outside ports are rated fairly in order to distribute the burden of contributions to local government equitably between businesses around the country.

The Government have listened to the concerns of businesses with significant and unexpected backdated bills, including those within ports. It has legislated to allow such bills to be repaid over an unprecedented eight year period rather than in a single instalment, to help affected businesses to manage the impact on their cash flows during the downturn by reducing the amount they are required to pay now by 57.5 per cent.

Non-Domestic Rates: Public Houses

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer of 9 November 2009, Official Report, column 75W, on non-domestic rates: public houses, whether an assessment has been made of the effect of the rates revaluation on (a) public houses and (b) post offices which have diversified.

Barbara Follett: No estimates of the likely bills after revaluation have been made for public houses or post offices which have been diversified, these will contain not only transitional relief, but also all other reliefs, some of which will be determined by the billing authority in question.

The five-yearly business rates revaluations make sure each business pays its fair contribution and no more by ensuring that the share of the national rates bill paid by any one business reflects changes over time in the value of their property relative to others. The 2010 revaluation will not raise a single extra penny for Government.

Over a million properties will see their business rate liabilities come down as a result of revaluation. The Government intend to put in place a £2 billion relief scheme to limit the impact on the minority with bill increases. This is on top of the wider support available to help ease business pressures including discounted rate bills for small businesses and deferring tax payments.

Non-Domestic Rates: Valuation

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made, other than by means of his Department’s consultation on transitional relief, of the effects on businesses of the 2010 rating revaluation; and what estimate he has made of the likely level of non-payment of rates owing to business closures in 2010.

Barbara Follett: On 8 July 2009 my Department published Business Rates Information Letter number 10/2009 which contained information on the regional and sector impacts of the 2010 revaluation. On 17 November 2009 my Department published a final impact assessment on transitional arrangements scheme which included information about the impacts of the revaluation.

We have made no estimate of the likely level of non-payment of rates in 2010 due to revaluation. The five-yearly business rates revaluations make sure each business pays its fair contribution and no more by ensuring that the share of the national rates bill paid by any one business reflects changes over time in the value of their property relative to others. The 2010 revaluation will not raise a single extra penny for Government.

Over a million properties will see their business rate liabilities come down as a result of revaluation. The Government intend to put in place a £2 billion relief scheme to limit the impact on the minority with bill increases. This is on top of the wider support available to help ease business pressures including discounted rate bills for small businesses and deferring tax payments.

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his most recent estimate is of the (a) gross cost before and (b)
net cost after the application of downward phasing of
providing transitional relief in respect of business rate
revaluation in each year of the 2010-15 rating cycle.  
[307884]

Barbara Follett: The following table shows the estimates
of gross cost before and the net cost after the application
of transition relief for each year of the 2010-15 cycle.
The figures for the gross cost before the application of
transition relief can be found on table 3 on Annex B of
the "The transitional Arrangements for the Non-domestic
Rating Revaluation 2010 in England" consultation
document. The assumptions used for the purpose of
this modelling are discussed in its Methodology annex.
A copy of the consultation document is available at the
following link:
http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/
localgovernment/nddrrerevaluation2010

The figures have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.
This is consistent to what was used in the consultation
document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross cost before transition</th>
<th>Net cost after transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,060</td>
<td>1—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All these figures are non zero. When rounding to the nearest £5 million, they round to zero.

The five-yearly business rates revaluations make sure
each business pays its fair contribution and no more by
ensuring the share of the national rates bill paid by any
one business reflects changes over time in the value of
their property relative to others. The 2010 revaluation
will not raise a single extra penny for Government.

Over a million properties will see their business rate
liabilities come down as a result of revaluation. The
Government intend to put in place a £2 billion relief
scheme to limit the impact on the minority with bill
increases. This is on top of the wider support available
to help ease business pressures including discounted
rate bills for small businesses and deferring tax payments.

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government which 50
individual hereditaments in the South East had the
biggest percentage change in rateable value between the
2005 Rating List and the draft 2010 Rating List; what
the (a) location and (b) local authority area is of each;
and what the rateable value of each is on each list.  
[308624]

Barbara Follett: The following table shows the rateable
value on the 2005 Rating List and the draft 2010 Rating
List for the 50 individual hereditaments in the South
East Government Office Region that had the biggest
percentage increase between the two lists, as at 2 November
2009.

These data are consistent with the statistical release
titled: “Non-domestic rateable values: 2010 Local Ratings
Lists—England and Wales”, published on 18 December
2009. A copy of the statistical release is available at the
following link:

http://www.ova.gov.uk/publications/statistical_releases/
VOA_Statistics_Release_Final.pdf

No address information other than postcode is held
in the dataset used for the analysis. The address, 2005
list rateable value and 2010 draft list rateable value from
the live database for each hereditament in the central
and local rating lists are published on the Valuation
Office Agency’s website. This information is updated
weekly.

http://www.ova.gov.uk

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government whether he
expects the 2010 rates revaluation to be revenue-neutral
across (a) the five year cycle and (b) in each year of
that cycle.  
[307885]

Barbara Follett: For the 2010 revaluation the small
business multiplier has been reduced to 40.7p to ensure
that on 1 April 2010 (the first day of the 2010 rating list)
the gross yield will be the same, in real terms, after
allowing for future appeals, as the gross rates yield
expected for 31 March 2010 (the last day of the 2005
rating list). Therefore, the process of introducing new
rateable values on 1 April 2010 will be revenue neutral
in real terms. Thereafter, the rates yield may vary in the
normal way with, for instance, ongoing changes to the
rating list.

The five-yearly business rates revaluations make sure
each business pays its fair contribution and no more by
ensuring the share of the national rates bill paid by any
### Offenders

**Chris Huhne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many employees of his Department and its agencies have been convicted of a criminal offence of each type in each year since 1997.

[308508]

**Barbara Follett:** Less than five employees of Communities and Local Government have been convicted of a criminal offence in total since 1997. Publication of further details could breach our rules of confidentiality and are thus, not provided.

### Oneplace

**Adam Afriyie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the cost to his Department was of building the Oneplace web portal was; what budget he has allocated for the purpose of advertising the launch of Oneplace; and what estimate he has made of the cost of maintaining Oneplace in its first year of operation.

[306384]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This is an operational matter for the Audit Commission, and I will ask the chief executive of the Audit Commission to write to the hon. Member direct.

**Letter from Steve Bundred, dated 5 January 2009:**

Your Parliamentary Question outlined above has been passed to me to reply.

The cost incurred by the Audit Commission of building the Oneplace web portal is £484,000. This includes an estimated £220,000 on design and consultation with members of the public to ensure that the site meets their needs. The Audit Commission has spent £9,000 advertising the launch of this new service. The cost of maintaining Oneplace in the first year of operation is estimated to be £120,000.

A copy of this letter will be placed in Hansard.

### Parking

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will place in the Library a copy of each research project commissioned by his Department on residential car parking in the last five years.

[308267]

**Barbara Follett:** A copy of the report, ‘Residential Car Parking Report’, from 9 May 2007 has been deposited in the Library. The report is also available at:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/residentialcarparking

### Parking: Fees and Charges

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer of 21 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 1509W, on parking: fees and charges, how much revenue was raised by local authorities from on-street parking (a) penalty charge notices and (b) charges in each year since 1997-98.

[308983]

**Barbara Follett:** The information on the revenue raised by local authorities in England on penalty charge notice income and other sales, fees and charges from on-street parking from 2005-06 is tabled as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Penalty charge notice income</th>
<th>Other sales, fees and charges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>£275.7</td>
<td>£286.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>£297.1</td>
<td>£303.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>£333.5</td>
<td>£332.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>£312.1</td>
<td>£351.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information for earlier years is not available.
Planning Permission

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to allocate funding to local authorities in respect of their new duties consequent on the creation of the Infrastructure Planning Commission. [307841]

Barbara Follett: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Jackson) on 28 October 2009, Official Report, columns 476-77W.

Regeneration: Finance

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which regeneration schemes funded by his Department are delivered through the regional development agencies. [307834]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Department for Communities and Local Government contributes funding to the Regional Development Agencies’ Single Budget. However, it is the responsibility of individual RDA boards to determine how this resource is best utilised and which, if any, regeneration programmes are supported within each region.

Regional Government

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on elected regional government in England outside London. [308620]

Ms Rosie Winterton: The Government have no plans to introduce elected regional government in England outside London.

Urban Areas: Regeneration

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to provide assistance to the accelerated development zones pilot schemes run by local authorities. [308596]

Barbara Follett: There are currently no active accelerated development zones pilot schemes. In December’s pre-Budget report, the Government gave an update on work initiated in the April 2009 Budget, saying that it “will continue to examine the framework that would be needed to implement tax increment financing and consider the primary legislation that would be needed if schemes were to be introduced”.

“Accelerated Development Zones” are the geographical areas within which tax incremental financing, if introduced, would operate.

Waste Disposal: Fees and Charges

Robert Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether any local authorities have reported efficiencies relating to the introduction of wheeled refuse containers in their most recent annual efficiency report to his Department. [308600]

Barbara Follett: The Department does not collect information from councils on the value of efficiencies broken down by individual service sectors. Councils are required to report only the total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008-09 financial year.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Apprentices

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many apprenticeship vacancies have been (a) advertised and (b) filled through the National Apprenticeship Service online vacancy system in each month since it was established. [304160]

Kevin Brennan: The information is as follows:

(a) The following table gives the number of new apprenticeship vacancies advertised each month (rounded to the nearest 10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>1,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>1,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>1,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>1,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>3,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>3,810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) The number of vacancies filled through the apprenticeship vacancies system each month since launch is as follows (rounded to the nearest 10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures provided above are the number of candidates who have been recorded as successful in securing an apprenticeship opportunity through apprenticeship vacancies online.

These figures will significantly underestimate the number of apprentices who found positions through apprenticeship vacancies online. This is because some of the advertisements, particularly for large employers, will lead candidates to the employer’s own on-line vacancies and the recording of successful candidates through this route can take longer.

Apprentices: Leeds

John Battle: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) how many apprenticeships there were in Leeds in each year since 1997; [306592]
(2) how many apprenticeships were there in Leeds West constituency in each year since 1997.

Kevin Brennan: Information on the number of apprenticeship starts are published in a quarterly statistical first release (SFR). The latest SFR was published on 22 October at:
http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics/sfroct09/
Supplementary table 6.1 shows apprenticeship starts by region, local authority and parliamentary constituency from 2003/04, the earliest year for which we have comparable data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Lewes</th>
<th>East Sussex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>147,319</td>
<td>145,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>143,097</td>
<td>143,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>128,145</td>
<td>128,437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-employed traders may be declared bankrupt (or enter into an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA)), however, registered companies are the subject of liquidation (compulsory liquidation or creditors voluntary liquidation (CVL)).

Table 2 shows the number of self-employed traders who were declared bankrupt in 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Where the bankrupt has provided a valid date of birth (93.4 per cent. in 2008).
2 Where the bankrupt has provided a valid postcode (96.9 per cent. in 2008).

Regional figures for 2009 are not currently available for bankruptcies, as they are compiled on an annual basis.

Statistics covering corporate insolvencies are not currently available at a sub-national level within England and Wales.

Business: Capital Investment

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what the level of investment by businesses has been in each age group resident in and (b) businesses based in (i) Lewes constituency and (ii) East Sussex there have been in (A) 2008 and (B) 2009 to date.

Ian Lucas: Figures for bankrupts in East Sussex and Lewes constituency in 2008 are shown in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Where the bankrupt has provided a valid date of birth (93.4 per cent. in 2008).
2 Where the bankrupt has provided a valid postcode (96.9 per cent. in 2008).

Norman Baker: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many bankruptcies of (a) individuals in each age group resident in and (b) businesses based in (i) Lewes constituency and (ii) East Sussex there have been in (A) 2008 and (B) 2009 to date.

Ian Lucas: Figures for bankrupts in East Sussex and Lewes constituency in 2008 are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Bankruptcies in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Where the bankrupt has provided a valid date of birth (93.4 per cent. in 2008).
2 Where the bankrupt has provided a valid postcode (96.9 per cent. in 2008).

Business: West Midlands

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to encourage business investment in the West Midlands.

Ms Rosie Winterton: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to encourage business investment in the West Midlands.

We are also taking action to ensure the foundations for growth are in place as we emerge from the economic downturn. As a result of Government bringing forward capital expenditure, Advantage West Midlands (AWM) has been able to invest £11.2 million to allow early commencement of work to redevelop Birmingham New Street Station, creating up to 400 new jobs and £1.8 million to accelerate the redevelopment of the former MG Rover site at Longbridge Birmingham, enabling an early start to the relocation of Bournville college, securing 250 construction jobs. Furthermore, 9 per cent. of orders under the vehicle scrappage scheme have been placed in the West Midlands, which is broadly in line with car ownership in the region.

On 10 November we launched Partnerships for Growth: A national framework for regional and local economic development. The objectives of which include raising the rate of sustainable economic growth, increasing employment and increasing the economic performance of all English regions. AWM is already contributing to
this agenda through, for example, delivering over 12,805 Business Link Health Checks by the end of November 2009 and jointly investing £40 million with EMDA in the £130 million world-class Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC)—a world-class research organisation to support companies and their supply chains in improving their manufacturing competitiveness. It is also providing investment in low carbon technology through its £2.4 million support for the Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator project and its £19 million support for the Low Carbon Vehicle Technology Programme, to accelerate the introduction of the next generation ultra low vehicle carbon vehicle.

AWM provides a range of other measures to help business. It has, for example, between April and September 2009, made grants totalling £736,000 to 15 companies for research and development and grants totalling £3.8 million to 46 companies for business investment. Through its Advantage Transition Fund, which ended in November 2009, it has made loans of more than £10 million. Arrangements are now being put in place for a successor fund, as part of a £44.8 million business support fund which includes:

An Early Stage Equity fund of £8 million;
A Growth Equity fund of £9.2 million, matched by the same amount from the private sector, and;
A Mezzanine fund of £9.2 million, also matched by the private sector.

Last year AWM was involved in a record number of inward investment success such as the expansion of Deutsche Bank, which now employs 500 people in the region. This year it has been involved in a further 21 projects creating 645 jobs, with others in the pipeline, which it is hoped will lead to over 900 further jobs.

UKTI in the West Midlands is supporting companies in a variety of ways to grow their businesses internationally. It has supported over 540 companies so far this year to increase their exports through a variety of supported programmes including Passport to Export, a scheme for novice exporters to help them to export strategically and Gateway to Global Growth, for companies with two to 10 years exporting experience. Using additional funding provided by Advantage West Midlands, UKTI has so far assisted 330 companies to increase exports, which has lead to 45 jobs being created and 91 jobs safeguarded.

### Departmental Billing

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many and what proportion of invoices submitted to his Department have been paid within 10 days in each month since October 2008; and if he will make a statement. [307953]

**Mr. McFadden:** The following tables show (i) the volume of invoices received by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) since June 2009 and (ii) the percentage of invoices paid within 10 days by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and its predecessors the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) since November 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Volume of invoices received by BIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>3,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>3,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>2,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>2,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>2,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>2,675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Departmental Contracts

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether his Department has entered into any contracts with Siemens or its subsidiaries since February 2009. [303765]

**Mr. McFadden:** Central records indicate that the following contracts have been entered into with Siemens Enterprise Communications Ltd. since February 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>Specialist Call login Equipment 23,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>ISO 27001 Certification and Support 86,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>Photocopier provision 2,390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Departmental Publications

**Daniel Kawczynski:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills with reference to the answer of 13 July 2009, Official Report, columns 190-1W, on business: overseas trade, if he will place in the Library a copy of the 2009 study on its publication. [306915]

A report of the study is already in the public domain and can be accessed at the following URL: https://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/fileDownload/mergers.pdf?cid=438803

Departmental Reviews

Lembit Öpik: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills when he expects the review of his Department’s agencies to be published. [305345]

Mr. McFadden: BIS will review its partner organisations as part of the Government wide review of arm’s length bodies announced by the Prime Minister in “Putting the Front Line First: smarter government”. The result of the review will be published by Budget 2010.

EU Globalisation Fund

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many applications the UK has made to the EU Globalisation Adjustment Fund; how many (a) have been approved, (b) have been declined and (c) are outstanding; and what assessment he has made of the net cost or benefit to the UK of the Fund. [302844]

Angela Eagle: I will answer this question as responsibility for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) falls to my Department.

On the first part of the question, the UK has not made any applications to the EGF. All current member state applications and their status can be viewed on the European Commission’s EGF website at http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=582&langId=en.

As part of the Government’s response to the economic downturn, we have used the European Social Fund to the same effect as the EGF, investing in a combination of services that have proved to be effective in helping workers and areas affected by restructuring. The EGF can not duplicate use of other European funding.

On the second part, approved applications to the Fund have to date been financed from in-year transfers from areas of expected low implementation within the EU Budget, at no immediate impact to member states contributions. Unspent funds in one year, however, are used to finance the following year, thus reducing the amount of funding required from member states in that year. The UK’s share of financing applications approved so far in 2009 is abateable, and the net cost to the UK over the 2009 and 2010 period of these applications would be around £2.05 million.

As to the benefits, the Government will look positively at a specific case where it can be shown that the EGF would add value to national, regional or local measures and initiatives. In particular, it is important to marshal all resources available to help those struggling to find work so that they can move into jobs in growth sectors and be a part of the economic recovery.

Learning and Skills Council for England: Public Relations

Mr. Hurd: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what payments the Learning and Skills Council has made to (a) Fishburn Hedges and (b) Weber Shandwick Public Affairs in each of the last three years; for what purposes; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the contract under which such payments have been made. [302299]

Kevin Brennan: The Department does not hold this level of information. The Learning and Skills Council makes decisions about any work it contracts for specific projects based upon its own business needs. Geoff Russell, the Council’s Acting Chief Executive, will write to the Hon. Member with further information.

Letter from Geoff Russell, dated 8 December 2009:

I am writing in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question that you asked the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, on what payments the Learning and Skills Council has made to (a) Fishburn Hedges and (b) Weber Shandwick Public Affairs in each of the last three years; at what cost; and for what purpose.

I can confirm that:

Fishburn Hedges currently works on two specific projects for the Learning and Skills Council and that this is contracted via the Central Office of Information (COI) on:

Skills for Life: Get On. The campaign is designed to promote the importance of improving literacy and numeracy skills to adults.

Skills for employers: incorporating Train to Gain/Skills Pledge/National Skills Academy/Training Quality Standard. The campaign is designed to promote the skills offer to employers in a clear and concise manner:

Fishburn Hedges is not contracted to work directly for the Learning and Skills Council and any procured projects are managed through COI.

Fishburn Hedges has worked on Skills for Life: Get On, for the Learning and Skills Council via COI, since April 2008.

Fishburn Hedges has worked on the employer campaign for the Learning and Skills Council via COI, since July 2009.

The costs paid by the LSC via COI to Fishburn Hedges are as follows:

Skills for Life: April 2008 to March 2009—£378,583 ex VAT
Skills for Life: April 2009 to date—£151,086 ex VAT
Employers: July 2009 to date—£124,968 ex VAT

Weber Shandwick Public Affairs, in the past 3 years, has worked on one specific project for the Learning and Skills Council.

The LSC engaged Weber Shandwick Public Affairs to provide information to and on public affairs and media arenas in relation to the education and skills sector for the LSC’s public affairs team. Weber Shandwick did not speak on behalf of the LSC or represent the organisation at events. Their contract concluded in April 2008 and the LSC no longer retains an agency for this purpose.

The total amount paid by the LSC to Weber Shandwick for the last 3 years was £44,255 ex VAT.

Weber Shandwick public relations team (i.e. not the Public Affairs team) was also appointed by the Learning and Skills Council via COI between February and November 2009 to secure the engagement of large employers in the direct delivery of Apprenticeships, Skills for Life and Train to Gain to meet targets set.

The total amount paid by the LSC via COI was £195,200 ex VAT.
Local Government

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether he has made an assessment of the merits of extending the Joint Statement on Access to Skills, Advice and Trade Unions to include local government.
[306732]

Angela E. Smith: I have been asked to reply.

The Joint Statement on Access to Skills, Trade Unions and Advice in Government Contracting was launched out across the central Government Departments and executive agencies in July 2008.

It has always been the Government’s aspiration to extend the Joint Statement to other parts of the public services, following evaluation of the impact in central Government and subject to further discussion on the detail of any possible implementation.

A six-month review was recently completed by the Joint Statement Review Steering Group and is available on the Cabinet Office website at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/274789/joint-statement-review.pdf

The review recorded good progress in implementation and signalled the steering group’s support for local government to develop the principles of the Joint Statement in that sector. Local Government Employers have since expressed their support for further extension and are progressing the early stages of implementation through a series of discussions within the sector.

Office of Fair Trading: Internet

David T.C. Davies: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what redesigns of websites operated by the Office of Fair Trading have been carried out since 27 June 2007; and what the (a) cost to the public purse and (b) date of completion of each such redesign was.
[306213]

Mr. McFadden: The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is currently undertaking a redesign and restructuring of its website. Research conducted on its primary target audience including businesses, corporate lawyers and local authority trading standards services, found that the current structure of the OFT website is not meeting their requirements. The project costs so far have been £28,000 for qualitative research, with a further £86,000 committed to conduct user journey testing and design development work. The project is due for completion by the end of March 2010.

A project is also underway on the Consumer Direct website (which is run by the OFT) which will enhance the functionality of the site and guide consumers more easily to the information they need by the provision of video help guides. The cost of the research so far has been £20,000 and the total projected project cost is £70,000. The project is due for completion by the end of March 2010.

Royal Mail: Disciplinary Proceedings

Lynne Featherstone: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many postal workers were disciplined for failing to attempt to deliver parcels and delivering ‘sorry you were out’ slips instead in each of the last three years; what discussions he has had with representatives of Royal Mail on the matter; and if he will make a statement.
[308781]

Mr. McFadden: Disciplining of its staff by Royal Mail for any operational failings is a matter for the company’s management. I have therefore asked the Chief Executive of Royal Mail, Adam Crozier, to provide you with a reply to your question.

A copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Trade Agreements: Colombia

Mr. Watson: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent representations he has received on the negotiation of a free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia.
[308969]

Ian Lucas: In recent months, this Department has received representations from industry, NGOs, unions, Members of the UK and European Parliaments, and members of the public on the EU-Andean nations multi-party free trade agreement negotiations. These representations have covered market access issues and the human rights situation in Colombia.

Colleagues in other Departments have been receiving similar representations.

UK Trade and Investment: Training

Mr. Graham Stuart: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside UKTI’s buildings attended by civil servants in UKTI there have been since 2005; and what the cost was of each.
[307446]

Ian Lucas: UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) does not directly employ staff but draws on resource from its two parent Departments, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). UKTI has offices in 98 different countries, the nine English regions, London and Glasgow.

While UKTI holds aggregate figures relating to staff training, it does not hold records centrally on the number or cost of (a) away days, or (b) conferences that took place outside UKTI’s buildings that were attended by civil servants.

To provide this information would require obtaining details from each location and therefore can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment: Kent

Damian Green: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many and what proportion of 16 to 24 year olds were not in education, employment or training in (a) Ashford constituency and (b) Kent in each of the last eight quarters.
[304925]
Kevin Brennan: The Labour Force Survey sample is not large enough to provide quarterly estimates for small geographies such as local authority areas. We are able to give annual estimates for Kent from the Annual Population Survey, which has a larger sample, but this is not large enough to produce estimates at constituency level.

The following table gives the number and proportion of people aged 16 to 24 not in education, employment or training in Kent from 2000 to 2008.

Please note that these estimates are subject to large sampling variability and should therefore be treated with caution and viewed in conjunction with their Confidence Interval (CIs), which indicate how accurate an estimate is. For example, a CI of +/- 4.2 percentage points (pp) means that the true value is between 4.2pp above the estimate and 4.2pp below the estimate.

1 Age used is the respondents academic age, which is defined as their age at the preceding 31 August.
2 Those given are 95 per cent. confidence intervals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Confidence intervals around percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 16 to 24-year-olds in Kent.

Note: The ALALFS covers the period from March of the given year, to the following February.


Wales

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how much his Department has spent in Wales in each financial year since 1997.

Mr. McFadden [holding answer 14 December 2009]: Country and regional analysis spending data for all Government Departments is available in the PESA CRA table on the HM Treasury website covering financial years 2003-04 to 2010-11. The latest data were collected prior to the announcement of the creation of BIS and so figures are currently presented against BERR and DIUS. Figures for BIS will be published in spring 2010 and earlier editions cover previous years and preceding Departments.

Yorkshire Forward and One North East: Public Appointments

Philip Davies: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what provision is made in the proposed contracts of the new Chairman of (a) Yorkshire Forward and (b) One North East for circumstances where the body ceases to exist before the end of the contract.

Ms Rosie Winterton: The terms and conditions of all RDA board members including chairs states that:

“should the Agency be dissolved, restructured or wound up during the period of appointment, the appointment would also cease with effect from that dissolution or such other date as is specified in any relevant legislation.”

This clause will also be included in the contracts for the new chairs of Yorkshire Forward and One North East.

[Continued in Column 253W]
Ministerial Corrections

Tuesday 5 January 2010

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Departmental Sick Leave

Justine Greening: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the average length of employment of staff of his Department at each Civil Service payband.


Letter of correction from Ms Barbara Follett:

An error has been identified in the written answer given to the hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) on 12 October 2009. I have notified the MP of the error. The error was the figures given in average years column within the table.

The correct answer should have been:

Barbara Follett: The Department for Communities and Local Government came into existence on 5 May 2006 replacing the former Office for the Deputy Prime Minister. The average (median) years in post, by grade level, for staff in Communities and Local Government as at end of March 2009 is set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Average years (median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All grades</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Copyright: Music

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many meetings (a) Ministers and (b) officials have held with representatives from (i) the Federation Against Copyright Theft, (ii) the British recorded music industry and (iii) the Open Rights Group in the last 12 months. [R]


Letter of correction from Mr. Siôn Simon:

An error has been identified in the written answer given to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) on 14 December 2009. Neither Ministers nor officials in my Department have met representatives from the Federation Against Copyright Theft or the Open Rights Group in the last 12 months. However, I had informal discussions with the Open Rights Group at the Cabinet Conference held on 26-28 October.

The correct answer should have been:

Mr. Simon: Ministers have met with representatives from the British Recorded Music Industry (which we understand to mean the British Phonographic Industries) on six occasions in the last 12 months. A Private Secretary or other officials were present at five of the six meetings. Ministers also met representatives from the Featured Artists Coalition on one occasion. In addition, officials met bilaterally with representatives of the BRMI on three occasions, and were involved in several wider meetings.

Neither Ministers nor officials in my Department have met representatives from the Federation Against Copyright Theft or the Open Rights Group in the last 12 months. However, I had informal discussions with the Open Rights Group at the Cabinet Conference held on 26-28 October.
**ORAL ANSWERS**

**Tuesday 5 January 2010**

**JUSTICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col. No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compulsory Transfer Agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Prison Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Court Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dangerous Driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drug Misuse (Prisons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Court Cases: Political Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Court Cases: Public Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Tuesday 5 January 2010**

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col. No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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